

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAVEN

BRICS: THE WORLD'S NEW EMERGING ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

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BRICS: THE WORLD'S NEW EMERGING ECONOMIC ALLIANCE

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Acknowledgments

The ever-evolving work environment and the high tensions between the United States, China, and Russia have made the construction of this thesis an extremely complex and challenging endeavor. It is my sincere desire that from completing this analytical thesis, our country, especially our foreign affairs within our federal government, can better monitor hostile nations who pose a direct military threat to the United States when they drastically make foreign policy moves and create agreements between each other.

I want to additionally thank my advisor, University of New Haven Professor Howard Stoffer, for his guidance that has been beneficial throughout this entire endeavor. His 33 years of federal government and foreign affairs experience and knowledge proved to be a valuable asset in completing this work.

Additionally, I wanted to reflect on my time as a Connecticut State Trooper that has also helped me. As an investigator, looking at a situation or a problem from a high altitude, so to speak, and taking in all the details and all the information to them, coming to a rational and logical decision showed itself within this work. Before I came up with this topic at hand, I wanted to explore deeper into the global conflict/ higher tensions and the shared partnerships between nations who want harm to our nation.

Between my investigative career and my time at the University of New Haven, both my undergraduate time and now for my Master's, striving for a deeper meaning and answers to complex problems and situations that others have not yet explored or don't want to explore due to political reasons, has been at the forefront of who I am.

ABSTRACT

National Security is ever-changing and evolving. As our nation moves forward in today's world after the conclusion of the Iraq War and Afghanistan War, and moves into a new modern warfare, our nation must be on alert; searching for the next threat to keep our sovereignty alive and our citizens free and safe. This is especially important when nations who desire to harm our great nation find common interests in others to join forces against the United States of America. While looking at Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa Coalition (BRICS) and what these countries coming together could do to affect national security here in the USA, it can be seen that this coalition has the potential to become a new Axis power which will threaten not only us as a nation, but potentially the world as we know it. We must not only be prepared for what is to come, but also take steps to stop a new Axis power from forming or even prevent it from expanding any further.

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INTRODUCTION

It can be argued that recent world events are connected and rise military and economic concerns for the United States national security. This thesis will examine national security concerns and the complex dynamics between the United States, Russia, and China by scrutinizing the role of the latter two states in the alliances within the BRICS Coalition with other nations like Iran. BRICS serves as a cover to participate in clandestine operations to destabilize the United States. In order to explore this issue in depth, data from the world bank has been examined along with additional information from the BRICS Coalition website itself along with information and briefs from other sources. Furthermore, this thesis will examine historical events in the United States, China, and Russia, along with shared historical events among the three specified nations. In conjunction with exploring more current events from 2014 to 2024, this paper will review events of clandestine operations of economic and military significance as well as how those events contribute to why the issue at hand is that of a National Security concern deserving of further close examination and scrutiny.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BRICS: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa Coalition

ICJ: International Court of Justice

ICC: International Criminal Court

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

WHAT IS BRICS

The first thing to consider is to identify and explore what exactly is the BRICS Coalition. The BRICS Coalition is at the forefront of an economic alliance of nations, BRICS itself is an acronym which is made up of the following nations, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The closest comparison to the BRICS Coalition would be the United States and its involvement and partnership with the Group of 7 or with The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). BRICS was coined in 2001 after economist Jim O'Neil of Goldman Sachs stated that by 2050 these economies of these nations would be the top world economies. On June 16, 2009, the BRICS Coalition was established as an economic trade alliance among the above countries to challenge Western influence (1). Since BRICS was established, it became an economic partnership with a GDP or Gross Domestic Product of \$24.716 trillion. GDP is primarily known as the goods and services a country produces at monetary value at a given time. It is also an indication of how wealthy a given country/nation-state is. According to the World Bank as of 2021, Russia's GDP was \$1.779 trillion US dollars, Brazil's was \$1.609 trillion, India's was \$3.176 trillion dollars, China leads the group at \$17.73 trillion dollars, and South Africa's overall GDP was \$419 billion dollars bringing BRICS total GDP to \$24.716 trillion dollars. The United States GDP was \$23.32 trillion (2). As of January 1, 2024, the United States was \$27.94 trillion dollars, and all 31 nations of NATO GDP is \$45.933. How is this an issue for United States National Security? It appears that the BRICS foundation is focused on destabilizing Western nations. Having a higher GDP than the United States may create a rift in the world economy and could make the United States dollar fall as the standard for the world currency. If enough countries join BRICS and adopt their currencies, then the United States as a world superpower

economy will be weakened and the Western countries along with NATO, Europe, and Japan may be destabilized economically.

On January 12, 2024, BRICS announced that five new countries will officially join their coalition. These countries are Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Iran, and Ethiopia (3). With the addition of these five nations, the total GDP of BRICS is now \$28.5 trillion. This is also shown visually in the two Figures below.

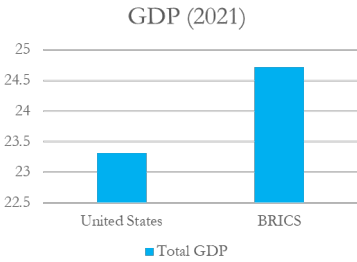


Figure 1: United States vs. BRICS Gross Domestic Product

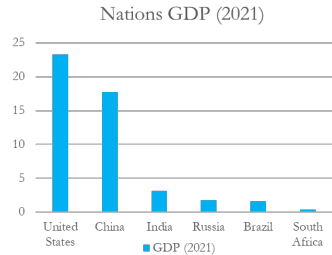


Figure 2: United States vs. Each Nation in BRICS Gross Domestic Product

How does this affect the United States? Since Saudi Arabia joined BRICS in 2023, they have been dramatically decreasing their oil production for the world to rise the price of oil on the world market, Saudi Arabia also stopped using the US dollar as their main currency for trade. This step will ultimately further weaken the power of the United States dollar and negatively impact the United States economy both from the oil supply and from the weakened state of the United States dollar.

The United States imposes sanctions primarily when a foreign country threatens the United States' national interests. For example, if a country makes an unfavorable political decision, the United States implements sanctions against it to correct the problem diplomatically. Sanctions are used to negatively affect the economy of a target country. Economic sanctions include trade barriers, asset freezes, travel bans, arms embargoes, and restrictions on financial transactions. This tactic is primarily effective since the United States dollar is overwhelmingly used as the primary trade currency with trading partners around the world. This is how United States sanctions economically impact such states. Many other countries rely on the United States dollar as well; for example, Saudi Arabia has been using the United States dollar as their accepted currency for trading oil. Now Saudi Arabia has begun to accept other currencies. This was discussed during the World Economic Forum in 2023 where Saudi Arabia was caught up in controversy about de-dollarization along with China, Russia, Iran, and Brazil. These talks focused on other nations reducing the United States dollar as the primary trade currency (4).

How does BRICS, affect the United States' interest and security? Since BRICS was established to challenge Western influences and economies, the countries forming their own

alliances and trade agreements has the potential to weaken the United States dollar; this would ultimately weaken the economy of the U.S as well as the power of influence to impose sanctions from the United States on these countries. This view is further supported by additional countries that are joining BRICS as of January 2024. These countries include Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. This would expand the BRICS overall GDP and their trade agreements and would negatively affect the U.S. dollar, especially by pricing oil from Saudi Arabia in other currencies such as Renminbi. Besides the above-listed countries, there are even more countries that have expressed interest in joining BRICS, including: Cuba, Nigeria, Venezuela, Thailand, Vietnam, Algeria, Bolivia, Indonesia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Gabon, Kazakhstan, says the President of South Africa and 25 additional countries not listed. This expansion could bring the BRICs total to almost 40 countries, which would increase the BRICS Coalition's total GDP, making it even higher compared to the current U.S. GDP, and could effectively replace the U.S. as the dominant world economic power. BRICS would then total 46% of the total world's population and 29% of the world's GDP (5). This is problematic for the United States economically since the value of the dollar could begin to devalue as more countries seek to join the BRICS Coalition. To better understand the scale and visualize BRICS, see Figure 3 below.

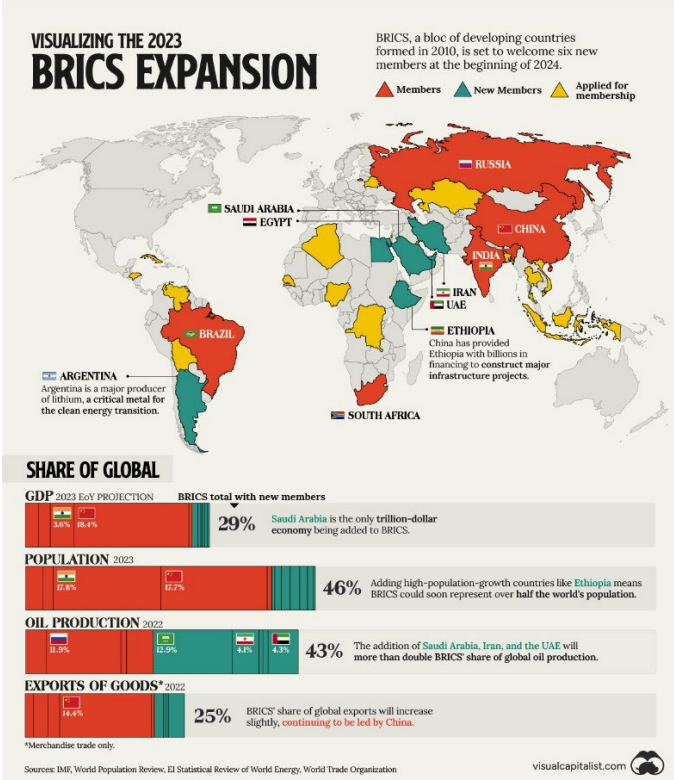


Figure 3: Visualizing BRICS Expansion 2023 (5)

HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES AND RUSSIA

UNITED STATES

Economic Coalitions or alliances are nothing new in our history. If we look at the United States history itself, we can draw a direct parallel between the United States and our adversaries, China, and Russia. For example, in 1948 the United States entered secret talks with the allied nations of England and Canada. These talks encompassed the main issues and targets that were observed during World War II from Nazi leaders such as Adolf Hitler in Germany to the newly developing problems that were arising from the communist leaders of China (PRC) and Russia (USSR). The allied nations saw the importance of banding together against their common enemy as they fought together against the Axis powers. After the allied nations achieved victory, they signed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. On July 25, 1949, the United States also officially signed, to solidifying the NATO alliance (6).

By forming NATO, the countries would not only share trade but more importantly military strength. Creating an allied alliance was not just a theory or an idea that started in 1948 after World War II; an alliance within the United States Nations was also brought up after World War I under President Woodrow Wilson in 1920. The League of Nations was comprised of a total of 63 countries throughout Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. At the time of World War I, that conflict was seen as the war to end all wars. Critics of the Wilson alliance in the United States Senate were outspoken against joining the alliance arguing that membership in the United States joining this alliance would greatly hinder its ability to defend itself, the cost of joining would be too expensive, and it would not allow the United States to pursue its full range of

interests. After President Wilson's term, United States President Harding was elected and ran on a platform opposing the alliance. As a result, the United States never joined (7).

When the United States Joined NATO, one challenge the alliance had to face was to integrate each military into an operational military organization. This would include commanders, equipment, and tactics. NATO further wanted an American leader for its military efforts; thus, General Dwight D Eisenhower became the first SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe) in December 1950 based on his extensive military experience during World War II. For any alliance having a strong military for overall defense is important; not just to defend one's country but also NATO has the goal of preventing future war and conflict as the world saw with World War I and World War II. Aside from alliances the United States also had (and continues to have to this day) an extensive history of engagement with Russia and China.

RUSSIA / USSR

Russia's history is highlighted by several alliances, one such alliance was with none other than the United States. Despite not being allied politically with the United States, the USSR in June of 1943 ultimately decided to join forces with the allies to fight against the common enemy which was the Axis power of the German army in the European theater (8).

The next alliance Russia was involved in was not until May 14, 1955, when the Warsaw Pact was created. The Warsaw Pact was made up of Russia (USSR), Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. However, in 1968 Albania

withdrew from the Pact (9). This pact was a direct response to the United States and European countries, such as England and France, creating NATO in 1949. Russia's response to the NATO alliance was to create its own. The Warsaw Pact was known as the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation, and Mutual Assistance. NATO and Warsaw were direct parallels to each other as opposing alliances. From this perspective, both alliances reinforced their military capabilities. This buildup of defenses led to the Cold War between the United States and Russia.

Unlike NATO, which is still an active alliance, the Warsaw Pact ultimately ended on February 25, 1991. The Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel formally declared the end of the Pact in July 1991. The Pact was declared defunct, due to nations such as Armenia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, Moldova, Turkmenistan, Lithuania, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Latvia, Russia, and Abkhazia all leaving to focus on their own free countries. Also cited was the fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989 and the failure of the Communist parties in the partnered nations within the Pact itself (9).

HISTORY OF AGGRESSION

Aside from alliances to contain the USSR and China, the United States also has an extensive history in its dealings with these nations. The shared history among the three nations has been one of hostility and aggression, with little in the realm of shared interests. The only point in history when the United States shared a common interest with Russia (USSR), when it was assisting their allied forces fighting back against Nazi Germany. Even in more modern times

the United States has been engaged in intense competition in Cold War style against the Russian Federation under President Putin.

Historically, from the Cold War which began in 1946 and ended with the formal dissolution of the USSR on December 25, 1991, there were several other key events. The first is the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 when the Soviets began to construct military bases medium range missile silos as a show of aggression against the United States. This act of aggression was the closest the United States and an enemy nation had ever gotten to nuclear war. The hostility was ended diplomatically with agreements to never invade Cuba, to dismantle U.S. medium-range missiles in Turkey and for the USSR to withdraw its nuclear weapons from Cuba forever (10).

The second threat relating to the Cold War was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 – 1988. During this incursion, Soviet forces quickly seized control over most of Afghanistan. The goal was for the Soviets to have a ‘friendly’ presence in the area and to spread their political ideology to gain access to the Indian Ocean. The United States and the allies in NATO’s response were swift. They sharply criticized the Soviets for their invasion and devised numerous measures to compel them to withdraw. One measure was the United States to begin supporting the Mujahideen rebellion. The Mujahideen were a group of Islamist guerrilla fighters who were formed to fight off the Soviet Union. Among the Mujahideen, the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, and other terrorist groups emerged in the region. The United States trained the Mujahideen to fight against the Soviets which would come to cost the United States approximately 3 billion dollars (11). The United States' involvement due to the Soviet invasion and the already high

tensions of the Middle East nations laid, the groundwork for numerous tribal terror groups and Muslim extremists such as the Taliban to emerge and fight against the U.S. when we invaded Afghanistan after 9/11.

Another example of the United States and Chinese aggressive interaction was during the Vietnam War of 1955 to 1975 where the Chinese Government backed the North Vietnam army and the Vietcong against the U.S. backed South Vietnam Army. China not only trained the North Vietnamese but also supplied them with arms as well. After the Vietnam War China later admitted to spending approximately \$20 billion in war efforts to North Vietnamese, sending 320,000 military personnel of which 4,000 died (12). It is clear from both examples that China has historically been a militarily hostile nation to the United States and NATO.

CURRENT EVENTS OF DESTABILIZATION

How does this connect to the core issue of this thesis? Namely, the destabilizing impact of the BRICS Coalition on the United States. Previously, we reviewed the historical relations among Russia, China, and the United States, uncovering a pattern of ongoing conflict, both in terms of ideological rivalry and direct military engagements. This is important especially when dealing with an issue related to a new alliance of states. The issues of the past, additionally, show us that an alliance between Russia and China would bring only pressure for the United States and its allies such as NATO, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. Recognizing that an alliance between China and Russia within the BRICS Coalition represents a detrimental, if not a threatening, scenario for U.S. national security.

UKRAINE V RUSSIAN WAR

In 2014, Russia launched a military incursion into the sovereign territory of Ukraine, making significant advancements toward the capital city of Kyiv. This aggressive move culminated in the annexation of Crimea, as Russian forces extended their control over the region. Russian forces occupied this area and forced Ukraine to accept that the Crimean Peninsula had come under the control of Russia which still occupies this area today. In 2021, Russia began to amass military forces and personnel along Crimea; this was one of the largest Russian mobilizations since 2014. A year later, in 2022, Russia launched a full-scale military invasion force into Ukraine. According to the U.S. State Department History, one reason for the Russian invasion of Ukraine was partially due to Ukraine becoming informally accepted or at least the next country to be accepted into NATO making it the 32nd Nation to join the alliance. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990 was quoted saying when a unified Germany joined NATO that the alliance would expand “not one inch eastward” (13). The former Career Ambassador and former Director of State Policy Planning, George Kennan, predicted Putin's reaction wrote in 1997 that trying to bring Ukraine into “NATO would be the most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era. Such a decision may be expected to inflame the nationalistic, anti-western and militaristic tendencies in Russia's opinion” (14). These quotes and the Russian political attitude/foreign policy are totally accurate in describing the anti-NATO policy of the Russian Federation of today.

When Russia attacked Ukraine, this ultimately sparked the United States and NATO to swiftly aid Ukraine, monetary and militarily with supplies. According to the KIEL Institute for the World Economy and their Ukraine Support Tracker, their data shows from January 2022 one month before the Russian invasion of Ukraine through October 31, 2023, with the next update scheduled for February 16, 2024, the tremendous support from NATO to Ukraine following the Russian invasion. Their data is shown in Figure 4 below. It should be noted that the monetary value at the bottom of Figure 4 is valued in the billions of USD:

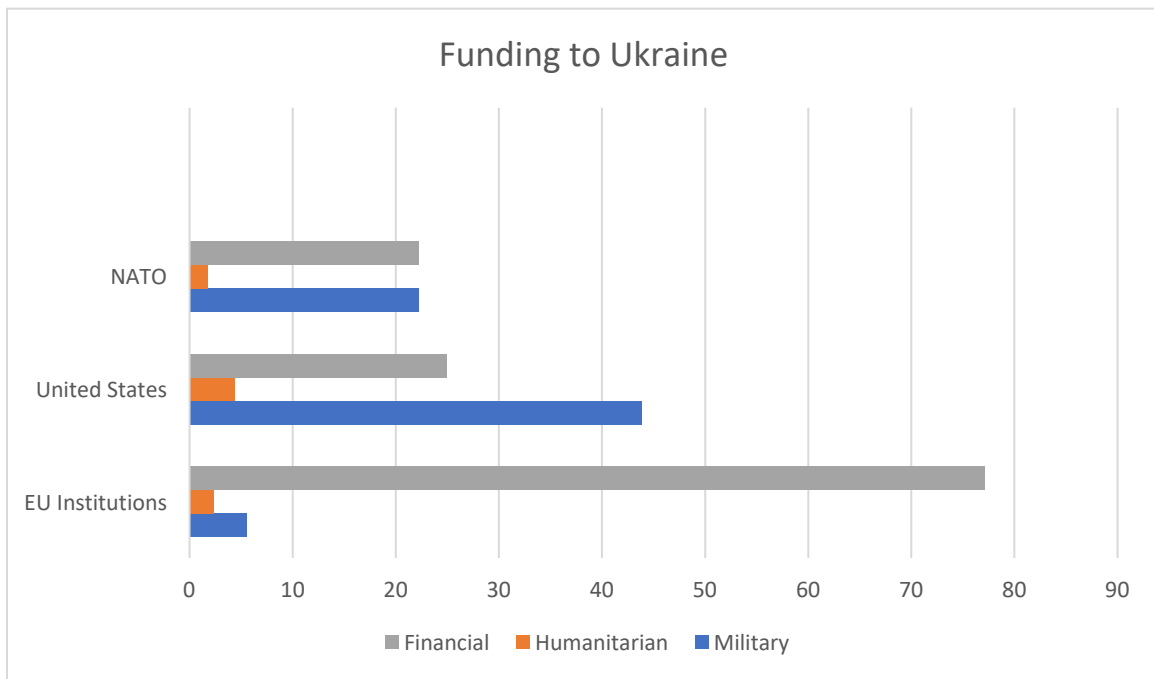


Figure 4: Funding Given to Ukraine (15).

At the same time as the Ukraine War, the United States has seen a growing number of security issues which also require United States attention. The Russian invasion and the United States intervention against Russia has made the United States less focused on our national

security issues, such as the Southern border with Mexico, and our trade deficits with countries like China, Iran, North Korea, and Gulf State.

With NATO continuing to support Ukraine and Russia becoming increasingly aggressive NATO signed a recent pledge as of January 23, 2024, that they will provide an additional 1.2 billion U.S. dollars in ammunition to Ukraine (16). In the same light, Germany's Defense Minister Boris Pistorius warned in an interview according to Politico News on January 19, 2024, that NATO is expecting a hot war with Russia as soon as the next 5 to 8 years, as tensions increase, and NATO continues to back their allied nation of Ukraine (16).

In March of 2023, amidst the escalation of the Ukrainian and Russian war, a United States drone was conducting surveillance over the Black Sea. During this mission, Russian fighters shot down the drone. Despite this hostile act, the United States opted not to retaliate militarily against Russia. Instead, the United States continued to deploy drones for reconnaissance missions; the drones were not alone, and they conducted their missions with a fighter escort for added protection. Beyond its involvement in the Ukraine war, Russia has been extending support to various hostile terrorist groups engaged in conflicts against the United States and its allies.

ISRAEL V HAMAS WAR

Groups and Nations that Russia is supporting are Iran and Iranian allies such as Hamas the Houthis in Yemen, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iranian Forces in Syria, and Iranian backed

militias in Iraq. This has been observed throughout the Israel and Hamas war on October 7, 2023. By examining the BRICS Coalition, we can begin to see how these conflicts and countries are all connected under their shared interest of anti-Western influences against the United States, UK, and Israel.

Russia and China also stepped into the Israel-Hamas conflict to aid Iran and Hamas. Back to October 7, 2023, the day before the attack Hamas against Israel, it received millions of dollars through a Moscow-based crypto exchange. Additionally, before the attack, the United States released millions of dollars back to Iran. That money has since been frozen in a Gulf account and cannot be touched by Iran. Russia's support of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority has continued at least since Putin took power in 1999. Russia supports Hamas or the enemy of the United States to fortify and bolster Russia's hold in the Middle East (17).

After the October 7 terrorist attack, the United States and NATO were quick to come to the aid of their allies by supplying funds, arms, and military equipment along with humanitarian aid. Furthermore, in terms of humanitarian aid, the United States also sent monetary funds to the area of Gaza totaling more than \$100 million in aid that has been captured largely by Hamas (18). As the war between Hamas and Israel intensified, the world began to get involved to assist their allies. Russia assisted with air support for Iran against U.S. fighters. China assisted with their fighters and naval ships to deter the United States. Iran authorized its militias in Iraq and Syria to attack United States military bases in the region. As a response, the United States carried out airstrikes against Iranian, Yemen, and other Middle Eastern hostile targets.

With Iran stating that they would be joining the BRICS Coalition as soon as January 2024, it is no surprise to see Russia and China quick to come to their Middle Eastern allies and assist them in an all-out regional war were to ensure. Even though BRICS is seen internationally as an economic coalition to protect trade partnerships and economic standings, one must rely on their partnership or allies when they are backed against a wall. In this situation, Iran, Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon are seeking support from Russia and China to help them. Meanwhile, Russia and China are protecting their common interests within their Middle Eastern partnerships. After all, it comes down to forms of control and plans to go to war with the United States.

Aside from Russia and China another BRICS ally joined into the regional war but not militarily. In a press release from the International Court of Justice, a key pillar of the UN Charter Court, it states that on December 29, 2023, South Africa another member of the BRICS Coalition, filed an application of proceedings against Israel for the Crimes of Genocide pursuant to the Genocide Convention (19). The alleged violations South Africa addressed were in Israel's response to the brutal Hamas attack on Israel October 7, 2023. (19). What is the International Court of Justice (ICJ)? The Court is participating in a global fight to end impunity, through international criminal justice. The Court aims to hold those responsible and accountable for their crimes and to help prevent these crimes from happening again. The Court cannot reach these goals alone. As a court of the United Nations, it seeks to complement, not replace, national courts or courts of individual nations.

The Court indicates the following provisional measures:

1. In a vote of 15 to 2, Israel shall per the Court take all measures within power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of the Genocide Convention. The Court highlights (killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group, and deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction as a whole.
2. In a vote of 15 to 2. Israel needs to monitor its military to the above point.
3. In a vote of 15 to 2. Israel shall take all measures within its power to prevent and punish the direct and public incitement to commit genocide against members of the Palestine group in the Gaza Strip.
4. In a vote of 16 to 1. Israel shall take any and all measures to ensure that basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.
5. In a vote of 15 to 2. Israel shall take effective measures to prevent the destruction of evidence and ensure the preservation of evidence related to the above allegations.
6. In a vote of 15 to 2. Israel shall submit a report to the Court on all measures taken to give effect to this order within a month of the date of the order (20).

Overall, the International Court of Justice holds hearings on cases of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, and War Crimes. In an article from Reuters, the newest international court, the International Criminal Court (ICC), also has jurisdiction is genocide cases. Within its history, there have been 10 convictions and court acquittals, five of which were for African Militia leaders from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, and Uganda. These men could face anywhere from nine to thirty years in prison (21). If the International Criminal Court rules

against a nation, then that nation could face hefty fines for its violations if it is a member of the Convention that established the ICC. Israel, the United States, Russia, and China did not sign or ratify the ICC Convention and thus are not bound by its decisions. Since the ICJ is part of the United Nations, its decisions are imposed on all parties and nations members of the UN.

It is important to note that South Africa, a member of BRICs filed genocide allegations against Israel to support its economic allies. Israel and the United States were quick to point out that South Africa has had its own allegations of genocidal attacks within its own nation and courts. These acts included attacks on white farmers whose actions were later coined the White Farmer Genocide. In a span from April 2020 to March 2021, there was a total of 395 murders of white farmers in South Africa. This matter just highlights the irony of South Africa rushing to aid its allies within the BRICS coalition where it has no other direct reason to get involved in the ICJ case.

CHINAS DESTABLIZATION

China has been accused of trying to control or force control of nations and companies within them over to China. An example of this tactic is called Coercive Capability (to force compliance) (22).

Some examples of China using the above tactic are not just isolated to the United States, but other foreign countries and corporations as well.

Examples of China's approach to this strategy include economy and trade. For example, China actions can be in the form of brinkmanship to put commercial and political pressure on trade partners, companies, foreign nations, and individuals for China's gain. Other steps include restrictions that China places on trade, inbound and outbound tourism to other countries, and suspension of company contracts/agreements within China.

- For governments China employs boycott campaigns, restrictions on outbound tourism, and economic sanctions.
- In one extreme case, some Chinese individuals were found to have established an active Communist Party "police station" in New York City where it began to monitor and harass Chinese-born United States immigrants who fled China (23).

Examples against the United States and its allies

- China controls its export of rare earth metals that it knows the United States needs for its technology i.e. microchips, nano chips, and rare earth metals for our communications devices and weapons systems.
- China in the past also placed restrictions against Japan when it tried to claim the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. China placed heavy trade restrictions on Japan at the time (24).

Today, China is engaging heavily in this practice by restricting trade and trade routes to the island of Taiwan. This is for their resources in valuable technology and metals. Some believe that China plans to wear down the Taiwanese people before fully attacking Taiwan in a 'hot war' Taiwan relies on the U.S. as a friend and ally with to avoid a hot war with China. This is

important considering the overall context of this potential conflict in tandem with other global conflicts, i.e., Ukraine and Israel, internal U.S issues such as our southern border. The southern border saw approximately 450 illegal Chinese immigrants who were crossing the border and who were stopped by Homeland Security law enforcement. In 2023, that number is now 24,314 Chinese illegal immigrants seeking to enter the U.S. (25). China is using this opportunity to consider an attack on Taiwan and overtake their valuable lead in microchip production and rare earth materials needed to make and trade them.

Aside from economic hostility, China has also engaged the United States in Cyber-attacks. The United States Department of Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency Director testified on January 31, 2024, regarding an active threat announced by China to attack the United States infrastructure (26). The United States on January 1, 2024, identified as a ‘Botnet’ or malware programming that is used to mask or conceal hacking. China had used the ‘Botnet’ to conceal its efforts to attack civilian critical American infrastructure by prepositioning systems that could cause real-world harm to United States citizens and communities in the event of a direct conflict (27). The FBI Director Christopher Wray warned in a hearing to Congress on January 1, 2024, that China vows to step up its cyber-attacks against the United States and its preparations for possible action against our infrastructure.

RUSSIAN DESTABILIZATION

Russia, like China, is no stranger to attacks against the United States. Russia has had success attacking United States critical infrastructure. For example, Russia hacked the United

States during the 2016 Presidential race between President Trump and Hillary Clinton. This occurred again, during the 2020 Presidential election between President Trump and President Biden. Now in 2024, the United States is stepping up its security to make sure that Russia does not have the same success with attacking the United States during the next election (28). The U.S. State Department released a Press Statement for December 7, 2023, announcing that the United States was filing indictment charges against Andrey Stanislavovich Korinets and Ruslan Aleksandrovich Peretyatko for their role in a criminal hacking conspiracy that targeted the U.S based entities, individuals, and their allies within the United Kingdom (29).

COUNTER ARGUMENT

Is the BRICS Coalition a threat to the United States and NATO? As it stands today, some experts possess a different opinion. Taylor Fravel, a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Political Scientist who also graduated from Middlebury College and Stanford University where he received his doctoral degree, presented the theory that the BRICS Coalition may not present an imminent threat to the United States. This idea was presented directly after BRICS announced their Middle East expansion. Furthermore, Fravel's work, and background lends credibility to his status as an expert on China's foreign policy and security strategy who is also the director of MIT's Security Studies Program. Fravel interview with MIT news reporter Peter Dizikes on the topic of whether or not the BRICS Coalition presented a viable threat to the United States. He indicated several points for consideration. First, the BRICS Coalition has not been institutionalized, and moving forward, he does not believe this reality will ever be (30). Additionally, Iran's addition to the BRICS Coalition isn't one for economic reason but more for

diplomatic motivations since both Russia and Iran are both heavily sanctioned by the United States. Thus, it is argued the BRICS Coalition consists more of a group that seeks to foster interactions within themselves and not a sole economic group. In other words, a group of countries and leaders that all have common interests in mind, those interests being anti-western. Second, Fravel brings attention to another additional issue: disparities regarding each country's overall set of national goals (30). Ultimately, he contends that this will lead to an overall weakness from an unstable power dynamic within their newly formed Coalition. Thirdly the BRICS Coalition itself has no governing charter, possess no clear-cut agenda and is currently just a group of nations that are either sanctioned by the United States or are against western ideations. Finally, any internal issues a country may experience are addressed within the nations themselves, for example China and India are unable to diplomatically forge mutual agreements (30). Ultimately, this untenable situation may very well, in all probability, lead to diplomacy issues and non-cooperation within BRICS. To further support their theory, Saudi Arabia and Iran do not work together from a cultural standpoint and religious differences. Taylor Fravel's theories mirror those of other academics such as those expressed by George Monastiriakos.

George Monastiriakos who is an adjunct professor of law at the University of Ottawa and an acclaimed opinion writer at Newsweek, and Geopolitical Monitor (31). On September 7, 2023, an article was written titled *The BRICS IS Not a Strategic Threat to the United States*, after BRICS announced their expansion of their Middle East partnerships and growing alliance. Monastiriakos directly points out that the guidelines to join BRICS are very vague, given the non-existence of a unified charter. Currently, and absent a former charter, the BRICS Coalition to some degree allows any nation to join their group (31). Secondly, there are more internal

issues from the nations that wish to join. For example, nations such as Egypt rely on aid from the United States. This is a challenge for Egypt as it puts them at risk of ultimately losing this funding unless they step away from BRICS.

Given the potential number of internal conflicts and diplomatic issues it will be hard for BRICS to find a common group and to agree on any sort of agenda or charter for that matter. That is why overall the BRICS Coalition is not the largest security concern as a group. Aside from China, Russia, and Iran as loan actors who pose a significant threat to the United States security and sovereignty.

CONCLUSION

The BRICS Coalition developed in 2009 as an economic coalition to oppose Western ideas, primarily the United States and NATO. What evolved on a global basis are regional conflicts in two areas: Eastern Europe with Ukraine versus Russia and the Middle East with Israel versus Hamas. The United States get involved in these conflicts to not only support our allies, but also to push back against aggressive nation-states that are supporting our adversaries in these conflicts and that are issuing historic anti-western ideologies. Some could even argue that they are anti-democratic/ anti-capitalism.

Historically the United States imposes sanctions on a country when a country acts in a way that is against the United States' national security interests. Terrorist nation-states sponsors

such as Iran or Russia have historically been highly vocal and opposed to the United States. Instead of sanctioning the country directly for an adverse economic effect. The U.S. should also consider sanctioning the allied countries who support the BRICS Coalition. Additionally, the United States can freeze assets that a country receives from the United States and NATO. Thus, by implementing this strategy an anti-American nation will be unable to perform key steps or acts of aggression or terror.

Next, the United States could consider a travel ban against the BRICS Coalition sponsored nations so their citizens are not able to enter the U.S. and vice-versa This will negatively affect the country's economy on a trade level and on a touristic basis. Typically, a travel ban would be enacted following wartime, pandemic/ medical concerns, or high crime issues occurring within the U.S. Through this strategy an all-out 'hot' military conflict would be avoided while also having an adverse impact on those other offending nations.

After examining the national security concerns this thesis focused on the complex dynamics between the United States, Russia, and China by scrutinizing the latter two states in their alliance within the BRICS Coalition including other nations like Iran, as a basis to participate in operations to destabilize the United States. The BRICS Coalition is without a doubt using its 'economic' partnership as a cover to destabilize the United States, NATO, Japan, and the Republic of Korea. This is why BRICS overall as a partnership of Nations who, at their core, oppose the United States and formed a Coalition to improve their own standing and to hopefully diminish the economic power of the United States. Overall, and based on the options of Taylor Fravel, George Monastiriakos, the BRICS coalition is not the foremost threat but, in

the future, it could be the vehicle used by hostile nations that are better organized and institutionalized having common interests to gather in opposition to the United States and NATO. Since the coalition itself was just formed in 2009 it is still in its infancy stages. However, the leaders at all levels of government should remain steadfast in their efforts to monitor the actions of the BRICS Coalition.

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