China and Lusophonia

A Compatible Alliance Network?

William J. Vogt

Abstract: A significant phenomenon of the international system over the past decade is the empowerment of emerging economies, particularly the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), in diplomatic and trade relations. Thus, alliances between China, the world's largest developing country, and newly efficacious powers in the global South have become salient topics in foreign policy research. This article focuses on the relations China maintains with Portuguese-speaking countries, or Lusophonia, which are notable for their geographic and cultural heft in the global South. As a nation removed from foreign imperial influence only a few decades ago, China shares a series of cultural commonalities with a Brazil-dominated Lusophonia that represents key political influences in middle-income countries. As a result, Lusophone countries are core targets in an overall international policy strategy that serves to benefit China for continued trade and economic growth, an orientation well aligned to enhance Sino-Lusophone cooperation in the short to medium term.

Keywords: China; Brazil; Portuguese colonialism; BRICS; foreign policy.

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China is amid an extraordinary rise to international and regional prominence. This is evident in the high growth rates the Chinese economy has registered in the modern era. Today, its growth is driving the world economy and steering the balance of power in the international system away from the West, redirecting influence toward Beijing. These realities lead to greater uncertainties when looking at the future of international affairs as a whole. The answers to questions such as how the international system will change due to China's rise generally remain open-ended.

This article seeks to make a few projections for how China will deal with its foreign affairs and the consequences its strategy will have on a global scale. To provide a more detailed analysis, it will focus on the relations China maintains with Brazil and other Portuguese-speaking or Lusophone countries, particularly with regard to current Beijing-promoted initiatives like the "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)" that have already directly affected the national economies of Lusophone states like Angola and Mozambique.¹

Main Characteristics of Lusophonia

Like other post-Renaissance European powers, Portugal created a large and expansive empire that ushered in contemporary modes of trade-powered globalization (Fig. 1).

For more than 500 years, it has anchored its territorial influence within major routes along the Southern Hemisphere as especially evidenced by the substantial Lusophone populations of Brazil, Angola, and Mozambique (Table 1). Its geographic spread across continents and oceans also highlights Lisbon's unique economic intentions throughout its colonial period.

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¹Du Debin and Ma Yahua, "Yidaiyilu: Zhonghuaminzufuxing de Diyuandazhanlue (One Belt and One Road: The Grand Geo-Strategy of China's National Rejuvenation)," *Geographical Research*, Vol. 34, No. 6 (June 2015), pp. 1005–1014; Peter Ferdinand, "Westward Ho — the China Dream and 'One Belt, One Road': Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping," *International Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 4 (July 2016), pp. 941–957; Justin Yifu Lin, "'One Belt and One Road' and Free Trade Zones — China's New Opening-up Initiatives," *Frontiers of Economics in China*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2015), pp. 585–590; Sit Tsui *et al.*, "One Belt, One Road," *Monthly Review*, Vol. 68, No. 8 (January 2017), <https://monthlyreview.org/2017/01/01/one-belt-one-road/>.

Fig. 1. Map of the Portuguese Empire.

Source: "The_Portuguese_Empire.PNG (2753 × 1400)," Wikimedia Commons, <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/7/73/The.Portuguese.Empire.png>.

Table 1. Contemporary Lusophone States.

State	Population (Est. 2017)
Brazil	207,353,391
Angola	29,310,273
Mozambique	26,573,706
Portugal	10,839,514
Guinea-Bissau	1,792,338
Timor-Leste (East Timor)	1,291,358
Cabo Verde (Cape Verde)	560,899
Sao Tome and Principe	201,025

Source: "The World Factbook," Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html>.

As such, the idea of Lusophonia (Portuguese-speaking territory) is more complex than the other European colonial tradition (namely the British Commonwealth),² and its existence is still very much in question

²Nicholas Fram, *Decolonization, the Commonwealth, and British Trade 1945–2004*, Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 2006.

and contested debate among scholars.³ This is particularly the case when examining Lusophonia's largest state, Brazil, in comparison with other former Portuguese colonies; from historical precedent to economies of scale, the South American nation often appears on a vastly different path than its African or Asian Lusophone counterparts.

It is important to note that Lusophonia represents a unified grouping of countries in which language is the most obvious common factor. Even though the bond that ties Portuguese-speaking countries together is weaker than other pan-national collections (continental, colonial, or otherwise), Lusophone states do exhibit certain qualities that arguably influence (foreign) policy decisions and outlooks. Within this complicated multinational grouping, the influence of imperial Portuguese norms, culture, and policy is not only a point of convergence among these nations, but also a nationalizing agent. In this way, each of the former Portuguese colonial possessions has a paradoxically unique national identity created through the grasp of its own Portuguese-inspired culture.⁴ Such reality importantly parallels the ethnic unity of nations like China⁵ and highlights existential struggles inherent in forging independent political stability while maintaining an appropriate perspective on a colonial past — a condition that Moisés de Lemos Martins characterizes as “culture wars. . . (regarding) the Lusophone idea.”⁶ This is

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³For instance, see Miguel Vale de Almeida, “Portugal’s Colonial Complex: From Colonial Lusotropicalism to Postcolonial Lusophony,” paper presented at the Queen’s Postcolonial Research Forum Seminar, Queens University, Belfast, 2008; Michel Cahen, “‘Portugal is in the Sky’: Conceptual Considerations on Communities, Lusitanity, and Lusophony,” in Eric Morier-Genoud and Michel Cahen, eds., *Imperial Migrations* (Springer, 2013), pp. 297–315; Helena Sousa, “The Mobilization of the ‘Lusophony’ Concept: The Case of RTP International Channels,” in *Comunicação e Lusofonia?: Para Uma Abordagem Crítica Da Cultura e Dos Media*, 2007, pp. 165–182; Helena Sousa and Manuel Pinto, “Lusophony: Communication in the Portuguese Speaking World,” International Communication Association Newsletter (Washington, D.C.: International Communication, 1999).

⁴Andrea Klimt and João Leal, “Introduction: The Politics of Folk Culture in the Lusophone World,” *Etnográfica*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2005), pp. 5–17.

⁵Arun Pereira, Hsu Chin-Chun, and Sumit Kundu, “A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Ethnocentrism in China, India, and Taiwan,” *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2002), pp. 77–90; Tsai Wan-Hsiu, Lee Wei-Na, and Song Young-A., “A Cross-Cultural Study of Consumer Ethnocentrism between China and the US,” *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2013), pp. 80–93.

⁶Martins, “Globalization and Lusophone World. Implications for Citizenship,” p. 76.

especially relevant in the modern age of instantaneous communication fueled by information technology in which the Portuguese language and the damaging colonial-era stereotyping of ethnic/cultural groups within Lusophone societies can go on spreading.⁷

With shared
language and
colonial memories,
Lusophone states
exhibit many
political, social and
cultural
commonalities.

Against this backdrop, Lusophonia can be defined through the following rubrics. First, it is a legacy of Portuguese hegemony through sovereignty and linguistic nationalism. As mentioned above, Portuguese colonialism is the most glaring common thread uniting this group of global South states. From the political perspective, such reality resulted in multiple effects that have lasted until the end of the empire at the end of the 20th century when Macau was returned to Chinese sovereignty on December 20, 1999.⁸

The stamp of Westphalian sovereignty, in particular, set the stage for later rebellion movements and independent governance.⁹ In both Brazil and Lusophone Africa, this effect directly defined the cultural and geographic borders of independent states today. For Brazil, the *Treaty of Tordesillas* (1493) established a legal standard for the Portuguese language and administration over much of the South American continent.¹⁰ For the non-island African colonies, the arrival and involvement of a European power (Portugal) represented the first time that formal outlines/borders for nation-state-level political entities were drawn and codified onto maps.¹¹

⁷Ibid.

⁸David Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁹Michael Cox, Tim Dunne, and Ken Booth, "Empires, Systems and States: Great Transformations in International Politics," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (2001), pp. 1–15.

¹⁰Stuart Elden, "Missing the Point: Globalization, Deterritorialization and the Space of the World," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2005), pp. 8–19; James McCourt, "Treaty of Tordesillas 1494," *Queensland History Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (2010), p. 88.

¹¹Saadia Touval, "Treaties, Borders, and the Partition of Africa," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (July 1966), pp. 279–293.

Second, Lusophonia experienced a post-World War II sociopolitical upheaval in which the left-wing ideology played a large role. Western notions of solidifying peace, freedom, and democratization following the destruction of World War II do not accurately describe the contemporary history of former colonial possessions in the global South. Among these areas, Lusophone countries carry particularly heavy histories of conflict, chaos, corruption, and despotism. It is important to note that the upheaval extended directly into the national affairs of the Portuguese state itself, as its empire collapsed with the departure of its right-wing dictatorship in the mid-1970s.¹²

Lusophone Africa, the source of instability and draining financial/political will for the last Portuguese imperial administrators, sought Marxism at that time to counter perceived fascist exploitation. That orientation explains early motivations for deepening international relationships from the contemporary Communist powers of the Soviet Union and, crucially, China. The two communist factions were created during a diplomatic feud over ideology and strategy toward the neo-liberalist West, an internecine conflict within Marxist-Leninism that had the lesser-known effect of perpetuating and intensifying post-independence civil wars in Africa. With such background, Portugal's possessions of Angola and Mozambique created political vacuums upon independence, given the departure from the only nation-state forms of (Western) political governance these territories had ever experienced. Hence, rival groups — aligned toward the left-wing and Marxist ideologies in general — struggled for power in an international system which both supported decolonization and motivated political disunity against former anti-colonial rebels.¹³

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¹²Birmingham, *A Concise History of Portugal*.

¹³Sérgio Chichava, "Mozambique and China: From Politics to Business," Discussion Paper 5 (Lisbon: Instituto de Estudos Sociais e Económicos, 2008); Lucy Corkin, "All's Fair in Loans and War: The Development of China-Angola Relations," in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon?* (Scottsville: University of Kwa Zulu-Natal Press, 2008); Loro Horta, "China, Mozambique: Old Friends, New Business," Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich, <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/specialinterest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/en/services/digital-library/articles/article.html/53470>; Fernanda Ilhéu, "The Role of China in the Portuguese Speaking African Countries: The Case of Mozambique," *Economia Global e Gestão*, Vol.15, No. 3 (December 2010), pp. 41–59; Carina Kiala, "The Impact of China-Africa Aid Relations: The Case of Angola," Africa Economic Research Consortium, November 2010, <http://dspace.africaportal.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/32369/1/angola-PB1.pdf?1>.

Although its colonial history is both distinct and longer than that of other Lusophone states, Brazil interestingly exhibits similar sociopolitical characteristics around the same point in history, coalescing around the right-wing military dictatorship from 1964 to 1985.¹⁴ The rise and dominance of its power highlight several points of commonality with countries that traditionally had strong influence over Brazilian culture and politics. Above all, the regime was in power during a period in which a wave of right-wing military dictatorships engulfed Latin America, causing much impact on neighboring governments in Argentina and Uruguay besides a fellow state in the Southern Cone, Chile.¹⁵ Next, the coincidence of right-wing dictatorships in Portugal and Brazil might reflect common influences in the political culture underlying both states facing the 20th-century geopolitical contexts. Contributing factors notably include the Cold War, and the lingering influence of relocation of the Portuguese court in the early 19th century underscores the mirroring political calculus between the former imperial power and its largest former colony.¹⁶ Moreover, since the end of the military dictatorship in the 1980s, Brazil has experienced growing populist influence in its national politics. This trend, as encapsulated by the rule of former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, has embraced the radical

Lusophone states generally tend to embrace multilateral trade and suffer from corruption.

left-wing ideology into the mainstream political culture, in alignment with Communist-influenced states like China, Angola, and Mozambique.¹⁷

Third, the policy postures of Lusophonia have been leaning toward multilateral trade. In the modern era, the foreign policy orientations of Lusophone states embody an

¹⁴Bryan McCann, *The Throes of Democracy: Brazil since 1989* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 2013).

¹⁵Luis Roniger and Mario Sznajder, *The Legacy of Human Rights Violations in the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁶"Pedro I and Pedro II | Brazil: Five Centuries of Change," <https://library.brown.edu/create/fivecenturiesofchange/chapters/chapter-3/pedro-i-and-pedro-ii/>.

¹⁷Jorge G. Castañeda, "Latin America's Left Turn," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (May/June 2006), pp. 28–43; Chichava, "Mozambique and China"; Corkin, "All's Fair in Loans and War: The Development of China-Angola Relations"; Horta, "China, Mozambique"; and Kiala, "The Impact of China-Africa Aid Relations."

ironic reality: countries with left-wing, Marxist political histories are embracing trade and commerce, while those with seemingly neo-liberalist methods of growth are seeking to enhance their power. Here, relations with China stand out for both highlighting this irony and contextualizing the logic of its adoption due to contemporary political calculations. China has presented these countries with an ideologically aligned model of development which brings quick infusions of no-strings-attached cash and a reliable source of demand for critical sectors in their respective national economies. This reliability of economic production comes with the potential for forging a new trading network that bypasses the often-stringent traditional Western market chokepoints.¹⁸ Consequently, for larger Lusophone states like Brazil, this emphasis on trade and cooperation with emerging powers like China can lead to greater international influence, particularly through heightened stature in less emphasized areas of the international system, namely global South regions like South America and Africa.¹⁹

Finally, Lusophonia embodies a general tendency toward corruption. Corruption is a sociocultural and political problem that pervades many states today. That said, Lusophone countries seem to have been suffering from corruption ailments in a systematic way. This is particularly the case in Angola, which ranks as one of the 15 most corrupt countries in the world in 2016 according to Transparency International.²⁰ Its corruption is so severe that it has begun to infect other Lusophone states, especially Portugal. Although Portugal is a relatively “clean” state by global corruption measures, it is significantly more corrupt than many of its European Union (EU) counterparts. It is probably a direct result of the growing Angolan investment in Portuguese media and business organizations, with the perceived

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¹⁸Shaun Grech, “Recolonising Debates or Perpetuated Coloniality? Decentring the Spaces of Disability, Development and Community in the Global South,” *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (2011), pp. 87–100.

¹⁹Samuel W. Bodman, Julia Sweig, and James D. Wolfensohn, *Global Brazil and US-Brazil Relations*, Independent Task Force Report No. 66 (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 2011); Steen Fryba Christensen, “Brazil’s Foreign Policy Priorities,” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2013), pp. 271–286; Niu Haibin, “Emerging Global Partnership: Brazil and China,” *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, Vol. 53 (Special Edition, 2010), pp. 183–192.

²⁰“Corruption Perceptions Index 2016 — Transparency International,” https://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016.

"dirty" money from a small minority of fabulously wealthy Angolans, posing a threat to transparency and impartiality in a state in dire need of economic growth sources.²¹ Brazil is also amid a political crisis over the wide-ranging levels of corruption practiced in politics, where surging scandals have led to the impeachment of one president (the Lula ally Dilma Rousseff), endangered another (the ineffective Michel Temer), and paralyzed meaningful policy-making.²² Among other effects, the crisis has failed to address major issues of violent and organized crime and contributed to multiple instances of international embarrassment before, during, and after the country hosted the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.²³

China's Relations with Lusophone States

Several strains of commonality underscore the orientation of foreign nations like China toward a uniform international relations strategy across Portuguese-speaking states. This alignment in multinational foreign policy is driven by contemporary Chinese priorities and favorable sociocultural conditions in Lusophone states located within the global South. Here, the combination of ideological alignment among ruling bilateral or multilateral elites and the shared familiarity with Portuguese-influenced diplomacy continue a lengthy and productive tradition of international cooperation with China. For China, Lusophone countries are particularly meaningful due to the collective potential of former Portuguese colonies in international trade and geopolitical networks.

The initial relationship between imperial China and imperial Portugal — the colonial power whose historical actions defined Lusophonia as an entity — created a powerful alliance that cornered lucrative markets and permitted the development of mercantilist and later neo-liberalist market economies upon which contemporary international trade is

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²¹Norimitsu Onishi, "Portugal Dominated Angola for Centuries: Now the Roles Are Reversed," *New York Times*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/world/europe/angola-portugal-money-laundering.html>.

²²Megan Galbreath, "A New World: Politics in Post-Olympics Brazil," *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2017), p. 14.

²³Wayne Drehs and Mariana Lajolo, "After the Flame," October 8, 2017, http://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/20292414/the-reality-post-olympic-rio.

constructed. China itself is in part shaped by Portuguese exploration and influence in the form of the now Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Macau, a self-administering territory that retains both the use of the Portuguese language and cultural/festive traditions.

As the mother country of Lusophonia, Portugal remains a center of linguistic and cultural influence in many of its former colonies, even though much of its foreign and trade policy is conducted through its involvement as a member of the EU²⁴ — a supra-national aspect of its contemporary foreign policy which is not emphasized in this research (due to the non-Portuguese influences involved). Today, it continues this relationship in a couple of meaningful ways. For example, it emphasizes linguistic unity as a defining characteristic of Lusophone supra-nationalism. Also, it maintains economic ties to many of its former colonial possessions. Among these relationships, the impact of Angola on modern Portugal stands out, which extends into clandestine, corrupt practices such as alleged money laundering and Angolan control of Portuguese media, a phenomenon that reverses previous colonial-era power structures as fueled by European over-exposure to the 2008 global financial crisis.²⁵

These kinds of relations with developing countries and emerging markets are common for Portugal. China, for instance, has a long history of working with the Portuguese to support mutual economic goals. The crown jewel in the productive relationship is the evolving political status of Macau. The southern Chinese port city was first granted to the Portuguese by the Chinese Emperor in 1514; it later became a Portuguese colony and was subsequently handed back to China in 1999. From a soft power perspective, this territory physically connects China to the Portuguese language and empire, with a legacy that affects Lusophone countries today, as

Lusophone states have maintained close ties with China for centuries due to their pivotal role in international trade.

²⁴Ricardo Cabral and Viriato Soromenho-Marques, "Portugal: 40 Years of Democracy and Integration in the European Union," Heinrich Böll Stiftung European Union, March 25, 2014, <https://eu.boell.org/en/2014/03/25/portugal-40-years-democracy-and-integration-european-union>.

²⁵Onishi, "Portugal Dominated Angola for Centuries: Now the Roles Are Reversed."

seen in Beijing's creation of the Macau Forum, which provides a formal diplomatic arena for multilateral dialogues between China and the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries.²⁶

Behind only Brazil, Angola is by far the most lucrative former Portuguese colonial possession. The distinction is reflective of the country's vast natural resource potential, especially with regard to petroleum; conversely, this designation also afflicts the country with the dreaded "resource curse"²⁷ which cripples broad-based socioeconomic development. Undoubtedly, inequality is a driver behind the flight of capital from wealthy and well-connected Angolans to perceived safe havens, including Portuguese economic and media institutions.²⁸ As such, the country is a central case study of neocolonialism and its effects in a globalized contemporary market environment, a reality reflected in the "Angola model" moniker describing the unique path of international development strategy.²⁹

As Table 2 suggests, Angola, with proven oil reserves, has been a well-publicized target for Chinese investment and trade in the 21st century. In addition, China has been a long-time diplomatic partner for the Angolans, with a formal relationship spanning nearly 30 years. This formal relationship would have spanned an even longer period had anti-Portuguese rebellions in Lusophone African states in the 1960s–1970s not split along polarizing lines of Soviet/Chinese support during a time of division between the two largest Communist powers.³⁰

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²⁶"China: The Ming (1368–1644) and the Qing (1644–1912)," Asia for Educators, Colombia University, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_ming.htm; Carmen Amado Mendes, "Macau in China's Relations with the Lusophone World," *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, Vol. 57 (Special Edition, 2014), pp. 225–242.

²⁷Michael L. Ross, "The Political Economy of the Resource Curse," *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (1999), pp. 297–322; Michael L. Ross, "Does Oil Hinder Democracy?," *World Politics*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (2001), pp. 325–361.

²⁸Onishi, "Portugal Dominated Angola for Centuries: Now the Roles Are Reversed."

²⁹Kiala, "The Impact of China-Africa Aid Relations"; Sun Yun, "China's Aid to Africa: Monster or Messiah?," Brookings Institution, November 30, 2001, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/chinas-aid-to-africa-monster-or-messiah/>.

³⁰Indira Campos and Alex Vines, "Angola and China: A Pragmatic Partnership," Working Paper Presented at a CSIS Conference "Prospects for Improving U.S.-China-Africa Cooperation," London, December 5, 2007, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/080306_angolachina.pdf.

Table 2. Key Statistics of Modern Angola.

Imports from China (2017)	\$2.67 billion
Exports to China (2017)	\$14.3 billion
Number of Chinese citizens in Angola (2013 → 2017 est.)	200,000 → 50,000

Source: Candido Mendes, "Chinese Businesses Quit Angola After 'Disastrous' Currency Blow," Bloomberg, April 20, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-04-20/chinese-businesses-quit-angola-after-disastrous-currency-blow>; and "OEC — Angola (AGO) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners," <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/ago/>.

That said, China has by and large supported the contemporary regime in Luanda from its early anti-colonial struggle against Portugal and in more recent years has been a major source driving economic recovery following a brutal civil war.³¹ Since the 1990s, Beijing has increasingly courted the Angolan government in exchange for greater access to its plentiful petroleum resources. It is a clear aim of major Sino-African foreign policies such as former Chinese President Jiang Zemin's 1996 "Five Points Proposal," which outlined Sino-African relations through prisms of cooperation in good faith, respect for sovereignty in internal affairs, joint pursuits of common economic development goals, partnership in international politics, and a shared outlook toward the future.³²

In accomplishing such a goal, China, through its China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), invests in Angola in much the same fashion as in other major oil-producing nations, shaping business practices in the country via two avenues: equity ownership and vertically integrated production. Here, China presents a contrasting foreign aid model from other significant global donors, namely Western powers, by refusing to provide structured loans that place both political conditions on lending and the risk of long-term indebtedness by the grantee country. That model is thus often portrayed as aid without neocolonialist intentions. At the same time, the greater hierarchical structure of vertically integrated — and Chinese

³¹Ibid.

³²Chris Alden, "China in Africa," *Survival*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (2005), pp. 147–164; Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Policy Priorities and their Implications for the United States* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

staffed — enterprises give Beijing-sanctioned corporations greater control of extraction and import-export activities, ensuring economic growth for China. This informal policy is particularly evident in several sectors of the Angolan economy. In addition to petroleum extraction, China has similarly invested significant capital into the supporting infrastructure and perpetuates endemic levels of corruption through electrical and telecommunications network construction.³³

China has gained great economic benefits while sparking controversy in Lusophone states in Africa.

Although its resource potential pales in comparison to fellow African states like Angola, Mozambique benefits from its natural resources and its prime geographic location as well. A producer of foodstuffs, its output attracts a hungry Chinese economic engine and influences the maintenance of an unequal trade imbalance favoring Beijing interests.³⁴ The country is also a valuable source for construction materials relevant to

infrastructure development and stands out in this area as a leading exporter of forestry products.³⁵ In addition, its location on the Indian Ocean is close to a major Southern maritime trading route that has caused increasing security concerns from the Chinese, particularly in locales farther east like the Malacca Strait.³⁶

Those general characteristics have contributed to China's dual military-economic posture of support toward Mozambique. Other than a total of 33 support programs and 20 joint programs on technological cooperation,³⁷ China has offered increasing aid for education, culture and medicine in Mozambique. For instance, more than 2,000 Mozambican medical

³³Alden, "China in Africa"; Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Campos and Vines, "Angola and China"; Kiala, "The Impact of China-Africa Aid Relations"; Sun, "China's Aid to Africa."

³⁴Alden, "China in Africa."

³⁵Chichava, "Mozambique and China."

³⁶Ian Storey, "China's Malacca Dilemma," *China Brief*, Vol. 6, No. 8 (2006), pp. 4–6.

³⁷Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC, "China and Mozambique," http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zzjg_663340/fzs_663828/gjlb_663832/3044_664114/.

personnel had been trained by Chinese professionals by 2012.³⁸ Militarily, it is not surprising that as early as the 1990s, China “provided the Mozambican army with uniforms, training, and some light equipment” in order to protect trade routes, and through them, national security.³⁹ Chinese support has extended to other conflict spheres, especially cybersecurity, as China has moved major manufacturing sections of its globally popular “Lenovo” computers to the southern African nation, a decision which parallels similar support of super-computing in neighboring Zimbabwe.⁴⁰ Similarly, Maputo has directly copied Chinese economic policy tactics, namely the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), to localize and centralize economic development efforts. That said, Mozambique faces political pressures against continued Chinese support due to accusations of exploitation of both Mozambican resources and people by invested Chinese interests in the country, particularly with regard to illegal practices in the forestry trade.⁴¹

As in its relationship with Portugal, China has had consistent contact with the territory and peoples of present-day Mozambique for centuries. It naturally extended to dynastic China’s interaction with the Portuguese empire, which recruited Chinese nationals to support colonization efforts in Africa during the 19th century. In the modern era, Communist China was highly involved in Mozambican affairs — it was the first to recognize the independent state forged by the winning Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) in the 1970s. The recognition came after subsequent periods of civil war, first against the Portuguese and later against indigenous rebel factions; Beijing played a significant role in these struggles by actively

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³⁸David Shinn, “China’s Involvement in Mozambique,” *International Policy Digest*, August 2, 2012, <https://intpolicydigest.org/2012/08/02/china-s-involvement-in-mozambique/>; “OEC — Mozambique (MOZ) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners,” <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/moz/>.

³⁹Alden, “China in Africa,” p. 51.

⁴⁰Viola Zhou, “Five Ways China is Building Influence in Zimbabwe,” *South China Morning Post*, November 15, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy-defence/article/2120094/five-ways-china-building-influence-zimbabwe>; and Horta, “China, Mozambique.”

⁴¹Chichava, “Mozambique and China”; and Paula Cristina Roque, “China in Mozambique: A Cautious Approach, SAIIA Occasional Paper, No 23, February 2009, <http://www.saiia.org.za/occasional-papers/china-in-mozambique-a-cautious-approach>.

supporting and training Maoist guerrillas and liberation movements which countered the preferred people and priorities of the Soviet Union.⁴² In more recent years, however, Chinese investments have increasingly targeted infrastructure in its foreign policy with Maputo as a sign of acknowledgement of Mozambique's economic deficiencies caused by years of wartime destruction.⁴³

Within Asia, Timor-Leste, independent since 2002, has potential importance to China for multiple reasons. For one, from a historical point of view, the small nation suffered for many years under Indonesia's dictatorial rule. For the Chinese, this could be interpreted yet another instance of brutal Indonesian governance abuses in its internal and regional affairs. For another, Timor-Leste sits near significant oil reserves off its shore. A closer Chinese relationship with Timor-Leste could thus help with easing its oil demand and trade security pressure. Not surprisingly, the young independent nation has since decided to join the China-promoted Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), further tying its economic prospects to the rise of China in international politics and trade.⁴⁴

Brazil's Unique Role in Sino-Lusophone Affairs

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, a similar partnership between China, the world's largest developing and non-Western economy,⁴⁵ and Brazil, the largest and most internationally politically powerful state in Lusophonia, has brought China into Latin American regional politics.⁴⁶

The Lusophone countries discussed above share common histories and similar economies of scale, thus facilitating similar relations with

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⁴²Chichava, "Mozambique and China"; "Mozambique Profile," BBC News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13890720>.

⁴³Roque, "China in Mozambique."

⁴⁴David Hutt, "Is China's Influence in Timor-Leste Rising?," *Diplomat*, November 19, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/11/is-chinas-influence-in-timor-leste-rising/>.

⁴⁵Isaac Stone Fish, "Is China Still a 'Developing' Country," *Foreign Policy*, September 25, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/25/is-china-still-a-developing-country/>.

⁴⁶Fernanda Ilhéu, "The Role of China in the Portuguese Speaking African Countries"; Carmen Amado Mendes, "Macau in China's Relations with the Lusophone World."

international powers like China. As noted in the earlier characterization of Lusophonia as a singular pan-national bloc, Brazil does share some of these aspects seen throughout the Portuguese-speaking world. The country is also highly involved in affairs of its fellow Lusophone nations — perhaps best reflected in its peacekeeping troop presence throughout Portuguese-speaking African states.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, Brazil's presence as both the world's largest Lusophone nation, an undisputed regional and continental power, and its emerging market economy in the present day, demands more detailed analysis.

Brazil in particular is an important country of focus when looking at the Sino-centric view of the international system. This article postulates that the growing closeness between the two large nations will continue to change international relations. An important element of the formal Chinese-Brazilian relationship is its historically long period of contact — at least from the Brazilian point of view. Chinese and Brazilian envoys have conducted business since as early as 1812, an epoch-making year in the history of Portuguese South America. The current country of Brazil remained a colony of Portugal for much of the 19th century, and was under the direct rule of the Portuguese royal court from 1808 to 1821, which had exiled itself to the Western hemisphere during the Napoleonic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula.⁴⁸ Such context underscores the extent to which both China and Brazil have frequently reached out to non-Western European markets for trade and security purposes.⁴⁹

However, the Sino-Brazilian relationship has been neither continuous nor fully integrated. In terms of geopolitical considerations over the past century, China has not always unilaterally welcomed Brazilian relations or cooperation; the Communist Party of China (CPC) did not approve the contemporary relationship until the right-wing periods in Brazil,

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⁴⁷Bodman, Sweig, and Wolfensohn, *Global Brazil and US-Brazil Relations*.

⁴⁸"Pedro I and Pedro II | Brazil: Five Centuries of Change."

⁴⁹Renato Baumann, "Some Recent Features of Brazil-China Economic Relations," Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2009, <http://www.eclac.org/publicaciones/xml/5/35745/LCBRSR209RenatoBaumannSome.pdf>; Bodman, Sweig, and Wolfensohn, *Global Brazil and US-Brazil Relations*.

American-supported dictatorship in Latin America⁵⁰ and socio-political turmoil within Maoist China (namely the Cultural Revolution) had passed.⁵¹ This reticence from Beijing's perspective has likely carried over into current foreign policy considerations, particularly its complex partnership with Brazil.

**Brazil and China
have forged strong
political and
economic
partnerships over the
past few decades.**

On the one hand, both countries are large and influential partners of the greater collective of relatively high-income emerging economies known as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa).⁵² This and other multilateral international institutions — especially the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Group of Twenty (G20), and the recent hosting of the Olympic Games by both countries — make the Sino-

Brazilian partnership a potent political force in global affairs that supports greater focus on matters affecting the global South.⁵³ Indeed, it is a product of several factors, including a shared history of lost decades of economic productivity and social stability, aligned commitments to multilateral diplomacy (particularly under Brazilian President Lula da Silva), and the leveraging of Western weakness following the 2008 global financial crisis.⁵⁴

On the other hand, while China has greatly benefited from its economic ties with Brazil, especially in the imports of food, oil, minerals and other natural resources, as well as in infrastructure construction and information technology, the relationship is imbalanced toward Brazilian macroeconomic dependence on China, as evidenced in Brazil's large trade deficit with China (see Table 3), the legitimization of Brazil as a member of the

⁵⁰McCann, *The Throes of Democracy*.

⁵¹Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *The Unknown Story of Mao* (New York: Random House, 2005).

⁵²Baumann, "Some Recent Features of Brazil-China Economic Relations"; Bodman, Schweig, and Wolfensohn, *Global Brazil and US-Brazil Relations*.

⁵³Daniel Cardoso, "China-Brazil: A Strategic Partnership in an Evolving World Order," *East Asia*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (March 2013), pp. 35–51; Niu, "Emerging Global Partnership."

⁵⁴Niu, "Emerging Global Partnership."

Table 3. Modern Brazil-China Trade Relations.

Total exports to China (2015)	\$35 billion
Exports to China: soybeans, iron ore, and petroleum (2015)	\$26 billion
Trade deficit with China (2015)	\$51 billion
Ethnic Chinese (including Chinese expats/immigrants) in Brazil (2007)	250,000

Source: Shaffer, "Brazil Faces Lopsided Relationship with China as Demand for Commodities Slumps," CNBC, August 3, 2016, <https://www.cnbc.com/2016/08/03/brazil-faces-lopsided-relationship-with-china-as-demand-for-commodities-slumps.html>; "Estou Orgulhoso Com a Minha Raiz Da China," China Radio International, May 22, 2007, <http://portuguese.cri.cn/165/2007/05/22/1@67710.htm>.

Chinese-empowered BRICS, and the general lack of importance allocated to bilateral Sino-Brazilian initiatives from Beijing.⁵⁵

This is notably evident in Brazilian public diplomacy and other formal state-directed mechanisms of diplomatic communication wherein criticism of China and its international policy stances are sometimes deliberately muted in order to maintain the country's financial stability, particularly the effects of its currency value determined by the investment decisions of Chinese multinationals working in tandem with Chinese state priorities.⁵⁶ In addition, Chinese support of Brazil may affect the latter's impartial and empowered conduct of foreign affairs, for the growing number of real estate and infrastructure purchases by Chinese state-supported entities represent a notable imposition and potentially corrupting factor on Brazilian society.⁵⁷ As a result, the Sino-Brazilian partnership is highly dynamic and controversial, with the greatest pressure placed squarely on the country's capital, Brasilia, a government mired in governance paralysis and corruption scandals at the moment.⁵⁸

This cross-emerging market relationship between China and Brazil is best seen in their close cooperation in such global institutions as the BRICS

⁵⁵Cardoso, "China-Brazil."

⁵⁶Baumann, "Some Recent Features of Brazil-China Economic Relations"; Bodman, Schweig, and Wolfensohn, *Global Brazil and US-Brazil Relations*; Cardoso, "China-Brazil," p. 46.

⁵⁷Christensen, "Brazil's Foreign Policy Priorities."

⁵⁸Galbreath, "A New World"; Rhys Jenkins and Enrique Dussel Peters, *China and Latin America: Economics Relations in the Twenty-first Century* (Bonn: German Development Institute, 2009), pp. 37–39.

that shift the international focus away from the status quo. Currently, international political institutions are acknowledging the rise of the BRICS as an influential force challenging the Western-dominated international norms. In addressing climate change, for example, China and Brazil have been working with other BRICS members to stall Western initiatives to enforce clean energy policy around the world indiscriminately between developed and developing countries.⁵⁹ This is illuminating because it represents a paradoxical juxtaposition between changes and continuity in Communist-era Chinese foreign policy, which dates back to the 1950s, when then Chinese leaders desired the internationalization of the Chinese Communist movement and presented their regime as a government passionately fighting against the Western capitalist forces determined to keep the developing world firmly in its place of poverty, and misery.⁶⁰

As a result, one may wonder whether the same tactic is being employed by present-day leaders in Beijing. Put simply, does China want to internationalize its economic system — the so-called “socialism with Chinese characteristics”⁶¹ — in much the same way the early leaders advocated Communism? Such a question can be answered from a realistic perspective. For sure, Chinese foreign policy in the Communist era has evolved and adapted to changes in the global political environment. The CPC has put itself into a position wherein it must maintain remarkable economic growth to sustain its unquestioned legitimacy as the ruling party of China. For this reason, productivity and exports are staunchly protected by Beijing’s leaders.⁶² Thus, from the Chinese perspective, environmental protection is important but must be integrated into China’s grand development strategy, for implementing controls on emissions requires significant investment in time,

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⁵⁹João Resende-Santos, “Brazil’s China Card,” Working Paper Series No. 25 (Middlebury College, Rohatyn Center for International Affairs, 2007).

⁶⁰“Bandung Conference, 1955,” Wilson Center Digital Archive, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/collection/16/bandung-conference-1955/5>.

⁶¹Sigfrido Burgos Cáceres and Sophal Ear, “China’s Natural Resource Appetite in Brazil,” *Asian Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2011), pp. 69–89.

⁶²Leigh B. Boske and John Cuttino, *The US-Brazil-China Trade and Transportation Triangle: Implications for the Southwest Region* (Austin: Southwest Region University Transportation Center, Texas Transportation Institute, Texas A & M University System, 2009), <https://static.tti.tamu.edu/swuttc.tamu.edu/publications/technicalreports/167861-1.pdf>.

money, and manpower that could otherwise contribute meaningfully to a growing macroeconomic engine.

This predilection in China's deliberation of foreign policy may seem at odds with that of a resource-rich country like Brazil.⁶³ However, such a concern is currently superseded by economic policy priorities where the BRICS hope to cultivate worthwhile international relationships among countries not fully aligned with the contemporary international system dominated by Western powers. In this way, China and Brazil have a mutually beneficial relationship that helps enhance both countries' strengths to counter the more established large markets of the West.

Despite different political and economic priorities, Brazil and China have joined efforts in challenging the West-dominated international system.

Another key element that drives the increasingly close Sino-Brazilian relationship and the growing presence of Brazil as an international power broker is a significant shift in petroleum reserve distribution. Brazil, already a leading food producer for the world, is also a major petroleum-exporting state, and its domestic policies can influence many facets of the global economy, from environmental regulation to the price of oil.⁶⁴ From China's perspective, it is imperative to cultivate such an essential inter-BRICS relationship from the onset. For what it lacks in natural production, China compensates countries like Brazil in other meaningful ways, including not only products like cheap manufactured goods, but also capital for infrastructure improvements. In this sense, China's continued relations with Brazil also represent an attempt to gain influence in the Americas by empowering Brazil to more effectively reform the existing global order.⁶⁵

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⁶³Carlos Pereira and Joao Augusto Castro Neves, "Brazil and China: South-South Partnership or North-South Competition?," Brookings Policy Paper No. 26 (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2011).

⁶⁴Burgos Cáceres and Ear, "China's Natural Resource Appetite in Brazil."

⁶⁵Pereira and Castro Neves, "Brazil and China"; and Resende-Santos, "Brazil's China Card."

Future Sino-Lusophone Alliance Network

Based on these realities, the future presents a series of possible changes relevant to China, Brazil and other Lusophone states, and even the whole world. One is the upcoming change of the guard at the world's top GDP spot. China is set to become the world's largest economy in two to five decades surpassing the United States.⁶⁶ From a soft power perspective, it is a game-changing event for many countries around the world. Once accustomed to the U.S. hegemonic protection and capital, the developing world now sees more competition between the United States and China in the soft power arena.⁶⁷

As one of the emerging countries caught between the U.S.-China soft power crossfire, Brazil could emerge as an important negotiator and mediator in international conflicts between the two economic superpowers. This is due to Brazil's unique tradition of diplomatic excellence, which has been required as a result of the country's geography, for almost every country in South America borders Brazil, many of them sharing the challenge of maintaining security over a dense and poorly delineated Amazonian jungle border.⁶⁸ Additionally, both the United States and China have great respect for Brazil as an important partner on several fronts, with China focusing on mutually beneficial trade while the United States sees a fully-functioning (though admittedly flawed) democracy flourishing in the 21st century.⁶⁹

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⁶⁶Deepak Nayyar, "China, India, Brazil and South Africa in the World Economy: Engines of Growth?," Discussion Paper No. 2008/05 (Helsinki: United Nations University-World Institute for Development Economics Research), pp. 9–27; Geoff Colvin, "Study: China Will Overtake the U.S. as World's Largest Economy Before 2030," *Fortune*, February 9, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2017/02/09/study-china-will-overtake-the-u-s-as-worlds-largest-economy-before-2030/>.

⁶⁷Mark Beeson, "Hegemonic Transition in East Asia? The Dynamics of Chinese and American Power," *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2009), pp. 95–112; Horace Campbell, "China in Africa: Challenging US Global Hegemony," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2008), pp. 89–105.

⁶⁸Julia E. Sweig, "A New Global Player: Brazil's Far-Flung Agenda," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 6 (November/December 2010), pp. 173–184.

⁶⁹Luigi R. Einaudi, "Brazil and the United States: The Need for Strategic Engagement," NDU Strategic Forum No. 266 (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University, 2011), <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-266.pdf>.

Given human self-interest in political affairs, one can also assume that Brazil will demand certain things in exchange for its help and trade, which would soon feed and sustain the world if current environmental, political, and economic trends continue. Here, the most significant area where Brazil will make demands will be in the spectrum of enhanced diplomatic recognition and prestige. Most importantly, the Brazilians will continue to make the case of their worthiness for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).⁷⁰ It is highly favorable to Beijing because Brazil can be groomed to align with BRICS wishes through formally recognized international institutions.

Outside of Western-oriented international political institutions, Brazil's new and more prominent position in international affairs — coupled with China's complete rise to dominance — will change the scope and power of several non-Western international institutions. The BRICS, for instance, represents a convergence of multiple emerging market interests.

Furthermore, Brazil's emergence as a major oil producer has given it greater sway over petroleum markets, including the activities of the Organization of Petroleum Producing Countries (OPEC), a multinational cartel. Even though Brazil is not an OPEC member, its substantial petroleum supply and geopolitical influence shift balance of power in that organization away from the Middle East toward the global South.⁷¹ Through strong relations with Brazil, Beijing can use this power shift to its advantage, citing BRICS loyalty as a driver for pro-emerging economy oil prices that would ultimately benefit China.

In this sense, the case of Sino-Brazilian relations explains much of the giddy diplomacy promoted by Beijing, Brasilia, and Luanda, the three most powerful capitals within the Sino-Lusophone network.⁷² Such Sino-Lusophone bilateral and multilateral relationships may generate many outcomes, the most prominent of which is the growth and future potential of South-South networks that, fed by economic necessity and technological

The Sino-Lusophone alliance is expected to grow stronger given the ongoing global power shift.

⁷⁰Pereira and Castro Neves, "Brazil and China."

⁷¹Burgos Cáceres and Ear, "China's Natural Resource Appetite in Brazil."

⁷²Boske and Cuttino, "The US-Brazil-China Trade and Transportation Triangle."

innovation, may bypass traditional trading hubs dominated by Western economies. This article has presented such an example in the Sino-Lusophone network that is arising thanks to Chinese investment and the serendipitous benefit of a common Portuguese language left over from a colonial legacy in South America, Africa, and Asia.

Given these trends, what remains to be seen is not whether the bilateral relationship between China and Brazil (or other Portuguese-speaking countries) will continue to mature, but rather what social and political impacts will emerge in each of these countries as a result. For China's relationships with large democracies like Brazil could consequently bring about a soft power influence that to great extent changes domestic political debate.