

# The BRICS paradigm within the reality of the “new political spaces”

**Boris F. Martynov**

Professor at the Moscow State Institute of International Affairs  
(MGIMO), Moscow, Russia.

[b.martynov@mtu-net.ru](mailto:b.martynov@mtu-net.ru)

## Abstract

The Author thinks, that, being the BRICS an innovative structure of non-Western nature, it will lose its proper “face” and identity without the elaboration of its *own ideas* on a wide range of current philosophical, political, economic and social problems. BRICS, as a conglomerate of the most important world civilizations of non-Western character, can be an agent of a new, long standing inter-civilizational dialogue on them. Among the spheres of cooperation between the BRICS countries, the Author sees as one of the most important the sphere of international law, because of their respectful attitude towards it. The Russo-Brazilian agenda on this issue may include the reforming of the ONU, the struggle against international terrorism, illegal drugs trafficking, organized crime and piracy, nuclear proliferation, slavery and discrimination in international trade. The closest attention within the BRICS paradigm, according to the Author, and precisely between Russia and Brazil, should be paid to the sovereignty over their natural resources, ecological and energetic and information security. As for him, the BRICS project isn't closed and is far from being finished. The world shows an evolution towards a “Concert of Great Civilizations” instead of the one, governed by a “great power” or “powers”.

**Keywords:** BRICS, cyberspace, world civilizations, global problems, international law.

The policy of war & peace has been traditionally constructed around different physical spaces, which acquired insofar their political dimension. Initially, there have been two: ground and sea surfaces. The 20th century added a new, aerial one, which by the end of it began to get expanded to the cosmic area. A notable trend towards the multiplication of physical and (inevitably) political spaces has been sustained by the process of the material/scientific development, pushed forward by wars and military build-ups. The 21st century is characterized by multiple interactions in a differently new kind of space, which qualitatively differs from all the old ones, being purely virtual. It is a so-called “informatics”, or a “cyberspace”.

Accordingly, we could connect the main security actors and their security preferences with the “capitalization” by the mankind of the corresponding spaces over the course of History. A *state security*, depending mostly on physical spaces (land, sea and air) provided for *military security* and quite obviously – for *military strength* to maintain and/or to conquer. The emergence, in the 20th century of *transnational corporations*, accentuated the need for *economic security*, *natural resources* being its principal basis, which already relativized this traditional – militarist / space-centered approach. The transnational actors began to more freely employ indirect – economic, informative, etc. – methods of domination. This made their international policy, at least *partly*, to become virtual. Nowadays it’s getting more and more so.

A “true believer” is always better than a “strong defender”. In our century, when information became actually *everything*, neither transnational corporations, nor states (which acquired many features of them) do really need go directly to war to achieve their goals. “Soft power” works better than a “hard” one, and “one, who governs human conscience”, really – “governs the world”. So, actors – those who can produce and get proper use of information – are and for a long time will remain in special demand. These are: *media*, *NGO`s* and, from my point of view, some *new international structures* with a clean and still not very much corrupted “curriculum”, provided they can say *something new* to the rest of the world. The BRICS is among them.

### **What is BRICS and what can be its future?**

To begin with, the BRICS appeared as an *innovative structure of non-Western nature*. The obvious fact is that, without its *own ideas* on a wide range of modern philosophical, political, economic and social problems, this project will immediately lose its proper “face” and identity. More than that, its *raison d`être* is not so much economics or politics in a “classical” sense (struggle for power), which are and still for a long time will be the domains of the West. To deal exclusively with current economics or politics, BRICS inevitably will attain an *adoptive character*, which, sooner or later, will make of it another formal (and unnecessary) international structure among so many. Let us not forget, that the supreme task of this innovative format is to contribute to the profound transformation

*of the whole* of the world politics and economy, which can't be realized without the *profound revision of the basis of the human being on this planet.*

A “cosmic” talk? Well, the number, scope and depth of the modern global problems (there's no enough place here to try to outnumber all of them) do not leave us much time to deal with “partial” decisions. But, when people begin to speculate about the “end” of the BRICS project because of the current economic difficulties of some of its member-states, in a way they may be right. If we still, as in the beginning of the 2000, see only an economic side of this project, then we have a full, “normativistic” right to say, “good bye” to it. From the point of view of some “vulgar” economists, the BRICS paradigm has already exhausted itself. According to them, the 21st century will do quite well without the “ascending” countries, and the “good old” global leaders (the West) will remain as such (Sharma, 2010, p. 290). But, the BRICS is no longer *just* an economic project<sup>1</sup>. Reality has changed its focus. Time has come to think about BRICS in qualitative and, maybe, futuristic terms instead of quantitative and present-day ones. The urgent *need for a new conceptualization* of too many of the world's problems demands a *long standing inter-civilizational dialogue*, which only BRICS, as a conglomerate of the most important world civilizations of non-Western character, is capable of maintaining.

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<sup>1</sup> The growing interest of BRICS to the politics is very well shown in the article of G. Toropchin “O nekotorych aspektach politicheskogo sotrudnichestva v ramkakh BRIKS” (On Some Aspects of Political Cooperation within BRICS)—International Organizations Research Journal – Moscow, High School of Economics, N 1, 2017.

The “multi-civilizational” approach, implemented in the BRICS paradigm, has long ago proved itself viable in international relations and is gaining space and authority in the modern political science. Small wonder, it meets the “covert” opposition from the “mono-civilizational” party, headed by the apologists of the West. It’s interesting enough, that the “*post-huntingtonians*” never doubt the very method proposed by S. Huntington, but try to turn it upside down in order to serve their interests. P. Katzenstein and others, e.g., postulate a certain “Civilization of Modernity”, where along with “independent” and “free” civilizations (European, Chinese, Japanese, Hindu, and “Afro-Eurasian”), there will remain one (the “Anglo-American”, of course) to “supervise” them all (in an Orwellian way, where some animals were “more equal, than others”)<sup>2</sup>. Even more interesting is a book by Ian Morris “War: What is it Good for?”, where the author not only praises the wars of the past that made us, allegedly, “safer” and “wealthier” (?!?) He eventually greets a new war: in cyber-space, where victory will belong to the most developed nations (no difficulty to guess which ones), acting as a powerful electronic “globocop” against the criminal will of those “under-developed”. “If the United States fails, the whole world fails” – such are his concluding words (Morris, 2014, p. 385). So, it shouldn’t be taken as an overstatement when we say: “If the BRICS fails, the whole world fails”.

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<sup>2</sup> See: *Civilizational Politics in World Affairs Trilogy*. Ed. By P. Katzenstein. Books 1 -3. Routledge, 2010-2012. (Katzenstein P. J., 2010; 2012; 2012a)

From this point of view, to repeat, in each and one declaration of the BRICS summits, that “it is not intended against anybody” is of not much use. As a potential counterweight to the present “Anglo-American” idea,<sup>3</sup> one that postulates multi-civilizational cooperation on the *equal basis*, will *never* be welcomed by the West, precisely by “Anglo-America”. From our point of view, a wholly skeptical (or, at the best, ignoring) attitude of the Western media and States towards the BRICS and its perspectives must be *taken for granted*, although the BRICS leaders never miss the occasion to speak about their openness for any kind of cooperation. They operate in practically all spheres of cooperation around modern world problems: from climate changes to international terrorism. The core of this is, of course, cooperation in the *legal* area. A Russian specialist says: “Having in mind the traditional respect of the BRICS countries towards international law, we could, for example, put this at the center of our discussions with the United States” (MGIMO, 2012, p. 2).

Could we, really? The United States creates an image of a constant violator of traffic rules, who demands their strict observance by others. Having in mind Anglo-American Common law and the corresponding juridical culture – something completely different from at least the *majority* of the BRICS legal systems, we can come to the conclusion that dialogue is short of impossible. Small wonder that our dealing with the world problems ends up simply naming them... No problems can be successfully treated

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<sup>3</sup> We attribute the origins of this idea to Katzenstein and colleagues (see above), though the essence of it can be easily found in the works of Mr. Winston Churchill.

without at least a *wish* to come to a common approach in international legal matters. No such “wish” is to be seen among the Anglo-American political elites.

Escaping the faulty “juridical romanticism”, we must admit, that to attain some kind of *economic, political, civilizational, cultural etc. equality* among states we must provide for, at least: a) – *new ideas*; and, b) – *decisiveness*.<sup>4</sup> It means, that in trying to promote BRICS values, we should not “look back” any more to the reaction of the West, waiting for its “positive” reaction. *We are at war* for the domination of a new *intellectual space*. The “moment of Truth” for the whole BRICS project demands from its members a sober and realistic vision of the whole situation. Either the BRICS (all of them, or some first, others, later) enter a new phase of development, marked by the cognitive efforts to gain intellectual supremacy over destructive (militarist, consumerist, materialist, libertarian, etc.) postures, or its “super-idea” (and, alas! – together with it the world itself) will melt down into a nonentity.

But all is not so macabre, as it may seem. Even from the “realistic” point of view we can mark the appearance of new approaches to some old notions in spite of the outdated Anglo-American “traditionalisms”. Some prominent economists, and among them the author of the acronym “BRICS” – Jim O’Neill, say that, in the information age, *globalization* needs not necessarily be *westernization* or “*Americanization*”. He writes later, that the “club of the Western democracies”, has, probably, “outlived” itself, and

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<sup>4</sup> We omit here the formal equality, which makes too many “equal” states subject to all kinds of fears in the modern “democratic”, “progressive” etc. world.

that the “G-20” is more legitimate, than the “G-7”, because it includes the BRICS countries (O’Neil, 2011, pp. 28, 176-177). Along with him, other authors confirm that the “economic reality” has proved to be more complex than we have become used to thinking, because it has always depended on more irrational *cultural norms*. They state that *happiness* – a specific and almost completely irrational category – isn’t measured by the GNP per capita, but has different meanings in different civilizations/cultures, and, as such, can’t be imposed on by anybody. In short, “the real picture of the world has many” peaks (Beugelsdijk & Maseland, 2011, pp. 367-368) – it’s this very thesis that the BRICS countries are fully aligned with.

As for the “ideas + decisiveness”, let’s see an example. On first sight, the ultimate goal of the new Bank of BRICS is quite “traditional”: economic development + well-being of people. Good! But, not enough! From the viewpoint of the equality of the civilizations we have the right to ask: “What kind of “development”?” Need it be followed by the degradation of Nature, poverty, epidemics, terrorism, interventions, wars, etc.? Being an innovative structure, BRICS *must* openly and publicly pose those questions and try to find its own answers to them. Not to *explain* to the world the proper *BRICS-understanding* of such notions as “development”, “progress”, “well-being”, “law”, “world order”, “democracy”, etc., etc. means to silently agree with the *Western* understanding of them, and to leaving things as they are. For BRICS as a unique conglomeration of non-Western civilizations/cultures, it means to commit suicide....



The spheres of cooperation between the BRICS countries are multiple. Now we see more and more commissions and committees appear on very different topics of human life. *Important is that they promise innovative approaches.* There is special talk about the international law. In an “unforeseeable” and “anarchic” world, where the authority of the international law (IL) is at its lowest level, the imperatives of cooperation between the BRIC countries can't be overestimated, thanks to their special, *respectful attitude* towards IL and a special perception by them of the majority of current international law and security problems. Here a unique role could pertain to Russia and Brazil.

The most important item on the Russo-Brazilian agenda in this sense, from our point of view, is the reforming of the international organizations, including the ONU, with a view to strengthening the judicial background to the struggle against international terrorism, illegal drugs, organized crime and piracy, nuclear proliferation, slavery and discrimination in international trade. On such issues Russia and Brazil usually find “utter proximity or coincidence of positions” in their common diplomatic documents and conventions. But what about the security issues?

Sometimes one hears that, as for this, Brazil is of a much lesser importance for Russia compared with close-by China and India. A truly short-sighted vision! The objective process of globalization<sup>5</sup> not only makes distant nations much closer, but also gen-

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<sup>5</sup> One should distinguish between the *objective* (physical) globalization processes and those *subjective* efforts of some countries to make them serve their own interests.

erates common problems. Russia and China are both nuclear powers and permanent members of the Security Council, together with nuclear India they can guarantee their security interests by this very status. The problem is that security threats have greatly changed and lost their unilateral character. Together with that, they: a) have acquired a mostly non-military character and began to act *within* the state borders, and, b) the contemporary world and, even more so, the future of our planet will be characterized by the struggle to *re-distribute natural resources* (water, rare metals, oil, gas, bio-resources etc.). This was clearly set out in the corresponding security doctrines of Russia (2015) and Brazil (2008). Then, c) – new and still unknown problems may suddenly appear in the near future. Evidently no treaties or conventions will have binding force and guarantee peace, if IL turns out to be a flexible “instrument” in the hands of a sole superpower. The closest attention within the BRICS paradigm and precisely between Russia and Brazil, from my viewpoint, should be paid to *the sovereignty over their natural resources, ecological and energetic branches of the security paradigm*, and, quite clearly, to the *information security*.

The world is extremely short of innovations and, even, eager for them. Let`s see the M. Mazover`s characterization: “In contemporary atomized societies, the citizens and classes disappear as the agents of change. Ours turns out to be the world of individualists who get united only as consumers of goods or information and trust the Internet more than their representatives in parliament... This individualistic world, moved by money, out shadows the more ancient vision of common values... The idea of world governance is turning to be a dream of the past” (Mazower, 2017,

p. 454). His own “lepta” to the common criticism brings H. Kissinger, when he says that the very notion of “truth” is being relativized and individualized, losing its universality, and the “abundance” of non-related information, according to him, makes real knowledge disappear (Kissinger, 2014, pp. 454,457).

Individualism, as a strong Anglo-American *credo*, can't resolve global problems of *any* kind: they have a too complex and too common character for that. They might be resolved only on a multi-civilizational and multi-cultural basis, where each civilization will contribute with its own. The necessary innovations to the future world order to be viable can only be proposed by those countries-civilizations most of which traditionally stood apart from the “big” global policy and its patterns set forth in the past by the so called “great powers”. So, it really seems that “if the BRICS fails, the whole world fails”...

And what about the West? Can and should it be alienated? – It's not the aim! Indeed, the “West” is far from being homogeneous. Nor can it escape its own cultural and civilizational dichotomies. For the United States, as H. Kissinger states, the victory of the universal principles must be accompanied with the recognition of the realities of history and culture of other regions (Kissinger, 2014, p. 483). For the EU, if it dares to pursue its own interests, we can foresee a broad alliance of three physical and a cyber-space, embracing Europe, Eurasia and China on a close economic, humanitarian and security basis. The BRICS project isn't closed and is far from being finished. Time and again more countries, regions or unions may adhere (formally or informally) to this global project (still in its beginnings!), guided by *common sense* instead of short-term

political preferences. The ideal will be (or will be not?) a world governed by the “Concert of Great Civilizations” instead of the one, governed by a “great power” or “powers”.

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