



PhD thesis

The BRICS configuration's conversion of common sense into good sense: the relevance of a neo-Gramscian study for inclusive international relations

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The BRICS Configuration's Conversion of Common Sense into Good Sense: The Relevance of a Neo-Gramscian Study for Inclusive International Relations

A thesis submitted to Middlesex University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

The study of the BRICS configuration is typically approached from problem-solving theories in International Relations (IR). Some scholars argue that the five economies aim to integrate the international system and co-exist with established powers (Burgess, 2013, Narlikar, 2013, Vickers, 2013). Meanwhile, in critical IR theory, Worth (2009a) argues that semi-peripheries are little examined as transformers of the world order especially from the Coxian critical theory lens. This thesis argues that the five states' convergence is not intended to transform or integrate the world order. Instead, their expressions for strengthening cooperation in the Global South's name is a result of the 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971), that is, widespread beliefs manufactured by the configuration's ruling classes. However, this common sense is fragmented. It ought to convert into good sense, that is, a coherent set of ideas devoid of criticisms, to avoid resistances.

This thesis emphasises three intra-state levels within the BRICS configuration – Brics from above, the middle, and below – and stresses the relevance of reverting to Gramsci's concepts for studying how the intergovernmental vision is shaped by these social forces' dynamics. Owing to limitations with Cox's analytical frameworks for critical IR theory, a Gramscian-inspired analysis is instead used to offer three hypotheses. First, the Brics-from-above manufacture a common sense of representing the Global South's interests. Second, the Brics-from-below challenge this common sense. Third, in anticipation of pressures from below, the Brics-from-above create 'middle' platforms, allegedly in civil society's interests. Documentary research, field observation, and interviews have enabled an exploration of the fabrication of common sense, why it is contested, and the discursive strategies deployed to appeal to the subalterns.

The findings suggest that the Brics-from-above constituting the configuration's political society fabricate the BRICS common sense and use the Brics-from-the-middle to give the impression that it is forged in civil society. However, this fragmented common sense does not convert into good sense. The Brics-from-the-middle play an important role in absorbing the Brics-from-below's resistances and in appropriating their grassroots principles by imitating dominant classes' strategies to consolidate the order established from above.

This thesis's theoretical implications suggest that a study of the configuration going beyond problem-solving theories' orthodoxy is necessary. Studying their convergence's ideational dimension exposes the governments' imagery about working in the Global South's interests as a fallacy. The update of two Gramscian concepts (*counter* passive revolution and *counter* trasformismo) is a conceptual innovation of Gramsci's ideas to reinvigorate engagement with neo-Gramscian research in IR. Overall, this thesis contributes to an underdeveloped body of literature about semi-peripheries in critical IR theory. It overcomes limitations of Cox's analytical frameworks and adds a new dimension to Gramscian research in IR.

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List of abbreviations

BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
BRIICS	Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China, South Africa
BTTC	BRICS Think Tank Council
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CIVETS	Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey, South Africa
CRA	Contingent Reserve Arrangement
E7	China, India, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Indonesia, Turkey
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
G7	Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States
G8	France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Japan, the United States, Canada, Russia
G20	Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, the European Union, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GONGO	Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisation
IBSA	India, Brazil, South Africa
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPEA	Institute for Applied Economic Research
MINT	Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey
N11	Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea, Vietnam
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NDB	New Development Bank
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIC	Newly Industrialised Country
NIE	Newly Industrialised Economy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ORF	Observer Research Foundation
PRIA	Participatory Research in Asia
REBRIP	Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples

R2P	Responsibility to Protect
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SGI	Sustainable Governance Indicators
TIMBI	Turkey, India, Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia
VISTA	Vietnam, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey, Argentina
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNOSSC	United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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Chapter 1: Introduction

International Relations (IR) is replete with arguments that the discipline needs distancing from state centrism favoured by mainstream problem-solving theories and requires to be expanded to include voices of actors from the non-West and of a non-state nature (Acharya, 2011; Acharya and Buzan, 2010; Cox, 1981; Nayak and Selbin, 2010; Tickner, 2003; Tickner and Blaney, 2012, 2013; Shilliam, 2011). Problem-solving theories refer to uncritical theories such as Neorealism and Neoliberal Institutionalism whose framework of analysis is grounded in the primary assumption that a given world order is not susceptible to change (Cox, 1981, p. 128–9). They prioritise scientific knowledge, data over facts, limit the focus on state actors and reduce a subject of study to predefined variables, which comply with positivist research methods (Cox, 1981, p. 129; Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p. 63–5). Their aim is to facilitate universality and predictability of Western-inspired models of analysis.

In world politics, this means that from an uncritical theory lens, the degree of authority of a state in the international system is gauged according to its dominance quantified in material conditions of economic growth and power acquired through militarisation and geographical circumstances. These are power influences of a coercive nature. Problem-solving IR theories may have served their purpose during the pre-Cold War era to explain bipolarity between the Western and Eastern bloc arguably situated in the Northern or core sphere of the international system. However, in the contemporary context of rising powers, emerging markets, and ‘new regionalisms’ (Shaw, 2015a, p. 261; Shaw, 2015b), reverting to mainstream IR theories to account for shifts in world politics brings little to no new insights. These theories sustain the attention on old powers. They have not been designed to explain the adjustments to socio-political transformations of non-core actors, that is, those not belonging to the Northern or Western core of the international sphere.

This prioritisation of mainstream theories and attention on old powers has meant that the South has either experienced an acute invisibility in IR or has been subjected to positivist scrutiny, that is, a scientifically-verified logic of a Western origin, not necessarily applicable to theorise their context. For example, modernisation theory is an economic-driven approach, popularised in the 1960s in development studies, to elevate Third World countries from traditional to modern societies (Rostow, 1960). It advocates economic advancements for underdeveloped countries to gain relevance in the world system while completely disregarding their history and culture. Studies of international relations follow a similar assumption by giving the impression that Global South actors are not worthy of academic attention in the discipline unless they caught up with the Global North or West and became serious contenders through material conditions conferring state power acquired through their economy, military, or territorial conquests.

Reducing the understanding of the leadership potential of a state to economic determinism and material conditions, measured on a scale inspired by the Global North or West, is redundant because the decade leading to the new millennium has witnessed a series of political events in addition to technological and cultural phenomena. These have reshaped the international political sphere. The twenty-first century's global political transformation provided a momentum for actors from the South to detach themselves from the machinations of either American or Soviet superpower and to reinvigorate potentially a theorisation of the Global South in IR.

To date, however, Global South actors' dynamics remain under-studied from an IR theoretical lens because in spite of attempts to energise 'discussions around studying the Global South, IR's mainstream still lacks vibrancy ... [and it has] yet to fully move beyond the assumptions

and realities' (Mansour, 2017, p. 2–3) of the Cold War legacy. The impact is that although some non-core states are economically prominent in the world order, problem-solving IR theories fail to acknowledge that it is at the ideological and cultural levels where they are capturing hegemonic power through consensual means rather than coercive strategies. The resurgence of South-South cooperation, for example, goes beyond an alignment of economic, political, or military interests. Instead, there is convergence of a discursive and ideational nature. Shared attributes of South-South cooperation build notably on the 'ideas of a common identity, equality, and solidarity ...; the defence of the sovereignty of newly independent states; and opposition to the "North"' (Bergamaschi and Tickner, 2017, p. 1). The essence of Global South dynamism, hence, seems to be grounded in commonly shared ideas and discourses manufactured and sustained at the non-core level of the world order. It is not simply about the states' national material capabilities quantified in economic terms.

In studies of the Global South in IR, understanding that the discipline needs theoretical reinvigoration to go beyond a study of material capabilities is of particular relevance for theorising the intergovernmental configuration of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS). The BRICs configuration, initially without South Africa, was coined as a country acronym in a 2001 Goldman Sachs's research paper (O'Neill, 2001). In the span of eight years, it has evolved from an economic abbreviation to become a politico-economic configuration, which has been issuing an annual intergovernmental declaration since 2009 speaking about the interests of emerging market economies and developing countries, and, thus, indirectly the Global South. Despite their differences, in the ten intergovernmental declarations from 2009 to 2018, the BRICS state leaders have succeeded in presenting to the world an aligned vision about urgent reforms needed for the international financial system and global governance.

To give authority to their discourse, the state leaders enlist their government representatives and government-sanctioned civil society actors to demonstrate that they work together cohesively in a diversity of sectors ranging from agriculture, banking, counter-terrorism, education, energy, environment, employment, finance, foreign affairs, healthcare, innovation, national security, science, technology, and telecommunications among others (BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18).¹ The responsibility of coordinating collaboration in these areas is entrusted to the ‘BRICS Sherpas and Sous Sherpas [that is] the official government representatives nominated by the heads of states’ (People’s Forum on BRICS, 2016). To extend involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, government-approved platforms such as the Business Forum, Trade Union Forum, Parliamentary Forum, Civic BRICS, Academic Forum, and BRICS Think Tank Council (BTTC) have also been established.

Another important point about BRICS is the embedment of their discourses about areas of cooperation and numerous projects including the New Development Bank (NDB) in principles of transparency, sustainability, meritocracy, representativeness, inclusion, respect, and mutual benefits among other values. In addition to highlighting the benefits to developing countries and rectifying North-South imbalances, these values are claimed to reflect state-society exchanges. For example, the official website of Civic BRICS, that is, the official BRICS Civil Society states:

Involvement of the civil society in the discussion of BRICS agenda is extremely important not only to provide the leaders with an opportunity to look at the problems from the viewpoints of different groups of the population and, consequently, to make decisions based on their views and interests, but as well to make decisions made at the

¹ The BRICS Information Centre is an online database, which catalogues official government documents about the BRICS including their intergovernmental declarations and communiqués. It is run by the University of Toronto. The references in my bibliography provide the links of access to specific online resources, which I have used from this website.

Summit more legitimate and to ensure the desired effect of these decisions for the social systems of each of the Alliance's countries (Civic BRICS, 2015).

By employing the support of government-approved stakeholders and claiming to incorporate the views of different civil society actors in formulating the intergovernmental vision, it is suggested that the configuration operates using a bottom-up approach. The BRICS configuration's rhetoric deviates from the one-dimensional and top-down approach reflected in the traditional institutions of global economic governance, namely the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Through the BRICS configuration's intergovernmental discursive strategies, there is the illusion of a competing hegemonic project, that is, a way of functioning that challenges the existing order established by Northern or Western powers.

However, the BRICS configuration's rhetoric and claims of prosperity for developing countries are resisted and challenged globally and domestically. As articulated by Robinson (2015, p. 18), 'all five BRICS countries have been hit in recent years by an explosion of mass struggles from below against rising capitalist exploitation and state repression and corruption'. Bond (2013) refers to these groups as the 'Brics-from-below'. They are non-governmental organisations and grassroots social movements of different types and working for different causes among the five countries, which share a transcultural solidarity. Their aim is to echo the people's feelings and draw attention to the sub-imperialism of the BRICS, that is, how the five countries 'accompany and extend imperialism' (Bond, 2016a, p. 15) rather than challenge it. In comparison with the official government-approved BRICS Civil Society, the Brics-from-below are an unofficial form of civil society questioning the BRICS intergovernmental discourses.

To hypothesise the reasons about why the BRICS governmental leaders are finding it necessary to sustain an official BRICS Civil Society and other government-sanctioned platforms while continuing to experience domestic resistances about their vision in world politics, IR theory cannot rely on problem-solving theories. A study of BRICS convergence cannot be restricted to an economic logic because there are intergovernmental strategies of an extra-economic dimension. The decisions are formulated as being in wider society's interests including the poor and vulnerable communities, and not just for the states. Yet, there is an evident contradiction when their capitalist accumulation strategies aim at integrating the existing world order, which they criticise. Unlike state-centric problem-solving theories, critical theory in IR offers a different approach to study the BRICS configuration's state-society dynamics because it acknowledges the importance of social forces, that is, non-state factors or class relations, rather than state features as the most relevant to be studied.

In general, critical theory is an umbrella phrase for any theory critiquing a branch of knowledge. It can refer to the first and second generations of critical theory from the Frankfurt School embedded in studies of sociology and political philosophy. In my thesis's context, I am interested in the conceptualisation of critical theory, expanded in the work of Robert W. Cox (1981, 1983, 1987, 2001), which inspired the development of the Italian School in IR and eventually the Amsterdam School in Global Political Economy (GPE). The latter shaped the trajectory of thinking about transnational capitalist classes, that is, 'that segment of the world bourgeoisie' (Robinson, 2003, p. 39) which 'own[s] and manage[s] [transnational corporations] and financial institutions that drive the global economy' (Robinson, 2015, p. 3). The Italian School was essentially coined to demarcate from the English School embodying problem-solving IR theories.

Cox's (1981) critical theory is pertinent for critical interpretations of international relations and questioning the origins of a given social order especially such as BRICS. It disputes the universal applicability of Western-inspired scientific models of analysis prioritising the state as the dominant variable in world dynamics. More importantly, my primary interest in the Coxian version of critical theory is because of his inspiration from the work of Italian philosopher, Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Although Gramsci had little to say about international relations in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971), Cox's revision of IR theory and his extrapolation of Gramscian concepts to explain hegemony or how power is won rather than imposed is applicable to an understanding of the BRICS configuration's intra-state social forces' dynamics.

On the one hand, Cox's analytical frameworks have served to explore how hegemonic power is captured when there is a 'strong congruence' (Gill, 1990, p. 47) among the social forces, that is, ideas, institutions, and materials capabilities at the three interlinked levels of production, world orders, and state-civil society (Cox, 1983, p. 135–8). Coxian scholarship, that is, research inspired by Cox's frameworks have taken one step forward by considering social forces of a transnational nature as the significant class actors requiring close examination in discussions of the world order (Gill, 1993; Holman, 1996; Overbeek, 1993; Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay, 2008; Robinson, 2003, 2004; van der Pijl, 1998). These critical studies went beyond a simplified conceptualisation of the state embodied in the Realist school of thought.

On the other hand, these same studies can also be considered narrow in the quest for extending IR's horizon because they prioritise a logic of capitalist development, which favours an analysis of elitist class actors at the expense of the less privileged ones. For example, van der Pijl (2006, p. 28) argues that there is an 'evidently superior capacity of the western bourgeoisie and transnational capital to control not a particular portion of the globe, but the political

economy of world society in its entirety'. For studies of world politics, this transnational analysis of class structure perpetuates a tradition akin to problem-solving IR theories in the sense that it casts non-Western or Global South actors as subordinates subjected to the modus operandi of the West or Global North. It also encourages a vertical or top-down analysis of the organisation of social forces in the social hierarchy.

The argument that non-core states suffer a mistreatment even in Cox's critical theory has also been noted by Worth (2005, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). He argues that 'the Italian School often downplays the relevance of weak, peripheral or semi-peripheral states' (2008, p. 640). The discipline of IR, even with the prevalence of the Italian School, continues to ignore the relevance of non-core states and casts economically powerful Western institutions as the central characters worthy of being studied. The analytical framework of Cox's critical theory, thus, currently fails to account accurately for all the integral components of the state-society dynamics of an established order. This thesis explores how this lacuna can potentially be overcome by reverting to the true essence of a Gramscian interpretation of the undercurrents between the ruling classes and subalterns within BRICS.

In order to elaborate on the theoretical basis of this thesis, it is important to begin by explaining why BRICS is noteworthy of being studied at all and from a Gramscian perspective – a framework, which has already saturated IR and suffers from misinterpretations in the discipline. As such, this introductory chapter is structured to first, emphasise the importance of exploring BRICS; second, clarify how it is connected to the Global South through discourse; and third, reiterate the relevance of the configuration for the discipline of IR. The second half of this chapter provides an overview of the research objectives, the hypotheses, methodology, and intended contributions of this study before ending with an outline of the structure of this thesis.

1.1. Why BRICS?

The BRICS configuration has transformed into an unlikely intergovernmental convergence. Collectively, the five countries are noteworthy owing to their demography, topography, and economic size. As of 2017, the BRICS countries' population aggregated to 3.14 billion, that is, 43 percent of the world population (World Bank, 2019b). Their land territories constitute 25 percent of the world's land mass and their Gross Domestic Product (GDP), evaluated at current market prices, represented 23 percent of the overall Gross National Product (GNP) of all countries in the world in 2017 (World Economic Outlook, 2018). The upward trajectory of their economic growth has helped to reinvent the markets of BRICS as a rival of the G7 industrialised countries.

Although their collective economic status cannot be underestimated in the global economy, it is difficult to situate their commonality because the five countries are significantly disparate. Their cultures, historical journeys, and people-oriented aspirations vary. They perform differently in terms of social affairs, that is, provision of health care, education needs, social inclusion, and access to opportunities promoting personal rights among other development goals (Moore, 2014; Reisen, 2012; Sustainable Governance Indicators, 2014). Their convergence is also atypical because of their diverging political arrangements. Brazil, India, and South Africa are democracies. They share a rather similar score in democratic indexes according to the recent 'Freedom in the World' report (Freedom House, 2019). Inversely, China is a one-party state and the Russian president controls Russia's authoritarian regime.

Even at the economic level, their affluence cannot be accounted for according to a single explanation because their societal transformations from the 1990s onwards, the decade, which energised the era of globalisation, have been distinct. For example:

- Post-Communist Russia underwent a transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. During this phase, businesses collaborated with the state but the elite-led transition in the oligarchs' interests in addition to the financial crisis of 1998 weakened the already unstable Russian economy (Worth, 2005, pp. 96–109). Despite struggling with market openness and privatisation, the Russian economy rebounded partly due to the demand for its natural resources and its emerging vibrant consumer society, which attracted multinational investments.
- In 1992, the leaders of the Communist Party of China pressed for accelerated reforms. They officially used the term 'socialist market economy' for the first time to urge a revamping of the socialist core of their economy in order to avoid long-term stagnation (Zemin, 1992). Strategies aimed at opening their economy to foreign investment, enhancing their technological development, and privatisation of their agricultural sector while operating alongside central state-owned enterprises began in 1978 but these were a gradual approach to socialism with Chinese characteristics (Myers, 1995, pp. 1–10). A sense of urgency appeared among Chinese leaders in the 1990s to accelerate these reforms owing to the collapse of the Soviet Union, which incited them to consider the possibilities of a weakened economy due to lack of reforms.
- In 1994, the newly elected African National Congress overcame capital flight from the South African economy by liberalising their financial market and committing to privatisation of key parastatal bodies (Habib and Padayachee, 2000). However, it was undertaken against the backdrop of a transitional democratic economy concentrated on reconstructing itself post-apartheid and rising unemployment while enduring difficulties in the provision of social and physical infrastructure.
- In 1991, the newly elected and pro-reform Indian government launched a series of incremental economic reforms, which led to a gradual deregulation of the Indian

economy (Wadhva, 2000). In addition to a devaluation of their currency and elimination of export subsidies, the economic reforms consisted of privatising key infrastructural industries (namely in power and telecommunication), trade, and finance sectors.

- Brazil also experienced different waves of economic reforms in the 1990s. A notable one was in 1994 when the newly elected government from the Party of Brazilian Social Democracy adopted a gradual approach to prioritise macroeconomic stability (Spanakos, 2004). Although it liberalised its markets and joined regional trade organisations, the Brazilian government planned social policies along with their reforms.

In summary, these brief accounts serve to contextualise the different economic pathways and transitional developments, which happened in the five countries at the beginning of the 1990s. Although they seem similar in how they began liberalising their respective economies and opening to trade, these happened with varying degrees of openness and were driven by distinct country dynamics. In other words, the explanation for their economic development is multidimensional and shares few common features.

Yet, despite few economic and political commonalities, the five countries have managed to establish a platform for coordinating their state interests and, more importantly, to sustain this configuration as a politico-economic arrangement since 2009. This setup has been artificially established in the sense that it did not materialise intrinsically because of traditional intergovernmental initiatives. Rather, Jim O'Neill (2001) coined the acronym 'BRIC' in a Goldman Sachs's report to compare the real GDP growth of the four countries with the advanced G7 economies and predicted that the emerging markets of the BRICs would outperform some of the G7 in the next decade.

Following his 2001 report, two additional researchers from Goldman Sachs, Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, produced the 2003 report entitled *Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050*. It asserted with high confidence that in a period of fifty years, the economies ranked within the top ten would be radically different from 2003 (Wilson and Purushothaman, 2003, p. 17). These reports reinvigorated the interests of elite financial investors into the four countries and indirectly led to financial investment into their economies (Tett, 2010). According to O'Neill, this was a result of the pioneering report and the creation of an acronym with unbiased connotations. 'Unlike phrases such as "emerging markets" or "developing world", BRIC did not sound patronising, or unpromising; it was neutral, strong, politically correct' (O'Neill, quoted in Tett, 2010).

Despite the attention on the economic significance of the acronym, there was an unforeseen political turn to the countries' abbreviated name, which the researchers could not have predicted. In addition to market interests in the non-Western economies, O'Neill's (2001) and Wilson and Purushothaman's (2003) predictions unintentionally set in motion the opportunity for the rising powers to align their economic and development goals in the international system to form an intergovernmental organisation. The four BRIC countries met as a ministerial configuration for the first time in 2006. This was held at a Foreign Ministers' gathering prearranged to synchronise with parallel sessions of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in New York. Their interaction resulted in a joint communiqué reflecting their mutual thoughts about current global development issues (BRICS Information Centre, 2008). The diplomatic coordination among the Foreign Ministers eventually accelerated the formalisation of the grouping. 'This successful interaction led to the decision that the dialogue was to be carried out at the level of Heads of State and Government in annual Summits' (Brazil Ministry of External Relations, no date). It paved the way for the Russian president to initiate

a parallel meeting with his Brazilian, Indian, and Chinese counterparts during the G8 summit in Japan in 2008.

Upon Russia's initiative, the first Heads of State's summit, simultaneously referred to as BRIC summit, occurred in Yekaterinburg, Russia, on 16 June 2009. While it began initially as a grouping of the BRIC, the club's membership was extended to South Africa in 2010, which led to the acronym being labelled as BRICS. From 2009 to 2018, there have been ten consecutive annual BRICS Heads of State's summits. The high-level intergovernmental gathering rotates presidency and venue among the five countries every year. In addition to this annual platform where the government leaders issue their yearly declaration mainly encompassing their aligned aspirations, the event is preceded by diverse state-sponsored BRICS-related activities throughout the year. As elaborated in Chapter 5, these BRICS-related government meetings are instrumental in shaping discourses and directing ideas about the configuration.

1.2. The significance of BRICS for the Global South

While the two recent decades have seen a surge in the number of country acronyms of a semi-peripheral character invented by distinct organisations, which were inspired by the Goldman Sachs's acronym, none has matched the aforementioned degree of formalisation as BRICS. For example, VISTA, E7, N11, CIVETS, MINT, BRIICS, and TIMBI are other abbreviated country groupings from the non-core sphere of the international system.² Among these

² VISTA (Vietnam, Indonesia, South Africa, Turkey, and Argentina); E7 (China, India, Brazil, Mexico, Russia, Indonesia and Turkey); N11 (Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, South Korea, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey and Vietnam); CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa); MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey); BRIICS (Brazil, Russia, India, Indonesia, China and South Africa); TIMBI (Turkey, India, Mexico, Brazil, and Indonesia).

groupings, the BRICS configuration is comparatively the most remarkable in terms of real-world output.

It demarcates from other groupings because of its successful creation of the NDB, a series of intergovernmental forum for different sectors, and a civil society platform among other government-approved fora. The five countries have succeeded in formalising and sustaining many of these bodies since their official gathering in 2009. This is a rare occurrence for middle powers, including Russia and China, which tend to avoid agreeing to ‘some form of institutionalization’ (Cooper, 2016, p. 529) because it can mean relinquishing some state power to a body of authority.

Yet, the once neutrally coined acronym in a Western investment bank’s report has, surprisingly, transformed into an intergovernmental organisation capable of articulating coordination over important areas in global politics. The states have not surrendered any power through their interactions. Instead, there is an attempt at harmonisation at their discourse level about what they consider to be pressing global development issues. In spite of diverging societal differences, the governmental leaders are succeeding in projecting a unified vision about the purpose of their conglomeration and its significance in world politics for different groups of actors from the non-core sphere.

Their aligned vision is evident, for example, in their conjoint declarations echoing their commitments for effective cooperation among their respective governments particularly in the interests of developing countries and emerging market economies (BRICS Information Centre, 2009, note 15; 2010, notes 5, 8, 11; 2011a, notes 6, 7, 15; 2012a, notes 4, 8, 9, 11, 13; 2013, notes 3, 9, 13; 2014, notes 3, 8; 2015, notes 3, 11, 15, 19; 25; 2016, notes 10, 42; 2017, notes 3, 6, 69; 2018, note 9). Their yearly statement about multilateralism, intended to rectify North-

South development unevenness, and annual action plans are considered to be a result of multi-level discussions with diverse ministerial representatives, think tanks, and involving people-to-people exchanges among the five countries. Their commitment to a multi-layered engagement on topics of regional and international relevance suggests a cooperative spirit originating from the Global South, which aims to rival the unidimensional Northern or Western instances of collaboration.

Additionally, in the context of South-South development, the BRICS configuration is debated in policy papers to play a key role in challenging traditional North-South relations by offering an alternative model for multidimensional cooperation (Morazan et al., 2012; Richmond and Tellidis, 2013; Sahle 2010, p. 109). For this reason, the BRICS countries' association with Global South discourses has to be acknowledged in world politics because it is not an evident connection, which is explained below.

Since 2009, the BRICS Heads of State have been issuing annual intergovernmental declarations where they present themselves as working not only in the interests of emerging and developing countries from their configuration but also for the poorest and most vulnerable communities not belonging to the core sphere (BRICS Information Centre, 2009, note 6; 2010, notes 15–18; 2012a, note 9; 2013, notes 13–15; 2014, note 21; 2015, note 33; 2016, notes 30, 32; 2018, note 68). Although it is complex to locate an exact definition of BRICS as a configuration given their stark differences, the grouping is often associated with the Global South in the academic literature. This was the case in journal articles published as part of a special issue on 'Rising Powers and South-South Cooperation' in *Third World Quarterly*. Gray and Gills refer to BRICS as 'expanding Southern economies' (2016, p. 594) and Muhr (2016, p. 640) calls them 'Southern partners'. Thakur (2014) also argues that the 'BRICS natural international constituency is the global South' (p. 1794).

Associating BRICS with the Global South is ironic because in the annual intergovernmental declarations from 2009 to 2018, South-South cooperation has only been mentioned once (BRICS Information Centre, 2015, note 66) whereas the expression ‘North-South’ has been articulated thrice (BRICS Information Centre, 2012a, note 12; 2015, note 66; 2017, note 6). In all these instances, they have been expressed in relation to redressing North-South development imbalances. Yet, in all declarations, the joint statements refer repeatedly to emerging and developing economies as well as greater representation for poorest and vulnerable communities. It is suggested that their intent is to voice not only their issues about the Global North or West but also the concerns uttered by actors situated in the non-core sphere of the world order, that is, from semi-peripheries and peripheries. Arguing that the latter are under-represented and do not enjoy equal status in the world order, the BRICS configuration is framing a way of presenting itself as speaking on behalf of the Global South.

To give legitimacy to their discourse about working in developing countries’ wider interests, the BRICS state leaders claim to involve civil society’s different viewpoints (Civic BRICS, 2015). However, this involvement has not been ubiquitous throughout their declarations. The idea about officially involving civil society in BRICS discourses only happened in 2015 under the Russian presidency of the configuration (BRICS Information Centre, 2015, note 74). Russian authorities defied the assumptions that a civil society platform would be unlikely because of its own objection by organising the first Civic BRICS, that is, the first official civil society organisation among the BRICS countries but entrenched this platform with the BRICS Academic Forum and BTTC. The latter are heavily endorsed and funded by the governmental authorities and these official platforms ensured that civil society’s actions were closely monitored from above.

One of the main issues to address about the existence of these official civil society organisations is their impact on unofficial civil society platforms within the BRICS configuration, which exist and operate outside the government-approved sphere precisely to avoid having their resistances and civil actions be controlled by the states. The official Civic BRICS and unofficial grassroots movements perform distinct roles and articulate different discursive realities about the configuration. The contrasting functions of the government-approved Civic BRICS and unofficial grassroots groups; the extent of their independence from the state; the conflicts between them; the organisation of their ideas as well as practices; and their contributions to strengthen or challenge the intergovernmental discourse warrant greater scrutiny. This is because despite their differences, they both embody the sphere of ‘civil society’. The official and unofficial nature of these platforms condition and influence the political dimension of the state in opposing ways. On the one hand, encouraging the official Civic BRICS can be analysed in the context of their role binding the state and society. On the other hand, attempts at controlling the unofficial Brics-from-below can be analysed as a political management from above.

It is also important to underline the timing of the inclusion of a formal BRICS Civil Society. It was around the same period when the Brics-from-below, that is, the forms of resistances to the intergovernmental grouping’s vision, began to grow and question ‘the uncertain rise of a “Global South (and East)”’ (Garcia and Bond, 2016, p. 5). The Brics-from-below called on social movements and grassroots activists among the five countries to question the place of BRICS in the global economy and their rhetoric of offering a different way of operating than the Global North or West while pursuing the same capitalist accumulation strategies as the latter.

In the wake of these vocal resistances, the official BRICS Civil Society began inviting the grassroots movements to join their official platform in order to share their views with the state leaders. Nevertheless, this invitation and alleged involvement of groups with different viewpoints has not resulted in the grassroots movements' ideas being included in any of the declaration dated from 2015 to 2018. This was noted in the aftermath of the BRICS Trade Union Forum of 2013 where not only were some participants from below denied access to this platform but also none of their views featured in the final declaration as evidenced in note 42 of the fifth BRICS declaration (BRICS Information Centre, 2013, note 42).

The intergovernmental declaration disregarded explicitly their own government-approved Trade Union Forum because of the demands voiced from the working class movements (BRICS Trade Union Forum, 2013). To posit the reasons about why the state would reject demands from the working classes and other subalterns, there needs to be a theoretical framework, which considers other social forces than the unitary state in its analysis. The interactions of social forces with different degrees of empowerment are significant for studies of world politics. In the context of BRICS, their intra-state dynamics shape their intergovernmental conception of the world. This is why their association with the discourse of the Global South and their contradictory state-society exchanges are significant for studies of semi-peripheral convergences because it requires a theoretical framework, which can account for both the state and non-state dimensions of the configuration.

1.3. The relevance of BRICS for IR

The self-presentation of BRICS as speaking in the Global South's interests is worthy of investigation in IR because there is a paradox. Although the BRICS leaders present their ideas

as an alternative or novel, they perpetuate and echo existing models akin to the Global North. For example, the NDB, which had been rhetorically presented in its initial stages as opposing the World Bank's practices and favouring multilateralism, suffers from criticisms about being a sub-imperial organisation and promoting interests of dominant state actors, notably China (Abdenur, 2014; Bond, 2016b; Khanna, 2014). Since problem-solving IR theories disregard cultural discourse and winning the consent of subalterns rather than imposing power on them, this contradiction would not be picked up from an uncritical IR theoretical lens.

Continuing to study the BRICS configuration from problem-solving IR theories does not contribute new knowledge to the discipline for two main reasons that will be discussed below. First, treating the grouping as a fixed entity of state actors pushes researchers to concentrate on analytical models inspired from either the Neorealist or Neoliberal schools of thought to check whether the Goldman Sachs's forecasts would result in BRICS removing current superpowers from their economic throne to change the global order (Brawley, 2010; Herd and Dunay, 2010; Hurrell, 2006; Keukeleire and Bruyninckx, 2011; Subacchi, 2008). Perpetuating discussions about redistribution of power or shifts in international balance of power is limited in scope because the BRICS configuration has little intention of challenging the existing order (de Coning et al., 2014; Glosny, 2010; Robinson, 2015, p. 1). In these scholarships, there is already an acceptance that the BRICS strategy is meant to coexist with current superpowers and integrate the current system rather than question it.

The second reason why these attempts at situating the BRICS power in the given world order is limited for IR is because they essentially concentrate on what the five countries can contribute materially in the international system to advance capitalist practices. In other words, problem-solving theories are interested in studies of BRICS as a material contributor *in* the

Global South rather than how it has become a representation *of* the Global South.³ Problem-solving theories have been developed to study power relations and the potential of these material capabilities. Any newcomer such as BRICS gaining visibility in the international arena as a bloc of countries experiences the same academic scrutiny as core states as evidenced in the aforementioned scholarship. Overemphasising the material capabilities of the five countries neglects an exploration of the very origin of their political and cultural convergence.

Problem-solving IR theories are, thus, limited for the context of BRICS because they disregard those social forces of a non-state nature within the configuration, which are questioning the projects of the state leaders. Along with the government-to-government BRICS gatherings, a solidarity among the Brics-from-below has been growing. These groups originating from the bottom level of the configuration's social stratum are critical of the BRICS intergovernmental agenda and question their call for multilateralism and global reforms allegedly in the Global South's interests (Bond, 2013; Bond and Garcia, 2014; Garcia and Bond, 2016). They are critical of the governments' double standards discourse. They express concerns about the intensive capital accumulation strategies and the discourses from above claiming to pursue capital in the name of less developed countries while pretending to be different from the Global North. Problem-solving IR theories do not account for these different ideological viewpoints because they treat subjects of study as a fixed value-free object and disregard their agency, history, and culture.

In addition, there is another significant group of actors within the configuration, which lacks academic scrutiny despite playing a significant role in enriching and giving greater authority

³ I deliberately italicise the words 'in' and 'of' to draw attention on the implications these will have in studies of IR. This will be discussed in details in Chapter 2.

to the state leaders' discourse. As noted in the work of Garcia and Bond (2016, p. 6–7), there are distinct groups with different degrees of empowerment within the configuration. In addition to the Brics-from-below and the 'heads of state, corporate and elite allies' (p. 6) whom they classify as the Brics-from-above, there is another category whom they refer to as the 'Brics-from-the-middle'. They constitute the 'BRICS Academic Forum, intellectuals and trade unions' (p. 7), that is, any government-sanctioned platform within the configuration. These official BRICS platforms are endorsed by the five governments and are dubbed as civil society by them because they connect the state and society. The Brics-from-the-middle are distinct from the grassroots Brics-from-below because they are organised at the governments' requests. They are responsible for representing the 'viewpoints of different groups of the population' (Civic BRICS, 2015); ensuring that the intergovernmental decisions are made in the interests of the mass population and their individual country contexts; and eventually providing legitimacy to these decisions. In this sense, the official BRICS organisations are responsible for managing the civic space and practices between the state and society. Due to their middle position between the groups from above and below, they are called the Brics-from-the-middle.

Owing to this intra-group dynamics within BRICS, the configuration is relevant for the academic discipline of IR because it invites the application of a theoretical framework, which is inclusive of all the integral forces involved in either the fabrication or contestation of the intergovernmental vision. The complexity of the configuration's internal dimensions implies that in order to hypothesise why the Brics-from-above are embedding their discursive strategies in state-society exchanges, a critical IR theoretical lens is needed. It is important to note, however, that it is not only problem-solving IR theories, which are outdated to study the BRICS configuration. The Italian School's critical theory, which led to a neo-Gramscian approach in

IR and GPE, is also limited because it favours an analysis of transnational capitalist classes at the expense of groups with limited economic, political, and social empowerment.

In order for Coxian critical theory to allocate proper attention to social forces with different degrees of empowerment as key contributors and shapers of state dynamism, it needs to be updated. Although Cox's analytical frameworks never assumed a 'predetermined hierarchy of relationships' (1981, p. 137), they have turned hierarchical precisely because of an unintentional vertical top-down approach to understand social forces as has been adopted in Coxian scholarship. Their focus on transnational capitalist class actors favours a vertical approach to understand the group organisation of social forces (Gill, 1993; Holman, 1996; Overbeek, 1993; Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay, 2008; Robinson, 2004). Vertical group organisation stresses social hierarchy of domination and subordination, and eventually prioritises elitist or privileged groups at the expense of the ones subjected to their dominance.

It leads to less empowered groups being cast as inconsequential in studies of international relations because their views are deemed as already embedded in the elitist agenda or unimportant for governmental decisions. Yet, as seen in earlier evidences from the BRICS declarations, the governments claim to work closely with all groups. The current Coxian analytical frameworks cannot address the implications of social forces possessing different degrees of empowerment in shaping intra-group dynamics. Concentrating on one category of actors because they are socially, politically, and economically more powerful is a one-sided analysis.

Finally, a vertical approach to social forces' group organisation invites an understanding that weaker groups will have a greater say in intergovernmental decision-making should they join

the other forces higher up in the social hierarchy. In the BRICS context, the upward movement of groups from below entails being integrated and co-opted into the groups from the middle, which are controlled by the government. The co-optation of resistant groups and their ideas is a core feature of the struggle of social forces for leadership. To give greater attention to the BRICS configuration's different social forces and overcome a vertical or top-down analysis of the grouping's dynamics, it is fundamental to revert to some of Gramsci's concepts from his initial writings. These are principally concerned with establishing cultural and ideological leadership rather than imposing power coercively. Gramscian concepts, thus, provide insights on the distinct functions of different classes of actors engaged in the struggle for ideological leadership.

1.4. Why Gramsci for a study of BRICS?

In spite of the international community's scepticism about the future of the BRICS intergovernmental grouping (Beausang-Hunter, 2012; Garcia and Bond, 2016; Kornegray and Bohler-Muller, 2013, p. 285), the belief that the configuration offers an alternative and fairer model to rival the Global North or West has transformed into what Gramsci called 'common sense'. This refers to a 'conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by ... various social and cultural environments' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 419). This uncritical absorption is sustained when dominant classes deploy tactical discursive and practical strategies to persuade the masses and any potential resistant groups that their agenda is in the wider society's interests. They manufacture this common sense using consensual means involving 'passive revolution', that is, subtle strategies initiated from above meant to persuade subalterns and any opposing groups into agreeing to support the ruling cause rather than coercing them into acceptance (Gramsci, 1971, p. 58f–59f). 'Trasformismo' is also another strategy deployed from above to absorb intellectuals from the opposing groups. In Gramscian terms, the dynamics between the

state, that is, political society *and* civil society, is what constitutes an integral state (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12–3).

Overall, a Gramscian theoretical lens is useful because it distinguishes between coercive and consensual mechanisms as a means of subjecting subalterns to accept the leadership of socially empowered groups. The dynamics between ruling and subaltern classes for the achievement of cultural hegemony is, thus, at the heart of Gramsci's writings (Gramsci, 1971, p. 10, 144). On the one hand, subalterns are ruled classes, which are denied access to hegemonic power and are confined to a socially less empowered status in society.

On the other hand, ruling classes are understood as those, which are vital for the achievement and preservation of a group's hegemonic status (Gramsci, 1971, p. 161, 180–5). The intellectual and moral leadership of a dominant group is secured when the ruling classes manage to win over subalterns by subjecting them to concede – actively and willingly – to the notion that the dominant group is serving wider society's interests (Gramsci, 1971, p. 114). This willing endorsement and use of persuasive strategies are possible in the context of a consensual scenario where the ruling classes' manufactured common sense is widely accepted, unexposed to contestations, and even if faced with grievances, the ruling classes are successful in absorbing the struggles that erupt (Gramsci, 1971, p. 322–34). However, if they fail to order in a 'systematic, coherent and critical fashion', that is, through good sense, the diffusion of their fragmented common sense risks '[fracturing] along certain lines and in certain directions' (p. 327).

Therefore, intellectuals from subaltern classes who are eager for changing an uncritical conception of the world are also able to oppose the ruling classes' common sense and attempt to popularise the philosophy developed from their own social stratum. Their resistance to the

dominant common sense or their own conception has to convert into ‘good sense’, which is about becoming aware of the practices deployed by the current leaders. It involves going beyond ‘a fragmentary collection of ideas and opinions’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328) and detangling from this fragmented and incoherent common sense in order to become effective at questioning the existing leading narrative of the ruling classes. However, conditions of subalternity and their development, according to Gramsci (1971, 52–6), are precisely what limit groups with little degrees of empowerment and subjected to the dominance of ruling classes from developing good sense.

For subaltern intellectuals to showcase good sense and become politically effective, they have to become centralised, organised, and express a collective consciousness. Essentially, when this political organisation is not achieved, common sense is no longer contradicted and good sense does not detach from it (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326–33). This is possible when the ruling classes, whose hegemonic status is being challenged, devise subtle strategies of passive revolution and *trasformismo* in order to ‘conserve the assent of the subaltern groups and ... maintain control over them’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 52).

Unlike problem-solving theories or even Cox’s analytical frameworks, a Gramscian theoretical framework is ideal for BRICS because it enables us to study the configuration as a network of different social forces rather than a fixed entity in the world order. The state, for Gramsci (1971, p. 242), is integral and should be understood as a composite of political society *and* civil society. They both comprise an organic unity because they exist alongside one another. ‘[T]he state in many ways controls the development and organization of civil society’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 242). A Gramscian approach, therefore, becomes useful because it allows an engagement with all the integral elements of the configuration, that is, the non-governmental and

government-approved organisations within BRICS. As Gramsci (1971) said, ‘it [is] interesting to study concretely the forms of cultural organisation which keep the ideological world in movement within a given country, and to examine how they function in practice’ (p. 342).

Although a Gramscian theoretical lens is promising for studying the relationship between political and civil society such as to offer comprehensive explanations of the state of affairs in a society by analysing class actors or social forces with different degrees of empowerment, its adaptation into neo-Gramscianism and Coxian application has been met with criticisms (Burnham, 1991; Joseph, 2008; Radice, 2008; Saurin, 2008; Steans and Tepe, 2008). Scholars argue that borrowing Gramsci’s ideas in the Coxian tradition and applying them to case studies of international relations and the global political economy involves stripping his concepts of their true essence and overstretching their application beyond Gramsci’s original national context to the point of diluting their true meaning (Callinicos, 2010; Germain and Kenny, 1998, p. 17; Smith, 1994, p. 147).

Despite these criticisms and the fact that both the disciplines of IR and GPE are inundated with Gramscian analysis, my thesis contributes a neo-Gramscian approach in IR and argues that a study of the BRICS configuration beyond its state features is necessary for understanding the underpinnings of these middle powers with semi-peripheral characteristics. In this thesis, Gramsci’s common sense is applied with the aim of providing a momentum to reflect upon how those discourses coming from above, appear natural, are unquestioned, and become dominant.

Rather than reducing the BRICS grouping to a matter of economic relations, how it co-exists with the existing powers, or how it can be a means of transformative change, it is more desirable

to consider how different socially, economically, and politically empowered groups within the configuration are manufacturing the vision of the five governments. The ruling classes' discursive strategies deliberately present themselves in a positive light in order to offer a united competitive hegemonic project to the existing Northern or Western institutions in the world order. However, this positive self-presentation is not solely intended to challenge existing global leadership. Instead, it is a matter of winning over the consent of subalterns from the configuration in order to fabricate and sustain the common sense of working in their interests.

Another important reason for using a Gramscian theoretical lens and for overcoming its obsolescence in IR is also to think about where the Brics-from-the-middle, that is, the government-approved platforms fit in the state-society dynamics. They play an active role in sustaining the common sense of the groups from above and in co-opting as well as appropriating the principles and intellectuals from below.

Overall, when the dynamics of the BRICS configuration's political and civil society are dissected, parallels can be drawn with Gramsci's writings about the struggle of social forces for leadership. In the *Prison Notebooks* (1971), he provided a breakdown of the distinct impact of establishing an order through coercion and consent. In either scenarios, he wrote about wider society's different responses to an imposed dominance and one that was won through consent. More particularly, he accentuated the prospects of deploying subtle pre-emptive political strategies in instances when the leadership and common sense of a social group is contested. To understand this political intervention from above, Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* are akin to a toolbox. They contain a set of conceptual tools, which perform different functions and yet are all necessary in the assembling of seemingly fragmented pieces, which are eventually connected to framing an image about how an order is established and sustained in society.

Despite the fact that a manual about how to use the tools or concepts from this toolbox is lacking, it is still feasible to logically handle his concepts beyond the immediate context he intended for them.

1.5. Research objectives and purpose

This thesis's main objective is to consider how Gramscian concepts are relevant for studying the BRICS configuration's state-society dynamics in IR. Simultaneously, this objective helps to think about how to overcome the discipline's narrow-mindedness. Currently, knowledge of global geopolitics continues to overemphasise state actors from the core sphere as more worthy of academic attention. Meanwhile, critical interpretations and questioning of the contributions of social forces from semi-peripheries to the world order are overlooked. This thesis aims to address this gap. Its objective is to incorporate all the integral components of BRICS as a subject of study. This includes giving proper academic attention to the semi-peripheries' political society and civil society as distinct units of analysis.

Ultimately, the purpose of contributing to knowledge on world politics through a study of BRICS is to build a more inclusive IR. More precisely, the research aims for offering a post-positivist study of BRICS are fourfold. First, it considers the implications of problem-solving or uncritical theories' treatment of BRICS and the potential of Coxian critical theory for a study of semi-peripheral countries' convergence. Second, it explores the degree to which the neo-Gramscian approach, derived from the Coxian model, continues to favour a logic of capitalism and assumes a top-down flow of the hierarchy of social forces, which limits understanding of semi-peripheries in Coxian-inspired studies.

Third, it reverts to Gramsci's concepts of common sense, good sense, passive revolution, trasformismo, political society, and civil society to explain the BRICS state-society dynamics

and discourse appropriation. Fourth and based on the previous aim, this thesis highlights the distinct roles of the different groups with different degrees of empowerment. It considers engagement with Gramscian concepts as a means of reinvigorating research with Gramsci's ideas in critical IR theory, not the Coxian analytical frameworks, to contribute to the underdeveloped body of literature on semi-peripheries' from a critical theory perspective in IR.

1.6. Outline of the key terms

This section outlines the key terms employed in this thesis. I explain the shortcomings of existing classificatory definitions of BRICS in the next chapter. This thesis employs the acronym in capital letters to refer to the grouping of the five states. They are referred to as semi-peripheries mainly to emphasise the point that they have not reached the core level and are not peripheries. The acronym 'BRICS' refers to the five states whereas 'BRICs' refers to the grouping prior to South Africa's membership.

To distinguish among the non-state actors or different classes in the BRICS configuration, I rely on the classification offered by Garcia and Bond (2016, p. 6–7). They differentiate among the Brics from above, the middle, and below. I explain later in this chapter the differences of my application of the categories from the work of Garcia and Bond (2016). However, in general, the three expressions echo some of their definitions. The Brics-from-above are a class of actors from the upper social stratum of the five countries referring to 'heads of state, corporate and elite allies' (p. 6).

The Brics-from-the-middle refer to the BRICS Academic Forum, BRICS Trade Union Forum, BTTC, Civic BRICS, and any government-approved or official platform organising on behalf of the governments' requests. Both 'BRICS Civil Society' and 'Civic BRICS' are used interchangeably to denote official government-sanctioned fora ensuring people-to-people

exchanges on matters pertaining to BRICS. Jaeger (2007) refers to organised civil society as a ‘sub-system of the ... political system [rather] than as a manifestation ... “from outside”’ (p. 258). Similarly, in the BRICS context, the Brics-from-the-middle share features of an official civil society bound with government structures. They reflect features of government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs) in the sense that they are approved for formation by the government but may not be directly operated by them (Korten, 1990, p. 104–5). GONGOs are established to project ‘ideas and practices [about] democratic promotion which are not on the surface politically contentious, but in fact mask other economic and foreign policy objectives’ (Cumming, 2010, p. 781). As will be elaborated in Chapter 6, the Brics-from-the-middle also give the impression of an independent civil society organisation but, in reality, play an important role in promoting the economic discourse advocating the governments’ interests.

The Brics-from-below are grassroots activists among the five countries and beyond who share a transcultural solidarity and contest the BRICS agenda. They constitute members from the working classes and the inferior social stratum of the BRICS. During their initial gathering in Durban in 2013, the activists used the label ‘Joint Civil Society’. However, to avoid confusion with the official governmental civil society meetings, the activists began calling their platform as the ‘People’s Forum on BRICS’. Overall, the labels ‘Joint Civil Society’ and ‘People’s Forum’ are used interchangeably to refer to the unofficial civil society platform of the Brics-from-below. Such organisations or movements that transcend borders are labelled as unofficial to underline the ‘loosely arranged networks of people’ involved in their gatherings who call for ‘political and social transformations beyond the confines of individual states’ (Davies, 2019, p. 2).

The concepts of political society, civil society, common sense, good sense, passive revolution, and trasformismo are derived from Gramsci's writings. These are elaborated in Chapter 3. The 'most immediately visible aspect of the state is political society' (Buttigieg, 1995, p. 4). In this study's context, political society refers to the heads of state and government bodies whereas civil society refers to the 'ensemble of organisms' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12) constituting the non-governmental organisations. Both political society and civil society are integral features of a state. The political society controls the development of civil society and it is in civil society where the leadership of a social group is won through consent rather than coerced. When discussing the interplay between political and civil society, they are regularly referred to as 'state-society'.

Common sense is not to be understood according to the mainstream definition meaning the exercise of sound judgement in practical matters. In Gramscian context, it is a conception or ways of thinking of any person, which become ingrained and pervasive and reflect the beliefs of the social group the individual belongs to. Common sense, however, is fragmented and when diffused in civil society, it can 'fracture along certain lines and in certain directions' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 327). Every social stratum can fabricate common sense and their differing conceptions of the world can be in competition with one another to become the leading or dominant one.

Inversely, good sense is a step higher than common sense. It is detached from common sense because there has been a realisation of class consciousness and an understanding of the practices involved in the struggle for leadership, which is accepted by wider society. Passive revolution refers to a strategy engineered from above to contain forms of resistances (Gramsci, 1971, p. 106–14). Trasformismo refers to another strategy from above meant to absorb intellectuals from opposing forces (Gramsci, 1971, p. 58f).

1.7. Overview of the research question and hypotheses

On account of the lack of theoretical engagement with how the BRICS configuration has become a representation *of* the Global South, this thesis borrows insights from Gramsci's concepts to formulate its research question and hypotheses. The overarching research question asks: how is the BRICS common sense about representing the Global South's interests manufactured and does it convert into good sense? Specifically, three hypotheses have been formulated to address this research question. The first hypothesis posits that the intellectuals affiliated with the BRICS ruling classes and political society manufacture the common sense of representing the Global South's interests. The basis for formulating this central question is because existing scholarships do not explore the very origin of the BRICS discourse but rather assume an inherent link between the configuration and the Global South.

There are grassroots groups, however, which challenge the BRICS discourse, and claim that the ruling classes have appropriated their principles to give authority to their common sense. In this political and civil society interplay, the role of the groups from the middle should not be ignored because they operate as government-sanctioned platforms to allegedly reflect subalterns' ideas. This thesis, thus, emphasises these internal dimensions of the configuration embodied in the categories of the Brics from above, the middle, and below whose dynamics influence the semi-peripheries' strategies at regional and international platforms.

As a result, the second hypothetical claim is that the Brics-from-below challenge the common sense manufactured by the Brics-from-above. The third hypothesis claims that in anticipation of pressures from below, the Brics-from-above create platforms for middle groups, allegedly for creating exchanges with civil society, but these Brics-from-the-middle co-opt members from below and absorb their contestations. This third hypothesis is also linked with the claim

that the Brics-from-the-middle devise discursive strategies imitating tactics of elite groups, appropriate subalterns' principles, and project these in the configuration's vision to give authority to the discourses of the Brics-from-above about the Global South. This hypothetical claim is, hence, also about exploring whether this strategy serves to prevent opposition to the BRICS common sense from converting into good sense.

1.8. Brief description of the methodology

This study of BRICS requires a multi-methodological approach because of how I have formulated my research hypotheses. As stated in the previous section, my research question is whether there is a detachment of good sense from common sense within the BRICS configuration. To substantiate this study, it has been further broken down into three correlated claims: formation of common sense through discursive strategies from above; potential challenges to that common sense in the form of resistances and contestations from below; and co-optation of these subalterns' principles by middle groups.

First, for an understanding of the fabrication of common sense by the Brics-from-above which is reinforced by the Brics-from-the-middle, a 'political-critical discourse analysis' (van Dijk, 1997) of texts produced by the governmental actors has been necessary because the language they employ produces, reflects, repeats, and supports their social power. This analytical approach 'deals especially with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance' (van Dijk, 1997, p. 11). BRICS government-generated documents are not simply a matter of reflecting commitments or action plans for the next annual summit. Instead, they serve to reproduce and reinforce their common sense as popular knowledge. As argued by Fairclough and Fairclough (2016, p. 187), '[t]exts are "multi-

functional”: ... they provide representations (of people, objects, events)’. Moreover, discourse intends to convince less empowered groups of individuals of a perspective or prompt them to reject views, which challenge the dominant one. For this reason, an analysis of the BRICS discursive strategies has been necessary, to understand how the Brics-from-above articulate a ‘positive self-presentation’ (van Dijk, 1997, p. 37; 2006b, p. 126) of their decisions, that is, emphasise meanings about themselves associated with positive connotations while negatively criticising competing views. This positive-self representation reflects the ‘witting evidence’ (Marwick, 2001, p. 172–9), that is, the intentional message and information which the government actors seek to convey.

Second, in order to reveal why the Brics-from-below contest the positive imagery projected by the Brics-from-above, it has been necessary to understand their views about how they perceive the BRICS and the configuration’s intention for the Global South. Given that the Brics-from-below in BRICS have been recently formed and they constitute an unofficial civil society, it has been difficult to gather information about their gatherings.⁴ For this reason, field observation of the platform for the Brics-from-below has been necessary because there is currently little scholarly explanation in IR for why these groups exist and how they are different from other official BRICS platforms such as the organised BRICS Civil Society.

Observing the gathering of the Brics-from-below in 2016 was helpful for my understanding of their cultural organisation and purpose. One of the benefits has been the direct exposure to the participants’ activities in a naturally occurring context. It has also been valuable to combine my observations with interviews because as Patton (2002, p. 291) notes, ‘whenever possible and appropriate, having observed what appears to be significant ... some effort should be made

⁴ I began working on my PhD in October 2015 and, at that time, the activities and initiative of the Brics-from-below were relatively new.

to follow up with those involved to find out directly from them what ... [it] really meant'. On this account, I interviewed some of the organisers behind the Brics-from-below and their participants.

Owing to the different components of this study, a multi-methodological approach, combining the methods of document research, field observation, and interviews, has been more effective in comparison with the narrow strategy of a single-method approach. The latter would have been limited to investigate the BRICS configuration's complex organisational structure. There is a diversity of subcultures shaping the configuration. Hence, analysis of the BRICS configuration's organisational framework has required a 'variety in data collection methodologies in order to mirror the complexity which they attempt to describe' (Paul, 1996, p. 142).

1.9. Research contributions

This thesis contributes to an understanding of the BRICS configuration beyond its economic and material capabilities. The focus on the configuration as a group of state actors narrows the engagement with the topic to discussions of its economic potential. There is a theoretical bias in favour of problem-solving theories for a study of semi-peripheral convergences, which this study seeks to address and avoid because it restricts the discipline of IR. This exclusion is a result of prioritising studies of powerful states from the core and ignoring non-core states as well as classes or social forces with different degrees of empowerment.

To overcome this theoretical bias, this thesis distinguishes between BRICS as a subject *in* and representation *of* the Global South. It invites IR scholars studying semi-peripheral convergences to clarify their approach to the subject because it impacts on what aspects of the integrative processes they are studying and to consider that understanding semi-peripheries as

a contributor *in* the Global South is different from being construed as a representation *of* the Global South. This distinction also allows acknowledging that studies of BRICS in IR are little examined from a critical theory angle.

Although the critical theory outlook espoused by Gramscians and neo-Gramscians in IR literature has mainly been utilised to examine European integration (Bieler and Morton, 2004; Cox, 1993; Gill and Law, 1989; Gill, 1993; Overbeek, 2004) and even if some semi-peripheral countries have received Gramscian analytical attention (Girling, 1984; Moore, 2007; Morton, 2007b; Worth, 2005), these are individual country case studies. The integration processes of semi-peripheral countries are not discussed beyond a problem-solving approach. The current literature confine the research on integrative processes of non-core countries to studies of the state as the dominant actor, dwell on the importance of material functions of the configuration, and insinuate that the intergovernmental decisions are dictated by economic gains. The consequence of prioritising the statist dimensions of the configuration is to deliberately ignore social forces of a less empowered and non-market nature because they are deemed as inconsequential in shaping decisions at an international level.

This thesis fits in the body of knowledge on critical IR theory because it questions the origins of the BRICS common sense and goes beyond studies about its economic predictions. However, it does not aim to reinforce the Coxian perspective focusing on the transformative capabilities of the configuration in the world order. Instead, the key point about questioning the origin of the BRICS common sense is to transcend queries about their transformative capabilities. Instead, it adds another outlook for a critical interpretation of the configuration in order to draw attention on their intra-state interplay and its implications for social forces with different degrees of empowerment. Overall, the transcultural solidarity among the people's movements of the Brics-from-below does not have any direct impact on regional or

international decisions. Yet, the findings on discourse appropriation suggest they play an important role in the discursive strategies designed from above and the middle meant to co-opt their actors, absorb their ideas, and consolidate the intergovernmental vision at a global level.

Another area where this study deviates from Coxian critical theory is through its engagement with Gramsci's concepts. Rather than extrapolating Gramsci's notes into Cox's analytical frameworks to account for the international context, this thesis offers a neo-Gramscian contribution in IR but in a different way from neo-Coxian scholarship. It reverts to Gramsci's original ideas and updates two of Gramsci's concepts (passive revolution and *trasformismo*). This thesis's originality is in the form of a conceptual engagement emerging as a result of a lack of analysis of Gramsci's concepts because the scholarly attention remains mainly concerned with debates on whether his ideas are obsolete and misapplied in contemporary contexts such that they have lost the true essence of their meaning.

The two updates are concerned with Gramsci's concepts of passive revolution and *trasformismo*. While Gramsci refers to passive revolution as a tactic from above, it is important to account for the strategies from the middle because they are affiliated with the groups in power but which feign working in the interests of the groups from below. This thesis considers that passive revolution from the middle groups within the BRICS configuration can be a means of revitalising interest in new applications of a Gramscian analysis in IR beyond the neo-Gramscian approach located in Coxian scholarship.

This thesis refers to the subtle strategies from the middle as *counter* passive revolution and *counter* *trasformismo*. It is not a revision of the concepts but rather an addition of a new component underlining that co-opted subalterns from civil society are capable of devising strategies, which imitate tactics of elites from the political society in order to restore and

consolidate top-level groups' social order when it is challenged. The word 'counter' is employed to refer to the strategies of the groups from the middle rather than from above and to connote that despite the fact that they are subalterns, co-opted groups deploy tactics which act in opposition to the interests of the genuine subalterns, that is, voluntary organisations from the inferior division of the BRICS configuration. The word 'counter' is ambiguous but it helps through its double interpretations. First, 'counter' as a verb can refer to acting in opposition. In this study's context, the Brics-from-the-middle act to counter the strategies of the Brics-from-below. Second, 'counter' as a prefix can mean to correspond. It is also observed that the Brics-from-the-middle complement the strategies of the Brics-from-above and behave as their counterparts. The point of using the word 'counter' is essentially to distinguish the strategies from the middle and invite further research on a reinvigoration of Gramsci's concepts rather than debate the rigour of his work as a theory for contemporary case studies.

1.10. Research limitations and shortcomings

Despite this study's theoretical intention, it does not claim to be an expert interpretation of the ideas of Gramsci. Similar to the criticisms attached with existing scholarship, which are concerned about Gramscian ideas being stretched beyond their true essence, my update of the two concepts of passive revolution and *trasformismo* can face equal reproaches. However, it remains that a Gramscian analysis of the integral components of the BRICS configuration, that is, political society and civil society, has not been offered to date. Acknowledging the role played by groups situated in between the leading classes and subalterns serves to consider and explore future hypothetical possibilities about how to situate their position in state-society dynamics.

Another reason for the inexpert interpretation of Gramsci's ideas is due to the complexity of his *Prison Notebooks*. Owing to the lack of clarity about how he intended his work to be interpreted mainly because of the conditions these were written, I found his ideas complex to grasp. In order to understand and connect his different concepts scattered in his notebooks, the missing connections I experienced during my reading led me to illustrate his ideas visually using a mind map, which I explain in Chapter 3. Although I have attempted to incorporate his main ideas related to the struggle between social forces for leadership, there are some concepts such as war of position and war of manoeuvre, which I have disregarded in my analysis of the BRICS intra-state dynamics.

As a result, while I have opted to concentrate on common sense, good sense, passive revolution, trasformismo, political society, and civil society, my visual illustration (Figure 3.3.1, Chapter 3) can be considered as having over-simplified Gramsci's ideas. Nonetheless, this also invites discussions about knowledge production in IR beyond the written form and imagining a different presentation of Gramsci's notes such as to make these more accessible for practical purposes, namely for social movements rather than for academic theorisation.

Additionally, situating the position of different social forces within a visual illustration of a Gramscian map can clarify the reasons about the differences between how groups with different degrees of empowerment are or ought to be represented and what is in reality being represented about them. Acknowledging these differences is not intended to think of ways of bridging the gap between the contrasting forms of representation. Instead, it is important to understand that the different representations are deliberate and determined by politics. This is particularly important in my explanation of the differences between a vertical and horizontal approach to understanding the organisation of social forces in a given order, which is elaborated in Chapter 3.

Finally, I acknowledge that I have simplified the distinction among the different groups of social forces (Brics from above, the middle, and below) for analytical purposes. Garcia and Bond (2016) identify distinct ideological viewpoints for each group. For example, they present at least three different categories within each of their classification for the Brics from above, the middle, and below. My primary reason for eventually deciding to disregard their proposal of different views within each group is for practical reasons and to avoid vagueness in my research. Extending each group of actors would have been beyond the scope of this thesis. I have concentrated on the three main categories rather than sub-categories because this has helped to address the central research objective. This oversimplification can be addressed in future research, which I identify in my concluding seventh chapter.

1.11. Structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters, which are detailed below. Chapter 1 is the introduction. In Chapter 2, I review the literature on BRICS. The aim is to demonstrate my understanding of the topic and consider what has been written and not covered on BRICS already, which would strengthen the case for this study. It starts by focusing on the diverse terminologies and expressions associated with the acronym, which render it complex to define. The difficulty of situating the commonalities in the terminologies which would justify their labels as ‘semi-peripheries’, ‘emerging’, or ‘industrialised’ economies is important to be addressed in the first instance because it impacts on the treatment of the subject in IR. First, this chapter notes that the major debate being about the contested definitions suggests that the BRICS configuration is a misfit in the current world order, which cannot be studied using an analytical framework reserved for core states’ integration.

Second, Chapter 2 considers the theoretical implications of Cox's legacy for a study of BRICS. On the one hand, it identifies that knowledge on BRICS concentrates on its potential as a contributor of materials *in* the Global South, which perpetuates problem-solving theoretical approaches of BRICS in IR. On the other hand, questions about who are the BRICS and what would be an ideal theoretical framework to explore the politico-economic origin of BRICS and its representation *of* the Global South are not being asked. This chapter ends by emphasising the argument that the BRICS convergence is little studied from a critical IR theory lens. Yet, even Cox's critical theory is limited for a study of BRICS. The quasi-inexistent discussions about the configuration's social forces and how best to study their dynamics leads to a consideration about how a Gramscian theoretical engagement with the state-society interplay can be applied in BRICS.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the theoretical framework. It begins by refining the gap identified in the previous chapter about how the BRICS configuration is becoming a representation *of* the Global South. This chapter provides a visual illustration of Gramsci's key concepts. It defines the concepts of common sense, good sense, civil society, passive revolution, and *trasformismo*. This chapter also reviews texts that have applied and extrapolated these concepts for other contexts. It notes that the lack of accurate application of the concept of passive revolution results in criticisms claiming that neo-Gramscianism is flawed. To overcome this argument, the final section of this chapter offers a list of the conditions derived from Gramsci's writings about how a case of passive revolution can be identified. It assesses different contemporary applications of the concept and rates them as either a strong, poor, or continuing case of passive revolution. This chapter ends with a formulation of this thesis's hypotheses.

Chapter 4 explains the research design. It justifies the relevance of employing different qualitative research methods to substantiate the three hypotheses. The research design, that is,

how data collection has been conducted is explained. The ethical considerations are addressed in this chapter in addition to the limitations of the chosen methods of documentary research, field observation, and interviews.

Chapter 5 addresses the first hypothesis about how the BRICS common sense is fabricated but also fragmented. It considers how BRICS discourses produce a positive self-presentation of their image through the language they employ in their texts. This chapter identifies ‘practical cooperation’, ‘global economic governance’, ‘international affairs’, ‘people-to-people exchanges’, and ‘principles’ as the key themes constituting the BRICS intergovernmental declarations. It also explains the four steps of discourse analysis, which this thesis has undertaken to identify these themes. The next section of this chapter concentrates on the three themes of practical cooperation, global economic governance, and international affairs, and how the Brics-from-above spread these discourses as common sense. The two themes of people-to-people exchanges and principles are elaborated in Chapter 6.

The findings discussed in Chapter 5 indicate that the declared commitments for these themes are grounded in witting evidences that the producers of the texts use to give authority to their message of working in the Global South’s interests. An analysis of these statements, however, reveals the unwitting evidence, that is, the concealed information, which the Brics-from-above do not present because it would undermine their positive self-presentation. This chapter concludes that the intellectuals affiliated with the political society of the Brics-from-above manufacture the BRICS common sense and use the Brics-from-the-middle to enrich their conception of working for the Global South’s interests. However, there are evident contradictions in their common sense, which prevent their fragmented common sense from converting into good sense.

Chapter 6 considers the resistances of the Brics-from-below and addresses the hypothesis about whether the Brics from above and the middle play an active role in preventing opposition to their common sense from converting into good sense. It expands on the themes of people-to-people exchanges and principles, which were identified in the previous chapter. It concentrates on the origins of the Brics-from-below and how the timing of the inclusion of discourses about culture and BRICS Civil Society is important. The timing suggests a strategic and pre-emptive means from above to absorb resistant voices from below and appropriate their principles. In this chapter, Gramsci's methodological stages about the development and formation of subalterns are not only useful to trace the development of the Brics-from-the-middle and Brics-from-below but have also been valuable to account for the failure of the Brics-from-below to assert their integral autonomy. The conclusion reached is that the Brics-from-below's opposition to the BRICS common sense also does not convert into good sense because the Brics-from-the-middle deploy subtle strategies similar to dominant classes to regulate the exchange of information about the configuration and absorb the contestations from below.

Chapter 7 is the conclusion to the thesis. It considers how this thesis's contributions fit the body of knowledge on world politics and inclusive IR.

Chapter 2: Distinguishing between knowledge on BRICS as a subject *in* and representation *of* the Global South

The writings on BRICS are vast. In academic endeavours, the acronym has been an area of research since Jim O'Neill, a Goldman Sachs's researcher, coined it in 2001. This chapter offers a thorough survey of the scholarship written on BRICS. It notes that knowledge on BRICS is organised according to the material contributions, that is, the quantifiable resources measured through their population size, economic growth, territory, and military forces at the configuration's disposal *in* the Global South. Owing to the positivist assumptions and rendering of BRICS into a subject, which can be scientifically examined, the configuration has been primarily treated in IR scholarship according to mainstream problem-solving theories. As a result, the major debates and discussions on the subject have been state-centric, that is, they have narrowed their focus on the state as the primary unit of analysis and other pre-defined materialistic variables.

Theoretically, the configuration has been subjected to a replication of Northern or Western assumptions believing that national interest is a priority, security can never be ascertained, and, thus, power-seeking through material accumulation is necessary. Meanwhile, knowledge about how BRICS have become a representation *of* the Global South has been neglected in world political analyses. One of the primary limitations of mistreating BRICS as an accumulator of material resources conferring power has been to exclude an understanding about how the configuration is employing non-coercive strategies mainly through discourse to appeal to different classes of actors within their configuration and across the Global South. It is this gap in knowledge on BRICS, which this study seeks to fill.

This chapter, thus, identifies the academic studies conducted on BRICS, offers insights on how the subject has been studied to date, and draws conclusions from these perspectives. By elaborating on how knowledge on the configuration has been organised since the acronym was coined in 2001, the aims for reviewing the literature on BRICS in this chapter are twofold. First, to showcase my understanding about the topic and second, to strengthen the case for my research, which is about encouraging a study beyond a scientific treatment of BRICS subjected to rationalist or positivist thinking and state-centrism. The expected objective is to substantiate the argument that a study about how BRICS have become representative *of* the Global South is needed in order to examine all the integral political and civil society features of the configuration.

This chapter is structured in four sections. Section 2.1 is mainly descriptive. It provides a history of the acronym because its origins have streamlined the key features used by scholars to narrow their study on BRICS. It then elaborates on the different definitions or the country classifications associated with BRICS, which have also influenced the scholarly treatment of the subject. As a result of definitions prioritising the material capabilities and structural resources of BRICS, section 2.2 of this literature review notes that the body of knowledge in IR has favoured a study of the configuration from mainstream problem-solving theories, namely Neorealism and Neoliberal Institutionalism. To identify the questions and debates, which have not been framed on BRICS in IR scholarship, section 2.3 borrows Cox's (1981) analytical distinction between problem-solving theories and critical theory to distinguish knowledge on BRICS as a contributor of resources *in* the Global South and how it is construed as a representation *of* the Global South. Section 2.4 is the chapter summary.

2.1. The history of the acronym

Although the introductory chapter briefly mentioned the acronym's economic roots, it is important to elaborate on its creation because it has influenced studies on BRICS. In his research paper, which coined the acronym, O'Neill's (2001) macroeconomic predictions were meant to reflect on the global market's trajectory at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The calculations of the four economies' projected growth encompassed variables such as GDP growth, world trade shares, and purchasing power parity. To support his forecasts, O'Neill offered four possible economic scenarios for the next decade, which all concluded that the real GDP growth of the BRIC countries would exceed that of the G7 group. Additionally, O'Neill (2001) commented that the 'fiscal and monetary policy in the BRICs' (p. 1) and their rapid growth would influence the global balance. He suggested that international platforms, predominantly the club of 'Finance Ministers and central bank Governors' (p. 11) constituting the G7 forum, ought to include BRIC representatives because of how their policy-making would change the global economic landscape.

There have also been other factors accounting for O'Neill's inspiration for coining the acronym. His interest in the emerging power of Asia and the terrorist attacks of September 2001 propelled him to argue that imposing American or Western philosophy would not be universally accepted (O'Neill, cited in Tett, 2010). Instead, he suggested that globalisation is intended to encompass multiplicity rather than American unipolarity in the future world order. As such, non-Western economies ought to be accommodated in global decision-making. O'Neill also acknowledges that he devised the innovative country grouping because he felt pressured to stamp his mark on his department at Goldman Sachs when he was appointed as the sole Head of Economics in 2001 (O'Neill, cited in Tett, 2010). Given the significance of

countries not belonging to the Western sphere and their potential influence, his search for a new theme with an economic novelty resulted in 'BRIC'.

O'Neill, however, rejects the claims that it was a marketing trick to draw attention to Goldman Sachs (Tett, 2010). Instead, he asserts that the four countries would have grown irrespective of the label attached to them. Despite their geographic and cultural disparity, and having never envisaged grouping themselves to form a conglomeration, he identified the shared characteristics of the four different countries that would bind them: large growing populations, their economies' potential, and a positive governmental attitude about global markets.

The two other Goldman Sachs's researchers who expanded O'Neill's predictions equally commented on the factors responsible for the BRIC countries' advancement in the global economy (Wilson and Purushothaman, 2003). According to them, it was not about 'miracle growth' (2003, p. 12), that is, a phenomenal event, which would boost their individual economies, and help them to outperform the G7 countries. Instead, they proposed that three instrumental and ongoing factors accounting for this growth already existed: 'growth in employment', 'growth in the capital stock', and 'technical progress' (p. 7).

In addition to suggesting that the four powers' rapid growth had the potential to transform the financial landscape, the Goldman Sachs's research papers propelled the BRIC countries as an important market to be conquered by Western countries. Shortly after the papers were published, the investment bank was inundated with requests from financial executives and businesses 'trying to hone their strategies to sell products to the non-western world, or to use regions such as China as a manufacturing base' (Tett, 2010). The acronym, thus, became an abbreviation with positive connotations, which reinvigorated elite financial investors' interests in the four countries.

Although this thesis acknowledges the importance of O'Neill and his colleagues' contributions in projecting the economic status of the four countries through demographic trends and a model of capital accumulation and productivity, the research intention is neither to prove nor refute the accuracy of their predictions or question their model and techniques of calculations. Instead, the reason for describing the origins of the acronym is to draw attention to the main questions that have been asked around the topic from its creation, which seemed primarily concerned with whether the predictions would materialise and the impact it would have globally.

Two key criticisms are noted in the initial research on BRICS. The first ones are about the prospects of the configuration's economic dimension. In the wake of the acronym's popularity, knowledge on BRICS has been essentially organised around the countries' economic potential. Scholarship on their economic trajectory reached different conclusions at diverse periods since the acronym was coined. Cheng et al. (2007) concluded that despite social challenges and 'major legislative and regulatory obstacles to the growth of BRICs' (p. 154), the grouping's sizable economic supremacy is incontestable for the future. Others criticised the investment bank's research papers. For example, Cooper's (2006) economic analysis marred the Goldman Sachs's optimism about BRICs by highlighting their neglect of other aspiring economies, namely Mexico, Turkey, Indonesia, and Vietnam in potentially rivalling some of the four countries. Kedia, Lahiri, and Mukherjee (2006, p. 57–60) argued that diminished economic growth rates in the individual BRICs and inconsistencies in their capacity to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) are obstacles, which would prevent them from outranking the G7 economies. In an economic report, Hawksworth and Cookson (2008) identified other states than the BRICs as offering better investment prospects.

The second type of criticisms concentrated on the social and political dimensions of the grouping. Additional studies about O'Neill's (2001), Wilson and Purushothaman's (2003) predictions underlined their neglect of socio-economic and political factors specific to the individual countries capable of preventing them from realising their BRICS potential. Using a case study of the Indian economy, Desai (2007) argued that internal market constraints and worsening of rural poverty in India would affect the BRIC countries' sustained growth projection in the long run. Sotero and Armijo (2007) stressed the domestic challenges in Brazil as unacknowledged obstacles in the Goldman Sachs's forecasts. In their own economic projections, Jacobs and van Rossem (2014, p. 56) underlined the role of China and not Brazil, Russia, and India as the key economic player to compete with the rest of the world. In documents produced by international think tanks, the Goldman Sachs's macroeconomic projections have also been addressed. Esposito, Kapoor, and Mathur (2016) focused on the social and political challenges likely to slow the rising powers' economic progress. The global financial crisis and social unrest in the individual countries have also prompted financial analysts to argue that the predictions will not materialise (Flanders, 2011; Garcia, 2011; Tisdall, 2016).

The economic projections offered in the Goldman Sachs's research papers have, as a result, been variedly interpreted according to the economic climate in order to discuss the grouping's trajectory. In the initial years of the acronym's popularity, interpreters of the economic data offered different versions of the countries' ability to realise their BRICS potential. By concentrating on the feasibility of the economic predictions, little attention has been devoted to acknowledge the complexity of defining BRICS especially as from 2009 when the acronym began transforming into an intergovernmental configuration.

2.1.1. Terminologies: what is not BRICS

The origins of the acronym reveal that the convergence of the BRICS configuration as an intergovernmental organisation from 2009 has been artificial. This means that it has not been ‘the product of diplomatic negotiations based on shared political values or common economic interests’ (Thakur, 2014, p. 1792). Instead, interests of the four government representatives to meet and discuss the prospects of a convergence developed because of the popularity around the buzzword ‘BRIC’ created by a private sector investment bank. The omnipresent acronym in financial discourse during the first decade of the twenty-first century fashioned into a trendy identifier of the four countries. O’Neill’s (2001) idea that non-Western countries can reasonably contribute to the global economy caught the governments’ attention. The four Heads of State first met as an intergovernmental configuration in 2009 and invited South Africa to join in 2010.

However, once the acronym transformed into an intergovernmental grouping in 2009, defining the relationship among the five countries was still not straightforward. On the one hand, since 2011, the BRICS state leaders started identifying themselves as ‘a major platform for dialogue and cooperation’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2011a, note 6) ‘amongst countries that represent 43% of the world’s population [whose goals are] the promotion of peace, security and development in a multi-polar, inter-dependent and increasingly complex, globalizing world’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2012a, note 3). Prior to 2011, their intergovernmental declarations were fundamentally formulated in aspirational statements about themselves and their goals on different topics such as ‘We stress the role ...; We call upon ...; We are committed...; We are convinced...; We recognise ...; We stand for ...; We reaffirm...; We strongly condemn...; We have agreed...’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2009, notes 1–16). Such statements remain repeated in every declaration but since 2011, they have expanded and become less vague.

On the other hand, in scholarly work, the expressions used to define the relationship among the five countries are wide-ranging. The different labels to discuss BRICS include: ‘club’ (Armijo and Roberts, 2014, p. 8; Cooper and Farooq, 2013, p. 428); ‘grouping’ (Pant, 2013, p. 91; Stuenkel, 2013a, p. 32; Unay, 2013, p. 77); ‘association’ (Dookeran, 2013, p. 129; Besada and Tok, 2014, p. 84), ‘forum’ (Marino, 2014, p. 3), ‘configuration’ (Olivier, 2013, p. 405), ‘resource powers’ (Wilson, 2015), ‘semi-peripheries’ (Ruvalcaba, 2013; Worth, 2015, p. 124), or ‘sub-imperialists’ (Garcia and Bond, 2016). Precise definitions of these expressions are not necessarily offered by the authors but these varied expressions are being highlighted to suggest that studies of BRICS are not grounded in a single definition or classification.

Instead, the numerous descriptions of BRICS are distinct but commonly stress the countries’ structural resources consisting of their economic capabilities and population size as the fundamental features of their convergence. Cronjé (2015), for example, considers the BRICS formation as a group of members of ‘developing or newly industrialised countries ... distinguished by their large, fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional and global affairs’ (p. 167). Kornegray and Bohler-Muller (2013) describe ‘BRICS as a disparate group or a partnership of [economic] convenience’ (p. 56). Quantifiable economic indicators have been used to rank the countries’ collective convergence. Authors have concentrated on GDP growth (Cooper, 2016, p. 530), their contribution to global trade (Stephen, 2014, p. 13), capital flows (de Paula, 2008; Duan, 2009; Gammeltoft, 2008), and a range of empirical measures to classify the five countries.

Other scholarship add characteristics beyond the economy but still of a material dimension to underline the five countries’ extent of influence. Agtmael (2012) comments that BRICS are ‘not a true power bloc or economic unit within or outside it ... [since within their respective

region,] none is fully accepted as “the” leader’ (p. 77). Jacobs and van Rossem (2014) demarcate their research on BRICS further by proposing that it ‘cannot be classified as a category of rising powers’ (p. 47) because a unidimensional emphasis on economic power neglects military and political dimensions. The classificatory concept of middle or rising powers is, nonetheless, regularly employed to refer to the BRICS configuration (Cooper, 2016; Cooper and Dal, 2016; Gilley, 2016; Maihold; 2016; Santikajaya, 2016, Stephen, 2014).

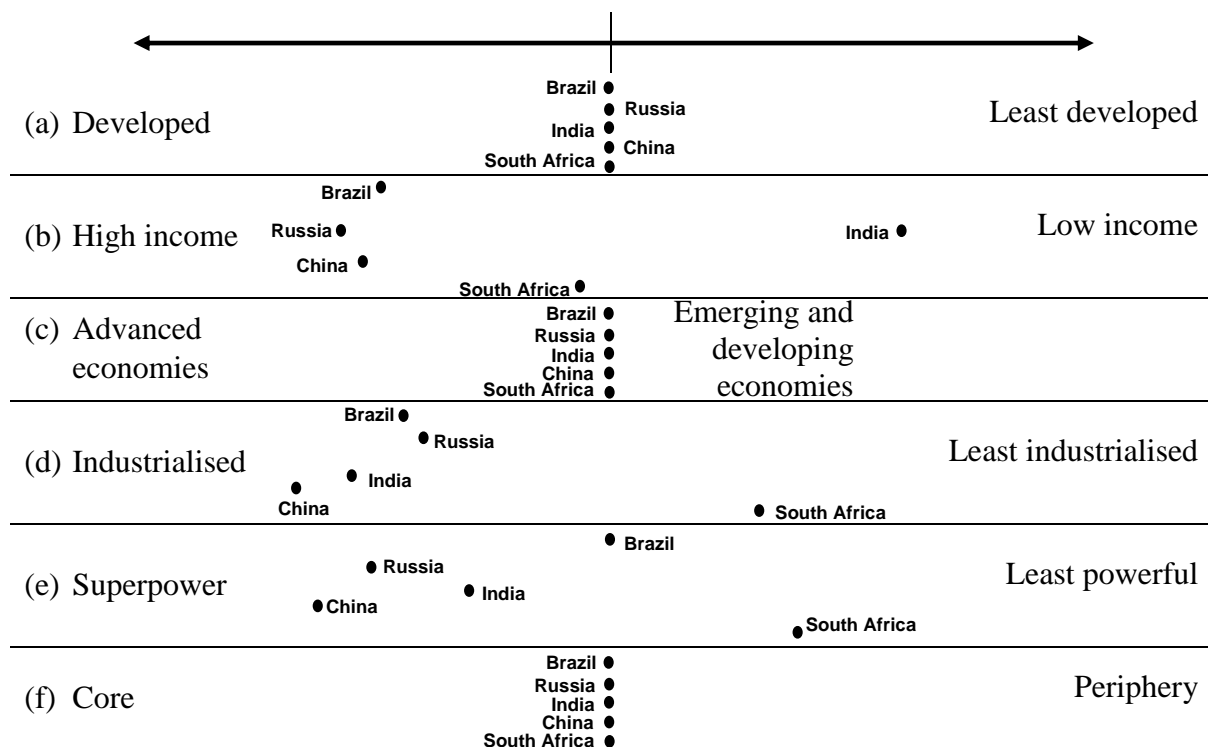
Attaching such labels as rising or middle powers with the BRICS configuration suggests that it has been defined in terms of what it is not. It implies the five countries have neither fully reached a final target yet nor are they at an economic standstill. They are in between two positions of a spectrum. Gilley (2016) notes that the so-called middle powers will consist roughly of the 10th to 30th ranked countries’ measured according to ‘their economic size, network influence or political memberships... [such as to indicate that] they are not actually in the middle but rather among a select group of the 15 percent most powerful countries’ (p. 651–2). As argued by Shaw (2015b, p. 3), it has become common to analyse these emerging powers, situated in the middle, according to their similarities and differences. Their convergences add new insights about regional groupings and the debates over how to situate their individual position in the global political economy invite different considerations about how to define and study them.

There are other binary models where the configuration is classified as being in the middle. For example, core-periphery, developed-least developed, high income-low income, and powerful-least powerful are classificatory terms associated with the five countries. Overall, the five countries making the BRICS are neither part of the core economies nor the periphery, thus consolidating the insinuation that they are in the middle. They are neither developed nor least developed. They neither collectively fall in the first world nor the third world categories despite

the fact that such labels are rarely used to classify countries. They have neither achieved the status of superpower and nor are they limited in terms of power. Instead, they are generally conceived in terms of what they are not; hence, leading to them being positioned in the middle of existing classificatory models.

Yet, assuming that the five countries are collectively in the middle of these classificatory models is misleading. When examined closely in Figure 2.1.1 below, the BRICS members are situated at distinct levels on numerous world scales used to label them.

Figure 2.1.1 BRICS countries' individual positions according to different country classifications



Sources: (a) UN (2019, p. 170–2); (b) World Bank (2019a); (c) IMF (2018);⁵ (d) UNCTAD (2019); (e) Chun, 2013; (f) Kentor (no date).⁶

⁵ The IMF only distinguishes between advanced economies, and emerging and developing economies.

⁶ Although there is no date for this website, the latest data used from the World Bank by Kentor dates from 2006.

Figure 2.1.1 indicates the position of the five BRICS members in different country classifications. This abstract illustration is based on data provided by different sources and except for 1(e) and (f), the rest are mainly established according to different organs of the UN. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) interpret data and statistics differently in order to offer different accounts about how to classify countries on numerous world scales. They use contrasting terminologies but the UN relies on data produced by the World Bank on Gross National Income (GNI) per capita in order to define the degree of development of countries.

Nevertheless, as illustrated in Figure 2.1.1, when situating the position of the five countries on different scales, there are notable divergences despite the similarity in sources of data from the World Bank. In addition to the difficulty of situating the position of the BRICS countries on the spectrum of the binary models used to classify countries according to these institutions, there are limits with the terminologies employed to define BRICS, which are explained below.

2.1.2. The shortcomings of existing classificatory definitions

The UN's report on *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2019* classifies the countries based on their degree of development measured according to GNI per capita. In other words, this classification is based on income level and, according to the UN's aggregation methodology, four of the BRICS countries categorise as developing countries falling in the sub-category of upper middle-income economies (UN, 2019, p. 172). While India is classified as a developing country by the UN, it ranks it as a lower-middle-income economy.

In Figure 2.1.1(b), when breaking down the upper middle level threshold according to calculations established by the World Bank and also used by the UN (2019, p. 168) in its country classification, there is a disparity in the position of each of the BRICS countries

indicating that they do not align collectively at the income level. The point is that it is misleading to define BRICS as a group of developing countries despite their alignment in Figure 2.1.1(a) according to the UN's classification. Although income level established by the World Bank is employed by the UN with the aim of matching other classifications, India would not align with the other four with a similar degree of development level.

Even the World Bank which had the habit of distinguishing between developed countries as high-income countries and developing countries as low- or middle-income countries has stopped this practice (World Bank, 2016, p. iii). In 2016, the World Bank declared its intention to start phasing out the term 'developing world' from its publications and databases. Unay (2013) comments that despite collectively constituting the largest economic bloc outside the industrialised countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the reason why the BRICS are viewed as developing countries compared with others internationally is 'due to their substantial developmental needs, regional income disparities, informal economic sectors and poverty alleviation necessities' (p. 84).

There is another classification where economic criteria are prioritised when defining BRICS. The IMF's differentiation in country classification distinguishes between the major poles of advanced economies in the world, and emerging and developing economies. Although its country classification is claimed to evolve with time (IMF, 2019, p. 134), it remains centred on key indicators of 'GDP valued at purchasing power parity, total exports of goods and services, and population' (IMF, 2019, p. 134). More importantly, its identification of countries belonging to the category of emerging market and developing economies is determined according to 'all those that are not classified as advanced economies' (IMF, 2019, p. 134). This again substantiates the point that BRICS countries are categorised in world classifications according to what they are not. O'Neill (quoted in Hughes, 2011; O'Neill, 2011b) has also underlined

that ‘emerging’ is a limited expression to associate with BRICS given they have already emerged. He additionally argues that ‘emerging’ implies adopting outdated approaches to study their market capitalisation when each of the four countries have already achieved ‘1 per cent of global GDP or more’ (O’Neill, quoted in Hughes, 2011).

Another shortcoming can be noted when grouping BRICS as newly industrialised countries. The concept of industrialisation is used interchangeably with the degree of development of countries and equally relies on income data provided by the World Bank and UNCTAD. In fact, in regards to the BRICS countries, Wilson and Purushothaman’s (2003, p. 13) predictions on the four BRICs focused on the countries’ industrial competences. On the basis of the BRICS countries possessing modern industrial sectors, scholars have linked the grouping with the concept of industrialisation (Armijo, 2007; Cronjé, 2015; Desai, 2007; Unay, 2013). Nevertheless, in Figure 1(d), the degree of industrialisation is another classification where a disparity in the positioning of the five countries can be highlighted.

According to Bozyk (2012), although there is no official definition for the concept of Newly Industrialised Economy (NIE) or Newly Industrialised Country (NIC), it is used to refer to ‘traditionally less developed countries which have made profound structural changes in their economies under conditions of a fast growth rate’ (p. 164). The OECD initiated two reports documenting the impact of NIEs on production and trade in manufacturing (1979) and the challenges or opportunities they represent for OECD countries (1988). These reports justified the creation of the then new classificatory term because patterns of trade had significantly changed since the 1960s. The changing location of manufacturing production to the Gang of Four economies of East Asia (Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan) created a new topography for trade owing to modifications in their export dynamics. These NIEs began to be referred to as the ‘world’s factories’ (McGrew, 2011, p. 281), that is, ‘proliferating

manufacturing export platforms producing world, rather than national, products' (McMichael, 2012, p. 82).

The first OECD report (1979) identified three criteria, which would qualify a developing country as a NIE: rapid escalation in industrial employment, increasing percentage of world manufacturing exports, and accelerated growth in real per capita GDP that would result in the country successfully catching up with advanced industrialised countries. These criteria suggested that the shift in industrial production from advanced developing countries to the next level of developing countries would result in a continuing rise of NICs (Bradford, 1982, p. 11). The OECD reports did not offer a list of NIEs at their time of publication. They simply alluded to individual East Asian countries' rapid growth from the late 1960s.

The OECD's (1979, 1988) pioneering but outdated studies on NIEs only compared states' degree of industrialisation and specific conditions at defined periods, namely before and after the Second World War, which enabled them to transform their economies. Once a World Bank report expanded on the OECD's criteria to 'include developing countries that had per capita incomes in excess of \$1,100 in 1978 and where the share of manufacturing sector in the gross domestic product was 20 percent or higher in 1977' (Balassa, 1981, p. 143), the term became subsequently applied to selected countries in Latin America, Europe-Middle East, and the Far East. Since there is no agreed economic method to calculate the degree of industrialisation of a state, economists generated different lists of NIEs (Bozyk, 2012; Chowdhury and Islam, 1993).

According to the 2019 United Nations Industrial Development Organisation's (UNIDO) *International Yearbook of Industrial Statistics*, which provides 'statistical indicators to facilitate international comparison related to the manufacturing sector' (p. 7), Russia is alluded

to as an industrialised economy in the ‘Other Europe’ category. Meanwhile, Brazil, India, China, and South Africa are considered to be emerging industrial economies within their respective regional country groupings (UNIDO, 2019, p. 13–5). ‘The classification of industrial activities follows the United Nations International Standard Industrial Classification’ (UNCTAD, 2004, p. 88). When examining UNCTAD’ statistics on a global scale, the industry or manufacturing output of Brazil, Russia, India, and China place them among the top twenty in the world (UNCTAD, 2019). For this reason, it is inaccurate to define and study BRICS in current studies as ‘newly’ industrialised because their industrial output has been high for the last two decades.

As for the ‘superpower-least powerful’ classification in Figure 2.1.1(e), it derives from Chun’s (2013) assessment of the BRICS countries’ likelihood to achieve the status of superpower. This is argued to be shaped and measured according to key global power indicators encompassing such features as ‘political relations, foreign policy and military power’ (Chun, 2013, p. 52). The national policy frameworks of the individual countries are argued to be framed according to the priorities of security and defence. Russia and China are characterised as actors using hard power when framing foreign policy in comparison with the soft power of the other three countries. Gilley (2016) adds to the stratum of power classification by stating that ‘Brazil remains a middle power never quite able to achieve greatness ... [whereas] South Africa is actually a candidate to exit the middle power category as its economy and governance erode’ (p. 654).

Situating the position of each of the BRICS countries is additionally not straightforward for the binary extremes of core-periphery because the sources are not up to date and there is no agreement on a list of semi-peripheries. In Figure 2.1.1(f), this list is according to the results of Kentor (no date). In a working paper for the *Institute for Research on World-Systems*, he

assessed nation state power according to their GDP measuring national productivity and, thus, the countries' economic dependence or dominance, GNI per capita, and military expenditures. He combined both income and military data in the ranking of countries' overall position and classified them as core, semi-periphery, or periphery according to values assigned to each of the indicator. Kentor (no date) employed data from the World Bank from 2006 to distinguish between high-income countries, which he situated as belonging to the Global North while classifying the rest of the peripheries and semi-peripheries as the Global South. According to Chase-Dunn and Morosin (2013), Kentor's ranking of 'the position of national societies in the world-system remains the best' because it combines three important quantitative indicators.

At the origin, it was Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1979) who argued for an analysis of the world-system. His theory posits that the international system is a conglomerate of world systems rather than nation states and emphasises the relationships between geographical regions. It situates regions of the world within the categories of core, semi-periphery, periphery, and external. More commonly, the core-periphery conception has become a conventional classification in the international system. It suggests that the world consists of a spectrum of two extremities consisting of the core (capitalist-intensive regions) and periphery (labour-intensive regions) while the semi-periphery, located in the middle, refers to either core regions in regression or peripheries progressing in such a way that they are improving their economic position in the world system. Wallerstein considered the semi-periphery as a buffer zone between the core and periphery but stated clearly that they are both exploited by the core and exploiter of peripheries. A list of semi-periphery countries was initially proposed by Wallerstein (1979, p. 100). At that time, it encompassed four of the current five BRICS countries except Russia.

Other scholars have contributed to discussions of modern world-systems analysis. Chase-Dunn (1988, 1998, 2006) is one of the key contributors. In 1988, he offered a theory of semi-peripheral development and argued that the rise of semi-peripheries is commonly a result of the ‘rise and the fall of empires and the shift of hegemony within interstate systems’ (p. 36). Arrighi and Drangel (1986) highlighted that semi-peripheries are those with strong inclinations to climb the world economic ladder and are potentially successful because they aim to establish ‘diverse policies toward [their] internal and world markets’ (p. 14). For the period 1975–83, they identified, Brazil, the USSR, South Africa as semi-peripheries and China and India as peripheries.

By presenting a series of empirical indicators to identify the positioning of countries in the world-systems classification, Terlouw (1992, p. 162) concluded that ‘[t]here are no distinct and homogenous groups of core and peripheral states’. In another paper, he further discussed that researchers adopting a world-systems analytical framework ‘disagreed about which states were semi-peripheral’ (Terlouw, 2003, p. 71). This explains why additional scholarship have attempted to break down the semi-periphery classification further. Nemeth and Smith (1985) distinguish between a strong and weak semi-periphery; Kick and Davis (2001) identify a low semi-periphery; and Mahutga and Smith (2011) speak of a high-level semi-periphery. Yet, none of these discussions are able to agree on a list of semi-peripheral states. This point is also noted by Chase-Dunn and Lawrence (2010, p. 475) who observe that it is unclear how ‘to place nation-states in the zones (core/periphery/semi-periphery)’.

In the BRICS context, the five countries are considered as semi-peripheries not because they are in regression from the core regions but because they are experiencing upward mobility in the world system. Mann (2010), for example, regards BRICS as countries whose economic trajectory is on a continuous incline, which enables their classification as semi-peripheries.

Ruvalcaba (2013, p. 156) considers the group of BRICS countries as semi-peripheral countries because they have ‘developed the most fastened and profound processes of structural ascension in the past two decades’. Such observations relate to O’Neill’s (2001), Wilson’s and Purushothaman’s (2003) predictions projecting the BRICS countries as fastest-growing economies of the world. Growing faster than the G7 core countries suggests that the BRICS countries are rapidly catching up with the latter, thereby distancing them further from the boundaries of the periphery. Overall, BRICS are not peripheries and not core countries, thereby again consolidating their position in the middle of a classification spectrum.

In summary, the above description and Figure 2.1.1’s illustration of the classificatory terminologies associated with the BRICS countries has been intended to draw attention to the different classificatory definitions existing on the subject. While these can be contested because of the lack of alignment among the five countries in the different binary models, the major issue remains how these classifications have resulted in organisation of knowledge on BRICS around the material dimensions of income level, national productivity, military capacity, economic dominance, and network influence measured through security and defence policies.

The country classifications in Figure 2.1.1 have simplified the BRICS convergence to structural resources conveying power through economic and military dominance. The definitions emphasise how their progress in the global economy can be measured quantitatively. The primary assumption is to begin with the state as the key variable. In the world classifications, the states’ behaviours have been converted into variables, which can be objectively and scientifically studied. The state actors are assumed to be power-seekers naturally seeking to climb the global economic ladder in the global hierarchy.

In this sense, the country classifications have been grounded in Western assumptions encouraging scientific methodologies of social science, which forgo dimensions of culture and moral leadership. They lack historical awareness and are instead subjected to methodologies relying on calculations and economic projections from data and indices collected about their economy and their degree of hard power. The history of BRICS has, thus, transformed into a ‘mine of data illustrating the permutations and combinations that are possible’ (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p. 53). The study of its emergence and growth have been confined within pre-established parameters restricted to a ‘number of variables which are amenable to relatively close and precise examination’ (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p. 88) while disregarding the cultural and political components of the convergence. The next section elaborates on the theoretical implications of grounding knowledge on BRICS in scientific epistemologies.

2.2. Organisation of knowledge on BRICS

The previous section identified that industrial, military, and economic indicators have been primarily employed to measure the countries’ national capabilities. Simultaneously, these have shaped explanations of their collective material capabilities as a configuration of states. As a result of definitions stressing the material capabilities of BRICS and rendering the topic into a quantifiable subject matter, much of the literature on the subject is located within discourses focusing on the economic prowess, military capacity, or geopolitical influence of the five countries and what these represent vis à vis the Global North or West. For example, although doubtful of the pace at which BRICS economies will outperform the West, Agtmael (2012, p. 76–9) underlines the geo-economic characteristics of BRICS and attributes its success to how developed economies are bound to them because ‘growth in [Western] home markets has dried up’ (p. 79). Other similar arguments stress the ongoing transfer of wealth and global diffusion

of economic capabilities towards BRICS economies (Armijo, 2007; Armijo and Roberts, 2014, p. 503–6).

The material capabilities of the BRICS are, thus, analysed in terms of the implications for the existing global economic order. Despite noting that the BRICS repeatedly fail to appear in the list of top 50 countries in the World Bank's *Doing Business Index*, Makin and Arora (2014, p. 24) attribute the prominence of the five countries to their increased international trade and FDI responsible for shifting the focus from the advanced regions of the US, the EU, and Japan to the BRICS economies. Even scholars who have written about the realignment of the five countries' interests outside of economic capabilities, attribute the political dimension of the grouping as a rationally strategic means of securitisation to counter American unilateralist policies (Mielniczuk 2013; Kaya 2015).

It is additionally noted that other scholarship which are critical of the BRICS and which have insinuated the grouping to be a fallacy, have either based their conclusion on a rational economic basis (Pant, 2013) or referred to their not-so-strongly shared vision about financial norms and trade rules due to self-interested motives (Thakur, 2014). Beausang (2012, p. 69, 170–2), who is highly doubtful of the BRICS countries' pre-eminence, limits her criticism of the grouping to a lack of innovation in their materialist ambitions. These literature suggest that knowledge on BRICS has been organised according to the features of the configuration, which can be observed, measured, and quantified. Unobservable variables such as class relations and state-society dynamics have been disregarded.

Theoretically, such views sharing a materialist ontology fit Kenneth Waltz's (1979) Neorealist school of thought. Waltz revisited the features of classical Realism, which he considered insufficient to account for state interactions in international relations. He combined Realist

theory with positivism or a systematic logic that state relations can be observed and rendered objective according to a scientific interpretation of the subject matter. His Neorealist theory suggests that security of a state can never be ascertained. This, consequently, leads the rational state to engage in competition and relentlessly pursue power (Waltz, 1979, p. 131). A Neorealist framework assumes that security depends on states' having a uniform understanding of how the world system operates and their intention is to pursue strategies to improve their position in the balance of power.

Similarly, how the BRICS countries are progressing in the international system is understood from the traditional Neorealist framework assuming they aim to become a part of the existing world economy or compete for material resources conferring power. Essentially, discussions and major debates of BRICS have become shaped by an economic Realist framing that is used to portray the increasing material capabilities at the disposition of these countries as posing a threat or problem to American superpower and prompting the latter to become alert to their rising competitive edge. They have been treated in relation to how established powers perceive them as strategists attempting to gain power and what they mean as contenders of the current status of global order led by the Global North or West. Together the five countries are argued to challenge the dominant North model by presenting an alternative paradigm that demarcates itself from mainstream patterns.

For example, a special issue on the BRICS published in the *Review of International Political Economy* in 2013 explains that the development trajectory of the configuration departs from the interventional measures of the Washington Consensus (Fourcade, 2013; Babb, 2013; Ferchen, 2013; Ban and Blyth, 2013) owing to their shared commitment to 'macroeconomic prudence' (Babb, 2013, p. 286). Chaturvedi, Fues and Sidiropoulos (2012) additionally suggest that South-South cooperation of the emerging Southern powers of Brazil, China, India, and

South Africa differs from traditional cooperative arrangements because they have shifted from the donor-recipient category to a partnership model. The BRICS partnership model reflects South-South solidarity reflecting a framework of development cooperation in favour of countries of the South.

By promoting a discourse of equal partnership with mutual benefits, the BRICS model challenges the donor approach of traditional state actors imbued with conditionalities. Faced with the threat of BRICS countries' deepening integration in the international system, traditional Western state actors view the emerging powers as disrupting the existing polarity and devise strategies to safeguard the status quo. For example, Vezirgiannidou (2013), notes that there have been attempts driven by the US 'to split the BRICS' unity' (p. 644) by encouraging the integration of specific countries such as India at the expense of ignoring the others in discussions about security cooperation.

The BRICS cooperative strategies have equally been dissected according to another mainstream positivist IR theory, which is Neoliberal Institutionalism where discussions about cooperative arrangements in the international system are not new. In the study of international politics, discussions about cooperation are associated with Keohane's (1986) idea of reciprocity; Lipson's (1984) suggestion that interaction between or among nation states is a strategy as a result of game theory or the Prisoner's Dilemma; Gilpin's (1975) and Krasner's (1976) encouragement of a world economy; and Keohane and Nye's (1977) thoughts on power and interdependence. Taking inspiration from values of Liberal theory, they contend that in spite of contrasting state interests, cooperation is possible through institutions.

According to Gilpin (2001, p. 89), most scholars of GPE agree with Keohane's definition of cooperation as occurring 'when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated

preferences of others through a process of policy coordination' (1984, p. 51–2). In spite of diverging interests or perspectives, international cooperation takes place when states decide to reconcile those differences because they are guided by rationality and seek to maximise opportunities to improve their position in the balance of power. Even Moravcsik's (1993) liberal intergovernmentalism, which offers a framework to explain closer international cooperation accounts for the convergence of national state interests on the basis of pressures faced by different governments.

Intergovernmentalism, similarly to the Realist tradition, is grounded in the belief that states are only interested in cooperating because of geopolitical interests such as protecting their national sovereignty, defence purposes, and national security (Moravcsik, 1993, p. 480–2). The BRICS intergovernmental strategies are equally examined according to the assumptions of this problem-solving theory. For example, in a special issue on 'Negotiating the Rise of New Powers' published in *International Affairs*, Burges (2013), Narlikar (2013), and Vickers (2013) highlight the self-interested and strategic motives of Brazil, India, and South Africa to protect their economies for joining in the rise of emerging powers in their respective work. Breslin (2013) comments on how participation in the BRICS process is both an attempt to initiate redistribution of global power and, simultaneously, an indirect means of reaping benefits from 'mutually beneficial interaction ... in financial cooperation and development financing' (p. 628–9).

As a result of focusing on the states, national interests, and relative gains from convergence, the major debates on BRICS in world politics have been framed according to Neorealism or Neoliberalism which favour positivist methodological approaches. The BRICS cooperation and convergence have been studied according to how their materials conferring power fit or challenge the existing world order. These studies have been reduced according to quantifiable

variables such as economic factors, hard power measured according to their degree of militarisation, or a combination of the two. Methodologically, this implies that scientific parameters have been established to prioritise knowledge on BRICS in IR according to what can be observed and measured about their prominence in world politics.

On a practical level, this has also meant an organisation of the knowledge on BRICS according to what the configuration can contribute materially *in* the Global South. For example, there is a close relationship between the literature on South-South cooperation and BRICS (Abdenur, 2014; Chaturvedi, Fues and Sidiropoulos, 2012, Gosovic, 2016; Gray and Gills, 2016; Puri, 2010; Simplicio, 2011). When referring to its role *in* the Global South, the five countries are understood as individual contributors of ‘resources, technology, and knowledge’ (UNOSCC, no date) to the countries adhering to the label of a developing country or belonging to the so-called ‘South’. The aim of being counted *in* the Global South is to collaborate to assist one another in meeting development goals. The role of the BRICS countries *in* the Global South is, hence, understood according to the material resources available to the five countries, which can contribute to improve the position of the South in the world order.

On an academic level, literature on the Global South about BRICS and South-South cooperation, as noted by Bergamaschi and Tickner (2017, p. 3–7), have welcomed the diversity offered by the configuration in offering a different approach for cooperation. For example, Brazilian scholar, Oliver Stuenkel (2015a), argues that in-depth analyses of BRICS are needed to go beyond theoretical assumptions from the Global North in order to grasp the benefits that BRICS offer for shifting conceptions of global order. Although doubtful about the impact of BRICS on a world level, Indian scholar, Achin Vanaik (2016, p. 261–5) acknowledges that a competing hegemonic project to American global economic supremacy can only be offered by the ‘collective unit’ of BRICS (p. 65).

Meanwhile, scholarship from the Global North have a less positive attitude about BRICS because they have been studied with a degree of concern about the changes the BRICS would incur to the international system (Bergamaschi and Tickner, 2017, p. 3–7); thus, implying that BRICS can transform the global order. Yet, when analysing the literature in IR closely, the five countries' contribution *in* the Global South have been studied according to their degree of integration into the world economy rather than discussed in terms of their aptitude to transform it. For example, de Coning et al. (2014) suggest that the configuration's strategy is a matter of coexisting with the West whilst Glosny (2010) argues that there is already an acceptance of the existing order by China. When commenting on 'global integration and transnational capitalist class formation' within BRICS, Robinson (2015, p. 1) also concludes that their cooperative strategies are not intended to challenge the existing world order.

Theoretically, this implies that the concern of Global North scholars about the aptitude of BRICS to transform the world order is void at the moment because the configuration does not aim to either replace the current capitalist order with another model or resist the existing international system. Understanding that they aim to do so entails studying semi-peripheral locations as ideal for demonstrations of resistance against capitalist-driven core countries. Semi-peripheries, in this context, ought to be examined as actors challenging 'the basic logic of mode of production' (Chase-Dunn, 1990, p. 4) emanating from core countries in the international system. According to Garcia and Bond (2016), there are insufficient examples to justify BRICS countries' semi-peripheral features as a strong platform for resistance against Western hegemony. Katz (2016, p. 78) adds that instances where semi-peripheral countries are congregating with the aim of contesting the power of countries from the core are rare and not regular. Worth (2015, p. 109–23) equally comments that BRICS countries may allegedly depart from the Washington Consensus model on paper. In reality, it is doubtful they represent a

convincing challenge to the core countries' neoliberal agenda because they rely on the existing world economy to continue their upward ascent. Subsequently, they equally rely on exploitative features of the capitalist model to sustain their status. Taylor (2014, p. 12) also contests the alleged exceptional features of the BRICS countries and questions their agenda to change the world given that their primary interests remain on enhancing their elites' bargaining power instead of cooperating to redistribute economic power in the international system.

This is why Bond (2016a, 2016b) also views the BRICS countries as sub-imperialists – an expression which he considers is more politely substituted for semi-peripheries. By referring to BRICS as a sub-imperialist formation, Bond draws attention to the imperialistic features of the grouping, their economies' potential to exploit other groups, and, thus, highlights the coercive strategies they design to control capitalist and non-capitalist spheres. For these reasons, he proposes that the BRICS countries exercise some degree of imperialism, which favour capitalist interests and rather than overcoming forms of exploitation, they appear sub-imperialists because they serve in maintaining the neoliberal agenda of the core. According to Luce (2016), sub-imperialism suggests being dependent on the capitalist sphere, thereby, erasing the notion that semi-peripheral states are ideal for showcasing resistance, and involves 'appropriating the surplus value of weaker nations for themselves' (p. 29).

Overall, when studied as a contributor of resources *in* the Global South to either integrate the international system or exploit developing countries, it remains that priority is devoted to the economic and statist features of the BRICS countries. It follows and replicates the assumptions of problem-solving IR theories designed in the North, which are inadequate for the BRICS context. It hinders an in-depth understanding of the BRICS countries' internal dynamics, that is, the composite of their social forces and class relations. Gray and Murphy (2013, p. 183) observe that these 'domestic structures, arrangements, actors and dynamics influence the nature

of the internal interventions and behaviour of rising powers'. Similarly, in the BRICS configuration, there are internal dimensions shaping the relationship of the five countries' vision and, which are ignored in studies of international relations. These internal forces are namely the Brics-from-above, Brics-from-the-middle, and Brics-from-below whose importance will be further elaborated in this chapter's next section.

The edited book of Garcia and Bond (2016) is an exception because it expresses the existence of different classes within the configuration and provides an introductory understanding to the distinct roles played by varying governmental and civil society actors within BRICS. The book is a fundamental one on the topic of BRICS for its critical appraisal of the grouping but remains essentially descriptive. What is more surprising is that the few occasions where attempts have been made to propose methods of analysis, these means of assessments continue to rely on economic measurements. For example, while there is an acknowledgement about the existence of class struggles within the grouping from Wallerstein (2016), he proposed examining traditional indicators measuring inequality or economic advancements to 'assess the internal class struggles within the BRICS countries' (p. 272). Again, there is a risk that an analysis of the internal class dynamics will suffer from economic reductionism and will prioritise methods of study, which favour Western scientific biases.

In summary, the theoretical implication of adopting mainstream problem-solving theories has been to direct our attention mainly on the BRICS grouping's leadership as being a product of coercion due to their material capabilities defined in terms of their power, macroeconomic weight, military capacity, control over raw materials, market competitiveness, or economic and technological edges. While section 2.2 has focused on how knowledge on BRICS has concentrated on their contribution of material resources conferring power, this chapter's next part elaborates on the theoretical consequences for overemphasising the contribution of BRICS

in the Global South. In so doing, the analytical distinction offered by Cox (1981) between problem-solving theories and critical theory helps to identify the questions, which have not been asked about the configuration, and how best to reframe the debate about the non-core BRICS countries.

2.3. Cox's legacy for a study of BRICS

Cox (1981) is recognised for criticising Neorealism and Neoliberal Institutionalism, which he identified as problem-solving theories, for their fixation with prioritising national state interests and for conceiving the international system around statist principles. Cox (1981) argued that 'the state is ... a necessary but insufficient category to account for the imperial system' (p. 144). By suggesting that a state's leadership depends on its dominance over economic, political, social, and ideological spheres, and not just military supremacy, Cox challenged problem-solving theoretical approaches, which are state-centric and which have disregarded the role of social forces or class relations.

Given that he went beyond the coercive nature of militarism and political interactions between states, Cox (2007) invited scholars to consider 'societies as both shaped by and shaping of the larger sphere of world order' (p. 514). In other words, societal changes should not be examined in isolation from internal and external dynamics. In my study's context, Cox's (1981) analytical distinction between problem-solving theories and critical theory helps to clarify the theoretical implications of interpreting the BRICS configuration as a subject *in* the Global South and *of* the Global South.

2.3.1. *In* the Global South: problem-solving theories

According to Cox (1981), a problem-solving theory is about how the existing world system is managed. The theory is not intended to question the existing social order's historical origins

but to take ‘the world as it finds it’ (1981, p. 128). Existing power relations and current institutional settings are unquestioned and unchallenged. Instead, the subject of study from a problem-solving approach is explored by how it fits within the current order, how it co-exists within the established system, and what measures it takes to overcome challenges it faces. ‘The general aim of problem-solving is to make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble’ (Cox, 1981, p. 128–9). Besides overlooking non-statist social forces, the potential of states transforming the world order is ignored from a problem-solving theoretical angle.

In the literature surveyed in section 2.2, the state-centric and economic debates about the BRICS countries’ potential have led to an understanding of the configuration’s vision as being driven to integrate the world order or a platform co-existing with established powers. The alternative cooperative strategies that they offer are not analysed in terms of their origin and means of offering a strong alternative to transform world order, but as mechanisms for entrenching their position in the international system through the creation of new institutions in spite of their geopolitical differences.

Cox (1981) highlighted that when exposed to Neorealism, which he maintained has metamorphosed into problem-solving theory, alternative ‘modes of thought [become] castigated as inapt’ (p. 132). As mentioned in the literature surveyed in section 2.2 of this chapter, on the one hand, studies of the BRICS configuration’s new financial projects are framed as posing a threat to the established world order in the sense that they have the potential to destabilise the status of Western financial institutions. On the other hand, their strategies are studied as intended to protect the five countries’ collective interests. In either scenario, the rise of the configuration is approached from mainstream problem-solving theoretical lenses of

Neorealism and Neoliberalism because understanding states as actors guided by other motives than power-seeking is considered irrelevant in these mainstream positivist disciplines.

Ultimately, the role of the BRICS countries *in* the Global South is understood according to the materialist resources, which the five countries can contribute to improve the position of the South in seeking power. This, in turn, has been interpreted as meaning to destabilise the existing world order led by the West. The BRICS convergence has, thus, been mistreated in IR scholarship as a problem they present for current world order that needs to be solved. This favours a scientific handling of the subject prioritising positivist methodologies.

Meanwhile, internal dynamics potentially influencing the BRICS governments to strengthen their association with the Global South are disregarded. Robinson (2015) comments that ‘by misreading the BRICS’ (p. 18), we ignore ‘struggles of popular and working class forces’ (p. 1) in the South because they have no agency in managing the elements of the existing world order. Instead, the state is seen as embodying the power to either defend their self-interests or advance the interests of the South for a better positioning in the balance of power. The theoretical implication of adopting problem-solving theories has been a disregard about how the BRICS grouping’s leadership can be related to the cultural and ideological dimensions of the intergovernmental convergence.

When confining studies of world politics to traditional Neoliberal and Neorealist theories, Rosow (1994, p. 1–2) has also argued that such approaches serve to divide issues in the political economy according to a priority list. For example, the emerging powers’ rise gains relevance in studies of international relations and global political economy when their convergence strategies for solidarity on protectionism are perceived as a threat. Although few scholars have situated the rise of the five as a group outside the materialist ontology associated with realist

theories (Flemes, 2010; Stephen, 2014; Xing, 2014), there is much to contribute on how the emerging powers of BRICS are challenging established theories in IR and GPE other than through mainstream theories. In order to do so and refresh knowledge of BRICS in IR, questions about how the configuration has become a representation *of* the Global South rather than its contributions *in* the Global South have to be asked. This will now be discussed below.

2.3.2. *Of the Global South: critical theory*

In comparison with the previous discussions about the BRICS configuration's contributions *in* the Global South, the countries' representation *of* this sphere has been inexistent because the literature have, so far, overlooked this perspective. Studies from traditional IR theories have not been critical in the sense that they have not concerned themselves with the origins of the power relations of the configuration. They have narrowed their assessment of BRICS to specific variables and assumed a non-historical, that is, an unchanging reality and, thus, a fixed order in the international system, which the BRICS are either assumed to integrate or challenge materially.

To overcome this biased ideological assumption about a fixed Western-led international system and fixation with whether BRICS intend to integrate or challenge this order, knowledge on BRICS has to be widened. It needs to consider the basic processes at play in the development of the configuration's association with the Global South. Studies on BRICS need to move beyond a top-down assessment of power relations, which eventually confine the subject according to problem-solving parameters. Instead, internal forces namely from the bottom of the configuration and the social interactions among classes of actors need to be acknowledged. To do so, Coxian-inspired critical theory helps to explore why and how the BRICS configuration's association with the Global South has originated.

Unlike problem-solving theories, which assume progressive change may occur within pre-defined boundaries, Cox's (1981) critical theory is grounded on the basis that the state is subject to change fundamentally. A critical theory approach is concerned with how the change originates and its potential to transform into a historical phenomenon. It does not take for granted that practices of the world order are unchangeable, intrinsic to the global political economy, and pre-established by states as natural and inevitable occurrences. In the BRICS context, critical theory helps to ask such questions as to how and why the BRICS intergovernmental vision has emerged and how this is being sustained.

Moreover, Cox's critical theory acknowledges the historical contribution of social forces, that is, groupings of people or class relations within states, in continually shaping world processes. As stated by Abbott and Worth (2002), 'critical theory has claimed to be able to "stand back" from the debates of political scientists, economists and policy-makers alike' (p. 1) whose viewpoints are grounded in mainstream positivist interpretations of the world order. It assesses world processes beyond the confines of positivist methodologies and acknowledges social forces rather than states as key actors.

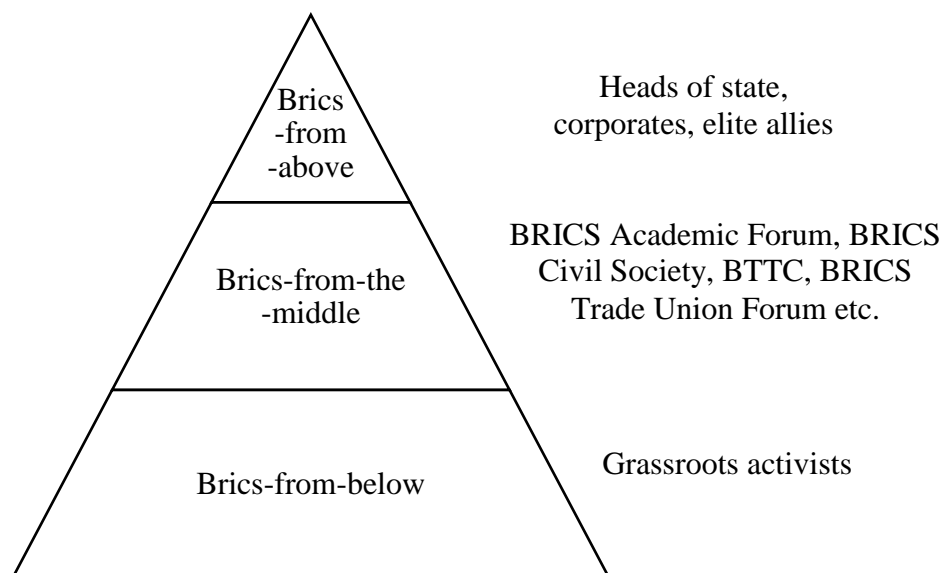
To distance studies of BRICS away from positivist methodologies reinforcing a problem-solving theoretical approach, a critical ontology about the configuration, that is, questions about its very nature needs to be developed. Gill (1993, p. 30) underlines that this 'particular [critical] ontology' is not 'self-evident'. It needs to be 'theorised'. Cox (2001) argued that critical theorists, referring to his own work and the studies of Gill (1993), Rupert (1995a), and Robinson (1996) are 'yet to deliver a substantive research agenda' (Cox, 2001, p. 45). Nevertheless, their shared ontology is grounded in the belief that non-state actors, namely

individual groups and institutions within states constitute a global fusion of forces and structures, whose movements contribute to the global political economy.

Likewise, for a study of non-core countries such as BRICS, Cox’s legacy to the critical ontology invites us to move beyond the Realist ontology embedded in the notion that understanding world politics is essentially about examining those states possessing ‘advanced technologies, military strength and a favourable place in the international division of labour’ (Gill, 1990, p. 39). Cox’s critical theory gives greater prominence to the unquantifiable and invisible relationships, which problem-solving IR theories decline to acknowledge and qualify as relevant to be analysed.

More precisely, as illustrated in Figure 2.3.2 below, Cox’s critical theory helps to recognise the possibility of diverging views held by different groups of actors with varying degrees of empowerment about the BRICS vision.

Figure 2.3.2 Composite of the BRICS configuration’s class actors



Source: Author’s own illustration adapted from the work of Garcia and Bond (2016, p. 6–7).

Figure 2.3.2 highlights the different groups of actors, which constitute the BRICS configuration. Garcia and Bond (2016, p. 6–7) distinguish among four groups of actors with ‘different ideological standpoints in relation to the BRICS’ (p. 6). They classify ‘heads of state, corporate and elite allies’ as the Brics-from-above; ‘BRICS Academic Forum, intellectuals and trade unions’ as the Brics-from-the-middle; and consider ‘grassroots activists whose visions run local to global’ as constituting the Brics-from-below. There is a fourth group, which they have dubbed as ‘BRICS from a pro-Western corporate perspective’ (p. 4). They consider them as followers of American capitalist order and which ‘fear the rise of the BRICS’ (p. 4). In this thesis, this fourth group is not included as an analytical category because they do not contribute in the fabrication of the configuration’s vision.

Within each of the first three categories, Garcia and Bond (2016) further divide each level into sub-categories. For this study, this thesis disregards their sub-categories and only distinguishes among the Brics from above, the middle, and below. The primary reason is because concentrating on three categories allowed for a manageable study of the complex political and civil society interplay in the BRICS configuration. They provided direction for exploring this state-society dynamics and focusing on the subject of investigation within the scope of the study.

These class actors and their social relations are ignored in problem-solving theories as indicated previously. Their dynamics would not be considered in traditional IR theories because power is deemed as coming from the states’ material and structural resources and to be imposed in the international system rather than through strategic means intended to win over the consent of the groups being governed. As a result, the image of the BRICS manufactured through ideas and discourses as a representative *of* Global South’s interests is not examined. More

importantly, questions on the different and possible clashes of views from within the configuration and the implications on the BRICS vision are not raised.

Since 2010, the BRICS countries have experienced a surge of mass mobilisations from the bottom level of its configuration. On an individual country level, the strikes and mass mobilisations have been covered in scholarship on the political economy and social movements. For example, the collective action of Chinese workers have been discussed in the work of Kan (2011), Friedman (2012), and Chan and Hui (2012). The numerous miners' strikes and social protests in South Africa have been covered by scholars from the country (Mottiar and Bond, 2012; Bond and Mottiar, 2013; Alexander, 2013). India underwent a wave of anti-corruption protests in 2011 as noted in the work of Sengupta (2014). The Brazilian demonstrations in 2013 'demanding free transport, improvements in public services, the reforms of a dysfunctional and corrupt political system, and much more' (Saad-Filho and Morais, 2014, p. 227) have been attributed to 'a social malaise associated with neoliberalism' (Saad-Filho, 2013, p. 657). Robertson notes that just before the 2012 Russian presidential election, anti-regime movements in Russia had started taking more creative and innovative forms of street demonstrations ranging from 'Blue Bucket protesters climbing on official cars to the street theater of Oborona to Pussy Riot'(Robertson, 2013, p. 17).

While the above scholarly contributions on social movements, union organisation, and mass mobilisations have been written with little connection to one another and are diverse in the causes they support, Nowak (2017) argues that the recent surge in mass strikes in emerging economies share a connection. They are newer forms of mobilisations or social movement unionism, but that form of transnational activism is rare (Nowak, 2017, p. 982). In reference to strikes in the Indian automobile sector in 2011–12, the Brazilian construction division in 2012–13, and South African mining in 2012–14, Nowak (2015) highlights that they 'were also part

of a larger global strike wave ... [extending over] several years, from 2010 to 2014 ... [and] embedded into a larger scenario of protests' (Nowak, 2019, p. 5). In the BRICS context, the Brics-from-below also share a history. The groups involved are entrenched in local struggles of their respective country but more importantly, share a transcultural solidarity in the sense that they have ultimately been organising themselves 'geographically' since 2011 as a result of their networks and shared perspectives on BRICS.

Although the groups of actors within Brics-from-below are mutually connected to one another by a common goal to mobilise against the neoliberal agenda of the BRICS configuration, my study expands knowledge about their transcultural solidarity beyond a study of labour organisation. The reason is because while the category of the Brics-from-below is a relatively new concept in academic literature (Garcia and Bond, 2016), studies on class struggle and mass mobilisations have been around the exploitative features of capitalism and the political economy (Bieler, 2001; Bieler, Lindberg and Pillay, 2008; Gray, 2010; Moore, 2007; Morton, 2006; Robinson, 2003). These are important contributions in GPE. However, as I explain in Chapter 3, narrowing a study of class struggle within BRICS to capitalism reduces the Brics-from-below to an economic understanding around labour exploitation, ignores cultural discursive practices within the configuration, and favours a top-down analysis of the transnational capitalist classes, that is, the Brics-from-above.

Instead, the reason for expanding knowledge on the class struggle within BRICS is to underscore the transcultural solidarity rather than the transnational nature of the Brics-from-below and draw attention to their major concern about the configuration's claim to represent their interests. Expanding knowledge on how the configuration is becoming a representation of the Global South goes beyond reducing BRICS to studies of its economic relations. It avoids this economic reductionism by inviting a focus on its class struggles such as to underline that

the development of the BRICS grouping's global discourse and vision echoed in their intergovernmental declarations is attached and inextricably linked with the internal class dynamics within the configuration. For this to be achieved, there is a need for a critical theoretical perspective questioning how the social order of the configuration has originated and is being maintained.

Critical theory is, thus, a pertinent theoretical framework to understand the significance of these class struggles because problem-solving theories in IR do not attribute importance to their existence in world politics. Unlike mainstream theories, critical theory does not see their activities as separate from an understanding of the unequal power relations, which produce them. Critical theory plays an important role in helping to situate the causes accounting for the exclusion of their activities in studies of world politics. For example, through their gatherings and voluntary associations of various social movements in parallel with the official annual BRICS intergovernmental forum, the Brics-from-below have been forging a solidarity through their unofficial civil society meetings. While intergovernmental summits prioritise matters of global governance, economic convergence, and international affairs, the demands of the population and people-related policies are being ignored. It is this issue which this thesis seeks to address.

2.4. Chapter summary

In summary, prioritising economic and governance discourses while ignoring the claims from below have theoretical implications, which problem-solving theorists cannot explain. They primarily refuse to qualify the very existence of the people's organisation on the basis that adequate policies may already exist to address their demands or that the benefits of the states' governance, economic, or trade discussions will be in wider society's interests. For example,

problem-solving theories would consider the government-sanctioned BRICS Civil Society and think-tanks as the existing institutions operating to deal effectively with their issues. From these problem-solving theories, there is a refusal to acknowledge that groups with lesser degrees of empowerment qualify as significant actors needing attention in world politics as the current system can already address their concerns in its existing format.

Critical theory, inversely, overcomes this theoretical barrier by considering that the exigencies of the grassroots' social movements do not fit in the current social order. In fact, they should be considered as potential sources of contestations which account for the historical origins of the BRICS cultural convergence, which only started gaining momentum in the same year that the unofficial Brics-from-below were formed. Critical theory, thus, questions the origins of the change they can bring and gives a voice to the less privileged groups, which the elites and ruling classes disregard in world politics.

This chapter also considered that what is currently known about BRICS rests on assumptions of problem-solving IR theories. Non-positivist forms of knowledge about BRICS have not been developed because the configuration has been treated as a rational convergence of state actors, subjected to objective macroeconomic calculations, and devoid of any analysis about the ideas, languages, and groups of non-state actors, that is, the involvement of the Brics-from-below in shaping the configuration's dynamics. Important questions such as why and how the intergovernmental configuration is finding it necessary to create such government-approved platforms as a BRICS Civil Society, BRICS Trade Union Forum, or BRICS Academic Forum are not being asked. These questions cannot be answered from problem-solving theoretical perspectives, which essentially describe the configuration's implications for the existing order rather than explain its historical origins or account for the social processes involved in the development of its other internal forces namely the Brics-from-the-middle.

However, while this chapter briefly introduced Cox's critical theory and its potential for inviting a post-positivist study of BRICS, it has yet to demonstrate that the Coxian analytical framework is flawed. The non-core or semi-peripheral convergence of BRICS remains little examined from the Coxian analytical framework. To devise a theoretical framework, which can encompass all the internal dimensions of BRICS, the next chapter continues reviewing the literature on Coxian scholarship, considers its possible application to a study of BRICS, and outlines the theoretical approach taken in this thesis.

Chapter 3: Extending theoretical engagements with the BRICS configuration

The previous chapter identified that knowledge on BRICS needs to be broadened to explore how they have become a representation *of* the Global South. It was determined that positivist-prone scholarships prioritising scientific principles to explain BRICS and that facilitate predictions about their growth confine their studies according to observable and measurable indicators of power such as income, population size, or military forces. Concentrating on material capabilities has entrenched the assumption that the BRICS convergence is a natural power-seeking occurrence in world politics searching to advance in the hierarchical ranking of countries. This is measured according to what the bloc of five countries can contribute *in* the Global South to either match or surpass core countries.

Although the previous chapter also recognised the potential of Coxian critical theory for exploring BRICS beyond positivism, that is, beyond its observable statist features and economic indicators, it remains that studies of non-core countries face limited academic scrutiny according to the analytical framework of the Italian School. To understand this lack of attention, Cox's analytical frameworks have to be explained. By considering their limits and reverting to Cox's original source of inspiration, that is, Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1971), this chapter proposes its own contributions to extend theoretical engagements with the BRICS configuration. This helps to identify concepts to narrow the hypothetical claims to explore how the BRICS configuration is manufacturing the belief that it is a representation *of* the Global South.

As such, this chapter is organised into four interweaving sections. Section 3.1 strengthens the point that semi-peripheries are little examined as potential influencers of the world order

according to the Italian School. While this first section underlines the theoretical bias of Coxian critical theorists, section 3.2 expands on this point by identifying Cox's analytical frameworks or epistemological proposal as the origin for why semi-peripheries are poorly analysed in the Italian School. This section also stresses Cox's vertical conceptualisation of global power as a major limitation for a comprehensive analysis of the BRICS configuration's intra-group social dynamics. Section 3.3 explains why a Gramscian theoretical lens is stronger for studying the configuration's internal dynamics. By reverting to Gramsci's notes and concepts, Section 3.4 of this chapter ends by formulating hypothetical claims about how the BRICS representation of the Global South is linked with the discursive strategies deployed by the Brics-from-above and the Brics-from-the-middle in order to contain the resistances of the Brics-from-below. Section 3.5 is the chapter summary.

3.1. 'Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose',⁷ including semi-peripheries

Cox was considered a pioneer in IR for his contribution of a neo-Gramscian model to study the transformation of the world order (Brincat, 2016; Gill, 1993, p.95; Leysens, 2008; Moolakkattu, 2009; Robinson, 1996, p. 388; Rupert, 1995a). His critical theory and analytical frameworks influenced the development of the Italian School, an expression anonymously coined (Gill, 1993, p. 21), but which he expanded. This was mainly to demarcate the discipline from the English School of IR, considered to be driven by Realism and Liberalism concentrating on the superiority of the state system in international society.

Cox (1981) proposed analytical frameworks, which became a method of examining national politics and a way of understanding international relations. His method of analysis, which I

⁷ 'Theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose' (Cox, 1981, p. 128).

explain in the second part of this chapter, does not prioritise the state. Instead, it attributes equal analytical weight to relations of production, institutions, and ideas. At both national and international levels, the dynamics of class factions originating in production relations between managers and workers, which eventually determine social classes in society, is considered more worthy of analysis in the Italian School. In addition to the critical ontology of Cox's theory, his analytical frameworks provide a different epistemology to study hegemony at the international level beyond simply assuming that global hegemony means 'an order among states' (Cox, 1983, p. 171).

Drawing on Gramsci's numerous concepts and ideas, Cox's critical theory of the world order became associated with neo-Gramscianism, that is, a new way of applying Gramsci's ideas to different contexts. Cox expanded his conceptualisation of the state and posited that changes in one of the three spheres of society, the economy, and politics influence one another. Hegemony is a combination of these three structures rather than simply one of them. This led Cox to strengthen his argument that world hegemony is not about an imposed order among states. Instead, hegemony for Cox (1983, p. 171) is when the social order or hegemony founded by a dominant social class at the national level is expanded outwardly to become world hegemony. It is about a replication of the domestic processes associated with the establishment of the national hegemony at the international level. In this conceptualisation of world hegemony, Cox argued that core countries are more open in welcoming this model in comparison with peripheries. To understand the reasoning of Cox's conceptualisation of world hegemony, Gramsci's notes about how hegemony is achieved has to be briefly explained in this section.

A Gramscian-inspired theoretical approach, deriving from Antonio Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* (1971), distinguishes between coercive and consensual mechanisms as a means of subjecting subalterns to accept the dominance of socially empowered groups. The dynamics

between ruling and ruled classes for the achievement of cultural hegemony is at the core of Gramsci's writings. The two classes are binary opposites. On the one hand, ruled classes are those groups, which are denied access to hegemonic power and are confined to a socially less empowered status in society. On the other hand, the ruling classes are understood as those, which are vital for the achievement and preservation of a group's hegemonic status (Gramsci, 1971, p. 161, 180–5).

The intellectual and moral leadership of a dominant group is secured when ruling classes manage to win over subalterns by subjecting them to concede – actively and willingly – to the notion that the dominant social classes are serving wider society's interests (Gramsci, 1971, p. 114). This willing endorsement and use of persuasive strategies are possible in the context of a consensual scenario where the ruling classes' manufactured common sense, that is, their uncritical conception of the world, (Gramsci, 1971, p. 322–34) is widely accepted, unexposed to contestations, and even if faced with grievances, the ruling classes are successful in absorbing the struggles that erupt.

Similarly, when Cox expanded Gramsci's framework for understanding world hegemony, he was referring to the 'complex ... international social relationships which connect the social classes of the different countries' (1983, p. 171). International institutions ease the embedment of the dominant economic and social forces, normally originating from the core sphere in the world order, by infiltrating countries and becoming involved into their domestic modes of production, which are subjected to either accept or reject these international practices. In the Coxian version of world hegemony, production is the substance of both domestic social order and world order. This is because the world of work impacts directly on the nature of states. A rejection of dominant practices is not possible because the dominant social forces absorb intellectuals countering their established hegemony and instead transform their ideas

compatible with their own vision. This process in Gramsci's notes refers to *trasformismo* (1971, p. 58f).

Nevertheless, Cox (1983, p. 173–4) also argued that it was possible to contemplate a transformation of the world order that was different from the one established by the dominant social forces from the core. For this, a new historic bloc with 'revolutionary orientation' (p. 167) has to emerge as 'an intellectual defence against co-optation by *trasformismo*' (p. 167). The formation of a new historic bloc happens when a subaltern class subjected to the dominance of the ruling social class 'establishes its hegemony over other subordinate class' (p. 168) through dialogue. For this to happen, Cox argued that attention has to revert to the social class dynamics at the national level. 'The national context remains the only place an historic bloc can be founded although world-economy and world political conditions materially influence the prospects for such an enterprise' (Cox, 1983, p. 174).

The strength of Cox's critical theory of world hegemony is, therefore, its offer of a 'historical mode of thought' (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p. 91) which does not prioritise economic rationalism for explaining production structures but involves historical materialism, that is, an understanding of the 'relationship between mentalities and material conditions of existence' (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p. 27). A state-centric approach dismisses historical materialism, that is, how political actions and the consciousness of the classes involved in the dynamics are linked with specific historical circumstances. Ideas are developed as a result of people gaining consciousness about their own material existence.

When applied to studies of international relations, this historical materialism amends a major limitation of problem-solving theories. In contrast to the latter, the historical materialism of Cox's critical theory acknowledges that an altercation between dominant social forces and an

emerging historic bloc can potentially create ‘alternative forms of development’ (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p. 95). This means that ‘historical materialism sees conflict as a possible cause of structural change’ in comparison with problem-solving Neorealism which treats ‘conflict as a recurrent consequence of a continuing change’ (Cox and Sinclair, 1996, p. 95–6). According to Cox (1981, p. 135), this type of historical materialism enables to question both the origin of a given order and to consider the prospects of how it may be transformed. In the BRICS context, this primarily means applying a critical theory with a historical materialist lens in order to understand the origin of the BRICS social order as a political configuration in world politics. It is understood that Cox meant his critical theory to apply to different contexts whether from the core, semi-periphery, or periphery.

Yet, when reviewing the literature about Cox’s application of his neo-Gramscian model of world hegemony, non-core countries, particularly, semi-peripheries have been neglected in critical IR and GPE. While this thesis does not intend to discuss the transformative capabilities of BRICS, the neglect of the neo-Coxian application is to underline that the cultural and ideological leadership of semi-peripheries have not been questioned. Priority has been attributed to core countries and their transnational managerial class, which is a group of actors responsible for managing the global economy’s capital (Cox, 1987, p. 359). To strengthen the claim that semi-peripheries have experienced little academic scrutiny owing to Cox’s vertical conceptualisation of global power, details of how and where Cox’s critical theory of world hegemony has been applied, need to be provided.

Scholarship, inspired by Cox’s distinction between problem-solving theories and critical theory and which contributed to a new Gramscian theoretical approach, include the work of Stephen Gill (1990), Mark Rupert (1995a) and William Robinson (1996). Along with Cox, their neo-Gramscian contributions share a concern about state-centrism in IR but their analytical

frameworks differ. Gill (1990) shared his own take on a historical materialist approach to discuss the transformation of world order. He introduced new concepts to describe how the world order guided by the principles of neoliberalism shrinks the social basis of popular participation. He demonstrated how consensus among ruling classes is necessary to rule over the capitalist world, to spread the virtues of capitalism, and to confine contesters refusing to join the capitalist world market.

Robinson (1996) drew attention to how global financial elites have achieved hegemonic power. He applied Gramsci's concept of hegemony to the international level and argued that core countries' elites have distanced themselves from overt coercive strategies to influence civil societies and gain their consensus. Robinson contended that as a result of the globalisation process, transnational elites such as the World Bank, IMF, and WTO would assume 'management of the global political economy' (1996, p. 372).

Rupert (1995a) studied how Fordist production techniques translated into a hegemonic project of global liberalism, which gained momentum and became widespread across Western Europe, and partly, Asia. This hegemonic project was anchored in American ideology of global order. Despite the fact that each of the above scholars contribute distinct accounts of how to study the international system from post-positivist orthodoxy inspired from Gramsci, Germain and Kenny (1998) note that they do not form a cohesive version of neo-Gramscianism.

The scholarship applying Gramsci's work to studies of international relations were broadened with the Amsterdam School, an expression coined by Peter Burnham (1991), to describe the critical theory approach developed by Kees van der Pijl (1998), Henk Overbeek (1993), and Otto Holman (1996). Similar to the Italian School, the Amsterdam School underlines the importance of critical international political economy and the need to distance theoretical

approaches from ‘state-centric ontology underpinning ... much of the English School’ (Overbeek, 2004, p. 114).

In his discussions of hegemony, van der Pijl (1998) argued that a hegemonic project is not necessarily a result of a strategy of accumulation but may encompass a politically articulated vision of a managerial class. Holman (1998) concentrated his discussion on a post-Cold War world order where the transnational capitalist class shapes states’ behaviour by creating guidelines for economic policy-making to which they give their consent. Inspired by Cox’s revival of Gramsci’s writings, these scholarships agree that a post-positivist study of international relations and international political economy is necessary. They consider the international system to be shaped by state-society dynamics and share similar perspectives on the nature of hegemony.

Meanwhile, from a critical IR and GPE angle, there is a lack of attention attributed to question the foundation of the social order of states not belonging to the core sphere and their adjustments to international pressures. This knowledge gap has also been underlined in the work of Moore (2007, p. 5) and Worth (2009a). As noted by Worth (2009a), Cox’s ideas have been primarily applied ‘to study influential states and regions’ (p. 9). For example, albeit different in their approach, Gill’s (1990) analysis, Robinson’s (1996) study, and Rupert’s (1995a) contribution to the Italian School have been about American hegemony. van der Pijl (1998, p. 47) drew attention to the capitalist order as being a result of the World Bank, IMF, the OECD, the WTO, and the EU – all Western-established transnational capitalist classes. Holman (1996) used Spain as a case study to analyse the internationalisation and democratisation of Southern Europe within the world economy. Bieler (1998, 2000) discussed the processes that led to Austria’s and Sweden’s application and integration into the European Community using a neo-Gramscian analysis of European integration.

In regards to countries which are not from the core sphere, Robinson (2003) has drawn attention to the insertion of Central American countries, namely Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, into the world economy through the globalisation process. His work, however, remains essentially about the role of Western-led transnationalised institutions such as the World Bank and WTO in imposing rules in this process. Gills (1993, p. 187) used the umbrella expression of 'East Asia' and the case of Japan whilst drawing on historical materialist analysis to highlight that Gramsci's application to 'non-Western international history' both past and present is equally informative.

The transformations of socialist Russia were van der Pijl's (1993) subject of analysis in his study of the country's historical formation. More semi-peripheral case studies include the work of Morton (2000, 2007b) who provides a neo-Gramscian analysis of the neoliberal restructuring of the capitalist order that took place in Mexico. Worth's (2004) neo-Gramscian analysis of post-Communist Russia employs a Coxian framework to comment on Russia's reintegration within the world order. He attributes the dynamics between national and international elements as having been central to Russian developments. Moore (2007, 2010), another scholar within the field of critical GPE, utilises neo-Gramscian and neo-Coxian approaches of passive revolution, *trasformismo*, and hegemony to apply it to a case study of South Korea's government's policies for national workers (2007).

While the above scholarships are important contributions in critical IR and GPE, it remains that these studies are concerned about how the semi-peripheries are adjusting to the world order. There is a continuing assumption that the states are subjected to the dominance of the core and international pressures generated by globalisation. They do not consider that semi-peripheries' response to these pressures can be the cause rather than the consequence of the

structural changes they are experiencing. In other words, the domestic class struggles within these semi-peripheries are considered as consequences of external pressures and are not considered as the cause, which triggered the strategies developed by semi-peripheral governments. Prioritising externally-triggered pressures results in a top-down rather than bottom-up analysis of the class of actors involved in the dynamics.

The above applications of Cox's critical theory of world hegemony to mainly core and a few non-core countries, therefore, expose that ideological biases associated with the study of non-core or semi-peripheries in world politics are yet to be overcome. The excuse for problem-solving theories' neglect of semi-peripheries has been their overemphasis on core-centrism. For example, Wallerstein's (1974) stratification of the world system into a core-periphery model has been driven by an economic-sided view to explain the 'world economy [as] integrated through the market rather than a political centre' (Goldfrank, 2000, p. 167). As a result, semi-peripheries were barely given attention in IR and GPE because they were considered as countries in transit or a 'medium-level of development [desiring] to catch up to rich countries' (Chirot and Hall, 1982, p. 81). Modelski and Thompson (1996) offered an uncritical theory about power cycle in which system leaders rise and fall. Their neglect of middle powers has been as an intentional result of concentrating on 'great powers' (Chase-Dunn, 2006, p. 592).

In critical IR theory, studies of semi-peripheries should not have suffered from a theoretical bias favouring one group of empowered actors over others. Problem-solving theories identify states as the superior actors worthy of analysis in world politics. Likewise, the application of Cox's critical theory suffers from a theoretical bias giving higher priority to transnational capitalist classes. This results in Cox's critical theory to favour hypotheses and studies

supporting the existing ruling elites and the current order led by Global North or Western hegemons.

In comparison with Neorealism's horizontal study of global power, that is, analyses assuming no hierarchy among states, Cox conceptualised his critical theory to offer a vertical aspect to global power. However, he never stated that it should be a top-down conceptualisation. Yet, the above scholarships inspired by Cox favour an understanding of Western institutions and international pressures generated by globalisation as being a natural phenomenon trickling down into domestic processes. For example, van der Pijl (2006, p. 28) argues that there is an 'evidently superior capacity of the western bourgeoisie and transnational capital to control not a particular portion of the globe, but the political economy of world society in its entirety' (p. 28).

Critical theorists inspired by the Coxian model of theorising world hegemony have narrowed the scope of Cox's critical theory by indirectly setting the tone of its application primarily for core countries. They have assumed a dormant role for semi-peripheries in the world order. As argued by Worth (2009a, p. 23), 'the role of the semi-periphery has moved ... to one that seeks engagement with the global political economy'. Semi-peripheries are no longer impassive actors subjected to the dominance of social forces from the core but are equally committed to finding ways to reformulate ways of thinking about their operational processes in the world order. As further explained in section 3.3 of this chapter, this has been a result of the origins of their domestic class struggles.

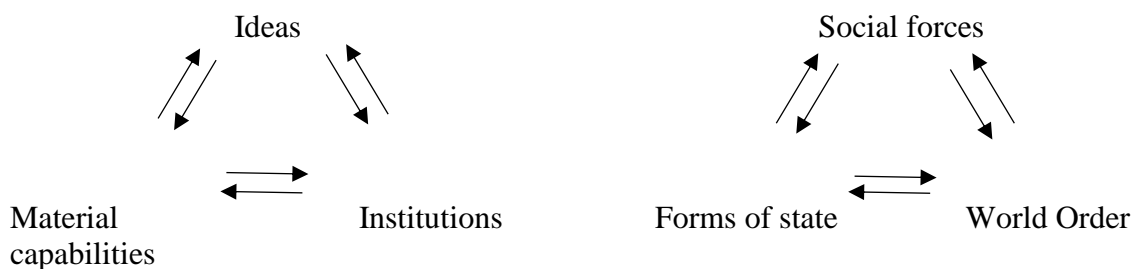
In summary, section 3.1 of this chapter argued that Cox's critical theory of world hegemony was meant to be applied to studies of core, semi-peripheral, or peripheral settings. Yet, Coxian scholarship have primarily favoured studies of Western hegemons and transnational capitalist

classes at the expense of giving equal attention to the formation of new historical blocs originating from the non-core and the Global South. Semi-peripheries in critical IR theory suffer from theoretical biases, which reduce the subject of study to one class of actors over others. This theoretical bias is equally linked with the analytical frameworks proposed by Cox, which is explained in the next section.

3.2. Implications of Cox’s analytical frameworks

For Cox, the key variables of analysis are the interrelating social forces of material capabilities, institutions, and ideas. As shown in Figure 3.2 below, he illustrated the interdependent relations among the three levels symbolically in ‘graphic triangle[s]’ (Sinclair, 2016, p. 515).

Figure 3.2 Cox's analytical frameworks



Source: Cox, 1981, p. 136–40.

Each of these levels may be the starting point of analysis (Cox, 1981, p. 153). Ideas are notions and expectations about how social order should be. Material capabilities refer to resources (technological, organisational, and natural). Institutions are a platform where ideas and material power are combined (Cox, 1981, p. 136). The institutions function to ‘minimise the need for the use of force or power existing within a society’s material capabilities, and... to merge ideas to the extent possible within groups, and on a larger scale, across groups’ (Moore, 2007, p. 13).

The interplay among the mutually dependent levels in Figure 3.2 influence the formation of world orders. The production structure, that is, what is decided to be produced by people at

work, how their production is organised, the structuring of work relations, and the distribution of the wealth, generates social forces, which establish social classes. In his visual illustration, Cox has abbreviated capitalist production processes to refer to social forces. Forms of state depend on the state-civil society dynamics and production relations are the source for the basis of both national politics and world order. World order is a representation of phases of war and peace (Cox, 1981, p. 138) and enables contemplating ‘how alternative forms of world order’ (Bieler and Morton, 2014, p. 216) can emerge. This happens because production ‘also creates resources that can be transformed into other forms of power – financial, administrative, ideological, military and police power’ (Cox, 1987, p. 5). For Cox, production, thus, goes beyond the national level and its transnationalisation shapes the status of the world order.

Cox’s ‘frameworks for action’ (Cox, 1981, p. 135) have become a means to analyse the relationship between politics and economics as formulated in his graphic triangles (Figure 3.2). These have become analytical frameworks for analysts studying contemporary periods of human history to use to explore the interplay among the different variables, which encompass the dynamics between institutions, ideas, and production. In this sense, it can be argued that Cox has offered a practical attempt to study the dynamics between different forces and classes of actors in society.

Nonetheless, as explained in this chapter’s section 3.1, the social forces generated from relations of production have resulted in a prioritisation of analysis of one class of actors over others. In the context of the globalisation of production, Cox (2001) has ranked the hierarchy of social forces engendered by the internationalisation of production processes in a three-part list. Cox divided the levels in society between the top level, that is, groups integrated into the global economy; second level encompassing subordinate groups; and the bottom level comprising groups excluded from the global economy (Cox, 2001, p. 48).

- Top-level groups constitute individuals in global management positions either operating in the governmental sector or in privatised companies. This category also encompasses workers in established employment positions with a relative edge over other workforces who contribute to the global economic production.
- Second level groups are in an inferior position to the top level category. They are workforces who contribute to the global economy but are not stable in their employment position. ‘They are the potentially disposable labour force’ (Cox, 2001, p.48).
- Bottom level groups are categorised by their exclusion from the global economy because they are from countries considered to be little successful in competing in the global economy.

By offering these categories, Cox suggested that internationalised capitalist groups embedded in the global economy are the ones responsible for devising strategies of reorganisation on a world scale. They are facilitated in this task because of the ‘erosion of domestic class compromises’ (Budd, 2013, p. 39). Indirectly, this has meant overlooking domestic processes and prioritising the most visible forces in the world order, that is, the capitalist classes with higher degrees of economic, social, and political empowerment.

Scholars who have followed the Coxian tradition have adopted similar pathways. Gill (1990) argues that the Trilateral Commission has generated specific ‘forms of elite interaction and identification’ (p. 75). In a discussion about European integration being a ‘struggle between transnational social forces’ (2003, p. 1), van Apeldoorn, argues that transnationalisation of capitalist production linked to capitalism’s social entrenchment in society has engendered transnational social forces. He considers the management of Europe’s socio-economic order to have been articulated by ‘elite groups at the apex of (fractions of) transnational social forces’

(2003, p. 2). The agency of the transnationalist elite forces enables them to facilitate the effects of global changes in the European Union. van der Pijl (2006) refers to the handlers of projects designed by the state as the ‘parasitic bourgeoisie’ (p. 46) who transform into a transnational class with leading ambitions in the transnational society. In a similar line of thought, Bieler, Lindberg, and Pillay (2008) comment that the internationalisation of production processes heightened by the globalisation process has led to the appearance of a ‘transnationalist historical bloc with the transnational capitalist class as its leading class fraction’ (p. 7).

Therefore, at the top of the structure of the transnationalist capitalist class responsible for the restructuring of the global economy, neo-Gramscian scholars strengthen Cox’s (1987) argument that the global economy’s capital is managed by a group whose ‘distinctive class consciousness ... constitute what can be called a transnational managerial class’ (Cox, 1987, p. 359). Despite not classifying themselves according to this label, the transnational managerial has ‘its own ideology, strategy, and institutions of collective action ... [and] is a class both in itself and for itself’ (Cox, 1981, p. 147). Members of this class refer to executives of transnational corporations but also encompass:

national public officials from the most internationalized parts of states, for example national finance ministries and central banks, private specialists whose area of competence is enmeshed in global economic processes, financial managers who represent an increasingly important component of this class, and senior functionaries of the global economic institutions (Budd, 2013, p. 67–8).

Robinson (1996) comments that the South has its own exact equivalent of the transnationalist managerial class. He refers to the ““technocratic” elite in Latin America, Africa and Asia’ (1996, p. 33), ‘sometimes termed a “modernizing bourgeoisie”’ (Robinson, 2004, p. 72) as key actors responsible for the monitoring of domestic social and economic reorganisation. Similarly, the BRICS configuration suffers from an equivalent bias that prioritises studies of

its transnational capitalist classes in analyses of the world order as evidenced in the work of Xing and Augustin (2014), which is explained below.

3.2.1. The limitations of Cox's analytical frameworks for a study of BRICS

In the BRICS context, a Coxian analytical framework has already been applied. Xing and Augustin (2014) borrow insights from neo-Gramscianism and critical theory to discuss the BRICS countries' transformative capabilities in the world order. They situate the configuration's social relations of production in the fusion of their domestic capital into international capital facilitated by the globalisation process. Transnational capitalism within the BRICS economies has become a 'powerful social force' (p. 62) unified not only by a common market for production and intra-trade but also through a platform of shared economic interests. They argue that mainstream IR theories are insufficient to strongly account for the five countries 'deepening ... connectivity' and 'collective ascent' (p. 62).

Xing and Augustin (2014) further comment on the state-society interplay in BRICS countries in facilitating their domestic actors adjust to changing conditions and capitalist requirements. Using Cox's (1983, p. 174; 1987, p. 149–50) conception of the world order, the authors highlight that hegemony is realised internationally because it has primarily been generated by domestic social forces which are responsible, as a historic bloc, for projecting it on a world scale. They use 'China's economic integration with the global economy since 1980' (p. 64) to emphasise its contribution to shaping the established hegemony.

Xing and Augustin (2014) acknowledge that the 'established hegemony is not shared' (p. 65). Based on this observation, they propose "'interdependent hegemony", rooted in the emerging development of the BRICS' (p. 66) to offer a new perspective for reshaping international order.

Although they use the terms ‘First World’ and ‘Second World’, their idea is to consider a fusion of national social forces from both core countries and semi-peripheries working as regional alliances to ‘contain and overcome hegemony derived from one national power’ (p. 66). In other words, their conception of ‘interdependent hegemony’ inspired from the collaborative strategies among the BRICS countries intertwined with coalitions and cooperative arrangements made with core countries is meant to overcome unipolarity in the world order.

Whilst Xing and Augustin’s theoretical approach is unique in its quest to explore the BRICS configuration’s status using a neo-Gramscian inspired conception of hegemony, their hybridity with Keohane and Nye’s (1977) interdependence theory is unconvincing because the potential ‘great transformation’ (Xing, 2014, p. 11) generated by BRICS is essentially a replacement of one set of institutions by another. In Gramscian sense, this is not transformation because the theoretical approach adopted by Xing and Augustin merely substitutes one mode of capitalism with another.

Additionally, Xing and Augustin (2014) attribute the strategy of the configuration to be a result of structural conditions built around economic and capitalist ambitions of the five BRICS economies. A viable strategy to realise hegemony in the Gramscian tradition depends on both ‘structural’ and ‘superstructural’ conditions (Gramsci, 1971, p. 55–90, 366–7, 375–7). The ‘hegemony of a group depends not only on its ability to organise consensus on problems related to the economic structure but also on those problems of an extra-economic nature’ (Morera, 1990, p. 146).

In the case of Xing and Augustin’s theoretical approach, discussions of hegemony have only centred on the fusion of capital and reorganisation of domestic conditions to match economic exigencies. Despite employing Cox’s level of state-society interplay, they neglect non-

capitalist classes and the contributions of groups with limited empowerment as a component of BRICS countries' convergence. Their chapter assumes economic determinism whereby capitalist forces with most social power within BRICS determine that projects with profitable aspirations merit more attention. In reality, BRICS countries call not just for greater economic cooperation but additionally advocate about other issues such as sustainability, fairness of distribution, and reforms of international financial institutions in their discourse (BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18). Since 2013, they have also been calling for greater cultural convergences. Their discourses of an extra-economic are worthy of analysis but are ignored in Xing and Augustin's (2014) analytical frameworks.

Xing and Augustin's (2014) mistreatment of the BRICS production processes and engendered social forces invites a revisit of Cox's legacy on this concept. Social forces are engendered by forms of production. Changes in production processes generate new social forces (Cox, 1981, p. 137–8). However, this notion of relations of production does not imply an endorsement of structural conditions built around economic determinism. Instead, Cox (1989) offered an encompassing view of production.

Production ... is to be understood in the broadest sense. It is not confined to the production of physical goods used or consumed. It covers the production and reproduction of physical goods used or consumed. It covers the production and reproduction of knowledge and of the social relations, morals and institutions that are prerequisites to the production of physical goods (Cox, 1989, p. 39).

In other words, relations of production refer to social relations of production. It is an ensemble of 'social relations in material, institutional and discursive terms' (Bieler and Morton, 2014, p. 217). Thus, engendered social forces are not confined to material reductionism. They 'also include other forms of identity involved in struggle such as ethnic, nationalist, religious, gender or sexual forms' (Bieler and Morton, 2004, p. 90). At the moment, Cox's analytical frameworks as applied in the work of Xing and Augustin (2014) ignore the role of the growing activities of

the Brics-from-below, which involve solidarity around such forms of struggle of an extra-economic nature. Similar to Cox's analytical frameworks, they disregard cultural formations and overemphasise economic structures. In addition to this major limitation for a stronger understanding of the dynamics from above, middle, and below of the configuration, Cox's critical theory suffers from another impractical limitation.

3.2.2. The impracticality of Cox's critical theory for a study of BRICS

Critical theory plays an important role in helping to situate the causes accounting for the exclusion of the activities of the Brics-from-below in studies of world politics. It has the potential of questioning BRICS transactions camouflaged in a discourse meant to be in the interests of the people and wider society. It provides an opportunity to assess how BRICS authorities treat groups contesting their governmental leadership. However, critical theory's acknowledgement of their existence remains merely theoretical and is insufficient to account for how they can actually achieve emancipation, transform into a new historic bloc, and transform the decision-making process within the configuration. In other words, this section of the chapter argues that critical theory does not result in practical transformative outcomes because it continues to remain purely theoretical and suffers from insufficient suggestions about how it can be made practical in the discipline of IR.

The lack of proposals about practical suggestions for critical theory can be because the very essence of this Coxian theoretical framework is to avoid following the same logic as mainstream problem-solving theories and turning subjects of study into quantifiable variables to the extent of robbing them of their subjectivity. It can also be because critical theory has never meant to serve perennial purposes in the sense of constructing a metaphysical truth from which all explanations about society can be derived (Bronner, 2017, p. 1). It assumes, after all, changing historical circumstances for which relevant changes have to be made accordingly.

For these reasons, it is understandable why a practical critical theoretical approach has not been considered to date since the analytical contributions of Cox. However, these assumptions should not restrict imagining innovative proposals about how to employ critical theory for future studies of issues, which affect varying groups of actors in different ways.

For a stronger understanding of change and real-world practices, critical theorists ought to move beyond a mere application of the theory. Otherwise, they will continue to plug social developments and instances of inequality into the course of the critical theory narrative at the expense of neglecting analysis and exploring possibilities of making the theory work for little empowered groups, which need supportive ideas and practices to overcome their invisibility in world politics. This would essentially lead to interpretation of selected descriptive examples without much consideration for developing conceptual tools, which would enable real-world transformative outcomes.

More importantly, Cox's vertical and top-down conceptualisation of power has to be revisited. This is because it unintentionally sustains a hierarchy in the social order, which estimates elitist and capitalist social forces as more worthy of scholarly attention because they dominate over others and are the ones responsible for preserving or changing global hegemony. It results in a vertical analysis of the social forces, that is, it flows from the top to the bottom of the social hierarchy and assumes that the emancipation of those from below can naturally occur if these groups move up the vertical structural order. In the scholarship on BRICS, this is evident in how the Brics-from-above, that is, the government and their transnational capitalist allies receive more academic scrutiny (Collins, 2013; Cooper, 2014; Robinson, 2015; Xing and Augustin, 2014). Meanwhile, those non-state forces at the bottom level of domestic societies remain invisible in world politics because critical theory as adopted by Coxian scholars cannot

explain how they can bring transformative changes on a global scale without going through Cox's analytical frameworks.

In a vertical conceptualisation of social power, it is assumed that governmental decisions are reached because these flow from above to the bottom. This top-down approach sustains unequal power relations because other groups involved in the configuration are not consulted. Inversely, a horizontal approach invites different groups of actors' involvement in the process of decision-making because it goes beyond a hierarchical ranking order. As argued by Nakane (1970, p. 40),

The ranking order which produces delicate differentiations between members of a group develops firm personal links between superior and subordinate. Such relationships form the core of the system of a group organization. A group structure based on a vertical line of this strength is demonstrably different from one based on a horizontal line.

In other words, there are fundamental differences between a vertical and horizontal organisation of any societal configuration. Although Cox's analytical framework did not assume a 'predetermined hierarchy of relationships' (Cox, 1981, p. 137), it has turned hierarchical precisely because of an unintentional vertical top-down approach to understanding social forces as has been adopted by the Coxian scholarship discussed in section 3.2. The same criticism applies to a neo-Coxian study of BRICS.

As earlier evidenced in the work of Xing and Augustin (2014), the study of the BRICS configuration's social forces has been narrowed down as a struggle between two different classes of actors, namely, the government authorities and their transnational capitalist allies versus resistant progressive social movements. In reality, there is another fundamental social group within the configuration, that is, the Brics-from-the-middle. Visually, the three groups of actors' organisational structure within BRICS can be illustrated in a vertical order (Figure 3.2.2a).

Figure 3.2.2a BRICS intra-groups' dynamics

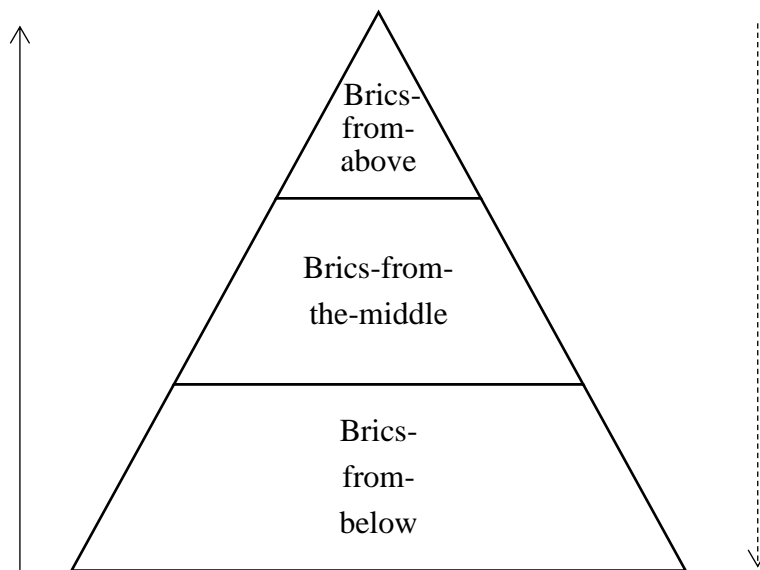


Figure 3.2.2a illustrates the position of the three different social groups within the BRICS configuration. The constellation of social forces in the form of groups from the middle requires considering a new category of analysis in discussions of class struggle. Since critical theory is also about achieving social emancipation, when analysed in a vertical line it is suggested that the groups can move in a linear way from either top-down or bottom-up (Figure 3.2.2a). Although the groups from above are unlikely to move down because this would compromise their power status, this logic is more applicable for when the emancipation of the groups from below happens. The latter will see that change and real-world outcomes would be possible if they climb the ladder. A vertical approach invites an understanding that Brics-from-below will have a greater say in intergovernmental decision-making should they join the other forces, namely, the Brics-from-the-middle.

However, climbing the ladder of social hierarchy is not emancipation. In a Gramscian sense, this is appropriation and absorption of intellectuals into the groups created by the ones from above, that is, the intellectuals from below can become absorbed into the groups from the middle, which are government-approved bodies. These middle groups are also a means of

legitimising and giving higher authority to the governmental decisions because through them, the elite groups from above can say civil society space has been provided and no strong resistance was raised. There appears to be consent over their governmental decisions. As a result, a vertical dimension of power relations diminishes the scope of dynamic discussions and treats the different groups involved as promoters of the intergovernmental agenda from above rather than being their contesters. Critical theory, in this sense, is impractical for groups from below because they remain invisible in studies of world politics.

A practical critical theory for BRICS can offer a different approach to study these different social forces. This can be clarified using the following two figures below. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 indicate the dynamics among the three groups sharing a vertical and horizontal relationship or organisational structure respectively. The labels 'Above', 'Middle' and 'Below' represent the different group categories within the BRICS configuration.

Figure 3.2.2b Vertical intra-group organisation

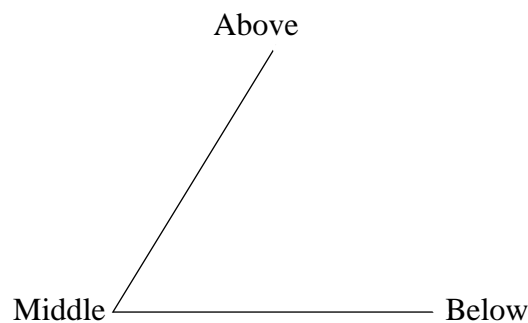
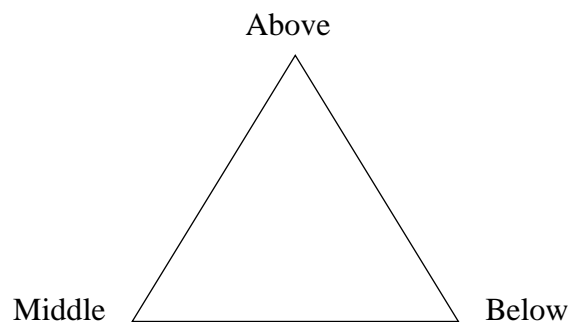


Figure 3.2.2c Horizontal intra-group organisation



In Figure 3.2.2b, owing to a vertical organisational structure, the groups from above are considered as the ones responsible for the creation of the groups from the middle. There is an above-middle relationship, which exists whereas an above-below relationship is non-existent because in the vertical order, it is assumed that the groups from below will go through the middle in order to voice their claims. Even if such an above-below relationship existed, it would be a weak and different one in comparison with the official forms of exchange between the above and the middle.

It is assumed that the Brics-from-the-middle provide the legitimacy and authority, which the Brics-from-above will need to sustain their leadership and even if the Brics-from-below do not agree, it becomes an insignificant issue because government-approved bodies from the middle have been created precisely to validate the views from above. In this scenario, the decisions made between the above and middle pass to subalterns at the inferior level of the social stratum without consulting the latter because groups from the middle have been created with the aim of allegedly representing the groups from below.

Inversely, Figure 3.2.2c proposes a horizontal organisational approach about how the intra-group dynamics should be analysed. In this configuration, a practical method of studying these dynamics would require looking at the different relationships, namely: above-middle, above-below, and middle-below. It does not disregard those classified as possessing little degrees of economic, social, and political empowerment. Instead, it opens the possibilities for considering that groups from below can exercise direct pressure on the top level. In Figure 3.2.2b, this possibility does not happen because the vertical structure of the organisation does not create a working relationship between groups from above and below. Subalterns from below have no other options than to go through the middle groups in order to make their claims heard.

In Figure 3.2.2c, the differences in the constitution of the three groups become essential for analysis because the different motivations of groups from below and the size of their group can pose a direct threat to the leadership of the top level of the social stratum. Gaining support from the middle is not enough because both the groups from above and middle are fewer in numbers and would require a working relationship with subalterns from below in order to gain support for their intergovernmental decisions and sustain their leadership through consent.

Therefore, a horizontal approach for studying how social forces are constituted and interact with one another is a catalyst to go beyond a uniform treatment of the class actors. When opening the analysis to a differentiation of the social forces with different degrees of empowerment and not simply concentrating on a class struggle between capitalists and the working class, a practical critical theory invites discussions about where to situate newly formed social forces. It is no longer about an above-middle and middle-below vertical relationship. Instead, the new dynamics are multidimensional.

To study the multiplicity of class dynamics within BRICS, Coxian scholarship employing Cox's analytical frameworks, which emphasise transnational elements in the international arena are, therefore, limited and impractical. If such analytical frameworks continue to be pursued, studies of BRICS risk being confined to economic reductionism. To avoid the economic reductionism of Cox's analytical frameworks, the next section argues that reverting to the original notes of Gramsci helps to strengthen critical theory's potential for studying the class dynamics within semi-peripheries and offer a stronger framework to study the multiple class relations illustrated in Figure 3.2.2c.

3.3. Extending theoretical engagements with BRICS by reverting to Gramsci

Much has been written on Gramsci, about Gramsci's relevance, and derived from Gramsci's thoughts (Buttigieg, 1990; Buci-Glucksmann, 1979; Cammett, 1967; Fiori, 1970; Martin, 2002; Davidson, 2016; Anderson, 2017; Buey, 2014; Hoare and Sperber, 2015). This section explains why this thesis adopts a Gramscian theoretical lens in order to provide a critical reading of BRICS. Before justifying the adoption of Gramsci's concepts to study the convergence strategies of semi-peripheral actors, it is important to understand who he was and how his ideas have been interpreted.

Antonio Gramsci was a member of Italy's parliament and General Secretary of the Communist party from 1924 to 1926. During Mussolini's fascist ruling in Italy, philosophers with rebellious inclinations were considered a threat to the regime. Despite his parliamentary immunity, Gramsci was incarcerated after a show trial and received a 20-year sentence in 1927 because the regime sought to halt his contradictory thinking deemed dangerous for the fascist government.

During his imprisonment, Gramsci reflected intensively on the reasons why Italy's civil society could not oust the tyrannical regime. His concerns were about the high degree of unevenness in Italy and its North-South divide. Gramsci's notes were not written chronologically or organised according to a given order. In spite of rigid political restrictions, his hand-written notes, which he started in 1929 and ultimately amounting to over 2,800 pages in 1935 managed to be progressively smuggled out of prison. These were compiled in 32 large notebooks. After a decade of harsh prison conditions and poor health, Gramsci died in 1937.

In the wake of his death, his notes survived and received posthumous attention. In his notes, he attributed the reason for civil society's failure to defeat the fascist regime to a combination of coercive and consensual strategies. According to Gramsci, the features of both civil and political society fuse to shape the integral state. In other words, political society and civil society exist alongside one another. This organic relationship enables the state to control the development of civil society by penetrating its key institutions and consciousness.

3.3.1. Gramsci's ideas through a mind map

Given Gramsci's unsystematic notes and in order to understand his ideas in their truest sense, visualising his concepts through a mind map has been helpful to clarify how these are connected. Figure 3.3.1 below is my attempt to capture the essence of his ideas. For the purpose of this thesis's aim, which is to frame a post-positivist theoretical framework for a study of how the BRICS configuration has become a representation *of* the Global South, a handful of Gramsci's concepts have been employed. There is a specific focus on political society, civil society, common sense, good sense, passive revolution, and *trasformismo*.

Figure 3.3.1 Visual illustration of Gramsci's key concepts

Leadership of a social group

Apparatus (I): Either achieved through coercion

≠

Apparatus (II): Or achieved through consent

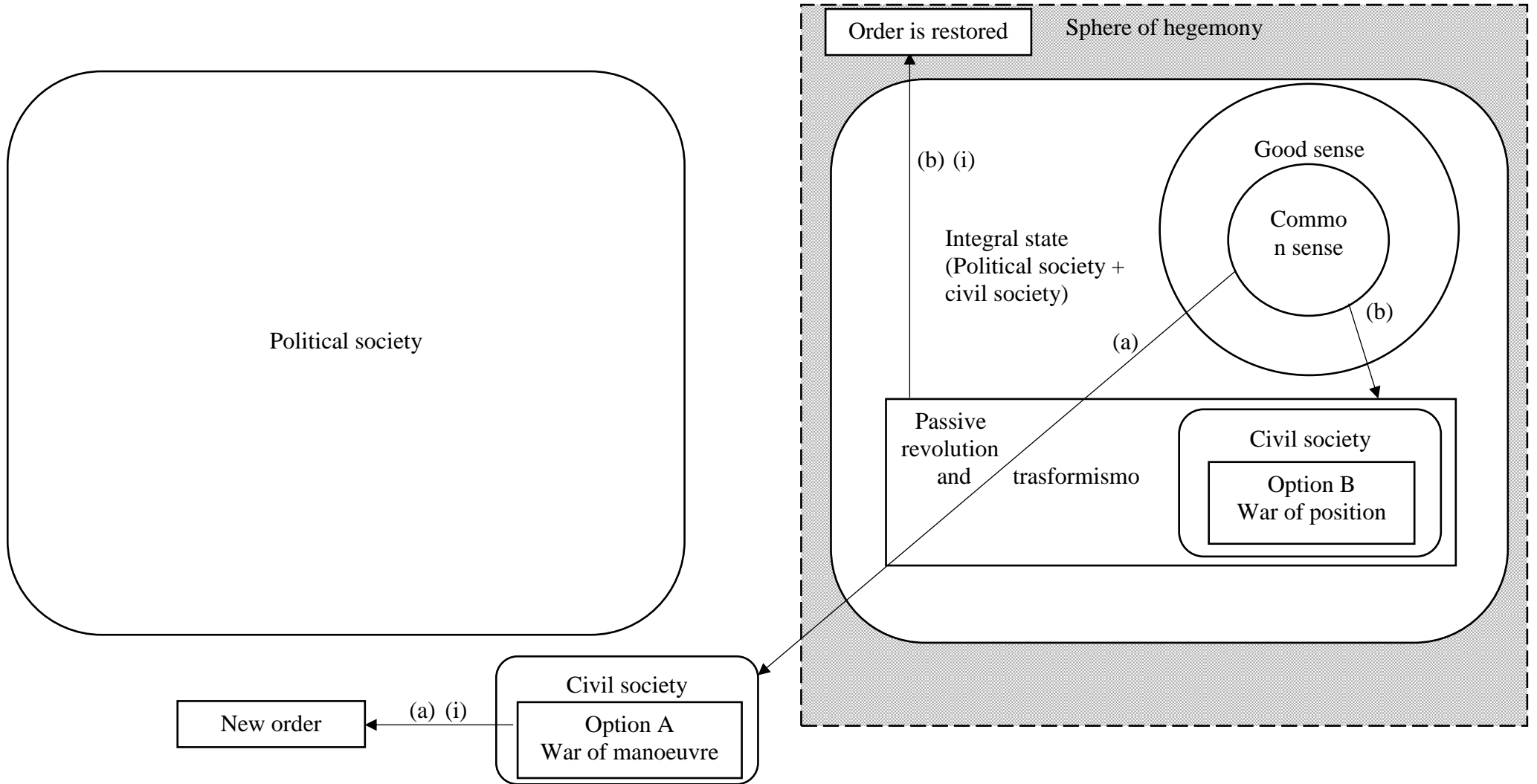


Figure 3.3.1 captures the interrelationship among Gramsci's key ideas. The illustration shows that Gramsci's notes are essentially concerned with means deployed by a social group to become dominant and exercise leadership. In a hegemonic sphere, the leadership of a social group is determined when subalterns or ruled classes are subjected to accept the dominance of politically and socially empowered classes. For Gramsci, 'the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways: as "domination" and as "intellectual and moral leadership"' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 45). In other words, the hegemonic reign of a social group is established according to different scenarios: either by coercion (Figure 3.3.1: Apparatus I), that is, authoritarianism, or through consent (Figure 3.3.1: Apparatus II), that is, persuasive tactics without the use of violence and where intellectual and moral leadership is applied.

The ruling classes for Gramsci (1971, p. 55f) are the ones responsible for political leadership. In this process of leading its allies and consolidating its governmental power, the ruling classes are also in charge of finding ways to dominate those who may resist their leadership (1971, p. 57f). The dynamics between ruling and ruled classes for the achievement of hegemony are, thus, at the heart of Gramsci's writings. The ontological basis of Gramsci's writings is 'that there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led' (1971, p. 144). The rulers and ruled are two different cultures (p. 134) and the distinction between rulers and ruled originate 'in a division between social groups' (p. 144).

3.3.1.1. Political society

In Figure 3.3.1, the relationship between the fundamental social groups, that is, the ruling classes (bourgeoisie) over the ruled classes (proletariat/subalterns) is characterised by force and dominance in Apparatus I. This is a state where the political society does not utilise civil society to gain consent of the mass population. Gramsci's description of political society differs from modern usages. It is an apparatus where power is legally coerced or imposed on the mass

population. This echoes features of authoritarianism and happens in instances where the ruling classes experience ‘crisis of command’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12) and fail to persuade subalterns to consent to their leadership. His conception of political society encompasses the institutions, which are responsible for monitoring and regulating society. Hierarchically, it is of a higher status or above his conception of civil society. Institutions in this apparatus exercise “‘direct domination” or command through the ... juridical government’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12).

In Apparatus I, the existence of civil society is considered irrelevant because decisions can be dictated. If required, force can be used to impose a dominant group’s interests. However, in the eventuality of attempts to overthrow the dominant group, the latter will only be able to defend themselves through force because they do not exercise moral and intellectual leadership such as to win over their attackers through unforceful strategies. The supremacy of a social group may be secured in this way through force. Violence is a tool, which can only be used and monopolised by the bourgeoisie in control of political society, thereby, the state. In Gramscian sense, this type of supremacy is not hegemonic. It is short-lived and unethical. In this context of political society, a war of manoeuvre referring to a coup d’état or direct frontal attack on the dominant social group, may be successful because it has little chances of being prevented.

3.3.1.2. Civil society

Inversely, Apparatus II in Figure 3.3.1 shows a sphere of hegemony reflecting non-coercive strategies. It is complex. The relationship between the ruling and ruled classes is determined according to persuasive strategies deployed by the dominant group and how they tackle any resistance presented by the subalterns who are confined to a socially less empowered status in society. The dominant classes are understood as those, which are vital for the achievement and preservation of a social group’s hegemonic status. The intellectual and moral leadership of a dominant group or bourgeoisie is secured when the ruling classes manage to win over the

proletariat or subalterns by subjecting them to concede – actively and willingly – to the notion that the dominant group is serving wider society’s interests (Gramsci, 1971, p. 57–8). This occurs when political society exists alongside civil society to form an integral state.

In the context of an integral state where the hegemonic status of a group has been acquired through consent, a war of manoeuvre, that is a direct attack, on the dominant group may be prevented because the latter would exercise moral and intellectual leadership such as to convince contesters that the dominant group’s interests are in wider society’s interests. The shaded area in Apparatus (II) in Figure 3.3.1 denotes a sphere of hegemony. It is framed according to the co-existence of political society and civil society, which fuse to form an integral state. Gramsci deemed civil society to be an integral feature of the state. Political society is the most visible feature of the state whereas civil society is less apparent.

Nevertheless, this does not mean civil society functions with less abilities or is intentionally kept invisible because it exists as a hostile organisation contesting the state. On the contrary, civil society is the most important sphere whereby the ruling classes seek to acquire hegemony. Once hegemony is secured in civil society, it can reverberate in political society. Both civil society and political society mutually reinforce one another for the benefit of certain groups and institutions. Consent has to be elicited in order for the integral state to justify its ruling as legitimate (Gramsci, 1971, p. 322–34, 419–25). This happens in civil society where the ruling classes develop a mechanism of persuasion by fabricating common sense. Consent from subalterns is extracted from them by convincing them of working in their interests. The bourgeoisie enjoy a historical position of prestige and confidence, which they exploit to impose a way of thinking in civil society and win the consent of those they are trying to rule over.

3.3.1.3. Common sense

In Gramscian tradition, common sense refers to a ‘conception of the world which is uncritically absorbed by the various social and cultural environments in which the moral individuality of the average man is developed’ (1971, p. 419). It is a ‘philosophy of non-philosophers’ (p. 419), that is, the everyday view of the world of a regular individual who is not an expert philosopher. This common sense of the average person is ‘fragmentary, incoherent and inconsequential’ (p. 419) and reflects the beliefs of the social group the individual belongs to. Each social class is responsible for managing its own common sense. This also means that the common sense of different social classes are in competition with one another. Thus, common sense determines class distinctions and determines which class is hierarchically superior.

For a social class to become hegemonic and exercise leadership non-coercively, it needs to modify the competing philosophy of the other classes and persuade them that their dominant common sense is better for them. Common sense, therefore, in Gramscian tradition, contributes fundamentally in sustaining a hegemonic order. It becomes the system of belief and norms around the dominant ideology of the bourgeois. It is a fabrication of false consciousness to make subalterns believe that the interests and values of the bourgeoisie are in their interests and that there are no other possible options (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326–9).

As a result, common sense needs to be understood as being a terrain on active socio-political struggle. This is because common sense, in Gramsci’s conceptualisation, is not about ‘a single conception, identical in time and space’ (p. 419). It is unsystematic because it is a collection of multiple beliefs but which may share similar features. ‘Every social stratum has its own “common sense”’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326f). Along the way of encountering competing philosophies, common sense picks up bits and pieces about how things are and enriches itself over time into an uncritical way of understanding the world through the lens of the dominant

social group. Gramsci's concept of common sense, consequently, becomes a strong analytical tool in the context of BRICS because it invites an exploration of the configuration's representation *of* the Global South and how this can be a result of the existing competing philosophies among its distinct social groups.

Torres (2011) offers an insightful Gramscian analysis of neoliberalism's common sense in education. He proposes that despite neoliberalism's failure as a sustainable model of economic development, it has influenced a strong political culture, which has become 'the new common sense shaping the role of government and education' (Torres, 2011, p. 177). In his work, he highlights how the reforms attached as strings with neoliberal globalisation has impacted upon public universities in terms of their 'efficiency and accountability, accreditation and universalisation, international competitiveness and privatisation' (p. 177). More alarmingly, it is the public universities' effective potential in operating as platforms of contestations against reforms imposed from above (through national or global order) that has been affected. As a result of this manufactured and uncontested common sense, neoliberal reforms have reduced access and opportunities to education for some social groups along the lines of race and class.

In mainstream IR scholarship, Rupert (2003) has prominently applied Gramsci's common sense to understand the politics of governance and resistance that occurs in the global economy. More specifically, Rupert (1995a) has argued that all social relations between individuals, groups and state elites are 'politically contestable' because they are 'historically produced' (p. 35). It is in the terrain of common sense where such a struggle is contested. To justify his claims, he analyses the ideas and policies that emerged in the US after the Cold War that have in turn spread throughout the world namely in terms of democratic and liberal values.

In the ideological struggle in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) debate, Rupert (1995b) observes that the challengers to Americanism and its uncontested forces of liberalism were able to articulate more explicitly a tension of central capitalism to oppose the American common sense. In this struggle, the challengers were able to envision a 'transnational political project involving participatory linkages' (p. 658) among the subaltern social groups. Thus, they situated their critique of Americanism (Rupert, 1995a) and NAFTA (Rupert, 1995b) within this tension such as to create a counter-hegemonic project and present an alternative intellectual and moral agenda against the US hegemon.

Luongo (2015) examines the common sense of austerity in Europe's historic bloc. He argues that the discourse around austerity was constructed to serve Europe's hegemonic interests of transnational capital. More precisely, he identifies the business-finance community as the intellectual actors who manufactured the common sense of fiscal tightening by using the discourses of Europe's alarming debt levels and extravagance. Pro-austerity discourses, however, are only helping to perpetuate the hegemonic position of the elites within the historic bloc. They are reinforcing 'the neoliberal structure underlying Europe's integration into the Single Market' (Luongo, 2015, p. 61).

In another European setting, Bruff (2008) highlights the importance of combining analysis of cultures and patterns of common sense to analyse contemporary capitalism in Europe. Using a neo-Gramscian approach and common sense, he argues that conventional studies of varieties of capitalism in Holland and Germany have overlooked the role of ideas and their influence on the complementarity or the competitive advantage of some institutions. He concludes that scholarship drawing on the institutionalist framework have not considered the economic performance of some European countries to be a result of their differing abilities to construct consensus. The above scholarships reveal a prominent application of the concept of common

sense on case studies from the core and a neglect of the application of the concept for non-core countries' contexts.

3.3.1.4. Good sense

The nucleus of common sense may be threatened when the dominant group fails to integrate subalterns from civil society socially and politically into accepting the dominant ideology. This happens when subalterns contest and disagree with the dominant common sense. To prevent ruptures in the governance of the dominant class, it is important 'to order in a systematic, coherent and critical fashion' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 327). This means the incoherent common sense has to convert into coherent good sense. If this good sense is not developed, it means that the fragmented common sense of the dominant class when being circulated in civil society has '[fractured] along certain lines and in certain directions' (p. 327).

In Gramsci's notes, essential social change can happen but this is not a result of economic developments. Instead, this occurs as a result of developing good sense. In Figure 3.3.1, good sense is illustrated as the 'healthy nucleus that exists in "common sense"' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 328). In comparison with common sense, good sense is systematic, coherent and critical (Gramsci, 1971, p. 327–8). Gramsci defined good sense as 'a conception of the world with an ethic that conforms to its structure' (1971, p. 326) and which is necessary to question common sense as well as to search for new ways of thinking and understandings of social reality.

The differences between common sense and good sense can be distinguished as conceptual rather than empirical (Gramsci, 1971, p. 323f) because they are related in such a way that each concept either excludes or precludes the other, that is, they are not mutually exclusive. Good sense is 'practical empirical common sense' (p. 323). In other words, good sense is common sense minus its contradictions. Gramsci also characterised good sense at a higher level than

common sense because it evolves from an unsystematic, uncritical, and incoherent view into a systematic, critical, and coherent perception of the world. Common sense can be converted into good sense. It starts with:

a philosophy which already enjoys, or could enjoy, a certain diffusion, because it is connected to and implicit in practical life, and elaborating it so that it becomes a renewed common sense possessing the coherence and sinew of individual philosophies. But this can only happen if the demands of cultural contact with the “simple” are continually felt (Gramsci, 1971, p. 330f).

Good sense, therefore, is about the development of social knowledge, which enables an individual to become conscious of the class reality and hegemonic practices of a given order. By ‘simple’, Gramsci is referring to the coherent philosophy, that is, good sense as not being disconnected with the masses or subalterns. The successful conversion of common sense into good sense means disentangling good sense from common sense. This is about a realisation of class consciousness and happens when it continues with what it started with, that is, identifying ‘the problems it sets out to study and to resolve’ (p. 330).

If the connection with the subalterns or masses is discontinued, conversion of common sense into good sense is not successful and this occurs because of an organic disunity among the dominant social forces. They fail to devise strategies to diffuse this consciousness coherently and are unable to become politically effective and transform into an organised political action. Failure to convert common sense into good sense can, thus, be because the conception of the world professed by the dominant class fails to ‘take concrete form’ (p. 129) and be asserted through political actions, which are relevant to address the everyday problem of the people (p. 326–9).

Overall, the conceptual interest is more notable for common sense in IR and GPE scholarships (Cox, 1981; Rupert, 1995a; 2003; Hall, 2002; Luongo, 2015; Bruff, 2008) rather than for good

sense. The work of Vicki Birchfield (1999), however, stands out. She bridges Gramsci's theory of ideological hegemony and Karl Polanyi's double movement to the former's common sense in order to critically theorise globalisation and 'the practical strategies of resistance to the anti-politics of market ideology' (p. 29). She highlights that the double-movement, that is, the way society decides to self-protect itself against market dangers, is driven by good sense. Both elements are critical to provoke consciousness and the will to act against 'consumer- and market-oriented capitalism' (1999, p. 48). The resulting consciousness from good sense is key to eroding the prevailing hegemony and in demystifying power asymmetries. Crehan (2016) compares the efforts of the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement as an attempt to develop good sense to contest the negative implications incurred as a result of the bourgeoisie's control of global capitalism.⁸

3.3.1.5. Passive revolution and trasformismo

Attempts to disentangle good sense from common sense can be counter hegemonic in instances when competing conceptions or narratives outweigh the dominant one. The tensions, which common sense of a social group experiences when facing masses' realisation of class consciousness and attempts to elicit good sense are contained in two ways. Option A in Figure 3.3.1 illustrates that there can be a war of manoeuvre, that is, a direct attack from subalterns which the dominant social group contains forcefully. Such coercive ruling is, however, not

⁸ This thesis approaches the difference between common sense and good sense in conceptual rather than empirical terms. It interprets the Gramscian difference between the two concepts according to their degree of coherence. Common sense being a set of incoherent ideas can be vague and prone to resistances whereas good sense is a coherent set of ideas that can be more readily circulated. Crehan's (2016) book entitled *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives* reminds us that Gramsci associated negative connotations with incoherence as it would imply an inability to convince and persuade without facing resistances. Inversely, good sense is at a higher level because it has already overcome such obstacles. Additional scholarship that have addressed this distinction include the work of Patnaik (1988), Gencarella (2012), Robinson (2006), and Green and Ives (2009).

hegemonic in Gramscian sense because it is not consensually achieved through persuasion. This is why Option A, which can lead to a new order, occurs outside the sphere of hegemony because there is no fusion of political society with civil society.

Inversely, Option B shows that rather than a war of manoeuvre, subalterns can engage in a war of position, that is, social and political struggle without the use of force. It is a defensive mechanism, to demonstrate, without resorting to violence, their contestations with the dominant common sense. It threatens the supremacy of a dominant social group but if subalterns are unable to progress in their contestations, they are in an impasse. During this stalemate, the dominant group can contain the war of position, that is, the social and political struggle, by resorting to peaceful strategies such as passive revolution and trasformismo.

Both these passive revolution and trasformismo are premeditated and engineered from above, that is, the dominant social group which adopts these tactics to persuade subalterns of working in their interests, win over their consent, absorb their intellectuals, and sustain the existing hegemonic order. Sassoon (2000), who is one of the key scholars who has interpreted Gramsci's passive revolution using its original essence, describes passive revolution as the attempt

to manage change and maintain control of economic and political power through compromises with different social interests and political forces within limits which neutralise anything which presents a serious threat (p. 18).

Non-revolutionary tactics such as compromises, negotiations or co-optation are used and these are deployed by the dominant groups rather than the mass or those who threaten the current leadership.

In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci described the processes of Italy's unification during the late nineteenth century as an example of passive revolution, which the peasantry, working classes, and the poorest social strata of the Italian population underwent. During the phase of unifying Italy, the Moderate Party experienced resistances from the Action Party, which opposed the unification on account that it would ignore various diversities. In the beginning, the Moderates were relatively small, with limited power and not cohesive owing to multiple beliefs in their conception of the world. Yet, the Moderates, which primarily emerged from a movement of patriots seeking reforms, formalised into a party in 1848 and transformed into Italy's principal ruling party at the end of that century.

Rather than turning towards the mass of the population for support in their quest for unification and the subsequent changes that would be needed, the Moderate Party formed alliances with the long existing classes of traditional intellectuals constituting the Piedmontese leaders. In addition, they allied with the bourgeois industrialists from the North and the bourgeois landowners from the South. Hence, the Moderate Party became organically connected with the upper classes on economic, political, and cultural fronts. They exuded such a 'power of attraction' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 60) that they succeeded in 'subjugating the intellectuals' (p. 60) from the rival Action Party into joining their network. This act of absorbing the leaders from their opponents who were closely affiliated with the masses is called *trasformismo*.

Once the unification of Italy happened, the leading Moderate Party's 'political leadership became merely an aspect of the function of domination' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 59). The masses had been cut off and their intellectuals incorporated into the leading force. It was a form of governance disconnected from the masses and essentially engineered from above. Gramsci (1971, p. 60) referred to this strategy as 'passive revolution', a 'revolution without revolution' or 'revolution from above' because it did not require the involvement of the mass whatsoever.

However, this type of governance, which is devoid of any engagement with the people, eventually fails. In other words, passive revolution is a weak strategy if it appeals only to a segment of society. In the case of the Italian unification, it essentially attracted the upper classes. Meanwhile, the working classes and the people retained their own conception of the world and this was not changed because the Moderate Party did not organise themselves with the aim of appealing to their interests. Instead, they imposed their ruling cause on them and this version of passive revolution failed because it did not establish a stable form of governance in the long run and was toppled by fascism.

In contrast, Gramsci offered another instance in his notes of a revolution engineered from above, which was stronger because it involved winning over the people first and forming a 'national-popular bloc' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 216f). Unlike governance by dominance, this instance of revolution from above involves a feature of Jacobinism, referring to intellectual and moral leadership, whereby the working classes willingly consent to remain subordinate to the upper classes because they have been made to believe that the latter function in their interests. Unlike the Moderate Party's temporarily established consensus, 'the development of Jacobinism... [involves] permanently organised consent' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 80f). Similar to the tactic of the Moderate Party, it is a process initiated from above. However, this time, it is gradually implemented and may take decades. More importantly, it requires making compromises in order to appear to accommodate subalterns' demands.

Related to the previous instance of conceptualising Gramsci's ideas on passive revolution, it is important to understand why compromises would need to be made. In the context of explaining the passive revolution initiated by the bourgeois Moderate Party, Gramsci attempted to elucidate how these minority bourgeois or capitalist classes, managed to rule over the mass.

The upper classes were supporting capitalist development in the North, which the Southern bourgeoisie also encouraged. This in turn incurred transformations across society. Deploying passive revolution was intended to lead to a capitalist mode of production. While *trasformismo*, that is, absorption of intellectuals helped in achieving capitalist domination, its failure to be sustained proved that passive revolution, in the Italian context, contributed to leading to but not maintaining that mode of production.

However, when applied to Fordism and Americanism in his notes, Gramsci provided insights on passive revolution being used to maintain capitalism. As Callinicos (2010) notes:

what had originally been conceptualised as a particular path *to* capitalist domination—from above, gradually, and without violent rupture—comes to be understood by Gramsci as a principal means of *maintaining* capitalist domination in an epoch of wars and revolution (p. 492).

In societal transformations, crises in capitalism occur. There can be sudden upheavals especially when the mass population has not been won over and instead capitalism has been imposed on them. It is during these occurrences of social upheavals and transformation where the upper classes have to continue the deployment of passive revolution in order to maintain their capitalist system in the long run. A new political force from the subaltern class can attempt to rupture or displace the existing order established by old forces from the dominant upper classes who will need to restore it.

It may happen that neither fundamental classes succeeds in predominating the other. When they are in such social equilibrium, both political forces competing with one another will reach a deadlock situation in the sense that neither forces in conflict is able to establish hegemony. This time, the passive revolution requires conditions of Caesarism, that is, ‘a compromise between two “fundamental” social forces’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 206). Caesarism is an act of

mediation where a group other than the old or new forces is tasked with intervening to solve the stalemate between them.

There can be two possible outcomes to this intervention depending on the context. Either, it can be a reactionary Caesarism where the old forces win an edge in social equilibrium and restore the existing order. However, ‘restorations *in toto* do not exist’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 220). This means that despite succeeding in stabilising the old regime, this would have happened because of compromises, concessions to accommodate some of the demands of the other social forces and efforts to help the proletariat adjust to societal transformations.

Progressive Caesarism is when the new force succeeds in the struggle for leadership and this also comprises concessions but of a different extent. The intervention of the Caesarist, that is, ‘third party’ can be due to a “momentary” political deficiency of the traditional dominant force’ or an ‘insuperable organic deficiency’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 221). On account of the resulting outcome from this intervention, the Caesarist’s task of arbitration is, ultimately, illusory given that the features of the alleged ‘third party’ depends on the side this mediator supports.

According to Thomas (2018), scholarship inspired from Gramsci’s use of passive revolution have interpreted his notes on the use of the concept in different ways.

First, it has been thought to represent a reformulation of the more established concept of “(bourgeois) revolution from above”, understood as a process in which existing political elites instigate and manage periods of social upheaval and transformation. Second, passive revolution has been understood as a rival or complement to other macro-historical sociological theories of state formation, modernization, or decolonization. Third, particularly when viewed through the lens of the Italian tradition of *trasformismo*, it has been conceptualized as a specific political strategy and technique of statecraft, and sometimes related to theories of governmentality. Fourth, passive revolution has been argued to constitute a useful lens for analyzing the nature and transformation of contemporary capitalism, whether understood as “neoliberalism” or in other terms (Thomas, 2018, p. 3–4).

Thomas (2018) offers a compelling analysis of how passive revolution is applied in contemporary contexts according to these four categories. The problem, however, with the scholarship which have interpreted passive revolution according to some of these categories is that they are the ones responsible for overstretching the meanings of the concept in order to serve the purpose they study. I explain this argument below after listing the conditions necessary for a situation to be identified as passive revolution.

3.3.2. Acknowledging the ‘concept-stretching’ of Gramsci’s passive revolution in contemporary applications

Criticisms of neo-Gramscianism highlight the thinning of Gramsci’s concepts when applied in contemporary contexts to the point that they have blurred their initial bearing (Germain and Kenny, 1998). This is a view shared by other scholars (Ayers, 2008; Budd, 2013; Femia, 2009; Callinicos 2010; Radice, 2008; Saurin, 2008; Steans and Tepe, 2008). Callinicos (2010) and Thomas (2018) note that it is namely the contemporary neo-Gramscian usage of the concept of passive revolution, which has been overstretched. The meaning of ‘concept-stretching’ refers to ‘extending the scope of a concept beyond that originally intended for it’ (Callinicos, 2010, p. 492). In order to explain the degree to which scholars employing the concept in new modes have stretched it, it is important to understand the conditions, which need to exist for passive revolution to be deployed.

The conclusions drawn from Gramsci’s notes on the Italian unification, explained above, are that the implementation of passive revolution can be assessed in three distinct ways. First, it can be a strong case of passive revolution where it results in the success of the traditional dominant force. Second, passive revolution is weak when the traditional dominant force is unsuccessful in retaining its order and is replaced by a new force. Third, it can be a phase of

continuing passive revolution whereby in this continuum the process of passive revolution initiated by the traditional dominant force endures until it becomes strong. This third category echoes Morton's (2010b) idea about 'passive revolutions ... that are in the process of becoming' (p. 319). This thesis's formulation of these three possibilities has been grounded on the basis that passive revolution is devised with the aim of realising permanent consent and establishing a legitimate authority, which is consented by the mass, that is, a leadership not imposed by coercive power.

In the context of this thesis's assessment of the degree of accuracy of application or recognising a case of passive revolution, the conditions identified in Table 3.3.2 below have to be met. Passive revolution is recognised if the dominant social class, in instances of a deadlock with a new political force from the subaltern class, premeditates it and if it is accompanied with the dual conditions of Caesarism and trasformismo. To simplify understanding of the assessment or identification of passive revolution, Table 3.1 lists the conditions.

Table 3.3.2 List of conditions to identify examples of passive revolution as strong, weak, or continuing

Conditions for recognising passive revolution:	Strong	Weak	Continuing
1. A social order already exists and is managed by a traditional dominant social class (A) according to their common sense.	✓	✓	✓
2. Subaltern social forces (B) subjected to this order express their dissatisfaction with this management because they face difficulties in adjusting to the dominant mode of production. They develop a conflicting common sense and seek self-organisation in resistance forces.	✓	X	✓
3. Neither A nor B manages to make their common sense outweigh the other. This is a situation of deadlock.	✓	X	✓
4. The existing dominant class (A) initiates the strategies from above to prevent subalterns from uprising.	✓	✓	✓

(a) Caesarism: Third party succeeds to convince the subaltern social forces (B) that the existing forces operate in their interests.	✓	X	✓
(b) Trasformismo: Intellectuals from subaltern forces (B) are co-opted with the aim of helping the process of transformism and support subalterns adjust to the changes.	✓	X	✓
5. Order of the old regime and not the new one is restored. Subalterns have adjusted <i>to</i> the dominant mode of production.	✓	X	✓
6. Steps 4(a) and (b) are repeated to <i>maintain</i> the establishment of the existing mode of production.	X	X	✓

Table 3.3.2 summarises that there is a strong instance of passive revolution when all conditions from 1 to 5 are met. Likewise, a continuing case of passive revolution is strong but it involves an additional step to recognise the ongoing passive revolution to maintain the existing mode of production. Inversely, weak examples of passive revolution are those, which claim to be initiatives from above but have not been activated as a result of Step 2, that is, subalterns becoming conscious of the fragmented common sense and seeking to emancipate from their subordinate levels. Scholarships may identify their study as passive revolution but given that Step 2 is overlooked, there cannot be strategies of Caesarism or trasformismo because there are no subalterns seeking to rupture the existing order who need to be won over in the first place.

To strengthen the distinction among a strong, weak, or continuing passive revolutions, I review the scholarships, which have employed the concept in contemporary contexts, and categorise them accordingly using the conditions listed in Table 3.3.2. In the international political economy of work, Moore (2010) identifies peer-to-peer production where participants own their own means of production as a ‘real threat to the current dominant mode’ (p. 146) of capitalism (Condition 1). The peer-to-peer movement promises to challenge competitive capitalism (Condition 2). In anticipation of reaching a social equilibrium where neither class

of actors would be able to advance (Condition 3), governments have initiated ‘skills revolutions’ to upgrade labour’s employability’s skills. While these are presented as empowering for labour (Condition 4a) and help them transition from manufacturing to technology-based societies (Condition 4b), such policies serve to entrench labour deeper into the capitalist mode of production (Condition 5). Governments’ involvement in perpetually reorganising discourses on employability through education and policy reforms is a means to perpetuate the exploitation of people’s skills (Condition 6). Moore’s (2010) case study is, therefore, a strong example of passive revolution, which is also continuing.

In the context of Zimbabwe’s politics, Raftopoulos (2010) argues that the Global Political Agreement (GPA) signed between Zimbabwe’s two competing political parties in 2008 is a case of passive revolution. In the first instance, the author identifies the order established under Robert Mugabe’s political party (Condition 1) as being contested by its civil society and opposition party (Condition 2). The ruling party was unable to persuade the contesters of its national legitimacy but the opposition party was also unable to win the election in 2008. Neither party defeated the other (Condition 3). To appeal to the citizens and also maintain the Southern African Development Community’s (SADC) support when faced with criticisms from the West, Mugabe’s ruling party conceded to cede some power to the opposing political power by signing the GPA (Condition 4). However, while conditions 1 to 4 are met and exemplify a case of passive revolution, the deployment of this strategy in this case was not a durable success for the dominant party because the order restored was not as strong as the old one. It involved power sharing.

Inversely, the conditions that Simon (2010) identifies as having prompted the Russian government to adopt passive revolution in the form of ‘the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Russia’s subsequent evolution’ (p. 430) have to be questioned. Since he acknowledges that

the influence of civil society including trade unions has been negligible (p. 446), it is unconvincing to justify that such forms of resistance would have developed into serious contestations that would have locked the governmental officials into a social equilibrium with an inexistent resistance movement. In his offer of a case study of passive revolution, Condition 2 (Table 3.3.2) is absent and the *trasformismo* he discusses is not a result of attempts to prevent upheavals and integrate the subalterns given that they did not present any challenge in the first place. The strategies to adapt to capitalism designed by the state officials seem to be a result of the exigencies to adapt to neoliberal hegemony rather than a means to assimilate the contestations of subalterns, which have not necessarily been genuinely threatening to the established order.

Similarly, Gray (2010) is clear in his ambition to use passive revolution to suggest that the Chinese state has been of fundamental importance in restoring capitalism in China because of domestic pressures stemming from the working class. He attributes the strategy for helping 'to address the role of the state in facilitating the restoration of capitalism and how "this revolution from above" has been embedded within broader processes of transnational accumulation and inter-state rivalry' (p. 455). However, the so-called passive revolutionary strategies designed by Chinese state officials drift from Gramsci's framework because the strategies from above have not been a consequence of the revolutionary pressures faced from below. No working class or subalterns had been involved in resisting those societal transformations in China. In this context, both Simon's (2010) and Gray's (2010) applications of passive revolution are weak examples of the concept, which have been stretched to fit the purpose of their study.

Morton's (2007b, p. 68) very definition of passive revolution as "a portmanteau concept" that reveals continuities and changes within the order of capital' shapes his account of Mexico's capitalist restructuring and transformation of the state according to exigencies of transnational

capital. Although his other scholarships (Morton, 2010c, 2011) have questioned whether the Mexican revolution posited genuine threat to the existing order, it remains that his neo-Gramscian version of transnational capital as a catalyst for passive revolution strategies is a demarcation from Gramsci's conception. More importantly, such conceptions neglect the existence, dynamics, and struggles of subaltern groups and assume that passive strategies are driven by socially empowered elites to maintain their capitalist status and position. Conditions 2 and 3 are not necessarily met to explain the deployment of passive revolution, which eventually results into being an outcome applied because of external pressures rather than coming from the inside of the Mexican state.

Therefore, it is accurate to argue that Gramsci's ideas as adopted by neo-Gramscians mostly influenced by a Coxian reading of Gramsci have robbed some of his concepts of their original meaning and true essence. Worth (2011, p. 374) comments that the central interest in echoing Gramsci's ideas on domestic politics into global politics has saturated the literature in IR such that Gramscianism now suffers from lack of theoretical originality. '[L]ess has been made in actually analysing the concepts used themselves' (Worth, 2011, p. 374). This neglect or gap in the Gramscian literature is an absence of original thinking in using and interpreting Gramscian concepts. Consideration has been largely placed on perpetuating a Coxian-inspired approach in applying his concepts to contemporary contexts.

This thesis overcomes this obsolescence and lack of original engagement with Gramsci's ideas by adding a new dimension to his concepts of passive revolution and *trasformismo*. The reason is because the mainstream approach to applying the concepts have been to begin on the same premise as the Italian unification and involving the dynamics between two fundamental parties. This thesis innovates and asks what happens when a 'middle party' acting as the bridge between the two fundamental parties feigns to be organically connected with the two opposing forces.

Rather than top-bottom interactions, this thesis adds the middle dimension to the debate and invites a multi-faceted analysis of the above-below, above-middle, and middle-below relationships. However, before explaining these relationships in regards with my study on BRICS, I underline the complexity of Gramsci's integral state, which posits challenges when applied to the intra-state BRICS dynamics.

3.3.3. Recognising the complexity of Gramsci's integral state

Gramsci was interested in exploring the relations of power and influence between political society and civil society as mutually strengthening one another for the benefit of certain groups and institutions. Other than recognising methodological differences between the two, the blending of political and civil society within the integral state makes it difficult to distinguish between them. Additionally, because of this fusion, when the state follows civil society's principles and emerges with 'ethical function[s]' (Sassoon, 1991, p. 83) or as an ethical state, its purpose becomes to educate both rulers and the common public.

Every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes (Gramsci, 1971, p. 258).

This means that the political society also influences the public sphere on economic matters. The political society's norms and laws can be protracted to civil society. The 'public can be brought under a collective pressure—a sort of tacit coercion' (Patnaik, 2012, 581). As a result, it is challenging to consider how civil society (or subalterns from civil society) can represent a source of resistance to state power if it legitimises the integral state's very coercive nature.

However, when civil society is considered relatively autonomous from the economic base, it can become a site for resistance. This is the case of the Brics-from-below, which are grassroots

bodies, detached from the economic structure. Civil society, thus, must be distinguished from the economic structure. It also operates beyond economic functions because of its cultural purposes (Gramsci, 1971, p. 242). As Gramsci distinguishes civil society from the economic structure, this thesis relies on this methodological distinction to analyse the framework of Brics-from-below.

Moreover, Green (2002) highlights the difference in claiming that civil society is an integral part of the state and suggesting it is an 'integral state'. He suggests that because Gramsci's civil society is embedded in the superstructure, it is not part of the state. Bobbio (1988) offers a different interpretation of Gramsci's civil society as connoting positive functions. For him, whilst the state is a vehicle of coercive strategies and ideological or political leadership representing negativity, civil society grounded in moral or intellectual leadership connotes positive elements of an ethical state. He considers civil society to be morally guided by the need to manufacture consent of its members and is, hence, guided by the motivation to win the consent of subaltern classes.

On this account, two models of civil society can be derived from Gramsci's distinction. First, a model of civil society, which is developed by the state and co-opted by the ruling class to lead subalterns both intellectually and morally into being 'convinced that the interests of the dominant group are those of society at large' (Femia, 1981, p. 41). Their aim is to integrate subalterns socially and politically into the dominant ideology. They normalise the 'fighting spirit' of the subaltern groups which may organise their 'defensive system' in a war of position (Gramsci, 1971, p. 337) and contain their contestations through passive revolution that imitate the tactics of the elite classes. Here, the positive dimension of moral or intellectual leadership coexist with the ideological and political nature of civil society. This thesis employs the characteristics of the Brics-from-the-middle to illustrate the co-opted strategies they design.

Second, this thesis considers the Brics-from-below as completely separate from the economic structure. Their primary aim is to inform and support the free choices of the subordinate groups. In the former model, ‘a common social-moral language is spoken, in which one concept of reality is dominant’ (Femia, 1981, p. 24) whereas in this second model, civil society is understood as the non-state sphere made up of organisations possessing the potential of rational self-regulation and freedom of thought.

3.4. A Gramscian conceptual framework for formulating hypotheses about BRICS

On account of the lack of theoretical engagement with how the BRICS configuration has become a representation *of* the Global South, this thesis’s central hypothesis is that the BRICS ruling classes manufacture a common sense of representing the Global South’s interests. Existing scholarships have not considered this hypothesis because they do not question the very origin of this discourse but rather assume an inherent link between BRICS and its material contributions *in* the Global South. Essentially, the research question is whether a conversion of this common sense into good sense is happening within the BRICS configuration. To substantiate this study, the central hypothesis has been broken down into three correlated hypothetical claims:

- First, the Brics-from-above are intellectuals organically connected with the configuration’s political society who are responsible for manufacturing the common sense of representing the Global South’s interests.
- Second, the Brics-from-below challenge this common sense.

- Third, in anticipation of pressures from below, the Brics-from-above have created the Brics-from-the-middle, allegedly in wider society's interests. However, the Brics-from-the-middle co-opt members of the Brics-from-below and absorb their contestations.

To build on the third hypothetical claim, this thesis argues that by offering members of the Brics-from-below to join the Brics-from-the-middle, these are compromises being deployed in anticipation of a deadlock between the two fundamental groups of social forces located on the two extremes of the social stratum. These two groups attempt to diffuse competing common sense discourses. Eventually, the Brics-from-the-middle devise discursive strategies imitating tactics of elite groups, appropriate the discourse of subalterns, and project it in the configuration's vision. When the Brics-from-the-middle attempt to persuade and co-opt the resistant groups to accept the BRICS leaders' common sense, the middle-level groups are preventing any alternative common sense from converting into good sense. The Brics-from-the-middle play an active role in the restoration of the existing social order within BRICS.

3.5. Chapter summary

This chapter set out to strengthen the argument that scholarly engagements with the BRICS configuration should extend beyond the theoretical confinement of positivist paradigms. Cox's critical theory is relevant for a study of BRICS. However, semi-peripheries such as the BRICS have been largely dismissed in critical IR and GPE despite that Coxian critical theory of world hegemony being meant for studies of core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral settings.

This chapter's section 3.2 identified that this dismissal is a result of Cox's analytical frameworks and subsequent prioritisation of transnational capitalist classes originating from the West. The implication for a study of BRICS is an inadequate application of a critical theoretical framework accounting for all actors with different degrees of empowerment within

the configuration. A post-positivist study of BRICS requires an engagement with all the ‘integral’ elements of the configuration and not simply those of an economic status because of the logic of capitalism. For this to be possible, Coxian critical theory ought to overcome its impracticality. This practicality does not entail imitating positivist strategies. Instead, it calls for a framework, which is capable of going beyond a vertical conceptualisation of social order and can place greater emphasis on the horizontal differentiation of social forces.

Section 3.3 suggested reverting to Gramsci’s notes to overcome the limitations of Cox’s analytical frameworks but acknowledges that his ideas may be misinterpreted in contemporary application. The result is a saturation of case studies inappropriately employing Gramsci’s ideas, notably his concept of passive revolution. To invite originality in using Gramsci’s concepts, this chapter introduced incorporating the new dimension of middle groups to reinvigorate theoretical novelty when engaging with Gramscianism. Finally, this chapter’s section 3.4 proposed engaging with Gramsci’s key concepts to formulate its hypothetical claims on BRICS. The next chapter now proceeds to explain the methodological framework adopted to address the hypothetical claims made in this thesis.

Chapter 4: BRICS: A pragmatic methodological and analytical approach

This chapter explains the rationale for the selection of the research methods and analytical approach for a study of the BRICS configuration's internal dynamics. As established at the end of Chapter 3, the overarching research question is about the prospect of a conversion of common sense about the BRICS configuration's representation *of* the Global South into good sense. To substantiate this study, it has been further broken down into three correlated claims: formation of common sense through discursive strategies by the Brics-from-above; potential challenges to that common sense in the form of resistances and contestations from subalterns of the Brics-from-below; and co-optation of these subalterns' discourse by the Brics-from-the-middle.

To consolidate these hypothetical claims and address the overarching research question, discourse analysis is necessary because the five governments use the weight of their combined advancement in political, economic, and social arenas to promote a discourse of allegedly representing the Global South's interests in their intergovernmental declarations. Meanwhile, the discourses and endeavours of subalterns within the configuration, which are resisting the BRICS common sense, are being overlooked. For example, the Brics-from-below claim to convey the genuine interests of the people from the South in their own statements, which they relay to the government officials. However, these do not feature in official governmental statements.

Yet, the government leaders speak on the subalterns' behalf by using a language, which appear to reflect their demands at international and regional fora. How this is achieved also requires an understanding of the role played by government-sanctioned Brics-from-the-middle. As a

result, it is worth exploring the origins of the BRICS discourses claiming an inherent link with the Global South and considering the hypothesis that groups from above and the middle of the configuration appropriate subalterns' language such as to overcome contestations emanating from below and avoid their resistance to the BRICS common sense from converting into good sense. Critical-political discourse analysis is, hence, useful because it 'deals especially with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance' (van Dijk, 1997, p. 11).

To elaborate on the research methods employed to substantiate the hypothetical claims and support the relevance of critical political discourse analysis for a study of BRICS, this chapter is structured into four main sections. Section 4.1 reaffirms the ontological basis of this thesis, Section 4.2 explains the chosen research methods, and section 4.3 elaborates on the importance of critical political discourse analysis. Section 4.4 is the chapter summary.

4.1. A reaffirmation of this study's ontology

A comprehensive understanding of BRICS cannot be reached by assuming that the escalation of the grouping is due to the projected economic and quantitative model designed by the Goldman Sachs's researchers. Silverman (2006) comments that in government research, 'there is little doubt that quantitative data rule the roost' (p. 35) because governments prioritise quantitative information as it reflects the findings of their own organisations, which employ 'reliable variables' (Silverman, 2006, p. 35). In the BRICS context, continuing to rely on statistical variables such as GDP, market growth, trade indicators, and investment level is insufficient to explain the configuration's attempt at political and cultural convergences. These have been gradual and been initiated at particular points in time which are worth questioning.

For example, it is important to consider whether the 2015 BRICS Civil Society was a reactionary measure as a result of the Brics-from-below's gatherings which had been growing since 2013.

Overall, my understanding of BRICS has been framed according to the narrative employed by the governmental bodies to represent 'themselves collectively both to themselves and to others' (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004, p. 56). This has shaped my interest in the 'whats' and 'hows', which have paved the way to the creation of those meanings about BRICS. Crehan (2016, Loc141) notes that there are 'heterogeneous beliefs people [have arrived] at not through critical reflection, but [encountered] as already existing, self-evident truths'. The same applies to the social reality of BRICS. There are different interpretations including positive and negative views about the prospects of the BRICS for the world order. Yet, the one serving the dominant group's interests is prioritised over other perspectives of BRICS. On this basis, qualitative research exposes what is extraordinary about the features of BRICS and the controversial governmental modus operandi, which requires a thorough understanding of its organisational structure, internal dynamics, and the views the diverse groups possess about the configuration.

The prospects of qualitative research for a study of BRICS are expected to reveal the practices of manufactured meanings about the configuration and how these are either accepted or rejected. According to Yauch and Steudel (2003, p. 472), unlike quantitative research, when engaging with cultural assessment, the qualitative approach generates 'the ability to probe for underlying values, beliefs, and assumptions'. In regards to BRICS, qualitative research helps in disclosing the beliefs and assumptions about the sub-groups, which influence the governmental decision-making.

Additionally, my decision to adopt qualitative research is owing to my scepticism with the statistical data used to explain BRICS to date. The selection of quantitative data used to represent the configuration is biased with a focus on geographic, demographic, and trade statistics. In addition, while official statistics on BRICS may be viewed with suspicion because they are government-generated, there are also no data published on groups which are challenging the dominant views. Simultaneously, information about the solidarity of resistant groups is lacking and the potential influence of their gathering is not studied.

This study, hence, depends on post-positivist research principles because my ontological perspective is grounded in the assumption that qualitative research is more accurate to explain the BRICS social and political phenomena. From my preliminary analysis of the BRICS documents, I note that the discursive constitution of the BRICS configuration is not a result of ‘a free play of ideas in people’s heads’ (Fairclough, 1992, p. 66) but originates from social practice and ranking of discourses. Within BRICS, there is a hierarchical order of discourse, which is shaped by the social order within the configuration. Understanding how a discourse becomes the dominant one requires studying the ways in which it becomes common sense and how appropriation of the language from below can occur. For this political-critical discourse analysis to be achieved, different research methods are required.

4.2. BRICS study: A necessity for data triangulation

This study of BRICS requires a multi-methodological approach because of how the primary research question has been formulated and broken down into three hypotheses. On account of the different components of the study, a multi-methodological approach has been more effective in comparison with the narrow strategy of a single-method approach. The latter would have been limited to investigate the BRICS configuration’s complex organisational structure.

There is a diversity of subcultures and diverging ways of operating taking the forms of Brics-from-the-middle and Brics-from-below interacting in the configuration. For this reason, analysis of the BRICS configuration's organisational framework requires a 'variety in data collection methodologies in order to mirror the complexity which they attempt to describe' (Paul, 1996, p. 142).

Qualitative researching, in this way, has enabled an exploration of the power and social relations within the configuration itself. It is important to highlight that through the articulation of the three hypotheses, the objective has not been to test theories formulated in advance. Instead, a focused approach has been adopted to ground the three hypothetical claims with empirical evidences. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 267) argue that triangulation is a 'way to get the finding in the first place – by seeing or hearing multiple instances of it from different sources by using different methods and by squaring the finding with others it needs to be squared with'. For example, I have arrived at the first claim by adopting a 'source-oriented approach' (Bell and Waters, 2014, p. 126), which I explain below in Section 4.2.1, and I have also looked for 'unwitting evidence' (Marwick, 2001, p. 172), that is, any information which is not officially declared.

To get a stronger sense of subalterns' concerns, I observed their gathering and followed up the preliminary analysis of my initial observations with interviews. In regards to my final claim, I reverted to documentary research to explore the strategies deployed by middle groups within the configuration to absorb contestations and reach compromises. As a result, for supporting these claims, data have been collected using multiple means. This process refers to methodological triangulation, that is, 'different ways of collecting data' (Flick, 2009, p. 448). Triangulation can be applied to numerous aspects of research methodologies depending on contexts for data gathering, strategies that can be adopted for the data collection, and taking

into consideration whether a single or multiplicity of data sources that can be used (Denzin, 2009, p. 301; Scandura and Williams, 2000, p. 1249). The strength of converging ‘multiple methods on the same research question ... [is the potential] to corroborate evidence from several different angles’ (Martin and Harrington, 2012, p. 188).

Additionally, using multiple methods has also been helpful to overcome ‘the deficiencies that flow from ... one method’ (Denzin, 2009, p. 300). Qualitative researching in the form of document searching, fieldwork, and interviews have been three distinct methods for collecting relevant data. Each possesses their respective strengths but are also limited. I have relied on official documents from BRICS states’ officials along with statements issued by the Brics-from-below as sources of data. Since the gatherings of the Brics-from-below are relatively recent and under-researched in the academic context, I have collected data on this grouping through field research. The three research methods have been useful in numerous ways. The next section proceeds to explain their utility and also comment on the difficulties encountered.

4.2.1. Documentary research of BRICS

“Document” is a general term for an impression left on a physical object by a human being’ (Bell and Waters, 2014, p. 126). It can encompass ‘images, films, videos or other non-written sources’ (Bell and Waters, 2014, p. 126) and can also be kept in electronic format. More relevant to my research, documents, according to Atkinson and Coffey (2004, p. 58), are considered as “social facts”, in that they are produced, shared and used in socially organised ways’.

Gramsci (1971, p. 411–2) was also interested in facts rather than statistical data produced through generalisations and methods borrowed from natural sciences. Explanation of ‘historical facts’, according to Gramsci (1971) is essentially ‘found in past history and in the

social conditions of the present’ (p. 224) rather than in information generated through arbitrary methods of data collection requiring mathematical and scientific forms of analysis. ‘[E]very real historical phase leaves traces of itself in succeeding phrases, which then become in a sense the best document of its existence’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 419). In other words, documents ought to be analysed according to the historical circumstances, which have led to their emergence.

In the BRICS context, the intergovernmental declarations, different ministerial documents on the grouping, and statements or recommendations produced by the government-approved organisations have been fundamental to be examined because they illuminate an understanding of past events, which led to the actual historical phase of the configuration. The study on BRICS using documents has been according to a ‘source-oriented approach’ (Bell and Waters, 2014, p. 127) where I have let the nature of the official and unofficial sources of information available on BRICS guide the development of my study and approach to the topic.

To formulate the hypotheses, I have been led by the materials contained in the official BRICS declarations and statements from diverse government-to-government meetings. I researched these documents to find ‘unwitting evidence’ (Marwick, 2001, p. 172–9). Witting evidence refers to the intentional message and information that the creator of the document sought to convey whereas unwitting evidence refers to the unintentional message or everything else that can be learnt from the document such as the culture or values to which the creator of the document adheres to. Bell and Waters (2014) comment that ‘all documents provide “unwitting evidence”, but it is the task of the researcher to try to assess its precise significance’ (p. 131).

They provide the following illustration:

If, for example, a government minister made a speech announcing a proposed educational reform, the “witting evidence” would be everything that was stated in the speech about the proposed change. The “unwitting evidence”, on the other hand, might come from any underlying assumptions unintentionally revealed by the minister in the language he or

she used, and from the fact that a particular method has been chosen by the government to announce the reform. If a junior minister is given the job of announcing a reduction in education expenditure that may well indicate that more senior colleagues anticipate that the government will be criticized (Bell and Waters, 2014, p. 131).

Similarly, in the BRICS context, it has been crucial to consider ‘who’ said ‘what’ intentionally and what the unintended messages in their declarations have been.

A study of documents produced on BRICS countries, moreover, enabled consideration of the social and historical context when and where the documents were produced. Reviewing documents allowed identification of the agents or producers of ideas (Bowen, 2009, p. 30). Since documents provide key chronological insights of past events, they help researchers identify the ‘historical roots of specific issues and can indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomena currently under investigation’ (Bowen, 2009, p. 30). This helps to establish whether the information produced in the document is a reaction to a significant event or crisis and how they are related to broader discussions. Therefore, the advantage of document research is that the facts in terms of extracts, quotations, or entire texts from policy reports, meeting minutes, or discussion papers, yield data that can simultaneously be organised into key themes or categories through analysis (Labuschagne, 2003).

In addition, given that documents of all types provide additional research data, they assist researchers in discovering new understandings or exploring ways of thinking relevant to the research, which have previously been left unexplored (Merriam, 1988, p. 118). Documents, as a research method, are a relevant strategy for this study because they enable tracking of changes in scenarios where numerous drafts of a particular document are made accessible. By examining periodic reports, subtle changes about how ideas have evolved, integrated, or been removed from the agenda can be identified. Therefore, document reviewing allowed to trail the conversion or lack of transformation of an incoherent conception into a coherent one.

Document analysis, in a study of BRICS, is also valuable because it ‘requires data *selection*, instead of data *collection*’ (Bowen, 2009, p. 31). This implies that the method does not affect the data being collected. Instead, the data available in documents have already been collected. The next step is to evaluate its content. Various official documents on BRICS are accessible in the public domain. Notably, the *BRICS Information Centre* is a website free of any affiliation, which serves ‘as a leading independent source of information and analysis on the BRICS interaction and institutions’ (BRICS Information Centre, no date). Its publications encompass all the official BRICS countries’ declarations since 2009 and include key ministerial documents from the five states.

It is important to acknowledge that the conventional approach to using documents as a research method has focused on studying documents as resources, that is, ‘containers of content’ (Prior, 2004, p. 77) or ‘inert carriers of content’ (Prior, 2011, p. 95). Whilst Prior (2011) acknowledges the approach of studying documents through its content, that is, the meaning of what is ‘in’ the document, she proposes that how ‘documents are used as a resource by human actors for purposeful ends’ (p. 95) is neglected. Beyond studying documents as simply modes of instructions or reports of events, documents also act as agents as they are ‘always open to manipulation by others: as allies, as resources for further action, as opponents to be destroyed, or suppressed’ (2004, p. 76). In the study of BRICS, both the intergovernmental declarations and the documents produced have been researched to assess the extent to which contradictory messages have been integrated or disregarded.

In spite of the strengths of documentary research for a study of BRICS, there have been limitations attached to using documents as a research method. Whether full access to an organisation’s documents and archives can be granted was not guaranteed. Moreover, the

‘official’ documents pertaining to the examination of historical events may not necessarily offer a true glimpse because some items, whilst originally discussed, may not be officially recorded into an organisation’s ‘institutional memory’ (Lamont, 2015, p. 82). According to Lamont (2015), it is uncommon in studies of international relations ‘to have full access to an organization’s official records, although this is more common for the historian investigating organizations that no longer exist, or researching an event that happened long ago’ (p. 81).

In addition, not all documents are similarly organised and readily accessible (Dunn, 2008, p. 88). For example, whilst the South African BRICS Think Tank Council’s (Human Sciences Research Council) website provided a wealth of documents through its online catalogue, accessing information from the webpage of the China Centre for Contemporary World Studies has been challenging because their website was deleted. Both these think tanks are part of the BTTC. The lack of access to all information on a webpage may be due to deliberate blocking, low irretrievability of the documentation, or biased selection of what information to display (Dunn, 2008).

Despite the inherent limitations attached to documentary research, the primary objective of treating documents as ‘social facts’ must not be overlooked.

Documentary sources are not surrogates for other kinds of data. We cannot, for instance, learn through written records alone how an organization actually operates day by day. Equally, we cannot treat records – however ‘official’ – as firm evidence of what they report ... This recognition or reservation does not mean we should ignore or downgrade documentary data. On the contrary, [since they construct particular kinds of representations using their own conventions] our recognition of their existence as social facts (or constructions) alerts us to the necessity to treat them very seriously indeed (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004, p. 58).

In other words, the cultural values attached to documents and the contexts in which they are produced must not be overlooked. Documentary research, nonetheless, as a single methodological strategy remains limited because there are some aspects of social interaction

potentially with the capacity of shaping the outcome of a decision-making process, which remain invisible to the researcher. In this context, combining this form of data analysis with other qualitative methods is necessary to expand the understanding of the BRICS phenomenon. Field observation has been one of these methods.

4.2.2. Field observation in the absence of a fixed site

According to Steinhoff (2003), ‘a fieldworker normally begins by finding a site – a community, an office, a school, a work site – and then settling down to observe and interview people in their natural setting’ (p. 36). In my study’s context, this has been impossible. The first reason is because access to official BRICS meetings and other official platforms was restricted owing to their high-profile status requiring security clearance. Second, it is because the unofficial Brics-from-below do not meet regularly and in the same organisational structure every time they have a gathering. For example, the People’s Forum in Goa, which I attended on 13 and 14 October 2016, encompassed majority of representatives from India with a handful from the other four countries among their 500 participants.

Contrastingly, the Brics-from-below’s first gathering in 2013 consisted mainly of South African non-governmental representatives along with comparatively fewer participants from the other countries. The BRICS annual summit is hosted in different countries and representatives of such People’s Forum seek to organise their gathering in parallel as a counter-summit generally in the same location as the host country. Owing to the different sites, it is difficult to observe such gatherings at a fixed location. As a result, I had to find different ways to observe their activities. This has involved entering their network to follow their communications. More precisely, I joined their mailing list where they share their updates and calls for solidarity. Another way of tracing their activities has been by observing their two-day

gathering at the People's Forum in Goa in 2016 when India was hosting the BRICS intergovernmental summit in the same city.

Furthermore, field observation of the platform for the Brics-from-below has been necessary because there is little scholarly explanation for why they exist and how they are different from other official BRICS platforms. Observing the gathering of the People's Forum in Goa has been helpful for my understanding of their cultural organisation and purpose. I attended the forum with the aim of collecting first-hand information in a naturally occurring context.

The People's Forum organised in Goa was a two-day event prior to the BRICS official summit. Over 500 participants attended and there were over 20 presentation topics covered by different speakers. There were numerous parallel workshops and there were last-minute changes, which resulted in additional topics being added to the two-day forum. Given that the programme was made available on the day, I had to spontaneously choose among the parallel workshops to attend. Moreover, although the organisers had planned for translation, there was a noticeable language barrier between the Portuguese-speaking participants from Brazil and the majority of Hindi-speakers whose presentations were translated in English. The majority of the presentations overran their allotted time due to a weak organisational setup.

At the end of the forum, the plenary was closed by a representative from South Africa who read a draft of the declaration of the People's Forum based on the discussions and exchanges of the two-day event. This was also shared a few days later by email and is available on their website. This forum was intentionally organised on the eve of the annual BRICS official summit, which was taking place in another area of Goa. I also learnt that rather than plenary discussions, organisers of the People's Forum intended to organise a march in the city but faced obstacles due to security reasons arising from the presence of the five government leaders in

Goa. Although contributions of the various speakers at the People's Forum whom I have audio-recorded were insightful, the rushed two-day event already provided a glimpse of the differences in organisation style between the official pre-summit events and non-governmental ones. Before elaborating on the issues faced while I collected data through this field research, it is worth considering its benefits.

Essentially, observing the participants at the People's Forum has enlightened my understanding of the motivations of the participants who attended this unofficial network of civil society gathering. Fieldwork, according to Myers (2013), 'is the best way to get an understanding of social situations "from the inside"' (p. 148). However, this does not imply obtaining access to confidential information or privileged insight that validated my hypothetical claims. Instead, it served as a pathway to access views that have added 'rigor, breadth and depth' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 2) to my study.

It is important to re-emphasise that in the context of official BRICS gatherings, I have not succeeded in attending any of the governmental meetings for a glimpse from the inside of the official gatherings despite numerous attempts. The reason I was provided in an email by the Director of India's Ministry of External Affairs was because the summit and other official events are a government-to-government meeting at the highest security level. As such, it is not open to the public. Nonetheless, I was invited to keep visiting their website for the summit meeting's outcome and information related to other meetings. In addition, representatives of the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), an Indian think-tank that forms part of the official BTTC did not return any of my emails or phone calls. As a result, in the case of the official BRICS events, I failed to observe their organisation 'from the inside' during my field research in India in 2016.

One of the benefits of observing the gathering of the Brics-from-below has been the direct exposure to the social interaction of the representatives of diverse civil society movements. This ‘directness’ has meant ‘[watching] ‘what they do and [listening] to what they say’ (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 320). I have employed the technique of observation in an exploratory phase with the aim of understanding the organisation of those at the grassroots level of the BRICS configuration.

To generate my primary observations, I have relied on an unstructured approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1998), guided by the motivation to develop a more solid sense of the unofficial grassroots movements’ concerns with the BRICS phenomenon. This exploratory phase revealed that there is a degree of coherence among the diverse representatives present, which is especially evident in their claim that BRICS government bodies have appropriated their language. Yet, their views on the practices to adopt to contest the BRICS leaders’ agenda were incoherent. In addition to recording the presentations of the numerous speakers at the People’s Forum, I kept notes of my conversations with the representatives and the various presentations. Initial analysis of my preliminary observations revealed emerging themes to investigate in the documents produced by BRICS and to explore during interviews.

I attempted to follow up with the contacts I have developed at the forum by email and via Skype. When complementing my observation of the gathering with interviews, as noted by Corbin and Strauss (2015), ‘it is not unusual for persons to say they are doing one thing but in reality they are doing something else’ (p. 41). Hence, my observations of the groups’ gathering has also served as a supplementary method to corroborate the information obtained from the interviews conducted with some of the organisers and participants. It has been beneficial to combine my observations with interviews because as Patton (2002, p. 291) notes ‘whenever

possible and appropriate, having observed what appears to be significant ... some effort should be made to follow up with those involved to find out directly from them what [...] [it] really meant'. On this account, I interviewed some of the key organisers behind the People's Forum and its attendees.

4.2.3. Interviews: Face-to-face and online

Despite being originally rooted in quantitative research (Carey, 2012, p. 109), interviews are widely employed within social research for data collection (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004; Miller and Glassner, 2004; Silverman, 2006; Stephens, 2011; Wengraf, 2001). 'In simple terms, interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004, p. 140). This research method is ideal because it is an 'uncomplicated yet highly effective means by which to collect ... usually rich amount of data' within a realistic timeframe (Carey, 2012, p. 109).

Compared with other methods, the interview is highly flexible. Its adaptable nature gives an 'interviewer [the opportunity] to follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate [ideas] ... that a written response would conceal' (Bell and Waters, 2014, p. 145). Through such a research method, I was able to develop, clarify, and elaborate interviewees' responses. In addition, the interview method, within predefined ethical boundaries, provided me access to information emanating from the inside of the organisers of the Brics-from-below, which offered 'new insights on issues under-explored in the past' (Carey, 2012, p. 109).

When complementing my direct observations with interviews, I noted that what participants said at the forum and what they actually believed did not necessarily match. 'Interview ... responses are [thus] notorious for discrepancies between what people say that they have done, or will do, and what they actually did or will do' (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 320). Semi-

structured interviews have been necessary for collecting data from the representatives involved at the grassroots level.

I conducted interviews with both the participants and organisers of the People's Forum because I sought to understand their motivations for joining this platform. Although there were 500 participants, many individuals were representatives of one non-governmental organisation or movement from diverse regions of India who responded to the call for solidarity. From my observations, I noted that the majority of the attendees from India were not familiar about BRICS before attending the forum and were being introduced to the motivations of the Brics-from-below at this platform. This gathering served as an awareness campaign on BRICS prepared by the organisers of the People's Forum.

When networking for gathering information and collecting data from potential interviewees, I noticed that besides the organisers from India of the People's Forum, it was notably the representatives of South Africa and Brazil who had a genuine interest in consolidating their subaltern-level groups' dynamics within the BRICS configuration. However, they were numerically fewer. Nonetheless, the information garnered during these interactions were abundant and illuminating for my study.

Initially, although I had an unstructured approach to my preliminary field observation, I intended to conduct more interviews but the compact two-day event made it difficult. Moreover, four participants with whom I had exchanged contact details for an interview via Skype after the event did not follow up on my request. Whilst 'Skype interviewing' (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014) has been beneficial in expanding my accessibility with participants consenting to be interviewed, there have been logistical considerations such as unavailability of some participants or lack of internet access accounting for my failure to interview them. For

example, there were three representatives from South African non-governmental organisations present in Goa during the People's Forum. Due to their busy schedule as presenters, I could not manage to interview them during the two days. We exchanged contact details for a follow up. However, two of them did not succeed to talk to me in order to share their views about the Brics-from-below because of poor internet connectivity in their home regions. One of the participants from Brazil whom I sought to interview did not feel confident speaking in English and as a result did not wish to be interviewed. In this case, the limitation of using interviews as noted by Wengraf (2001, p. 188) is a failure to persuade potential interviewees to give an interview.

The key informants for my study have included members who have contributed to the organisation of the People's Forum in Goa and participants who attended the event and who were agreeable to be interviewed. Although representatives of civil society movements from all five countries were invited, only a handful of participants not from India were present. There was only one representative from China, none from Russia allegedly because of strict monitoring of their travel by the Russian government, five from South Africa and three from Brazil. I faced a few limitations in data collection during this field research because of the sensitive nature of the participants' involvement. For example, the only representative from China was agreeable to be interviewed but unwilling to exchange contact details with me. He was agreeable to the confidentiality in the consent form and emphasised the retention of his anonymity in my research.⁹ He additionally urged me to not share on social media a photo of one of his presentation slides, which I had taken. As he was in Goa on a tourist visa, he feared it would compromise the work of his organisation in China if the information was shared. I

⁹ [Appendix A](#) is a copy of the consent for interview and participation information form, which was handed to every participant before an interview.

also noted that his off-record conversation with me about China's involvement in BRICS was a sharp contrast with the carefully worded information he shared during the interview.

Similarly, another representative of a local movement in India did not wish to share her contact details for a Skype interview at a later date seeking to preserve her anonymity. The issues with conducting these two individual interviews during the People's Forum were about finding an ideal quiet location and a convenient time where there would have been little interferences. Although we managed to do so, my interviews with the latter were relatively shorter compared with the ones I conducted online after the forum because we were short on time. Nevertheless, they were still insightful.

Overall, the other interviews I succeeded in conducting helped me realise the degree of understanding the participants have about BRICS, how they echo the ideas gathered at the forum in their own individual organisations in their respective countries, and their views on the official BRICS platform for civil society. I gathered information on their purpose for joining the groups from below and solicited their views on the future of BRICS. Since the pool of participants I have interviewed consisted of individuals from diverse organisations, this influenced the structure of my interview topic guide. Although my interviews were semi-structured, the interviewees were asked similar questions.¹⁰ I adapted my questions accordingly but sought to remain consistent in order not to obscure my analysis. According to Gusterson (2008), in such scenarios, 'it is the consistency of the questions posed to different individuals or populations that enables ... to make differentiating generalizations: everything comes back to the way different people respond to the same questions' (p. 104).

¹⁰ [Appendix B](#) is a copy of the interview topic/question guide.

Owing to the diverse backgrounds of the participants, the method of semi-structured interview has also been helpful for data collection in other ways. My interaction with the interviewees was guided by a list of topics to be covered. This interactionist approach has served to ‘generate data which give an authentic insight into people’s experiences’ (Silverman, 2006, p. 118). Since ‘interview subjects construct not just narratives, but social worlds’ (Miller and Glassner, 2004, p. 126), the semi-structured interviews have helped me not to access facts about BRICS but rather understand the perspectives of the participants who shared their views on BRICS by ‘telling it as it is’. The topic guide served as a checklist to my interaction with the participants and contained ‘a default wording and order for the questions, but the wording and order [was] often substantially modified based on the flow of the interview, and additional unplanned questions’ (Robson and McCartan, 2016, p. 284). The flexibility of this method namely with face-to-face semi-structured interviews enabled me to probe their answers and investigate interesting responses.

However, given that a few of the Skype interviews were only audio, I could not observe non-verbal gestures. According to Robson and McCartan (2016, p. 286) ‘non-verbal cues may give messages which help in understanding the verbal response’. Nevertheless, the authors also note that the flexible approach to semi-structured interviews creates doubts about the reliability of the responses. Despite this concern, I have found that unplanned questions have illuminated numerous responses.

The more prominent obstacle encountered when using interviews as a research method has surrounded the issue of anonymity and confidentiality. All of my participants willingly accepted to be interviewed and for the conversation to be recorded. I guaranteed them about the confidentiality of their recorded responses and informed them on tape of their rights for withdrawal or refusing to answer any question before the interview began. However, as noted

by Wengraf (2001, p. 187) ‘certain confidential material may not be used in any form, however anonymized’. In my study’s context, I had to exclude details such as names of the interviewees and their job title in the organisation. More notable and significant confidential material I had to anonymise included the name of the organisation, which the participant was working with or representing. Whilst anonymising the information implies modifying details sufficiently so that the individual concerned cannot be identified (Wengraf, 2001, p. 187), I had to guarantee that it did not undermine the value of my study. As a result, information such as the broad areas of their organisation’s field of expertise have been kept.

A key issue I faced when planning to conduct some of the interviews a few days after the forum was to take into consideration the amount of information I was open to share on my own views of BRICS when networking at the People’s Forum. My consent and information form contained a brief overview of my study covering the key areas I was exploring. Before beginning the interview, I invited the participants to ask me questions to clarify the purpose of my research. When trying to persuade them during my networking at the forum for accepting an interview, I intentionally kept my views on the subject of BRICS neutral. According to Foddy (1994), an interviewee potentially agreeable for an interview is going to encode what the interviewer intends to do and say into a framework, which they understand for the upcoming interview. Since I was planning to conduct some of the interviews a few days after the forum, I had to be mindful that my prior conversations with the interviewees did not influence them such as to bias their opinions. As noted by Wengraf (2001, p. 189), ‘[t]he more information that you give, the more they will inevitably ‘slant’ what they say in the light of the interpretation of ... what they think the effect of the research will be’. Given that I had conducted some preliminary document analysis, I had to be careful of the amount of information I wanted to share before the interviews such as to collect authentic views from the participants.

4.2.4. Preliminary reflections from the combined research methods

Using the three above research methods has been helpful to tap into the different dimensions of the BRICS organisational structure. The data collected from the different methods have helped to grasp distinct views about the configuration. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), ‘the combination of multiple methods ... in a single study is best understood ... as a strategy that adds rigor, breadth and depth to any investigation’ (p. 2). In this study, combining documentary research, field observation of the People’s Forum, and interviews has provided insights on the formulation of the statements of the BRICS governments, the way these are received by subalterns, and the way that some items are disregarded or appropriated to be used differently. A preliminary observation is that there are subtle strategies at the discursive level meant to manufacture a way of understanding the BRICS.

The data combined from the research methods reveal that there is a social hierarchy evident within the BRICS configuration where some groups are socially and economically more empowered whereas others are denied access to power or even their own representation. This social order also shapes the narrative on the BRICS. The discourse of the dominant group is prioritised because of the social hierarchy and is diffused as common sense. Economic and governance matters are ranked as primary subjects in their agenda at the expense of people-oriented discussions. Yet, the discourse of the governments is imbued with a positive language drawing on principles, which appeal to wider society. Meanwhile, besides being apprehensive of the alleged alternative model of the BRICS leaders, the data collected expose co-optation as a concern that subaltern groups have about the governments and official civil society platforms.

However, it is not only a co-optation of intellectuals from the subaltern level, but an appropriation of the principles they advocate, which BRICS governments project at

international forum, that worries subaltern groups. When absorbing the values and embedding claims of groups from below into their own discourse with ‘practical argumentation [that is] argumentation about what to do in response to practical problems’ (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2012) that countries of the Global South experience, BRICS leaders project a positive self-presentation of their conglomeration. It is at the discursive level of their intergovernmental declarations where they manufacture the common sense of representing non-core countries’ interests. Discourse is, therefore, an important analytical category for a study of BRICS.

4.3. Analytical framework

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the noun ‘discourse’ refers to ‘a formal written or spoken communication’ (2008, p. 409). It is ‘a serious speech or piece of writing on a particular subject’ (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2014, p. 207) The Collins English Dictionary adds a further feature to the definition of the speech or written piece by describing it as ‘intended to teach or explain something’. In the study of social transformations, Norman Fairclough (1992, p. 64) defines discourse as ‘a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning’.

In media studies, Sturken and Cartwright (2009, p. 439) understand discourse as ‘a body of knowledge that both defines and delimits what can be said about something’. Discourse is also prominently defined in social psychology (Parker, 1990; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Potter et al., 1990; Potter, 2012), where it is considered to be ‘a coherent system of meanings, realized in texts, which reflects on its own way of speaking, refers to other discourses, is about objects, contains subjects and is historically located’ (Parker, 1990, p. 187).

What is gathered from these distinct fields’ definitions of discourse, is that it is taken to refer to any form of written or spoken communication producing and conveying coherent meaning

about an object, activity, event, or the world. From these definitions, it is noted that the meaning-making process of discourse is attached to relations of power (Parker, 1990; Fairclough, 2012; Reisigl and Wodak, 2009). Discourse is viewed as having the capacity to define and influence the understanding of reality in addition to categorising subjects and objects within social boundaries whilst also being powerful in discarding alternate meanings, which do not fit dominant discourses. Over time, discourse has developed both as a theory and analytical tool.

Political theorists who have contributed to the expansion of discourse as theory include Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985). They argue that understanding of society or any social phenomenon is a matter of analysing the dominant discourse used to approach the construction of any societal practice, implying that alternate meanings of any activity or subject can be discarded. Their theoretical contributions have shaped a neo-Gramscian theory of discourse. Inspired by Gramsci's concepts, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that hegemony should not be reduced to a matter of class practice. Instead, they have situated their concept of discourse within a theory of the political. They have conceived hegemony as the creation of meaning that can be achieved through discourses. The study of the state, civil society, and economy is a matter of understanding their political discursivity. In their perspective, the formation of discourses about an object or activity always encompasses the exclusion of other possible discourses or meanings. Consequently, hegemony is linked to the shaping and limits of the degree of openness of a discourse. The other alternative meanings or 'surplus of meaning' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 111) are discarded. According to Martin (2002, p. 23),

[d]ominant discourses succeed by displacing alternative modes of argument and forms of activity; by marginalising radically different discourses; by naturalising their hierarchies and exclusions presenting them in the form of 'common sense'; and by effacing the traces of their own contingency. A successful hegemony will seek to render itself incontestable.

In other words, the implications of dominant discourses are their power to define meanings, influence common understandings, legitimise ways of operation that privilege some practices over others, and their capacity to impose social hierarchies (Dowding, 2011; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Martin, 2002; Torfing, 1999). These are considered a result of the power to exclude alternate meanings or those that are fundamentally different from the dominant one.

Critical discourse analysts drawing on Gramsci's concepts, therefore, build an understanding of hegemony to be a means of organising society where powerful groups produce ideas and construct social identities, which become widely and consensually accepted, are uncontested, and turn into a common sense of viewing the world. What is neglected in this theory of discourse, inspired from Gramsci's concept of hegemony, is the assumption of hegemony being achieved as a result of appropriating subalterns' discourses. It neglects to account that dominant social groups have the capacity to absorb, appropriate, or co-opt the discourses of socially less empowered groups into the more powerful ones. It is assumed that hegemony is a result of creating a dominant discourse whilst other alternatives have been excluded. In reality, it is necessary to acknowledge that subalterns' discourses may not be excluded. Instead, they may potentially be co-opted and (mis)appropriated by powerful groups to pretend that they are serving wider society's interests.

In the BRICS context, employing discourse as an analytical tool involves dissecting the forms of communication and interaction about the subject across diverse groups and various platforms because these shape their meanings and naturalise their status as a representation of the Global South in the world order. As a method, it does not only involve looking at the governmental groups' promulgated discourses or the ones that are discarded. Additionally, it consists of acknowledging the origins of the discourses and the different groups of social forces

responsible for its creation. Hence, the BRICS common sense of representing the Global South's interests is best understood within a multidisciplinary framework combining social, economic, political, and discursive components.

4.3.1. The rationale for political-critical discourse analysis

Political discourse analysis is the study of 'the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels' (van Dijk 1997, p. 12). However, as van Dijk (1997) acknowledges, politicians are not exclusively responsible for an articulated discourse. In international relations, there are various active participants influencing political discourses and practices. Similarly, the BRICS phenomenon, its dominant meanings, and resulting practices necessitate a critical analysis of the discourses shaping the subject. The grouping is not constituted of governmental and state parties alone. There are groups from inferior levels of its social stratum and of a non-governmental status or parallel to the states, contributing thoughts to the subject but whose involvement are concealed or misappropriated at international fora. As a result of the discourses promulgated at the governmental forums and foregoing the voices of subalterns, dominant power relations within BRICS remain perceived as natural and legitimate, allegedly speaking on behalf of less empowered groups and the wider Global South.

While there have been attempts to frame 'Discourses of the Global South' (Kantha, 2012), this has been in general environmental discussions and not with particular emphasis on BRICS countries. In addition, Kantha's (2012) objective of outlining 'fundamental commonalities of the Southern discourses' is grounded in rigorous scientific research focusing on climate data and collective strategic interests. There is little emphasis on discourse at the Global South level from a political perspective. The BRICS governments advocate working for advancing the

interests of developing and emerging countries and yet, their collective intergovernmental discourse is little analysed politically. A political-critical discourse framework enables distancing a study of BRICS away from capitalism, rigorous scientific methodologies, and interpretations of economic data.

A political-critical discourse analysis approach enables one to situate the BRICS configuration's perspective on manufacturing their self-presentation in the name of the Global South in particular historical and institutional contexts. By understanding BRICS discourses as a 'social practice' (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64), this thesis explores how the common sense of the governments is politically manufactured.

Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it. A dialectical relationship is a two-way relationship: the discursive event is shaped by situations, institutions and social structures, but it also shapes them (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997, p. 258).

A discourse analytical approach, moreover, 'makes it possible to analyse pressures from above and possibilities of resistance to unequal power relationships that... appear as societal conventions' (Higgins and Smith, 2013, p. 9). This reminds analysts that discourse analysis is neither a matter of analysing language or its language use intrinsically, nor a 'detailed analysis of texts' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 123). Rather it is concerned 'with the linguistic character of social and cultural processes and structures' (Keller, 2013, p. 25). In other words, it is about the processes through which a discourse becomes a dominant one on a social level. In this study's context, a discourse analytical approach provides the means to study the meanings of the official and unofficial texts produced on BRICS, which consolidate a reality about the configuration by prioritising certain views over others.

4.4. Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the reasons for combining three research methods: documentary research, field observation, and interviews. This multi-methodological approach is necessary because of the complex organisational structure of the BRICS configuration. Gathering data from multiple methods provided the means to identify contradictions among the diverse social groups and to support the hypotheses with evidences.

Multiple methods rather than a single method has also been useful because the BRICS gatherings (official and unofficial) occur frequently throughout the year and at different sites. Information from the documentary research of the BRICS documents helped to understand the Brics-from-above's political strategy through discourses whereas other methods had to be designed to observe the activities of the People's Forum. Observing participants say one thing at the People's Forum and follow a different pathway in their action has necessitated an exploration of their views through interviews. The different research methods have complemented one another.

The preliminary observations reveal that it is at the discourse level that the struggle among the social forces is evident, which is why a political-critical discourse analysis is required. The ways that common sense discourses are fabricated, enriched, circulated, manipulated, or (mis)appropriated reflect the social hierarchy among the intra-state groups. There are both intentional messages and underlying assumptions behind numerous BRICS declarations.

Thus, through these research methods, it has been observed that the social infrastructure of BRICS does not comprise an economic society alone. There are other dimensions namely from both civil society and political society, which are integral to the BRICS configuration. Understanding BRICS from economic dimensions results in focusing on the coercive

mechanism of the state at the expense of neglecting the social forces of an extra-economic nature, which is why a study of their convergence at the discursive level has been necessary.

Chapter 5: Fabrication and fragmentation of the BRICS common sense

This chapter substantiates this thesis's first hypothesis purporting that the Brics-from-above are intellectuals organically connected with the configuration's political society who are responsible for manufacturing the common sense of representing the Global South's interests. The aim is to demonstrate that once the BRICS conception of the world is accepted as mirroring society's interests, this system of ideas and beliefs manufactured by the ruling classes is assumed to constitute popular knowledge and turn into what Gramsci called common sense. As such, this chapter is organised in three main sections. To explain the popularisation of the BRICS common sense, section 5.1 identifies five central themes capturing the essence of the BRICS intergovernmental declarations: practical cooperation, global economic governance, international affairs, people-to-people or cultural exchanges, and principles. The process of identifying these themes or central categories where the Brics-from-above present themselves as working in the interests of emerging and developing countries serves three purposes.

First, an attentive reading and analysis of each intergovernmental declaration allows for an identification of the patterns in the BRICS intergovernmental texts, which they have deployed to direct ideational discourses and aspirations about their intent in the world order. Second, it enables an understanding of the role played by the intellectuals organically affiliated with the BRICS political society who are responsible for organising these governmental discourses. Third, it helps with understanding how and where these discourses have been reproduced, namely by government-approved platforms of the Brics-from-the-middle. The latter develop these discourses further as common sense by enriching them through additional ideas and spreading them through the platform of civil society. This point helps to connect with Gramsci's reflection that common sense 'is not something rigid... but is continually

transforming itself, enriching itself' (1971, p. 326f). In this case, the Brics-from-the-middle play an important role.

Section 5.2 draws attention to three of the themes identified in the previous section namely practical cooperation, global economic governance, and international affairs.¹¹ It is concerned with demonstrating that these themes, which are being popularised in the BRICS declarations as common sense, will remain fragmented conceptions of ideas and not convert into good sense. The reason is because, according to Gramsci, a social group's conception of the world ought to translate itself in action so as to show 'the group is acting as an organic totality' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 327). If this is achieved, common sense develops into good sense.

Section 5.3 draws conclusions from the two previous sections' findings. It reaches the conclusion that the Brics-from-above's organic relationship is already vulnerable because of internal discrepancies at this level in the three themes. It shows that the Brics-from-above as a social group of political society has yet to discover 'its objective and subjective unity in action' (p. 327). As a result, their common sense cannot convert into good sense, that is, a conception, which is deprived of criticisms and contradictions. This chapter ends by linking these findings' implications with the field of critical IR theory.

5.1. BRICS intergovernmental declarations: a platform for positive self-presentation

As of 27 July 2018, there have been ten annual BRICS summits' intergovernmental declarations since the first one dated from 2009. Each annual declaration is read by the Head

¹¹ The two remaining themes, that is, people-to-people or cultural exchanges and principles, will be further discussed in the next chapter.

of State from the hosting country, which alternates every year among the five countries. Although the host country's Head of State delivers the declaration verbally, it remains an intergovernmental statement expressing the shared perception of the five BRICS countries, which is communicated on the last day of the annual BRICS leaders' gathering. It is a documented statement culminating from the previous official ministerial and other government-approved exchanges among the five countries.

Pre-summit meetings occur throughout the year either in the country where the annual summit is organised and where representatives of BRICS countries travel, or alternatively may be organised in non-BRICS countries on the margins of other scheduled international activities. For example, the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs tend to hold 'their annual meeting on the margins of the ... United Nations General Assembly' (Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, 2017) in September of each year and it is a meeting chaired by the incoming host country's Minister of Foreign Affairs/International Relations. This is a tradition, which started when the four initial BRIC countries initiated informal discussions in 2006 about coordination over diplomatic matters around the date of the UN General Assembly.

The annual BRICS leaders' declaration contains a set of documented commitments proclaiming the intentions and common vision of the five countries' governments in a diversity of sectors. Although the declarations are non-binding documents, they are noteworthy because they communicate shared perceptions from the five different governments on a range of topics. When issued, they receive considerable media attention and coverage in foreign policy analyses (Davies, 2015; Garcia, 2011; Hughes, 2011; Keohane, 2011; Kynge 2015; McLannahan, 2015; Sidiropoulos, 2018; Stevenson, 2011; The Economist, 2013a; The Economist 2013b). The documents are not meant to impose legal obligations on any of the governments. Instead, the declarations echo their vision, their perceptions of matters of mutual concern in the

international order, their planned course of action to address global challenges, and their commitments towards one another.

The ten BRICS intergovernmental declarations are broad in the range of items they cover. They also fluctuate in length and they address different themes. Nevertheless, there is an evident pattern in the declarations. There are constant items in the documents, which appear on an annual basis, although they may be organised or presented differently. For example, the first Russian declaration contained 16 points setting the foundation for the areas of discussion. As illustrated in Table 5.1 ([Appendix C](#)), the number of points covered has varied since this statement. On average, the declarations range from a minimum of 33 to a maximum of 110 points. It is important to note that a reduction in the number of points discussed is not a matter of countries excluding previously mentioned items on the agenda. Instead, sub-points may have been grouped together and actions completed given that each of the declaration is followed by an action plan, which is referred to during the next summit. Items, which are work-in-progress, are identified as such.

Despite the fact that every host country has assigned a particular theme around which to organise their gathering since 2011, the joint leaders' statements remain focused on the major issues of the international agenda. The annual declaration is, in this way, a presentation of the BRICS approach for cooperation and coordination of their efforts to achieve concrete outcomes in different areas according to their vision. To substantiate my overarching research hypothesis claiming that the Brics-from-above, that is, the governments manufacture the belief of working in the Global South's interests, it is important to examine the organisation of the themes and their correlations. Identifying the patterns and the recurring themes is helpful to study the discursive strategies to manufacture a system of belief and ideas about the purpose of the BRICS intergovernmental convergence.

5.1.1. Identifying themes for analysis from the BRICS declarations

Exploring the intended meanings of the declared statements enables one to demonstrate the unwritten or unspoken meanings of the government texts. For explaining the internal workings and meaning-making processes of the Brics-from-above, the recurring themes in their official declarations, how they are presented, and the themes omitted over the years had to be identified. Three steps have been followed in this identification process. The first consisted of a preliminary open coding. The second step consisted of formulating abstract categorical proposals in order to connect the open codes and find relationships among them. The third step involved identifying an umbrella theme or central category to capture the essence of the other sub-categories (open codes).

5.1.1.1. Open coding

Open coding is used in early stages of research. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 102), to ‘uncover, name, and develop concepts, we must open up the text and expose the thoughts, ideas, and meanings contained therein’. An open code refers to a broad label or an expression, which encapsulates the denoted or literal meaning of the raw data collected (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 102). To arrive at the number of open codes per annual declaration as shown in Table 5.1 ([Appendix C](#)), Rivas’s (2012) zig-zag approach for coding themes, which is a process of collecting and analysing data, was used. It begins with starting to identify code titles in the data and continuing the process until ‘gaps in the data are filled or new and unexpected themes unpacked’ (Rivas, 2012, p. 369). The end of the process is reached ‘when no new themes emerge from the data (which is called saturation of themes)’ (Rivas, 2012, p. 369).

Similar to Rivas's zig-zag approach, when identifying the themes or code titles in the initial stages of analysing the BRICS declarations, I started in a chronological order with the first declaration, which was also the briefest. I identified 72 open codes, that is, broad labels, which encapsulated the literal meanings of each of the items written in the document. I generated a code title for every coherent part of the items mentioned on the document. The code titles in the starting stage were rough expressions: words or phrases, which encapsulated the essence of the data. I either used some of the words and phrases verbatim as open codes or paraphrased a few of them. For example, I reworded 'Merit-based' to 'Meritocracy'. Table 5.1.1.1a ([Appendix D](#)) illustrates additional extracts from the stage of open coding showcasing some of my rephrasing. In the second declaration, the number of new themes fell to 55. I continued until the number of open code titles per declaration was exhausted. This first stage of coding each of the items in every declaration has meant I read all the statement sentences sequentially in order to deduce the code titles. I treated the data uniformly and many unexpected themes were discovered such as 'Outer space', 'Railways', 'Youth', or 'Film' amongst others.

There were numerous repetitive open codes in either the same declaration I was analysing or the other following ones. I intentionally separated some of the codes. For example, when employing the word 'Cooperation', the intergovernmental leaders' statements speak of different types of cooperation: 'Macroeconomic cooperation'; 'Technical cooperation'; 'Investment cooperation'; 'Agricultural cooperation'; 'Inclusive cooperation'; and many more. If I had combined the data into the umbrella code 'Cooperation', I would have simply concluded that BRICS economies are largely interested in macroeconomic policy coordination, which was primarily emphasised in the first declaration. The types of cooperation the five countries seek to engage in have evolved and diversified into a variety of fields in comparison with their first declaration.

In the first stage of my preliminary coding, the open codes did not necessarily appear to be sharing similar characteristics. Table 5.1.1.1b ([Appendix E](#)) lists all the open codes extracted from the declarations. Yet, through careful reading of the yearly declarations and comparison among them, a pattern could be noticed. For example, discussions of the World Bank or the IMF were always connected to requests for reforms justified by the vision and principles of creating a non-discriminatory world economic order. To be able to connect the seemingly unrelated codes, it was helpful to follow Rivas's (2012) logic that 'the function of category development is to systematically group multiple fragments of unconnected literal codes into something meaningful and more analytical and digestible' (p. 376). This led to the second phase of my analysis.

5.1.1.2. Abstract categorising

The second stage of analysing the BRICS intergovernmental declarations consisted of organising the open codes into abstract categories, in which they could be broadly grouped and from which meanings could be derived. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011), 'categories are inferred by the researcher' (p. 479). Reading and re-reading the data 'to become thoroughly familiar with them' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p. 565) helped in the process of refining the categories and finding links among them. This construction of the categories 'involves grouping the units [that is, the code titles] into domains, clusters, groups, patterns, themes and coherent sets to form ... [a] symbolic category that includes other categories' (p. 479).

In the context of the BRICS declarations, some of the abstract categories were constructed according to the literal meanings of the open codes identified in Step 1 (Table 5.1.1.1b, [Appendix E](#)). Once the list of open code titles was formulated in Step 1, relationships among

them were established by considering how they are connected to one another. For example, when attempting to find the relationship among such differing open codes as ‘Health’, ‘Diseases’, ‘Piracy’, ‘Migration’, ‘Disaster management’, or ‘Poverty eradication’ among others, the statements in the declarations were referring to cooperation in these areas with the aim of reaching practical outcomes through a BRICS cooperation. This led to the abstract categorical proposal in Step 2 (Table 5.1.1.1b, [Appendix E](#)) purporting that a diversity of world problems cannot be addressed unilaterally.

In addition to the above abstract categorical proposal, four other ones were formulated (Table 5.1.1.1b, [Appendix E](#)). The five proposals are summarised below:

- Practical cooperation among BRICS countries and partnership with other countries in diverse sectors has the potential to reach concrete outcomes in international society’s interests.
- The existing global financial architecture lacks transparency and is discriminatory for emerging and developing countries. The global economic governance structures need to be reformed to reflect inclusiveness and representativeness in the world order.
- Global threats and challenges exist in different forms and jeopardise international security. Poor and developing communities are particular susceptible. Existing institutions should be reformed to address conflicts, threats, and reach consensus-based decisions through a multilateral approach.
- Cultural diversity is the foundation of BRICS cooperation. Sustainability of common vision and intra-BRICS projects is achieved through exchanges and cooperation in various civil society areas (media, think tanks, youth, parliament forum, local governments, trade union forum, etc.).

- All of the previous themes are formulated on the basis of shared ‘principles of openness, solidarity and mutual assistance’ amongst other ideals and values.

5.1.1.3. Choosing umbrella themes or central categories

The third step of analysing the declarations consisted of clustering each of the above proposals into overarching themes. Step 2 (Table 5.1.1.1b, [Appendix E](#)) involved formulating relational statements, which could potentially connect the diversity of open code titles derived from Step 1. Step 3 focused on deciding a central category or theme. This central category or theme ‘consists of all the products of analysis condensed into a few words that seem to explain what “this research is all about”’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 146). Strauss and Corbin’s (1998, p. 146–7) criteria for selecting a central category have been applied. The five BRICS themes were chosen based on their central relationship with the other sub-categories (open codes). The themes were formulated according to frequently used words in the data. Thus, the relationship of the open codes or sub-categories from Step 1 could be explained by relating them to these central themes.

As such, the themes chosen for analysing the BRICS discursive strategies encapsulated the essence of each abstract or broader category, and captured the literal meaning of the open codes. Initially four themes were identified: ‘practical cooperation’, ‘global economic governance’, ‘international affairs’, and ‘people-to-people exchanges’. This was not a complicated stage because the repetitive open codes and occasional sub-categories in the original declarations suggested these themes. However, the surprising element from my data analysis has been to identify an unexpected fifth theme. There have been numerous open codes repeated in each of the broader categories, which expressed the ideals of BRICS cooperation. Given the pattern and the high degree of frequency of repetition of these ‘principles’-related open codes in the four previous categories, these warranted a theme of their own for analytical

purposes because they helped to substantiate my first hypothesis about the fabrication of a positive image of the ruling classes and the political society. I discovered that this theme bound the four previous ones in order to convey coherence about the statements in the declarations. Hence, an additional fourth step (Table 5.1.1.1b, [Appendix E](#)) entailed formulating a proposal binding the four initial themes.

5.1.2. Preliminary reflections about the BRICS themes

Ideas from the BRICS intergovernmental declarations centre on the key themes of practical cooperation, global economic governance, matters pertaining to international affairs, and initiatives for people exchanges or cultural diversity – the latter being a theme that only emerged in the analysis from the 2013 declaration onwards. The BRICS leaders mobilise specific meanings and project particular images about themselves through principles, which reflect ideals of unified commitments. The open codes and the patterns in which they recur led me to reflect on the following points during my analysis:

- First, the BRICS leaders do not have a common spoken language. Yet they have managed to employ specific words to convey a sense of commonality in their gatherings. The governments seek to emit a particular impression of their vision and status. No meanings with negative connotations towards any of the five governments were noted. Less desired or alternative perspectives of their grouping are not presented. For example, the five states' positive contributions to solve global economic problems and generate benefits for all types of economies including emerging and developing countries are emphasised. The five governments never express any critique towards one another or hold each other responsible for imbalances in global economic development and other areas. Instead, they speak positively of their cooperative role to solve world problems.

- Second, despite the ten declarations being issued at different periods in time, there is an internal uniformity about the topics they discuss namely their accusations against Western-led organisations such as the World Bank, IMF, WTO, and the UN Security Council.
- Third, the structure of the ten declarations is somewhat unchanged. Following their introductory statements, the joint statements generally proceed to criticise existing organisations mentioned in my previous point, reiterate their commitment to sustainable development while emphasising the concept of sovereignty, and discuss regional and international affairs affecting different countries but particularly conflict-driven states and poorest economies. Although they stress the importance of humanitarian assistance, the respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty is largely emphasised. Finally, in the declarations dated from 2013, the joint statements have tended to dedicate their last points to discussions of cultural alliances. The pattern, the frequency of the repeated points, and the structure of the documented items suggest a priority to the matters of discussion set by the governmental leaders. Matters about cultural integration are discussed in the last segments of the declarations.
- Fourth, building on the above point, it is noted that some matters are more extensively covered than others, namely the suggestions and requests for the IMF and UN Security Council to be reformed are repeatedly covered both in depth and in breadth.
- Fifth, the BRICS governments utilise expressions with positive connotations when presenting their vision. They employ words with undertones of positive values and ideals to emphasise that their cooperation in diverse fields is based on principles of transparency, sustainability, meritocracy, representativeness, inclusion, respect, and mutual benefits amongst other values.

5.1.3. The role of the Brics-from-above in the fabrication of the BRICS common sense

The above reflections from my preliminary analysis of the BRICS intergovernmental declarations resonate with Gramsci's notes about the establishment of a conception of the world, that is, common sense. Common sense is essentially about accepting beliefs emanating from a social group or held within a particular social world as the truth. It is unsystematic because it is a collection of multiple beliefs but which may share similar features. 'Every social stratum has its own "common sense"' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326f). Likewise, the Brics-from-above embodying the governments or political society in the BRICS configuration, are a social group responsible for upholding their own fragmentary common sense, which eventually turns into 'popular knowledge at a given place and time' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326f), mainly through their annual intergovernmental declaration. The common sense, though fragmented, transforms into popular knowledge because of how the social stratum in charge of its consolidation diffuses it in society and uses it to explain the world according to its vision.

In a Gramscian sense, the intellectuals from this social stratum are integral to consolidating and diffusing that conception of the world (Gramsci, 1971, p. 9–10). Their role goes beyond simply appealing to the masses through words but also involves 'active participation in practical life, as constructor, organiser [and] "permanent persuader"' (p. 10). Gramsci, here in his notes, was drawing attention to pacific persuasion and consent for leadership, which the masses agree to allot to this social group, rather than being forced or threatened to accept their dominant ideas. This relationship between these two fundamental social groups, that is, the ruling and the ruled classes, according to Gramsci, cannot be driven by above because it would imply a coercive leadership. Instead, this relationship is "'mediated" by the whole fabric of society' (Gramsci,

1971, p. 12) including the bottom level of civil society where intellectuals with connections with these classes perform important functions.

Likewise, in the BRICS context, there are intellectual forces giving the impression that they are independent thinkers operating objectively. In reality, they are organic intellectuals with fundamental connections with the political society. They perform specific functions according to the role they are serving. To explain this point, it is important to understand how the organic intellectuals constituting the political society of the BRICS, that is, the Brics-from-above play an active role in setting up the configuration's Brics-from-the-middle. Understanding the relationship between the Brics-from-above and the Brics-from-the-middle helps to explore how the former exploit the latter to secure their ideas about the BRICS spirit, that is, that the configuration's political society works in the interests of emerging and developing countries. The active role played by the Brics-from-above in shaping the features of the Brics-from-the-middle is significant in making civil society reflect the beliefs of political society and in forging their ideas as the dominant one.

The political society of the BRICS configuration is composed of their different ministries. As shown in Table 5.1.3a ([Appendix F](#)), some ministerial gatherings have been more recently set up whereas others have been key contributors to the foundation of the BRICS intergovernmental configuration namely the Foreign Ministers and Finance Ministers who have been involved in BRICS discussions since 2008. The Foreign Ministers meet on the sideline of the UN General Assembly's annual meeting in September whereas the Finance Ministers generally meet on 'the margins of G20 meetings and the regular meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank' (BRICS Information Centre, 2019).

The Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Russia, India, and China held their first meeting in Yekaterinburg, Russia on 16 May 2008, followed by a second meeting on 26 September 2008 in New York after the UN General Assembly meeting. The first Finance Minister meeting was scheduled on 7 November 2008 in São Paulo. The other Ministers equally meet on the margins of key global forum. For example, the BRICS Health Ministers meet on the sideline of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) assembly in Geneva and BRICS Trade Ministers meet on the margins of the WTO's ministerial meetings. They are intentionally scheduled ahead and on the margins of key global conventions in order to issue joint recommendations with the aim of influencing the agenda of the global meetings. However, so far, it is only the Foreign Ministers and Finance Ministers who have been successful at agenda setting. As explained below, they have been significant in organising the ways of thinking about the BRICS purpose in the world order.

During the first Foreign Ministers' gathering, the governmental actors spoke of a common language about global development, thus already dispelling connotations of self-interested motives of allegedly meeting to advance individual country interests.

They emphasized the prospects of the BRIC dialogue based on mutual trust and respect, common interests, coincidence or similarity of approaches toward the pressing problems of global development. ... The Ministers agreed that building a more democratic international system founded on the rule of law and multilateral diplomacy is an imperative of our time. They reaffirmed the commitment of the BRICs to work together and with other states in order to strengthen international security and stability, ensure equal opportunities for development to all countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008, notes 1–2).

The first two communiqués about their meetings created the illusion of working in international society's interests by stressing the inclusion of development talks in the interests of all countries. More importantly, their tenth point explicitly articulated the expression 'South-South cooperation'.

The Ministers noted that the South-South cooperation is an important element of international efforts in the field of development. It was emphasized that ... South-South cooperation does not replace but rather complements the traditional forms of development assistance (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2008, note 10).

These organic intellectuals attached with the political society of the BRICS configuration, that is, the Brics-from-above, helped to establish the foundation for conceptualising ways of thinking about the grouping in the world. They initiated and expanded discussions about their potential of working together on current world development problems, including the state of affairs in global finances, food crisis, and climate change alongside G8 member states and other emerging economies through the Heiligendamm process.

The Heiligendamm process refers to an OECD-sanctioned initiative. Its purpose is to institutionalise a high-level dialogue between the G8, of which Russia is a member, and the important emerging economies namely Brazil, China, India, Mexico, and South Africa with the aim of addressing the 'biggest challenges the global economy is facing today' (G8 Summit 2007 Heiligendamm, 2009). Building on this discourse, the Brics-from-above's intellectuals have employed these multiple beliefs about possibilities of cooperation and collaboration both within BRICS and involving other partners to address world problems. They eventually diffused these beliefs in other activities such as to shape and popularise a conception of the BRICS vision as functioning in international society's interests.

What best showcases the fundamental political power of the Brics-from-above is, however, not within the sphere of their international relations. Instead, the gathering of the Finance Ministers, which ensued as a subsequent step to the Foreign Ministers' discussions, has been central to consolidate the strengthening of cooperative strategies among the four initial BRIC countries. Within the space of five months from the first São Paulo Finance Ministers'

gathering, two additional meetings were organised. As summarised in Table 5.1.3b below, the financial crisis became an impetus justifying the exchanges of views of the four initial ministries.

Table 5.1.3b BRICs Finance Ministers' statements pertaining to the financial crisis

BRICs Finance Ministers, São Paulo 7 November 2008	BRICs Finance Ministers, Horsham 14 March 2009
<p>We, the Finance Ministers of Brazil, Russia, India and China held our first meeting in São Paulo, Brazil, on the eve of the Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors of the G20. We reflected on the main causes of the current financial crisis, its latest developments, future scenarios, as well as BRIC experiences and policy responses. We also discussed possible options to overcome the present situation and to avoid recurrence of similar events. On a longer term perspective, we exchanged views on the reform of international financial institutions and global governance. We also discussed proposals put forward by the countries on reforming the global financial architecture. We welcomed the initiative to convene a summit of G20 leaders on financial markets and the world economy on 15 November 2008, in Washington DC.</p>	<p>We, the Finance Ministers and their representatives of Brazil, Russia, India and China held our meeting in Horsham, the United Kingdom, on the eve of the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting. We reverted once again to the current situation in the global economy and its latest trends, as well as fiscal and monetary policy responses in BRIC countries. We also discussed the forthcoming G20 Leaders' Summit agenda and the expected outcomes. We consider that the G20's position as the focal point to coordinate with global economic and financial challenges and to lead international efforts responding to the current crisis should be consolidated. We exchanged views on the reform of international financial institutions. As a result of our deliberation we deem it necessary to focus the further international efforts in the following areas ... We also agreed to hold our next meeting in Istanbul prior to the 2009 Annual IMF and World Bank Meetings.</p>

Source: Brazil Ministry of External Relations, 2008, note 1; Brazil Ministry of External Relations, 2009, note 1.

In addition to demonstrating their political empowerment through their talks of potentially influencing political economy decisions at such platforms as the G20, World Bank, and the IMF, the Finance Ministers reinforced their authority of acting in international society's interests by underlining their stability during the financial crisis. 'We recognized that the crisis has to some extent affected all of our countries. We stress however, that BRIC countries have shown significant resilience' (Brazil Ministry of External Relations, 2008, note 4). They also

deliberately stressed the legitimacy deficits of existing governance structures to justify their requests for global changes.

In this way, the Finance Ministers have been key actors responsible for shaping the BRICS discourse on matters of global economic governance and justifying their requests for practical cooperation especially related to economic and financial matters. They were able to use the narrative of their economies having demonstrated resilience by exercising caution in liberalising their financial systems. This success expressed through the platform of the BRICS grouping empowered them to set the agenda of the G20 summit in 2009 (The Economist, 2009). They remained resolute in their requests of reforms of the IMF and greater representation in global policy-making. The G20 has deliberately served as the ‘premier forum for [their] international economic cooperation’ (G20 Information Centre, 2009b) and the BRIC countries saw an ideal opportunity to influence and set the global economic agenda through their configuration. As shown in Tables 5.6 and 5.7 below, the BRICs Foreign Ministers and Heads of State successfully managed to prioritise the matters of discussion at the G20 summit, which led to substantive outcomes.

Table 5.1.3c Endorsement of BRICs Foreign Ministers’ recommendations by the G20 leaders in 2009

Extracts from BRICs Foreign Ministers’ joint statement 7 November 2008	Extracts from G20 summit 2 April 2009
3. We recognized that the crisis revealed weakness in risk management, regulation and supervision in the financial sectors of some advanced economies. Therefore we call for reform of regulatory and supervisory frameworks, as well as clearer rules and transparency	Prudential regulation We have agreed to strengthen international frameworks for prudential regulation.
	The scope of regulation We have agreed that all systemically important financial institutions, markets, and instruments should be subject to an appropriate degree of regulation and oversight.

	<p>Financial Security Board</p> <p>Members of the FSB commit to pursue the maintenance of financial stability, enhance the openness and transparency of the financial sector, and implement international financial standards ... and agree to undergo periodic peer reviews</p>
<p>5. One of the most deleterious aspects of the current crisis is the freeze in private credit markets. There is an urgent need to find mechanisms, including through multilateral cooperation, to restore the real economy's access to credit, stimulate demand and to resume capital flows critical for sustainable growth and development, including ongoing infrastructure investment</p>	<p>[W]e will promote the standardisation and resilience of credit derivatives markets, in particular through the establishment of central clearing counterparties subject to effective regulation and supervision. We call on the industry to develop an action plan on standardisation by autumn 2009</p>

Source: Brazil Ministry of External Relations, 2008; G20 Information Centre, 2009a.

Table 5.1.3c above illustrates the BRICs grouping's success in influencing the G20's agenda based on its practical recommendations. This evidences the important role played by the organic intellectuals attached with the political class of the configuration in 'directing the ideas and aspirations of the class to which they organically belong' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 3). During the G8 summit on 8–10 July 2009, the G8 government leaders also acknowledged the need to cooperate with the key emerging economies of Brazil, India, China, and South Africa to respond to the financial and economic crisis (G8 Leaders Declaration, 2009, note 10). The G8 leaders encouraged an active participation with them to find proper solutions to address the world economy's challenges. This G8 leaders' endorsement of 'the results achieved until now and call for an extension of this dialogue among equals' (G8 Leaders Declaration, 2009, note 10), gave credibility to the successful functions performed by the emerging economies' political elites.

Moreover, the success of the BRICS configuration did not stop at the level of economic recovery contribution for overcoming the financial crisis. In 2010, the grouping was able to

request concrete reforms in the IMF quota and as shown in Table 5.1.3d below, the G20 followed up on this request and committed to enhance the legitimacy of the IMF by increasing the voice and participation of developing countries.

Table 5.1.3d Endorsement of BRICS Foreign Ministers' recommendations by the G20 leaders in 2010

Extracts from BRICS Heads of State summit declaration 16 April 2010	Extracts from G20 summit 26-27 June 2010
<p>11. ...We call for the voting power reform of the World Bank to be fulfilled in the upcoming Spring Meetings, and expect the quota reform of the IMF to be concluded by the G-20 Summit in November this year.</p>	<p>14. ...We recognize that the IMF should remain a quota-based organization and that the distribution of quotas should reflect the relative weights of its members in the world economy, which have changed substantially in view of the strong growth in dynamic emerging market and developing countries. To this end, we are committed to a shift in quota share to dynamic emerging market and developing countries of at least five percent from over-represented to under-represented countries using the current IMF quota formula as the basis to work from. We are also committed to protecting the voting share of the poorest in the IMF. As part of this process, we agree that a number of other critical issues will need to be addressed, including: the size of any increase in IMF quotas, which will have a bearing on the ability to facilitate change in quota shares; the size and composition of the Executive Board; ways of enhancing the Board's effectiveness; and the Fund Governors' involvement in the strategic oversight of the IMF. Staff diversity should be enhanced ...</p> <p>15. ...The majority of G-20 members have ratified the 2008 IMF Quota and Voice Reforms, fulfilling an important commitment made in London. Those members who have yet to ratify commit to doing so by the Seoul Summit. This action will not just enhance the legitimacy of the IMF by increasing the voice and participation of developing countries, it will also provide the IMF with \$30 billion in new quota resources. We call on all IMF members to ratify the agreement this year.</p>

Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2010; G20 Toronto Summit, 2010.

The attempts at consolidating the BRICS configuration's common sense of working in the Global South's interests, therefore, manifested in their concrete accomplishments in the initial stages of their grouping's setup. They provided directions to the discussions of the 2010 G20's summit according to their agenda and were successful in convening discussions about the topics of openness, meritocracy, rules-based order, and fairness. Although the G20 is an informal bloc whose summit declarations are non-binding, similar to the other blocs such as the G7 or G8, it is an important space for major industrialised and developing economies to discuss matters pertaining to international financial stability. The G20 summit is an expansion of 'the centre of global governance to include ascending powers alongside advanced ones, and to give each equal, institutionalized involvement and influence in the central club' (Kirton, 2010, p. 2). Due to this summit's representation as the centre of global economic governance and the space it offers to discuss matters about the world economy, the BRICS leaders have stressed the central role played by the G20 and not the G7 or G8 in dealing with financial issues (BRICS Information Centre, 2009, notes 1–2; 2010, note 3; 2011a, notes 14–15; 2012a, note 7). In their initial BRICS declarations, the leaders recommended actions, which have been addressed at the G20 summit namely in the IMF quota reforms whereby the members committed to transfer a share of the quotas to underrepresented countries (Table 5.1.3d).

Furthermore, the four BRIC leaders also requested urgent reforms in the World Bank whereby they demanded 'a substantial shift in voting power in favour of emerging market economies and developing countries' (BRICS Information Centre, 2009, note 11). Faced with this pressure, the World Bank initiated its 'first general capital increase' after more than twenty years, which resulted in a 'shift in voting power to developing countries' (Theis, 2010). Requesting stronger and more flexible aid from multilateral development banks has been

another area where the political class of the configuration advocated for support of developing economies.

We support the increase of capital, under the principle of fair burden-sharing, of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and of the International Finance Corporation, in addition to more robust, flexible and agile client-driven support for developing economies from multilateral development banks (BRICS Information Centre, 2010, note 9).

During the 2010 G20 summit, the members along with a significant contribution from BRIC countries committed to increase the resources available to the IMF ‘by \$6 billion through the proceeds from the agreed sale of IMF gold ... [which expanded] the IMF’s concessional financing for the poorest countries’ (G20 Toronto Summit Declaration, 2010, note 17). BRICS governments additionally accentuated the promotion of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ensuring that the poorest countries’ efforts are not hindered due to the aftereffects of the financial crisis. As a result, they called for policy recommendations, ‘technical cooperation, and financial support to poor countries in implementation of development policies and social protection for their populations’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2010, note 15). The G20 members responded to this call by committing ‘to put jobs at the heart of the recovery, to provide social protection, decent work and also to ensure accelerated growth in low income countries’ (G20 Seoul Summit Declaration, 2010, note 16).

All these examples indicate that the BRICS configuration’s political society performs an active role in giving directions to the discussions at the G20. As noted by Kirton (2010, p. 1), these ‘ascending powers have moved from being second-tier, selective, discretionary participants in the G8 to equal, full, founding members in the G20’. Through their discourses framed in support of developing countries’ interests, the organic intellectuals of the Brics-from-above

have been successful in fabricating a common sense, which projects their status as positive and as intended to be in the Global South's interests.

5.1.4. The role of the Brics-from-the-middle in enriching the BRICS common sense

In addition to having created the Brics-from-the-middle to reflect and circulate the ideas of the configuration's political society, the Brics-from-above have also developed the Brics-from-the-middle as the superstructure of civil society to give the impression of a bottom-up approach involving people-to-people exchanges and input from below in formulating the BRICS vision. As shown in Table 5.1.4a below, there have been a series of government-approved BRICS fora and meetings since 2009 where organisations other than ministries have been involved.

Table 5.1.4a Government-approved BRICS fora and meetings

Annual Heads of State's Summit	Anti-corruption Officials	Academic Forum - Organised by the BTTC since 2012	Business Forum	Competition Authorities	Civic BRICS	Counterterrorism Working Group	Legal Forum /Law Institute	Mayors of BRICS Cities & Friendship Cities	National Security Advisors	National Statistical Authorities	Parliamentary Forum	Science & Technology Officials	Tax & Revenue Authorities	Trade Union Forum
2009 Russia		2009 India		2009 Kazan					2009 Russia					
2010 Brazil		2010 Brazil	2010 Rio de Janeiro						2010 Russia	2010 Brazil				
2011 China		2011 Beijing	2011 Sanya	2011 Beijing				2011 Sanya		2011 Beijing		2011 Dalian		
2012 India		2012 New Delhi	2012 New Delhi							2012 New Delhi				2012 Moscow
2013 South Africa		2013 Durban	2013 Durban	2013 India									2013 New Delhi	2013 Durban
2014 Brazil		2014 Rio de Janeiro	2014 Fortaleza				2014 Brasilia			2014 Rio de Janeiro				2014 Fortaleza
2015 Russia	2015 St Petersburg	2015 Moscow	2015 St Petersburg	2015 Durban	2015 Moscow		2015 Shanghai		2015 Russia		2015 Moscow		2015 Moscow	2015 UFA
2016 India		2016 Goa	2016 New Delhi		2016 Goa	2016 Delhi	2016 Delhi				2016 Jaipur			
2017 China		2017 Fuzhou	2017 Xiamen			2017 Beijing	2017 Moscow	2017 Chengdu						2017 Beijing
2018 South Africa	2018 Buenos Aires	2018 Johannesburg	2018 Johannesburg		2018 Johannesburg	2018 Nelspruit	2018 Cape Town	2018 Buffalo City		2018 Pretoria				2018 Durban

Source: Compilation from the BRICS official documents (BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18).

One of such platforms, where institutions other than government ministers are involved, is the BRICS Academic Forum. It has been organised by the BTTC since 2012. The ORF is one of the think tanks of the BTTC and it stated:

The [2013] Declaration, signed by leaders of delegations for the BRICS Academic Forum, said the BTTC will form the platform for the exchange of ideas among researchers, academia and think tanks, and it will be responsible for convening the BRICS Academic Forum (ORF, 2013).

The BTTC is presented as a conglomeration of independent think tank organisations from each of the five countries: Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA) (Brazil), National Committee for BRICS Research (Russia), Observer Research Foundation (India), China Centre for Contemporary World Studies (China), and Human Sciences Research Council (South Africa). Their purpose is to connect ‘academicians from the five countries to deliberate on issues of crucial importance to BRICS and come up with ideas and recommendations’ (ORF, 2016a).

This thesis views the above organisations as constituting the Brics-from-the-middle because they are official government-approved bodies. They are not ministerial bodies, which constitute the political society of the Brics-from-above. Instead, these think tanks act as independent experts providing non-partisan advice to the configuration’s political society. Yet, as will be explained below, they operate as ‘pro-BRICS advocates’ (Garcia and Bond, 2016, p. 6). As such, in this thesis’s context, these think tanks and official platforms are called the Brics-from-the-middle because they are situated in the middle of the two fundamental groups within the configuration. They are only organised at the requests of the Brics-from-above to discuss BRICS matters but feign to reflect views meant to be in wider society’s interests. These official institutions at play within the BTTC give the impression of playing a fundamental role in generating spaces where ideas may emerge to be considered for action in the annual

intergovernmental declaration. For example, when IPEA hosted the academic forum in 2014, it emphasised the principles of free speech, debates, and non-persecution, which the organisation hoped would be echoed at next editions of the academic forum.

In the process of designing the agenda we adopted as a clear principle that the academic dimension of the two events should be their most important characteristic. This meant free debate, with as much divulgation as possible, and the participants should not be constrained by the official positions of their respective governments, but feel free to exchange ideas and proposals (das Neves and de Farias, 2014, p. 14).

Yet, despite claiming to be inclusive, the organisers of the 2014 BRICS Academic Forum had to carry out a selection process to limit the number of attendees and contributors because ‘the number of people who manifested interest in participating was four times the capacity of the [mayor’s] palace’ where it was held (das Neves and de Farias, 2014, p. 14). Moreover, the technical sessions to be discussed were also pre-selected and pre-defined prior to the gathering. This limited the free debating principle espoused by the organisers.

Another irony was the intentional decision not to issue a list of recommendations or final statements as had been the tradition at previous BRICS Academic Forum. Instead, academic representatives of the five member states documented the key issues and successes in a collaborative document of 328 pages. Although the documented report was revised by Brazilian editors working for the think tank of IPEA and constituted 24 chapters, authored by representatives from the five member states, the document essentially echoed the dominant discourse of the BRICS Heads of State. ‘Civil society’ was mentioned only nine times and purely in superficial questions about how to create a dialogue among non-governmental organisations, including private companies, universities and political institutions. For example, in this report, Low (2014, p. 193) provided a brief example of a working relationship between government and civil society in South Africa’s housing sector. Soares and Arruda (2014, p. 310) fleetingly suggested empowering ‘social movements and other civil society organisations

to develop and appropriate/adapt technologies to the benefit of the [Brazilian] society'. In short, the Academic Forum's document failed to mention any of the unofficial civil society movements, which had showed resistances against the BRICS capitalist vision at the previous summit in South Africa in 2013.

One additional important role played by the Brics-from-the-middle has been to deepen the BRICS common sense fabricated by the Brics-from-above about working in the Global South's interests as popular knowledge and entrench this belief as an accepted truth. To consolidate their conception of the BRICS, the government leaders embodying the Brics-from-above deliberately excluded any negative presentation of the configuration in their declarations. This practice has served to create an 'uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding' of BRICS 'that has become "common"' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 322). To strengthen the common sense that they cooperate to bring benefits to emerging and developing countries, the political society of the Brics-from-above additionally add the ideas from their government-approved Brics-from-the-middle's Academic Forum to their declarations. They do this because the common sense of the Brics-from-above can exist among alternative conceptions that other groups have about the grouping. This echoes Gramsci's argument that common sense is not permanent. It is 'not something rigid and immobile, but is continually ... enriching itself' (p. 326). Similarly, the Brics-from-above's political society needs to enrich their common sense with additional ideas generated from the pro-BRICS advocates to avoid any competing views and consolidate theirs as the leading one. For example, [Appendix G](#) provides extracts from the 2014 BRICS Academic Forum's report which have been acknowledged by the Brics-from-above and been used to add ideas to the BRICS vision. It shows examples of how the Brics-from-above have employed the platform of the Brics-from-the-middle to support their

manufactured common sense and give greater credibility to their discourses by creating the impression that there is a two-way dialogue between the ruling classes and other groups.

However, only the sections about the positive contributions of the BRICS have been extracted from the report of the Brics-from-the-middle's Academic Forum to be used by the government leaders of the Brics-from-above in their official documents. The latter dispel criticisms about the BRICS from featuring in the intergovernmental declaration. For example, in the same 2014 BRICS Academic Forum report, Maharajh (2014) added that to strengthen the role of BRICS as a contributor of change to the global political economy, there ought to be 'individual efforts at transforming their national systems' (p. 107). Yet, none of the BRICS declarations requested internal transformations in their member states.

Similarly, in her discussions of the importance of BRICS to initiate rules-based measures to fight terrorism and enhance cyber security, Moore (2014) recommended the five member states to exchange information 'about potential terrorist activity, cooperation between law-enforcing agencies and financial institutions, as well as intelligence' (p. 127). In all declarations, the governments have issued strong condemnation against any act of terrorism but have, to date, not proposed a concrete mechanism for data sharing and exchanging information on security matters. Some contributors of the 2014 BRICS Academic Forum additionally devoted a substantial proportion of the document to address the middle income trap with a particular focus on South Africa's productivity growth and Brazil (Fryer and Cattaneo, 2014; Fan, 2014; Veloso, 2014). Yet, these discussions did not feature in the 2014 intergovernmental declaration. It strengthens the point that only ideas serving to enrich the BRICS common sense and conception of a harmonised convergence are reinforced and reproduced in their official intergovernmental declarations.

Interpreting the above intentional neglect suggests that the Brics-from-above consist of organic intellectuals affiliated with the political society of the configuration who function to strengthen the common sense of the BRICS leaders. They give the impression of working alongside civil society through the Brics-from-the-middle. They play fundamental roles in manufacturing modes of thinking about BRICS and rely on discourses embedded in narratives of openness, transparency, integrity, mutual respect, effectiveness, amongst other positive values, which are hard to be disputed. Yet, simultaneously, they are also often vague. For example, deepening and broadening collaboration in existing areas of cooperation such as trade, economic relations, Information Communication Technology (ICT), or condemning any act of terrorism are discourses, which are unlikely to be invalidated or create controversies especially when they are presented as in the Global South's interests. However, these conceptions do not manifest in actions or practical outcomes in line with mass adhesion. This leads to the next section's discussions of the fragmented BRICS discourses in each of the themes of practical cooperation, global economic governance, and international affairs.

5.2. BRICS common sense: failure to overcome fragmentary conceptions

While the previous section explained the fabrication of common sense, how the conception of the world fabricated by the social group of the Brics-from-above gains the consent of the masses is another significant aspect about establishing the leadership of this group through persuasion. According to Gramsci (1971, p. 341), mass acceptance of common sense cannot happen 'simply because of the formally constructive will of a personality or a group which puts it forward solely on the basis of its own ... convictions' (p. 341). It has also to resonate with the interests of the masses and attract them through practical solutions. Otherwise, that common

sense will ‘fracture along certain lines and in certain directions’ (p. 327) because of a failure to ‘create an ideological unity between the bottom and the top’ (p. 329). Moreover, the leadership of the social group has ‘to take concrete form’ (p. 129) and be asserted through political actions, which are relevant to address the everyday problem of the people (p. 326–29). In the BRICS context, the Brics-from-above have initiated some actions, such as practical economic partnerships, the setup of a NDB, and important alignments in the management of international affairs, namely at the UN, which are explained below. However, these actions in the fields of practical cooperation, global economic governance, and international affairs are structured along contradictory lines, which appear disconnected from the people.

5.2.1. Exposing the BRICS practical economic and trade cooperation as a fallacy

According to the BRICS intergovernmental declarations, cooperation refers to the act of the five countries coming together to create a dialogue, offer potential solutions, and coordinate actions not only about pressing international matters but also regarding future development plans. From 2009 to 2018, the areas requiring cooperation and coordination, according to the governments’ perspectives has diversified.¹² In the BRICS context, this cooperation is not intended to be speculative but rather practical. The BRICS governments aim for cooperation through pragmatic measures, which can be feasibly achieved and can yield noticeable or quantifiable results.

¹² BRICS cooperation range from academia, agriculture, biodiversity, banking systems, climate change, culture, currency, diseases’ management, disaster management, education, energy, environment, foreign affairs, finance, health, industry, internet governance, intellectual property, labour and employment, local government, macroeconomic policies, migration, outer space, science, technology and innovation, sustainable development, taxation, trade, to tourism amongst other areas in a growing list of developmental fields.

Despite the fact that the spirit of cooperation expounded in the first BRICS declaration has evolved in order to encompass the views of technocratic experts, academia, think tanks, and other groups of civil society, the discourse of practical cooperation remains largely grounded in economic and trade narratives. In total, the word ‘cooperation’ has been used 530 times in all the declarations ranging from 2009 to 2018. 292 times, it has been used in relation to cooperation of an economic, financial, or monetary nature: ‘BRICS industrial cooperation’; ‘BRICS practical economic cooperation’; ‘currency cooperation’; ‘economic and trade coordination’; ‘commercial ties and investment cooperation’; ‘macroeconomic cooperation’; ‘monetary cooperation’; or ‘interbank cooperation’.

The Brics-from-above suggest that practical cooperation in the aforementioned areas is fundamental to achieve a sustainable global economic system and is the solution to the problems faced in the other areas requiring cooperation (agriculture, energy health, diseases’ management, etc.). The first Foreign Ministers’ meeting in 2008 concluded that energy security, socio-economic development, and environment matters would all be interrelated (Brazil Ministry of External Relations, 2008). In the 2017 BRICS declaration, the governments referred to this initial statement and reiterated that:

practical economic cooperation has traditionally served as a foundation of BRICS cooperation, notably through implementing the Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership and initiatives related to its priority areas such as trade and investment, manufacturing and minerals processing, infrastructure connectivity, financial integration, science, technology and innovation, and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) cooperation, among others (BRICS Information Centre, 2017, note 8).

For this reason, when setting the agenda for the annual summits, the first priority on the governments’ programme has remained on matters related to the strengthening and institutionalisation of the BRICS cooperation through economic partnerships. Cooperation in the economic and financial sphere has remained constant as a primary matter of discussion and

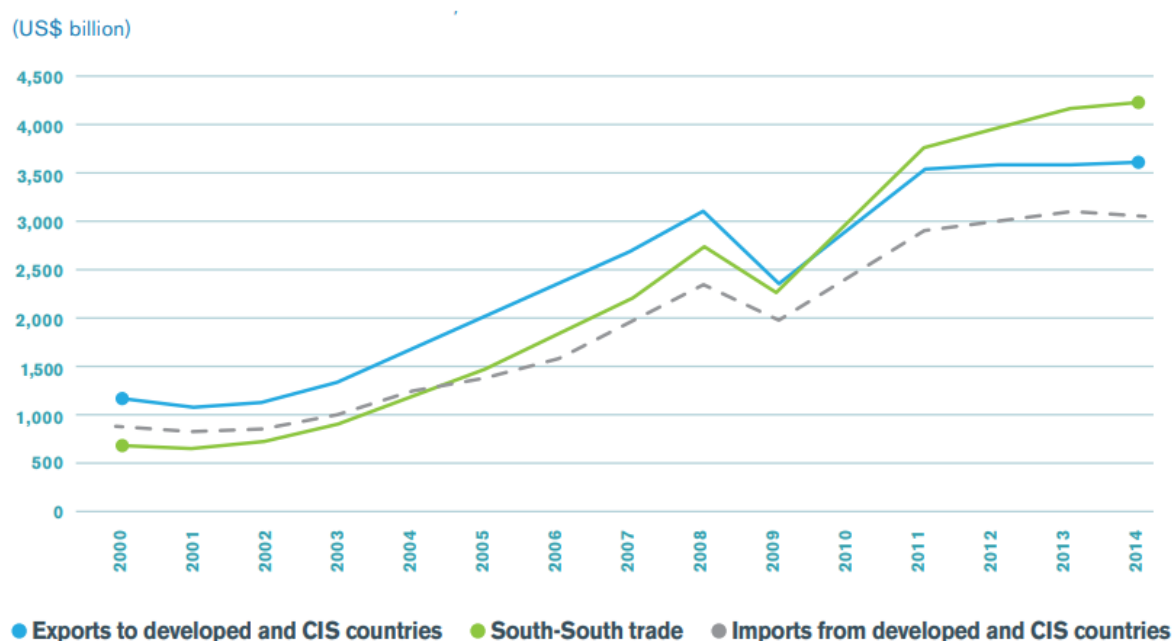
been formulated as the most promising area of BRICS activities in the BRICS agenda (BRICS 2017 China, 2017; BRICS 2016 India, 2016; Kirton and Bracht, 2013; Ratho, 2012). It is insinuated that cooperation in this sphere would overlap or spillover to cooperation in other development fields.

The BRICS Trade Ministers also underline that trade openness is not sufficient. These Brics-from-above justify the prioritisation of economic and trade cooperation in their agenda on account that if they do not contribute to stabilise international financial markets and if international trade is disrupted because of trade protectionist barriers, it will impact negatively on developing countries while protecting the interests of advanced economies. To evidence this claim, Table 5.2.1a ([Appendix H](#)) offers multiple extracts from BRICS declarations to illustrate the language they employ to demand changes and invoke an intensification of cooperative strategies. The extracts show narratives of economic and trade cooperation as repeated to be in the interests of poor, vulnerable, low-income, and developing communities. When manufacturing the common sense of working in the Global South's interests, the governments rely on 'othering' core countries and present them as not functioning in non-core countries' interests. They create a narrative to highlight that the status quo especially in the international trading system is not favourable to developing economies.

Beyond their witting declarations on practical economic and trade cooperation, there are underlying assumptions hidden in the explicit statements. The repeated terminologies of 'open, stable, equitable and non-discriminatory environment for international trade' (BRICS Information Centre, 2010, note 14) serve to blame the existing rules, modalities, and structure of the WTO as a fundamental problem needing urgent attention but also manufacture the illusion that the BRICS behavioural trade patterns are exemplary and do not suffer from the criticisms they blame core countries. It is suggested that trade with BRICS members as partners

will be mutually beneficial for Global South states. As illustrated in Figure 5.2.1a below, as of 2010, there has been an intensification of trade relations among South-South countries in comparison with developed economies. ‘South-South trade, or trade between developing economies, continues to account for an important share of developing economies’ total trade, estimated at 50% in 2016’ (WTO, 2017a).

Figure 5.2.1a Developing economies’ merchandise trade with developing, developed, and Commonwealth of Independent States



Source: WTO, 2016, p. 54.

However, this trade intensification among Global South countries is not the result of groundbreaking or innovative strategies, which the BRICS governments are introducing as an alternative. Instead, the intra-BRICS trade is dependent on trade agreements and partnerships, which were already in place prior to the institutionalisation of their convergence in 2009. As noted by a report produced on the *BRICS in World Trade*, little is known about ‘BRICS policy coordination and cooperation’ (Pioch, 2016, p. 8). In fact, when researching BRICS Trade Ministers’ documents, there is no revelation of common strategies, which they have developed as a result of their meetings (BRICS Trade Ministers, 2011–17). Instead, these documents

expound primarily an eloquent conception of practical economic cooperation for an open and fairer international trade in the interests of emerging and developing economies. As shown in Table 5.2.1b ([Appendix I](#)), these trade commitments are vague and lack concrete substance. None of the BRICS intergovernmental declarations speaks of creating new trade agreements. For example, they declare vague statements on trade with little commitments: ‘We recognise the important role played by international trade and foreign direct investments in the world economic recovery’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2009, note 5); ‘We stress the importance of the multilateral trading system, embodied in the World Trade Organization...’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2010, note 14); ‘We encourage all countries to refrain from resorting to protectionist measures’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2011a, note 26).¹³ For this reason, it is complex to understand how BRICS governments have concretely coordinated trade policies if at all. Thus, it can be argued that Global South economies have built on existing models and bilateral or multilateral relations to complement their trade relations rather than become persuaded with the BRICS mission of redressing global imbalances.

Moreover, the attempts of the BRICS governments to counter the practices of Western-led Bretton Woods Institutions for the sake of greater representation of the Global South has also been illusionary. The IMF, World Bank, and WTO contributed to create a new global economic order meant to promote international cooperation (Bretton Woods Project, 2005). They advocated a new form of liberalism against state protectionism; proposed a set of rules and regulations to govern state relations; and ‘played a critical role in legitimizing the neoliberal free-market paradigm’ (Peet, 2009, p. 75). As shown in Table 5.2.1c ([Appendix J](#)), BRICS governments have repeatedly demanded reforms of the three institutions.

¹³ Appendix I contains additional examples to evidence this point.

The BRICS governments' repeated requests for reforms of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO suggest their dissatisfaction with the current international economic cooperation strategies. The irony is that their demand is vocally claimed to be based on principles of openness, stability, equitability, and non-discrimination. Their implied audiences are not simply emerging and developing countries but also poor and vulnerable communities. Producers of BRICS documents use messages with positive connotations to reinforce their image as working in the Global South's interests and as providers of innovative ideas. Yet, their pledge for novel practices is a misconception because these same principles are equally employed by the Bretton Woods Institutions (Bretton Woods Project, 2005).

Table 5.2.1d Principles of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO

IMF	The IMF tracks global economic trends and performance, alerts its member countries when it sees problems on the horizon, provides a <u>forum</u> for policy <u>dialogue</u> , and passes on know-how to governments on how to tackle economic difficulties. The IMF provides policy advice and financing to <u>members in economic difficulties</u> and also works with <u>developing nations</u> to help them achieve macroeconomic <u>stability</u> and <u>reduce poverty</u> .
World Bank	We are not a bank in the ordinary sense but a unique <u>partnership</u> to <u>reduce poverty</u> and support <u>development</u> .
WTO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade <u>without discrimination</u> • <u>Freer</u> trade: gradually, through <u>negotiation</u> • <u>Predictability</u>: through <u>binding</u> and <u>transparency</u> • Promoting <u>fair</u> competition • Encouraging <u>development</u> and <u>economic reform</u>

Source: IMF, no date; World Bank, 2018; WTO, 2018.¹⁴

It can also be argued that traditional Western-led organisations are known for the co-option, absorption, and depoliticising of alternative development ideas such that their true meanings and purpose are lost (Cornwall and Brock 2005; Lewis and Kanji, 2009, p. 85; Rahnema, 1992, p. 117–20). The BRICS leaders are also responsible for adopting such practices. Yet, the latter

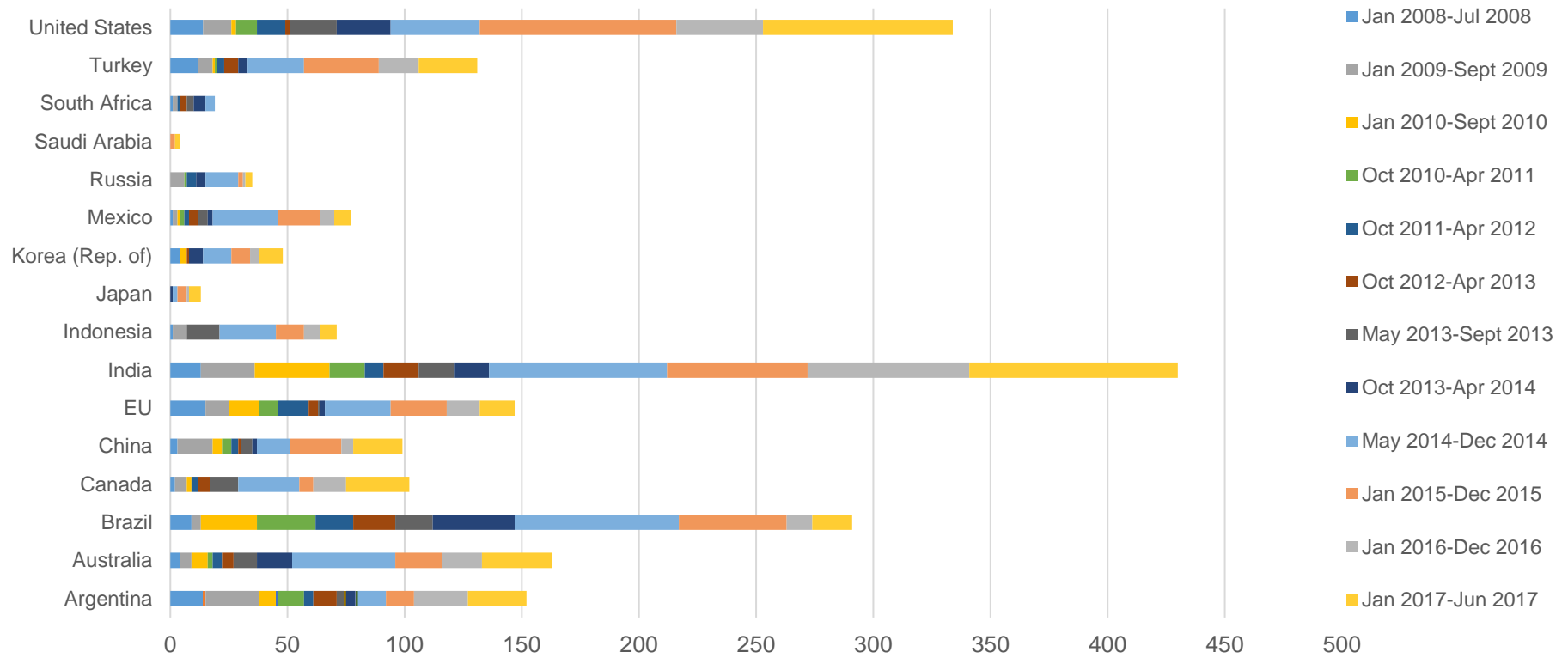
¹⁴ Underlines are my own emphasis.

criticise the Bretton Woods Institutions for behaving in contradiction with what they advocate in their principles. When criticising Western trade and financial institutions, BRICS governments intentionally engage in ‘othering’ them, that is, ascribing ‘varying degrees of negativity’ (Tekin, 2010, p. 161) to their behaviours, activities, and outcomes. For example, the BRICS intergovernmental declarations regularly underscore the legitimacy deficits of the IMF and the World Bank every year (BRICS Information Centre, 2010, note 11; 2012a, note 9; 2014, note 18; 2015, note 19). They suggest that their BRICS presence is necessary to supervise their behaviour and monitor the reforms requested. In this way, the Brics-from-above organise knowledge and discourses about the configuration according to a strategy of ‘positive self-presentation (boasting) and negative other-presentation (derogation)’ (van Dijk, 2006b, p. 126). In other words, the positive or good dimension of BRICS are accentuated while their negative side is de-emphasised or never mentioned. Concurrently, the opposite is applied for others, that is, their negative dimension is prioritised and anything positive about them is disregarded. To illustrate this point, the next section discusses the role of the BRICS leaders in presenting themselves as working in favour of an equal playing field in international trade and reveals the contradictions that indicate a discursive strategy of intentionally emphasising their positive contributions.

The BRICS governments showcase themselves as the initiators in raising contestations against trade protectionist measures at the WTO and in encouraging other countries to ‘resist all forms of trade protectionism and disguised restrictions on trade while supporting the work of the WTO and other international organizations’ (The Strategy for BRICS Economic Partnership, 2015). It is at the G20 platform where the internal workings of the BRICS governments’ trade and economic cooperative strategies can be observed. The G20 accounts for ‘86 per cent of the world economy, 78 per cent of global trade, two-thirds of the world's population, including

more than half of the world's poor' (Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, no date). As of 9 November 2017, the WTO has produced 18 monitoring reports on G20 members' trade measures (WTO, 2017b). All BRICS countries form part of the G20 and a close look at the WTO's monitoring reports of the G20 trade measures for the period 2009–17 (WTO, 2017b) reveals that BRICS countries are active in initiating investigations against anti-dumping measures which they deem as unfair or likely to disrupt the smooth flow of international trade. Some BRICS countries actively initiate investigations against anti-dumping measures. However, as seen in Figure 5.2.1b below, in these instances, Brazil and India are the most proactive among the BRICS.

Figure 5.2.1b Initiations of investigation of anti-dumping measures by individual G20 member states, 2009–17



Source: Data on anti-dumping measures gathered from the WTO reports on G20 trade measures 2009–17.

Collectively, as illustrated in Table 5.2.1e below, BRICS countries may appear as a strong bloc if the number of investigations they raise on anti-dumping measures is tallied for the period 2009–17. Although such reports from the WTO on G20 members are not legally binding and do not impose any obligations on the member states against whom an investigation is initiated, they project the BRICS countries as rule monitors in the international trade arena. The act of investigating anti-dumping measures can be seen as a way of preventing countries from engaging in trade protectionism, that is, measures which ‘can potentially restrict and distort trade’ (WTO Reports on G20 Trade and Investment Measures, 2010, p. 9). As a result, when emphasising the narrative of curbing trade protectionism in the international market in order to create an even playing field for developing countries, the BRICS governments give the impression that developing countries need the intervention of middle powers to monitor the behaviour of core countries from the EU or the US. The latter were expected to be more efficient at resisting market disruptions than other nations but their markets’ speculative bubbles ended causing the global financial crisis in 2009.

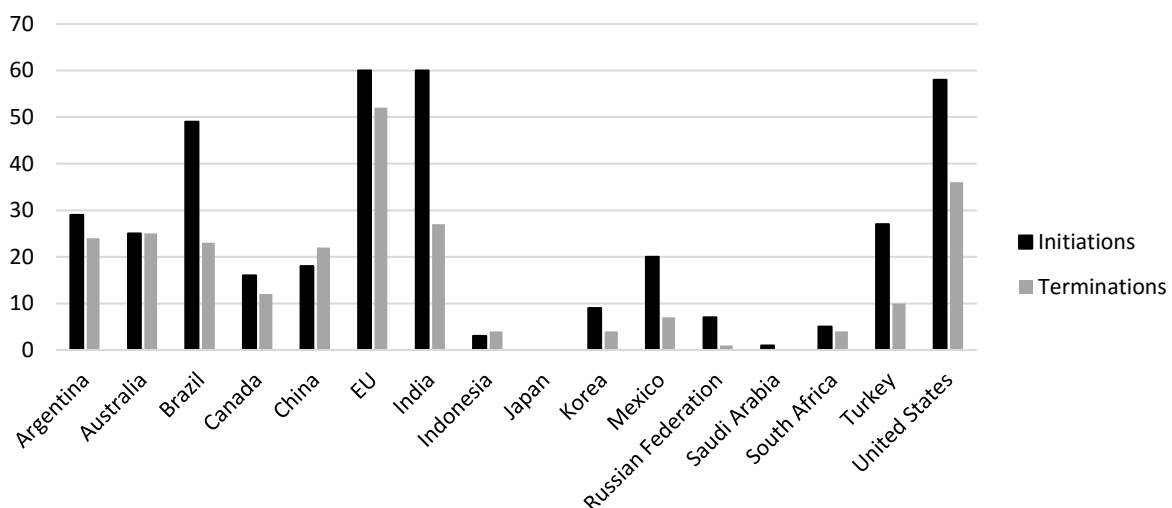
Table 5.2.1e Initiations of investigation of anti-dumping measures by BRICS and individual G20 member states, 2009–17

G20 Members	Jan 2008- Jul 2008	Jan 2009- Sept 2009	Jan 2010- Sept 2010	Oct 2010- Apr 2011	Oct 2011- Apr 2012	Oct 2012- Apr 2013	May 2013- Sept 2013	Oct 2013- Apr 2014	May 2014- Dec 2014	Jan 2015- Dec 2015	Jan 2016- Dec 2016	Jan 2017- Jun 2017	Total
BRICS	26	50	60	45	32	37	39	61	178	130	86	130	874
United States	14	12	2	9	12	2	20	23	38	84	37	81	334
Australia	4	5	7	2	4	5	10	15	44	20	17	30	163
Argentina	14	23	7	11	4	10	3	4	12	12	23	25	148
EU	15	10	13	8	13	4	1	2	28	24	14	15	147
Turkey	12	6	1	1	3	6	0	4	24	32	17	25	131
Canada	2	5	2	0	3	5	12	0	26	6	14	27	102
Mexico	1	2	1	2	2	4	4	2	28	18	6	7	77
Indonesia	1	6	0	0	0	0	14	0	24	12	7	7	71
Korea (Rep. of)	4	0	3	0	0	1	0	6	12	8	4	10	48
Japan	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	4	1	5	13
Saudi Arabia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	4

Source: Data on anti-dumping measures gathered from the WTO reports on G20 trade measures 2009–17.

The data from Figure 5.2.1b and Table 5.2.1e above indicate that the Brics-from-above declare their intention to make the international economic and trading world more equal by raising their concerns over unfair practices. They argue that the core advanced economies are responsible for creating imbalances in international trade that impact negatively on the progress of emerging and developing markets. They frame the core economies' behaviour in the world economy as untrustworthy. Yet, in reality, the BRICS countries are also responsible for WTO-inconsistent measures, which other countries flag as disruptive for the world economy. A significant amount of investigations is also initiated against BRICS countries as illustrated in Figure 5.2.1c below. Among the G20 members, BRICS countries collectively are represented as the initiators of investigations but during the same period from 2009–17, they have also been under investigations.

Figure 5.2.1c Number of anti-dumping measures initiated against G20 members and terminated by 2017



Source: Data on anti-dumping measures gathered from the WTO reports on G20 trade measures 2009–17.

More alarmingly, in comparison with other G20 members, BRICS countries show lower inclinations to terminate their anti-dumping duties. When examining the number of times G20 members including the BRICS countries have been investigated for anti-dumping measures

and the number of these investigations, which have been terminated for the period 2009–17, Figure 5.2.1b shows that Brazil and India actively initiate anti-dumping investigations. Meanwhile, Figure 5.2.1c above reveals that the number of such investigations initiated by other WTO member states against them are also high. More importantly, the rate of termination of these investigations for Brazil and India is less in comparison with core countries whose trade behaviours they claim to monitor. It suggests that BRICS countries' claim of being actively involved in strengthening a fair multilateral trading system is contradictory.

5.2.2. The disillusion of the BRICS governments' requests for transformations in global economic governance

In addition to the misconception behind the theme of practical economic cooperation, the theme of global economic governance in their intergovernmental declarations is also filled with double standards. As shown in the extracts in Table 5.2.2a ([Appendix K](#)), the BRICS governments rely on principles of multipolarity, multilateralism, legitimacy, meritocracy, effectiveness, transparency, openness, democracy, and stability amongst others in order to justify their requests for transformations in global economic governance. They illustrate Western-led IFIs' operating structure as obsolete and being responsible for perpetuating North-South inequalities. Through their creation of the NDB and by presenting it as a new banking mechanism, the Brics-from-above fabricate the illusion that they distance themselves from rigid structures of administrative governance to a new form of reaching decisions where members are treated as equal partners in the complex setup of global economic governance.

Additionally, when speaking on behalf of or in the interests of the poorest and most vulnerable members (BRICS Information Centre, 2012a, note 9; 2013, notes 13, 15; 2016, note 32; 2018, note 68), BRICS discourses on global economic governance suggest that these states do not

have much agency over their own actions at international negotiations tables. They do not have many alternatives than to keep returning to the IMF and World Bank for borrowing funds.

On the one hand, it is important to acknowledge the success of the BRICS governments in seeking IMF quota reforms, which resulted in significantly readjusting the shares of the quota in 2008. Since the 2008 reforms, the general review of quotas resulted in:

[shifting] more than 6 percent of quota shares from over-represented to under-represented member countries, [shifting] more than 6 percent of quota shares to dynamic emerging market and developing countries (EMDCs) ... China became the third largest member country in the IMF, and there are now four EMDCs (Brazil, China, India, and Russia) among the 10 largest shareholders in the IMF, and preserved the quota and voting share of the poorest member countries (IMF, 2017).

In spite of these alterations in the IMF, the BRICS countries have not succeeded in leading new changes in the institution. As noted in the BRICS declarations, they deem the process of IMF quota reforms to be slow (BRICS Information Centre, 2012a, note 9; 2013, note 13; 2014, note 18; 2016, note 30; 2017, note 29; 2018, note 68).¹⁵ Although the BRICS countries' activities in the Global South constitute a significant share of global economic activity (WTO, 2017a), since the IMF reforms, the five countries all together possess 14.18% of the votes in the IMF (Table 5.2.2c below), which is only a mere increase of 3 percent from before the changes (IMF, 2018). Meanwhile, the US continues to dominate the percentage of votes and the American government is refusing to endorse the proposed agreement reached in 2010 to shift voting shares (IMF, 2010). Additionally, regarding the BRICS configuration's requests on behalf of the South encouraging nominations from the developing world for the position of the President of the World Bank, it has been a failure as the US retains the privilege of recommendation.

¹⁵ See [Appendix L](#) for more details.

Table 5.2.2c IMF members' quota and percentage of votes

Member	Quota		Votes	
	Millions of SDRs	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total
Brazil	11,042.0	2.32	111,885	2.22
Russia	12,903.7	2.71	130,502	2.59
India	13,114.4	2.76	132,609	2.64
China	30,482.9	6.41	306,294	6.09
South Africa	3,051.2	0.64	31,977	0.64
Total		14.84		14.18
United States	82,994.2	17.46	831,407	16.52

Source: IMF, 2018.

Owing to the frustration with advanced economies' little desire to innovate in the global financial architecture, BRICS leaders and government authorities have successfully presented these actors as anachronistic and operating with the intention of preserving their privileges. Simultaneously, the discourse around the creation of the NDB for promoting and meeting Global South goals met little contestations and appeared to win consent rather than being a coerced idea. As described on its website, the BRICS NDB has become a '21st-century multilateral development bank' (NDB, 2017, p. 3).

The requests of the Brics-from-above for global economic reforms are also enriched with ideas by the intellectuals of the Brics-from-the-middle. For example, in 2016, the ORF, concluded that:

[f]ollowing deliberations ... the Academic Forum community agreed that the existing global governance architecture did not adequately reflect the realities of the 21st century. The participants stated the need to present a united BRICS front to ensure institutions such as the United Nations Security Council and the Bretton Woods Institutions are reformed and transformed to restore their credibility and legitimacy (ORF, 2016b).

Another BRICS Academic Forum even recommended the 'BRICS New Development Bank ... as a relevant institution to fund social infrastructure projects' (National Committee on BRICS Research, 2015, p. 6) to BRICS leaders in 2015. Several authors who contributed to this BRICS Academic Forum endorsed the NDB as a positive initiative and innovative mechanism to

address challenges created by economic globalisation and an opportunity to concretise their vision of achieving financial stability (Junxiu and Lixing, 2015; Mathur, 2015; Ncwadi and Ruzive, 2015; Stuekel, 2015b). Similarly, pre-summit gatherings whereby diplomats, officials and bankers from BRICS countries have met to prepare for the annual declarations openly approved the governments' discourse for improving global governance to serve the common interests of the international community. The Brics-from-the-middle have, thus, lent authority and forged this theme as common sense in the configuration's civil society.

During the NDB's initial setup, the aforementioned contributors to the 2015 BRICS Academic Forum have tended to acknowledge positively the existence of the NDB despite some minor criticisms. They preferred to grant it an opportunity to develop in order to assess its outcomes. It follows the logic that the rate of success of a decision or policy lies in its potential to attract by generating 'perceptions of value for ... some imagined future place and time' (Graham, 2001, p. 765). In other words, the desire to achieve a just and equal form of global economic governance would be assumed to be achieved once the recommended BRICS vision is implemented. The intended outcomes, however, are prospective and unconfirmed but convey their own 'powers of attraction' (Graham, 2001, p. 765). The vision is portrayed as desirable especially when principles such as ownerships, partnership, transparency, and openness serve to emphasise that developing economies are included in global decision-making on an equal footing. Meanwhile, these imaginaries serve to give greater authority to the BRICS common sense that global economic governance is in need of transformations, which the five leaders can best address as a collective bloc with a practical banking mechanism.

The intention to offer a model of global economic governance based on principles of openness, transparency, equality, meritocracy, inclusiveness, solidarity, mutual development, and complementarity also manufactures the impression that the BRICS governments do not seek

to attach conventional conditions on governance, demand domestic reforms, or follow risk-prone strategies as have been the case in traditional North-South cooperation instances. A closer analysis of the BRICS NDB's General Strategy for 2017–21 reveals there are two main reasons they emphasise for distancing their financing model from allegedly outdated models of cooperation and governance.

First, they emphasise the principle of developing projects according to 'sovereign operations or under sovereign guarantee' (NDB, 2017, p. 4). The five governments use a discursive strategy to rationalise the existence of their NDB by presenting the binary opposites, which serve in 'othering' the current financial institutions. By deliberately employing the expression 'sovereignty', the BRICS government authorities imply that current financial institutions do not respect the principle of non-interference especially when borrowers or beneficiaries of loans from the World Bank are imposed long-term development plans. Second, the NDB's founders intentionally express their aim of becoming a 'trustworthy multilateral development finance institution (2017, p. 4) to underline the risks of financial mismanagement and crisis caused by developed economies, which they indirectly present as untrustworthy to tackle global challenges and economic threats. BRICS leaders and government authorities, thus, employ a discursive strategy meant to persuade subalterns of the attractiveness of their new model.

However, the positive imagery of the NDB as an innovative and different financing mechanism is incoherent. Although the NDB's idea was first pitched in 2012 at the BRICS summit in India, the project was approved at the 2013 BRICS summit in South Africa. They reached the decision based on a report that the Finance Ministers were guided to generate and which confirmed the NDB's 'feasibility and viability ... for mobilising resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS and other emerging economies and developing countries'

(BRICS Information Centre, 2013). The leaders signed the agreement establishing the NDB at the 2014 BRICS summit in Brazil. The following items were agreed:

The NDB would have an initial authorised capital of US\$100 billion. It was intentionally agreed to be a significant and sufficient amount in order to aim for effectiveness in financing infrastructure. The initial subscribed capital would be US\$50 billion. Each founding member would benefit from equal shares. The Board of Directors' first chair would be from Brazil. The Board of Governors' first chair would be from Russia. The NDB's first president would be from India. Shanghai would be the location of the bank's headquarters. Johannesburg would host the bank's first regional office (NDB, 2017).

The way that the agreement has been designed suggests that the government authorities intended to be innovative and open in their 'relationships, projects and instruments, and approaches' (NDB, 2017, p. 4).

In reality, the initially spoken language of the undesirability of the Bretton Woods Institutions on account of their lack of equal representation is not supported with an alternative model of financing and decision-making. Instead, BRICS governments have proposed a strategy, which complements the existing IMF and World Bank rather than replaces them. Their second article of their agreement stresses that the NDB is envisioned to complement the 'existing efforts of multilateral and regional financial institutions' (NDB, 2017, p. 4). When prioritising the limitations of existing financial institutions to justify the creation of a new bank, the government authorities have deliberately given less emphasis to the idea that it is built to complement the existing institutions of the World Bank and IMF. This was also noted in a report submitted by participants present at the People's Forum organised by the Brics-from-below in 2016.

[H]aving initially spoken the language of challenge and competition to the Bretton Woods institutions, since the establishment of the NDB, its representatives have been at pains to stress that it is complementary to, and not in competition with the World Bank, IMF and other MDBs (The Research Collective, 2016, p. 4).

These grassroots participants also questioned the NDB's alleged principles of openness and transparency because many independent organisations, which sought consultation with the bank, were shunned. They were denied access to information and opportunities to be consulted, thus corrupting the BRICS 'rhetoric of being a new improved Southern oriented bank' (The Research Collective, 2016, p. 4). It shows that the NDB is cautious about the involvement of civil society and '[cherry-picks] "NGOs" [which] conform with rather than critically engage the NDB' (Public Services International, 2017).

Moreover, the common sense of framing global economic governance according to Global South's goals is questionable when one of their aims is to expand membership 'to ensure geographic diversity and a reasonable mix of advanced, middle-income and lower-income countries' (NDB, 2017, p. 4). Although the five governments welcome membership from all UN members with voting power limited to a 20% limit and emphasise that the BRICS collective voting power can never be reducible to below 55%, it remains that the participation of core countries as non-borrowers is invited in the later stages of its long-term strategy.

Another questionable fallacy of the BRICS common sense of global economic governance is the establishment of its Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) framework.

[The] establishment of a self-managed contingent reserve arrangement would have a positive precautionary effect, help BRICS countries forestall short-term liquidity pressures, provide mutual support and further strengthen financial stability. It would also contribute to strengthening the global financial safety net and complement existing international arrangements as an additional line of defence. We are of the view that the establishment of the CRA with an initial size of US\$ 100 billion is feasible and desirable subject to internal legal frameworks and appropriate safeguards (BRICS Information Centre, 2013).

While the initiative is innovative, the CRA has not been created to benefit the wider Global South. Instead, it is a short-term protectionist measure for the five BRICS national economies in the eventuality of a crisis in financial markets. In principle, the CRA allows BRICS countries

to distance themselves from conditionalities imposed from IMF loans. ‘Each Party shall retain full ownership rights in and possession of the resources that it commits to the CRA’ (Brazil Ministry of External Relations, 2014). Yet, the CRA’s treaty makes it clear that the member states are required to comply with the provision of information obligations to the IMF.

Furthermore, the maximum access for each BRICS member state to the CRA is limited to 30% of their quota. Eventually, should BRICS members states seek to borrow above their limit, the IMF remains their first lender. In summary, the CRA is a mechanism guarding the BRICS national economies from potential crises on a short-term basis. First, this undermines and goes against their commitment of working in the wider community’s interests. Second, once again, it is meant as a framework working alongside existing institutions and not intended to challenge them as the overall narrative of their declarative statements would suggest.

5.2.3. Evidences of disharmonised alignment among the Brics-from-above in the management of international affairs

Similar to the themes of practical cooperation and global economic governance, BRICS leaders have formulated a vision for dealing with international affairs in a narrative, which urges reforms of international organisations, namely the UN Security Council (UNSC). The principles of multilateralism, diplomacy, political efforts, sovereignty, mutual respect, rule of international law, and collective decision-making permeate the BRICS discourse about the management of international affairs. For detailed examples from the BRICS leaders’ statements, see [Appendix M](#).

In 2014, the leaders even came up with a Legal Forum initiative in order to promote “‘legal diplomacy”, rapprochement of legal communities of the Member States [and] legal theory and practice exchange’ (BRICS Legal Forum, 2017). Besides being an exchange platform, the

Legal Forum is meant to discuss ways about how law can be used ‘as an instrument for economic cooperation and social development of certain countries’ (BRICS Legal Forum, 2017). Once again, it is observed that the discourse has been formulated to facilitate cooperation of an economic nature. This suggests that there has been little deviation in the BRICS priorities since its first declaration. Using law to facilitate trade and economic cooperation remains a primary focus. However, none of the discussions from the four Legal Fora features in any of the BRICS governmental declarations to date.

Instead, when discussing issues of a legal basis, BRICS leaders and government authorities have largely concentrated on identifying limitations of the UNSC. They acknowledge its importance as a platform for engaging in multilateral diplomacy and where global threats and challenges can be collectively addressed. However, they strongly criticise the UNSC for being ineffective and an unrepresentative platform to tackle contemporary issues pertaining to international relations and security. They also condemn it for its inability to sanction member states, which adopt unilateral approaches and undermine other actors’ sovereignty. China and Russia being two of the five permanent UNSC members argue for an upgrade of the status of Brazil, India, and South Africa (BRICS Information Centre, 2009, note 14; 2010, note 4; 2011a, note 8; 2012a, note 26; 2013, note 20; 2015, note 4; 2016, note 10; 2017, note 40).¹⁶ It is important to note that the legitimacy of the UN bodies and especially UNSC are not questioned in the BRICS intergovernmental declarations. Rather the issue is with their ineffectiveness in ensuring a respect of multilateral diplomacy rather than unilateralism.

¹⁶ See [Appendix M](#) for more details.

In 2011, Brazil, India, and South Africa happened to be members of the UNSC along with the permanent members of Russia and China. They even acknowledged this unique opportunity during the 2011 BRICS summit:

We underscore that the concurrent presence of all five BRICS countries in the Security Council during the year of 2011 is a valuable opportunity to work closely together on issues of peace and security, to strengthen multilateral approaches and to facilitate future coordination on issues under UN Security Council consideration (BRICS Information Centre, 2011a, note 9).

For the first time, the collective coordination of the five actors could be assessed at the UNSC level. More precisely, there was a curiosity about how they would align their views about the civil war crisis in Libya and whether they would respond to international efforts to implement the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Garwood-Gowers (2013, p. 81) even contended that the ‘future success or failure of R2P ... will depend, to a large extent, on how it is received by the BRICS’.

On the one hand, South Africa’s vote in favour of UNSC Resolution 1973 and Brazil’s, Russia’s, India’s, and China’s abstention due to international pressure and on account of reports of significant human rights abuses, allowed the resolution authorising all necessary measures to protect Libyan civilians against the Gadaffi regime to be approved. This led to the belief that a consensus could be reached between North and South countries about the normalisation of the R2P as an international tool in times of humanitarian crisis. However, the Foreign Ministers from the abstaining countries expressed regret over the air strikes (Lavrov, 2011, p. 3). The ‘Russian Minister said that the BRICS countries should learn lessons from the Libyan crisis’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2011b).

This military intervention in Libya is arguably one of the reasons for the BRICS countries’ failure to reach a common position on Syria. Collectively, they appear to share a common

perception on the Syrian crisis (BRICS Information Centre, 2012a, note 21; 2013, note 26; 2014, note 37; 2015, note 36; 2016, note 14; 2017, note 41; 2018, note 46).¹⁷ They emphasise ‘the settlement of the crises in accordance with international law and in conformity with the principles of independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the countries of the region’ (BRICS Information Centre, 2016, note 14). Yet, the views of India, Brazil, and South Africa as part of the IBSA forum reveal flexibility in regards to the utilisation of the R2P. On the one hand, the Russian and Chinese governments oppose strongly any coercive means of interference. On the other hand, the trilateral IBSA forum reveals that these three countries may show greater flexibility. While Russia and China condemned the air strikes in Libya, IBSA displayed moderate views:

[The ministers] underscored that a no-fly zone on the Libyan air space or any coercive measures additional to those foreseen in Resolution 1970 can only be legitimately contemplated in full compliance with the UN Charter and within the Security Council of the United Nations (IBSA, 2011).

In 2011, Brazil’s Foreign Ministry also stated that ‘there may be situations in which the international community might contemplate military action to prevent humanitarian catastrophes’ (Brazil Ministry of External Relations, 2011, note 8).

During the five countries’ concurrent membership at the UNSC in 2011, Table 5.2.3c below shows that there were four instances where the R2P was initiated.

¹⁷ See [Appendix N](#) for the detailed statements.

Table 5.2.3c BRICS countries' support or votes on UNSC R2P resolutions in 2011

	2011	2011	2011	2011
Code	S/RES/1992	S/RES/2014	S/RES/1996	S/RES/1973
Country	Côte d'Ivoire	Yemen	South Sudan	Libya
UNSC Resolution	Security Council resolution 1992 (2011) [on redeployment of logistics and military personnel from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)]	Security Council resolution 2014 (2011) [on the situation in Yemen]	Security Council resolution 1996 (2011) [on establishment of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)]	Security Council resolution 1973 (2011) [on establishment of a ban on flights in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya airspace]
Brazil	Yes	Yes	Yes	Abstention
Russia	Yes	Yes	Yes	Abstention
India	Yes	Yes	Yes	Abstention
China	Yes	Yes	Yes	Abstention
South Africa	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: UN Security Council resolution 1973 (2011); UN Security Council Resolution 1992 (2011); UN Security Council Resolution 1996 (2011); UN Security Council resolution 2014 (2011).

Table 5.2.3c shows that out of the four occasions where the R2P was invoked, BRICS countries collectively agreed to pass the UNSC resolutions in the cases of Côte d'Ivoire, Yemen, and South Sudan, but not for Libya. The Libyan example has resulted in the BRICS permanent members' vetoing of military intervention. These indicate a selective bias and a fragmented conception of working other than for self-interested state motives. The BRICS common sense of alerting abuses in international relations with the aim of addressing them through multilateral approaches is prejudiced. Their UNSC decision-making since 2011 has been framed by the discourse of the dominant social group of the Brics-from-above within the configuration to prevent unilateral decisions rather than being based on the rationale about the extent of human rights' violations. Therefore, the BRICS common sense of working collectively for the benefit of the Global South is misleading. There are self-interested state motives guiding their

decisions, which prevent the Brics-from-above from ‘acting as an organic unity’ (Gramsci, 1971, p. 327). In a Gramscian sense (Gramsci, 1971, p. 326–9), such fragmented common sense and inability to reach cohesion among their social group is an indication that the BRICS common sense of working multilaterally for the benefit of the Global South has not converted into good sense, that is, a convincing and unified conception about the BRICS purpose.

5.3. Implications of the chapter findings and conclusions

Dissecting the BRICS intergovernmental declarations from 2009 to 2018 has enabled the substantiation of this thesis’s first hypothesis claiming that there is a fabrication of common sense about the BRICS governments working in the interests of the Global South. In this process, the Brics-from-above consisting of the configuration’s political society exercise important functions to express and promote the conception about what the BRICS configuration represents for the world. As evidenced in section 5.1, the social group of the Brics- from-above has created and organised the ideas on BRICS in different themes, which serve to justify the state leaders’ role in guiding the Global South in matters of practical economic cooperation, global economic governance, and international affairs. They have created the belief that they act as representatives *of* the Global South and work in their interests.

However, this chapter’s section 5.2 exposed the cracks in the BRICS common sense. There are indications that the incoherent, uncritical, and unsystematic conception about the purpose of the BRICS has been structured along contradictory lines, which suggest that they have not been rooted in the historical and social context of the mass. As a result of this disconnection between the top and bottom levels in the BRICS societal configuration, the BRICS common sense remains fragmented and contradictory. There is an incoherence in the organic unity among the Brics-from-above, which is substantial because of their inability

to reach practical outcomes for the Global South. While there were a few successful attempts namely in achieving changes in the IMF quota or even the NDB's creation, the BRICS leadership is not asserting itself through regular and concrete outcomes. Rather they remain vague and abstract indicating that the political society of the Brics-from-above remain a conglomeration of heterogeneous class actors even though they are from the same social stratum.

For studies of international relations, the incoherent common sense and its failure to convert into coherent good sense implies that it is of little relevance to begin on the premise that the semi-peripheral convergence of the BRICS has the potential to transform the existing world order. The mode of being of the Brics-from-above is mainly in eloquence and rhetorical terms. On a practical level, they will not succeed in permanently persuading their own masses about the BRICS vision for the Global South because they cannot overcome the contradictions in their common sense. As further explained in the next chapter, opposition to their common sense is facilitated when they fail to manage conflicting interpretations about their purpose.

Although the BRICS configuration shows unconvincing prospects as initiators of transformation in the world order, this does not mean that critical theory is irrelevant to question the social order they are attempting to establish in the Global South's interests. On the contrary, expanding engagement with critical IR theory is necessary especially because of the social forces with different degrees of empowerment within the configuration. As discussed earlier in section 5.1, while the Brics-from-above fabricate the common sense, their government-approved platform of the Brics-from-the-middle equally play fundamental roles in enriching this common sense. The important issue remains to overcome prioritising

state actors alone as the primary units of analysis and to consider class-based relations as worthy of analysis in the discipline of IR.

Reverting to Gramscian concepts provides a leverage in comparison with the analytical frameworks of Coxian critical theory to study intra-state dynamics. As seen in the work of Xing and Augustin (2014), a Coxian interpretation of BRICS reduced the study of the configuration to transnational capitalist classes. Despite the priority the Brics-from-above give to capitalist accumulation strategies as a means of enabling their practical economic cooperation, it is important to reflect beyond the limiting features of economic conditions. Instead, Gramscian concepts allow us to understand the distinct roles performed by the Brics-from-above and their direct contribution to developing the civil society of the configuration, namely the Brics-from-the-middle, whose intellectuals they use to enrich their common sense. Rather than simply assuming the BRICS leadership to be on the economic front, Gramscian concepts highlight the significance for the dominant social classes to win consent on a variety of sites including the moral and intellectual fronts.

Finally, the identification of the five themes in the BRICS declarations reveals that the areas of cooperation among them are created first on a discursive level. The patterns in their documents suggest that it is important to incorporate non-material features, namely, ideas as the primary units of analysis. In regards to problem-solving theories, this means that the leadership of semi-peripheries should not be reduced to self-interested motives, threats of survival in a system of anarchy, power accumulation through coercive means and material conditions of geographical expansion, or military dominance as tend to be the case in the Realist school of thought.

The state centrism of Neorealism is inadequate to theorise the active role played by the governments in organising the development of their societal configuration. Relying on the Brics-from-the-middle to support their common sense suggests that the BRICS state leaders are not guided by self-interested motives to impose their dominance in the world order. Instead, they are actively involved in creating, organising, and distributing modes of thinking about their semi-peripheral purpose on an ideational level. They are seeking to manufacture a common sense using principles from the Global South. The theoretical basis of Neorealism is inadequate to explain the reason why the government bodies are forging this belief using civil society platforms.

The fragmented cooperation and disharmonised alignments in the BRICS members' views on the management of international affairs also suggest that it is not in their rational interests to institutionalise intergovernmental decision-making. Their practices remain vaguely formulated in their declarations. Their limited practical actions and failures to assert themselves concretely in the management of international affairs or global economic governance attest to their limited success to unite coherently through institutions. Institutionalising their practices by surrendering their state autonomy to formal supranational bodies would imply copying similar practices to Western-led organisations and contradict the very essence of their declared commitments of working to redress North-South imbalances. In this sense, Neoliberal Institutionalism is limited to explain the convergence of the five individual states as a desirable vision given that their intent is formulated through different values. For example, neoliberal values refer to individualism, privatisation, deregulation, and commodification of cultures. The BRICS principles differ from these values and are instead formulated in a different language about meritocracy, inclusiveness, representativeness, respect of state sovereignty, among others.

Overall, this chapter has addressed its three objectives. First, it explained the process of identifying the different themes within the BRICS declaration where discourses are shaped to direct ideas about the purpose and vision of the configuration for the Global South. The fundamental functions played by the Brics-from-above in fabricating these ideas and the role of the Brics-from-the-middle in supporting this common sense have been addressed and will be further elaborated in the next chapter. While the second section presented evidences to comment on the continued fragmentary conditions of this common sense in the areas of practical cooperation, global economic governance, and international affairs, the final section interpreted these findings in relation to their implications for critical IR theory.

Chapter 6: Strategies from the middle to counter resistances from below

When analysed from a Gramscian conceptual framework, the previous chapter's findings on the BRICS themes of practical cooperation, global economic governance, and international affairs established that the configuration's common sense of representing the Global South's interests fails to convert into good sense. The lack of practical actions suggests a frail organic unity among the intellectuals of the Brics-from-above. Owing to the fragmented nature and incoherence of the BRICS common sense, it becomes possible for subalterns to develop conflicting interpretations about the configuration's purpose.

This chapter's aim is to draw attention to these conflicting views and the resulting implications. It addresses this thesis's second hypothesis claiming that the Brics-from-below are the ones challenging the BRICS common sense and the third hypothesis contending that the Brics-from-the-middle play another important role in attempting to consolidate the BRICS common sense. They devise discursive strategies similar to dominant classes and fend off contestations from below by appropriating grassroots principles to project these as emanating from their official civil society level in the BRICS. As such, this chapter also elaborates on the themes of people-to-people exchanges and principles, which were identified in Chapter 5. It also uses data collected from the field observation and interviews to substantiate the last two hypotheses.

In addition, to support the final two hypothetical claims, this chapter relies on the methodological insights offered by Gramsci's (1971) notes on the 'History of Subaltern Classes' (p. 52–5). Although these are brief, they are significant in the ways they stress the importance of acknowledging the interplay between political society and civil society.

Although he did not provide a definition of the subaltern, Gramsci's ideas about the concept is pertinent because he identified six methodological stages to study their development.

- First, changes occurring in social relations of production lead to an objective formation of subaltern social groups. These refer to groups, which are less empowered than the existing dominant political and economic groups, but they retain the 'mentality, ideology and aims' of the subaltern level from where they emerge (Gramsci, 1971, p. 53).
- The second element in understanding the concept of subalternity is about situating these groups' affiliation, that is, their relationship with the dominant social classes. It can be an inert relationship where the subalterns do not attempt to influence them. Alternatively, it can be an active affiliation where they attempt to sway the more empowered groups to support their cause.
- The third stage consists of the dominant classes becoming mindful and realising that the exigencies emanating from below cannot be fulfilled within the existing context framing the relationship between the ruling and ruled classes. This leads the dominant groups to allow the creation of subaltern-friendly bodies such as trade unions or civil society gatherings. They create the impression that these platforms are meant for subalterns to express their demands. In reality, while these platforms are a means for subalterns to voice their claims, the new institutions serve the hidden purpose of restricting the matters and issues, which can be voiced.
- Fourth, in order to overcome these restrictions, subalterns having become aware of the limited scope of the institutions created by the dominant groups develop their own platforms during this phase. However, they still remain limited because of their lack of empowerment.

- Although the fifth stage occurs within the prevailing political and economic framework established by the dominant groups, subalterns begin affirming their autonomy by seeking and uniting the support of groups, which have previously or are currently undergoing domination from above.
- The sixth stage is about the subalterns affirming their autonomy.

The third stage alludes to revolution-restoration or passive revolution and strategies of *trasformismo*. The “subaltern” forces ... have to be “manipulated” and rationalised to serve new ends” (Gramsci, 1971, p. 279). In Gramsci’s notes, they are both strategies engineered from above and do not involve participation from below in these initiatives. Both are responses to forms of resistances emanating from below and are achieved by assimilating the subalterns’ popular demands such as to give them the impression that their requests are being incorporated. While Gramscian notes refer to the process of preserving societal control as engineered by the social forces from above, this chapter considers the relevance of practices from the middle platforms. The latter are manipulated to serve ruling classes’ interests. In this revolution from above, Gramsci was referring to state-led initiatives. Rather than from above, this chapter expands the concept of passive revolution and *trasformismo* to add the strategies of co-opted subalterns encompassing middle platforms and their role in countering contestations from below.

Hence, this chapter’s objective is to employ some of Gramsci’s stages of analysis accounting for the development of subalterns in order to examine the intra-state BRICS dynamics, particularly, between the Brics-from-the-middle and Brics-from-below. Instead of the six stages, however, this chapter is structured in three sections according to the stages involved in the formation of subalterns. Section 6.1 explains the objective formation of the Brics-from-below as linked with the changes in social relations of production. It also explains the affiliation

between the Brics-from-below with the Brics-from-above and its implications. Section 6.2 elaborates on the functions of the Brics-from-the-middle and the strategies they devise from their level to reflect the voices from below but which are also meant to *counter* or deflect the latter's resistances from further destabilising the common sense of the ruling classes. I refer to these strategies from the middle as *counter* passive revolution and *counter* trasformismo. This section sub-groups the fourth, fifth, and sixth stages in Gramsci's formation of subalterns because the Brics-from-below fail to affirm their autonomy precisely because of these strategies. Their own opposition to the BRICS common sense will not translate into political action. Section 6.3 discusses the implications of these findings in relation to this thesis's contributions to critical IR theory and a new approach to using Gramsci's concepts.

6.1. The formation of the Brics-from-below

The subalterns' formation in BRICS, that is, the Brics-from-below has been prompted by the exacerbations they experienced for not being involved in the processes of making the intergovernmental vision and the changes triggered by the configuration's convergence. This thesis refers to the Brics-from-below as the unofficial civil society, that is, the platform established by grassroots activists within the configuration to demarcate themselves from the official BRICS Civil Society. While the latter are government-sponsored and was formed at the official requests of the BRICS governments (BRICS Information Centre, 2015, note 74), the organisation of Brics-from-below is unofficial in nature and is an initiative from the grassroots level of the configuration. Regarding the purpose of the unofficial format of the Brics-from-below, an interviewee who was also one of the organisers of the grassroots movements' gathering in Goa declared:

We could not let the official BRICS forum come out with a declaration unchallenged, come out with a vision of BRICS, which the people of BRICS countries might not agree

upon. So, we thought whatever the scale that we are able to manage, we must put a People's Forum (Interviewee 4, 2016).

This participant commented that the people of the Brics-from-below do not deny the potential that the BRICS convergence could have in pushing forward the demands of the Global South. They 'can possibly help bring in some other agenda [in] international negotiations [which] often ... dismiss the Southern agendas' (Interviewee 4, 2016).

However, the continuing neglect of the people-dimension in the BRICS economic-centric declarations prompted numerous interviewees to highlight the negative implications of the BRICS economic and capitalist convergence on wider society. They underlined the following reasons as motives for their gathering:

[To] stop these states from taking control ... and impose [corporate-driven policies] on people's life because everywhere in India and also other countries, these policies are creating havoc on people's lives and livelihood – so they are losing it. High time that people's policies should dominate and they should put pressure on the governments to stop all these kinds of chronic capitalism and think from the people's perspectives (Interviewee 1, 2016).

[To] change [the development pattern] from centralised state control, corporate dominated, profit-centric infrastructure ... to far more decentralised people-centric, quality controlled systems (Interviewee 3, 2016).

[To present] the views of the people movements and communities directly impacted by the decisions that the BRICS were taking (Interviewee 5, 2016).

The commonly acknowledged message from participants involved in the Brics-from-below is that the meaning of the BRICS governments' initiatives is different for the people. They see the BRICS projects as guided by capitalist or profit-making incentives, which will have little impact on improving the lives and livelihood of the people at the bottom level of the configuration. For this reason, they view the BRICS projects designed by the governments as disconnected from the reality of the mass population's perspectives and consider the

government plans as a means of controlling patterns of development for their own state interests.

Historically, the origins of the discussions for creating a platform for the people date from 2012 ahead of India's presidency over the BRICS summit. At the IBSA forum, Brazil, India, and South Africa expressed the need for involving people beyond the executive to invite cooperation from grassroots level. The grassroots organisation named Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) engaged in discussions aimed at launching the 'Civil Society – BRICS Engagement Initiative' in November 2011. As PRIA stated:

Essentially, the leadership of the project came from civil society within the BRICS countries. Towards that end ... [they would] co-ordinate the initiative in collaboration with the Polis Institute in Brazil, the Isandla Institute in South Africa, the Participation Centre in China and the Commission on Social Policies, Labour and Living Standards, Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. The primary purpose of this initiative was to develop a strategy whereby civil society actors from within the BRICS countries can begin to influence the key multilateral initiative (PRIA, 2011).

Despite PRIA's well-developed plan to encourage greater involvement from civil society organisations, its initiative failed to concretise owing to lack of resources and the restrictions on interactive dialogue across the five countries.

However, this did not discourage the groups from below to continue organising their meetings in 2013 during the South African BRICS presidency. They initially called it the Joint Civil Society BRICS summit but given the counter-BRICS nature of their platform, they were concerned that the label of 'Joint Civil Society' may affiliate them with the official government-sponsored gatherings. This is why they often refer to their gathering as the People's Forum. It occurred from 25 to 27 March in parallel with the official BRICS intergovernmental summit, which was happening in Durban. They succeeded in attracting and obtaining the endorsement of over 20 organisations ranging from grassroots social movements,

the media, non-governmental organisations, and academic institutions from different countries (Centre for Civil Society, 2013). The initial turnout was arguably low and, according to Garcia (2014), it could have been explained by the fact that ““BRICS from below” concept [was then] a very recent process and its pace [of organisation was] slower than that of governments and businesses’.

The solidarity among the social movements grew out of their shared concern that the five individual economies were ‘[selling-out] to international capital’ (Bond, 2013). The Bric-from-below argued that the show of intergovernmental unity is a façade to nurture the economic interests benefiting the ruling classes’ capitalist agenda. They accused the BRICS of imitating the Global North by ‘following the pattern traditionally adopted by Northern countries ... and exploiting land, both nationally and abroad, to benefit capital and global agro-industrialisation’ (Ferrando, 2012, p. 1). For these reasons, the participants of the People’s Forum felt that their unofficial civil society platform was necessary. They also deemed their gathering as vital because while some grassroots participants were denied access to formal civil society-related platforms such as the BRICS Trade Union forum, the discussions, which some of them managed to share at this government-approved forum, did not feature in the intergovernmental declaration. See [Appendix O](#) for extracts from the statements of the BRICS Trade Union Forum, which failed to feature in the BRICS intergovernmental declaration in 2013.

Although another gathering in Fortaleza in 2014 followed the 2013 people’s meeting, this protest march organised primarily by Brazilian grassroots movements gathered a different composite of participants than Durban. The Durban gathering was composed of a majority of social movements from South Africa in comparison with fewer participants from different countries. This is equally observed at the other people’s gatherings, which have alternated in

location as the BRICS summits rotated annual presidency. As I have noted from my field observation of the 2016 People's Forum in Goa, the majority of attendees are from the host country in comparison with the few others from abroad. One of the reasons is related to travelling costs. Another reason accounting for the variances in the organisation of the People's Forum is owing to the governmental restrictions on the travel of civil society groups. China and Russia, for example, are notorious for their tough regulatory control against local and international NGOs (Simon, 2011; Chebankova, 2013, p. 140–63; Brechenmacher, 2017, p. 7-36; Jacobs and Buckley, 2015). To date, there has not been a People's Forum of the BRICS, which has been organised in mainland China or Russia.

Despite the different forms of repression they face, social groups from the grassroots level of BRICS have been forging a solidarity especially after their views were disregarded from the 2013 official BRICS summit. On account of this disregard, the organisers of the Joint Civil Society platform (2013 People's Forum) reached the conclusion that interaction through formal mechanisms with the BRICS institutions was unproductive. They needed to develop a greater solidarity among their social groups and their civil society movements because these platforms reflected the essence of their concerns and were much more important than futile attempts at engaging with the official groups. Bond (2013), thus, demarcated the groups from below by coining the expression 'Brics-from-below' referring to a 'bottom-up civil society network to analyse, watchdog and represent silenced voices of dissent'. Another activist dubbed their gathering as an 'uncivil society' (Ngwane, 2018) to further differentiate themselves from the elite-led civil society organisers. Their aim has been to openly present the limitations of BRICS and expose their agenda as being different from the least empowered groups and people of the configuration, which they claim to represent.

The failure to have their views included by the governmental authorities led to the Brics-from-below to continue their organisation in 2014 during the Fortaleza summit in Brazil. There is one important event, which shaped the mobilisation at this particular Brics-from-below meeting. In addition to hosting the BRICS Summit, Brazil was responsible for organising the Fifa World Cup in 2014. This mega event happened against a backdrop of civil unrest in Brazil with the mass population growing frustrated with the increasing expenditures on foreign affairs at the expense of domestic issues namely in education, health, and other social welfare.

Overall, the varied successes of the gatherings of the Brics-from-below are due to the differing relationships among the social movements. For example, Brazil, India, and South Africa share a history of solidarity in organising international and transcultural demonstrations whereas the exchange of ideas with their Chinese and Russian counterparts is dissimilar owing to the strong censorship in these countries. Yet, as noted by Garcia (2014) who attended the Brics-from-below meeting in Fortaleza in 2014, diverse non-governmental groups attended.

Civil society was led by the World March of Women, the Landless People's Movement, the union federations CUT and CSP Conlutas, Jubilee South, the Articulation of Brazilian Women, the Popular World Cup Committee, Rede Brasileira pela Integração dos Povos, in addition to local organizations such as Instituto Terramar, Centro de Pesquisa e Assessoria, and collectives of communication, women and youth. Representatives of movements and NGOs from Africa, South America, Europe, Asia and the USA also participated. There were leaders from communities affected by mining in South Africa, academics and NGOs from China and India, as well as large international NGOs such as ActionAid. Support came especially from Germany's Heinrich Boell Foundation (which provided two days of debate on the new BRICS Bank, bringing together academics and activists from China, India and South Africa) and Friedrich Ebert Foundation, as well as ActionAid. Brazilians were obviously in the majority, but we could also feel a great presence from South Africans, a lesser presence of Chinese and Indians, and regrettably, almost no presence from Russian activists (Garcia, 2014).

Garcia (2014) also highlighted the positive impact of the Brics-from-below's continuing gathering in spite of their divergences.

Despite the differences, we can identify some similar experiences of impacts, confrontation and resistance, plus themes that are common to all the people of the BRICS.

There are, for example, experiences with mega-events and related violations of rights (the World Cup and Olympics in Brazil, China, South Africa and Russia, and Commonwealth Games in India). In the five countries, there are many instances of socio-environmental conflicts involving mega-projects of oil, gas and mining, and also rights violations around mega-infrastructure projects involving funding of national development banks. These will all likely be amplified by the future NDB. In other words, international solidarity and the processes of articulation and strengthening of societies in the BRICS will occur in processes of struggle, insofar as these countries move forward in the development model that they carry out today.

The increasing numbers of social movements wanting to be part of the Brics-from-below suggest a horizontal expansion of solidarity, that is, a growth guided by non-hierarchical forms of organisation as opposed to a vertical network. In comparison with the latter, which is characterised by hierarchy in decision-making and a unilateral flow of power from above, a platform encouraging horizontal expansion encourages rather than absorbs active engagement and invites participation from different groups sharing similar solidarity. As evidenced from the above statements from Garcia (2014), there was a growing number of social movements wanting to support the grassroots cause in comparison with the 2013 meeting and there were many new themes, which were added for discussion during this People's Forum.

However, despite this horizontal expansion during the 2014 meeting, there was a lack of concrete outcomes achieved by the Brics-from-below (Galli, 2015, p. 294). One of the reasons is because although the 2014 Fortaleza Brics-from-below's gathering saw a surge in the number of movements seeking to be part of the grassroots level within the configuration, Bond 'acknowledges that these were 'single-issue movements when what is needed is "civil society internationalism"' (cited in Galli, 2015, p. 294). In other words, there was a lack of unity in the conception about the BRICS, which the Brics-from-below were attempting to develop at their own grassroots level. What was missing among them was 'solidaristic-internationalist', that is, an alliance of social movements fighting for global justice and that:

[provided] solidarity to allies across the BRICS when they are repressed and jointly campaigning for human and ecological rights against common BRICS enemies (such as Vale, the China Development Bank, DBSA, Transnet/mega-shipping, fossil fuel corporations and other polluters, and the coming BRICS Development Bank (Garcia and Bond, 2016, p. 7).

Another reason accounting for the lack of concrete outcomes of the 2014 Brics-from-below's meeting was due to the eagerness of some of their participants to join and actively engage with the Brics-from-the-middle (Garcia cited in Galli, 2015, p. 294). This suggests an acceptance of some of the participants from the Brics-from-below to become part of the official civil society of the Brics-from-the-middle. It indicates an effort to move vertically upward in the ordering of the BRICS configuration's social hierarchy. Before elaborating on this point in the next sections below, it is important to understand that the primary stage in the formation of subalterns is related to changes in relations of production, that is, fundamental changes in social relations that happen among individuals as a result of transformations affecting the relations of ownership of productive forces.

6.1.1. Changes in social relations between the Brics-from-above and Brics-from-below

This subsection explains that the formation of the Brics-from-below has grown from a shared concern about the relations of production of the BRICS configuration, which the Brics-from-above control. It evidences the claim that the Brics-from-above exploit the configuration's productive resources and employ a misleading discourse about development characterised by 'efficient resource distribution' (BRICS Information Centre, 2015, note 12) for the benefit of the Global South. It supports the claim by looking at the performance in social indicators of the BRICS countries. The objective is to demonstrate that a prioritisation of economic development and a neglect of people's perspectives affects the social relations between the Brics-from-above and the Brics-from-below.

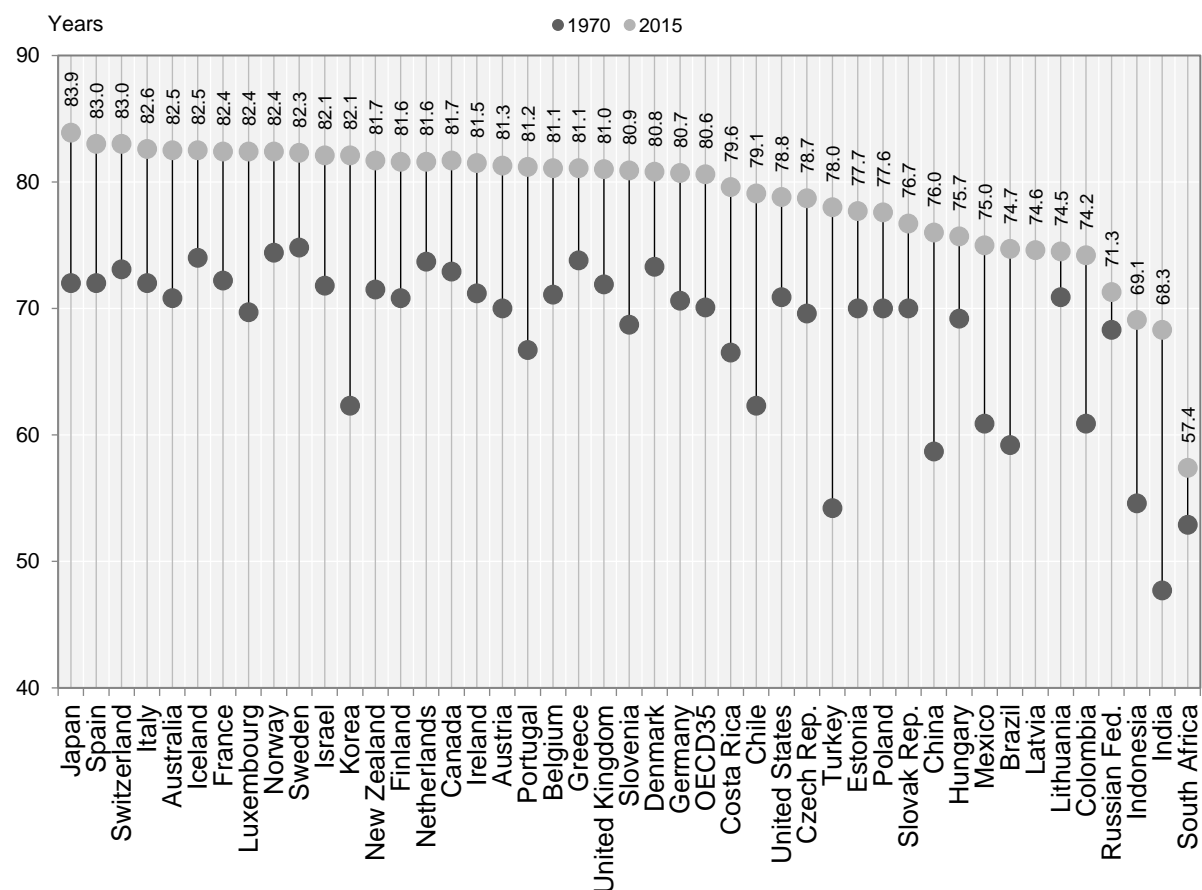
While it is relatively straightforward to describe the historical beginnings of the Brics-from-below, why it is sustained despite the difficulties these social groups face is more complex. It requires understanding the reasoning behind their existence. This can be done by looking at the data of a social dimension, which do not feature in the intergovernmental documents. For example, the economic convergence of the governments is not conducive to long-term development in the interests of the mass population. This can be evidenced by looking at the conclusions from the 2012 Sustainable Governance Indicators (SGI) report, which measured the five countries' 'performance in the areas of health care, social inclusion, families, pensions and integration' (Reisen, 2012, p. 2–3). The document reported the contradictory economic setting common to all the five countries:

The dual-economy setting common to all BRICS – the coexistence of a poor rural and an informal urban sector with a richer, growing urban bourgeoisie – sharpens the authorities' policy dilemmas. On one side are demands to continue past growth strategies in order to satisfy the basic needs of the poor; on the other are claims for more transparency, accountability and democracy, as articulated by the Internet-savvy middle class.

In addition to social inequality evidenced in the SGI report, OECD statistics on healthcare provision also reveal a lack of attention on societal progress in the BRICS countries (OECD, 2017). Among the health statistics, life expectancy is an important indicator of the strength of a country's societal efficiency because it reflects not just its health status but also the provision of all services required for lessening the mortality rate. Figure 6.1.1 below illustrates the changes in life expectancy of OECD countries including the individual BRICS members. Despite the progress in life expectancy over the last four decades, the BRICS countries are individually among the last ones and behind the OECD members. In the BRICS countries, life expectancy does not exceed the 80 year.

The measurement of life expectancy includes a series of vital people-oriented policies, societal dimensions, and provisions impacting a mortality rate. The indicators combined to calculate life expectancy range from the provision of ‘maternal care, child nutrition, vaccination, education, road safety, mosquito control, sanitation infrastructure, smoking policies, and ... hospital care’ (Elsenhans and Babones, 2017, p. 29). The OECD (2017) considers improvements in life expectancy to raise ‘living standards, [improve] lifestyle and better education, as well as greater access to quality health services’. In other words, improving rates of life expectancy reflects the good management of societal affairs and accounts for the social challenges, which impact the indicator.

Figure 6.1.1 Life expectancy at birth, 1970 and 2015 (or nearest year)



Source: OECD, 2017.

The relevance of looking at the above indicator (Figure 6.1.1) is to highlight the continued focus of the BRICS intergovernmental configuration on the big issues of economics, finance, trade, or governance at the regional or international level, which is an argument voiced at the People's Forum. Although the People's Forum acknowledges the importance of these elements, they criticise the governments for focusing on the 'safe issues' (Interviewee 8, 2016). Meanwhile, the whole social dimension such as access to social services, which directly concerns the mass population and working class, is neglected. This argument is also supported by the SGI report published in 2012, which concludes that 'maintaining social stability and social cohesion poses more problems for the BRICS than does sustaining their economic expansion and transformation' (Reisen, 2012, p. 21). The People's Forum is precisely organised to underline the continued emphasis of their economic concentration.

Concentrating on the configuration's economic convergence is done without an understanding of the transformation in the social structure that the five countries have experienced. Peilin (2013, p. xxiv) argues that there have been transformations in each of the markets of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, which have significantly enhanced people's livelihood. Meanwhile, other authors also stress that the social changes in the particular domestic contexts are understudied due to a tendency to focus on an analysis of economic development at the expense of social development (Costa and Scalon, 2013; Costa, Koslinski, and Costa, 2013; Wanderley, 2013). Owing to this focus on the economic dimension, many of the inequalities are assumed to be linked with an economic rationale and it is overlooked that their origins can be explained through political and cultural dimensions (Costa and Scalon, 2013, p. 421). Similarly, participants involved in the Brics-from-below suggest that the inequalities that they suffer from are not fundamentally economic but are also a result of an intentional strategy to prioritise safe

issues such as economic development rather than matters related to ‘access to social services ... critical areas like education, health, public services, etc.’ (Interviewee 8, 2016).

The BRICS agenda is very much an agenda ... that is driven by governments’ interests to ... grow their economies with very little concern for the impacts of the people in general but particularly those who are not part of the middle class (Interviewee 5, 2016).

...the lower classes, the popular classes, they do not have [any] idea about BRICS. Simply [because] the government they do not inform the population and they are not offering a clear information to the population about the BRICS... [It is] the government on the one hand and the population on the other (Interviewee 10, 2016).

These participants involved in the Brics-from-below were acknowledging the implications of the societal changes occurring in their respective societies, which were triggered by commitments designed from above and did not reflect their social stratum. They were underlining the disconnect between the BRICS projects and the people’s perspectives, which created inequalities beyond an economic level but were also of a political and discursive nature. This echoes one of the preliminary findings from Chapter 5 about how some matters namely linked with global economic reforms are more extensively covered as opposed to contentious issues, involving, for example, the demands of grassroots groups.

Inequality analysis at the income level, additionally, remains helpful to appreciate the changing aspects responsible for the transformations in society. As Grusky (2018, p. 13) argues, inequality analysis helps to illustrate class structure and how it changes. ‘Inequality is largely the result of the way in which social stratification is configured within a given society. It depends on circumstances and on choices made throughout the history of each society’ (Scalon, 2013, p. 3). In the BRICS context, strategies of capital accumulation have transformed their class structure. According to OECD data:

In emerging economies, such as China and India, a sustained period of strong economic growth has helped lift millions of people out of absolute poverty. But the benefits of growth have not been evenly distributed and high levels of income inequality have risen

further. Among the dynamic emerging economies, only Brazil managed to strongly reduce inequality, but the gap between rich and poor is still about five times that in the OECD countries (OECD, 2018).

The Brics-from-below have embedded these growing inequalities in the rationale for organising their movements. ‘If you look at inequality ... we are all kind of realising we [the mass population] are sort of the same position’ (Interviewee 7, 2016). This statement was made in relation to the widening gap between the richest and poorest of the BRICS economies.

Overall, the organisation of the Brics-from-below has not just been about a consolidation of workers but has transformed into a society-oriented platform concerned about inequalities not simply in economic terms but also about social problems. They still compose groups of people from the old classes formed prior to 2013, who share a solidarity:

The states and corporations ... deciding centrally what would be the development pattern whether in terms of energy or in terms of food or in terms of infrastructure. What we are saying is communities should have control in not only implementing but also in deciding what kind of extra action goes on ... We [groups from below mainly Brazilian, Indian and South African groups] have a lot of discourses not just for this big [BRICS] summit. In fact for the last 8-10 years, we have been having discourses on this even before that but mainly the WSF – World Social Forum – we had discourses over this and also in Rio + 20, we had lot of exchanges on this. So, these are fundamental synergies that we have been talking more or less on similar line. There are differences of details, not all details we agree upon but the fundamentals we agree upon and we also broadly accept as I said except on Chinese and Russian civil society positions, which are not very clear to us in all aspect. [Among] the three other BRICS countries, there is a broad agreement that the development pattern has to change (Interviewee 4, 2016).

On account of similarities they share in the struggles they support, the Brics-from-below have come to form a class of actors concerned about the inequalities sustained by the transnational elites from above in the BRICS configuration. When examining their history, the origins of their mobilisation can be traced to their concerns with the ambitious state-led economic projects, neglect of social affairs, and the subsequent transformations in social relations of productions in the local contexts. For example, what the Brics-from-below initially feared about the NDB is materialising. Since 2018, it has started granting loans to the private sector.

Brazil's Petrobras has already benefitted from a loan grant partially financed by the NDB for an environmental project. South Africa's Transnet has received a loan of \$200 million to reconstruct a port in Durban.

Most BRICS have profitable business arms in Africa, including the likes of Brazil's land-grabbing Vale coal mining and bribery-addicted Odebrecht construction, Moscow's nuclear-toting Rosatom, India's brutal Vedanta, Chinese corporations such as those that ran off with Zimbabwe's diamonds, and Johannesburg's own AngloGold Ashanti (Bond, 2018).

Hence, the BRICS configuration's focus remains on accumulation of capital with little concern about elevating the status of the wider Global South. The income inequalities between the richest and poorest of their societies are widening (World Bank, 2018). The subsequent impact is to favour the interests of the imperial elite states along with an exploitation of the weaker groups, which they fail to empower. Domestic capital has been organised with the aim of facilitating global capital accumulation at the expense of addressing domestic social issues. Therefore, the origins of the Brics-from-below are rooted in the social relations of production about BRICS embedded in capital formation but also entrenched in a knowledge production favouring the discourse practices of the elites while ignoring the least empowered groups.

6.1.2. Relationship between the Brics-from-below and Brics-from-above

The second phase in the development of subalterns relates to their relationship with the ruling classes. It is about 'their passive or active adherence to the dominant political formations, that is, their efforts to influence the programs of these formations with demands of their own' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 52). During the People's Forum of the Brics-from-below in Durban in 2013, these groups attempted to initiate exchanges with formal BRICS bodies but these proved to be unproductive as evidenced with the BRICS Trade Union Forum.

At the 2014 Fortaleza gathering, Brazilian groups from below had a different vision from the other participants of the Brics-from-below (Galli, 2015, p. 294). They initially sought to establish working relationships with the elite and formal civil society organisations, which they considered as having more potential for impact on the development agenda than grassroots social movements. As argued by Garcia (2014), ‘The BRICS are not a topic of concern of Brazilian social movements, which have their own agendas, and thus would not attract a large mobilization. International issues are always distant from local movements’ agendas’. According to the Brazilian Network for the Integration of Peoples (REBRIP), some movements spent months trying to connect with the elite formal organisations but were unsuccessful (2015, p. 4). Two inferences can be made from these attempts to engage with the governments-approved platforms. First, they indicate that the grassroots organisations and movements of the BRICS countries have different motivations for wanting to be part of the configuration’s official or unofficial civil society space. Second, these grassroots movements disagree about the type of social relation that they should develop with the governments but are aware that ‘being co-opted by the governments means [their] capitulation’ (REBRIP, 2015, p. 4).

Moreover, although the Fortaleza Brics-from-below happened in 2014, the Brazilian groups were drawn together because of their exacerbations with the preparations underway for the organisation of the FIFA World Cup and its costly expenditure. ‘It was the most expensive World Cup in history, tormented by claims of corruption and human rights violations and the promised infrastructure changes were far from complete’ (Rosenthal and Cardoso, 2015, p. 369).

Under the government of former president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the World Cup proposal was to have an event in which there was transparency on public spending. The opposite has occurred. An initial budget of R\$25.5bn (\$11.4bn) for stadiums, urban transportation, improvements in ports and airports, has risen to R\$28bn, according to the sports ministry’s executive secretary, Luiz Fernandes – almost three times the cost of

Germany's World Cup in 2006. Why are we organising the most expensive World Cup in history, without any of the benefits to the community we were promised? Plans to improve traffic around host cities have turned out to be chaotic, too; only three have stuck to their budgets and deadlines. Numbers like these have made the public angry and fuelled popular protests, in a bid to reverse the logic of a system that privileges money over social matters (Romario, 2014).

On this basis, the Fortaleza gathering of the Brics-from-below eventually became a platform to rally the majority of local social movements voicing together their criticisms about the Brazilian government rather than contributing to discussions of BRICS. As pointed out by Garcia (2014) who attended the Fortaleza Brics-from-below,

The environment in Fortaleza [one of the host cities of the World Cup] had been radicalized previously to the Cup, and we can imagine that if the BRICS Summit occurred in March, as planned earlier, we would have had very large protests. However, as it took place immediately after the World Cup, the atmosphere was of relative exhaustion.

In other words, much of the efforts of the Brazilian social movements in 2014 concentrated on issues around the World Cup and less on the BRICS summit (Garcia, 2014).

In 2015, Russia being the new BRICS host 'prevented a "Brics from below" or People's Forum from occurring' (Bond, 2017, p. 9). It is important to highlight such occurrences because they affect the momentum and the synergy around the calls for solidarity expressed by the organisers of the Brics-from-below. Given the uncertainty about the organisation of an unofficial gathering of the grassroots movements be it because of government suppression or logistic issues, it can be inferred that some of them, such as the Brazilian movements mentioned above, prefer to join in the pseudo civil society space of the governments. It ensures them a space to share views about the work of their organisation even if it is 'without the possibility to really discuss with the government the orientation of the BRICS [or its] politics' (Interviewee 10, 2016).

During the 2016 People's Forum in Goa, some of the movements once again attempted to initiate working relations with government authorities. However, these were fruitless.

We are nationally also working with national groups and movements with the national government and engage in negotiations [with them] ... but BRICS take inputs where it suits them especially on trade (Interviewee 8, 2016).

It is not possible to fight in an isolated way. It has to be kind of coordinated and with other sectors, we have to form alliances. So, we are already in the process of building alliances with other groups like in the fisheries, in the land, in the industrial sector, in the independent labour unions with organised sector, central trade unions, even with political parties wherever we fit (Interviewee 1, 2016).

The above responses suggest some instances of passive affiliation of some groups from below with more empowered social groups. In comparison, other participants demonstrated a more active stance in trying to influence the dominant agenda and gain wider support for their claims not just from the BRICS countries.

[We are also trying to] reach out to other comrades and communities in BRICS countries and beyond (Interviewee 3, 2016).

Most important was this feeling, this understanding with the participants that we have a real possibility to establish South-South solidarity and South-South process of common understanding and common struggle, like the struggle between these countries depend on other factors not only money but many political factors and conductors. It's important we have the capacity to fight ... we have access to resources, financial resources, we have a lot of partnerships with other countries, we have the possibility to maintain contact in these countries and develop common projects in the next years to try to strengthen the civil society and not necessarily influence the official agenda (Interviewee 10, 2016).

That joint statement [People's Forum declaration] to engage with BRICS leaders is secondary actually; building networks and learning about each other's experiences is more important (Interviewee 7, 2016).

This being an informal forum. I don't know whether [being part of official forums] would have reduced or increased the impact on the governments' thinking... and I'm not sure this was measured by the organisers how they could get their messages out to the media to the public consciousness and of course, just increasing consciousness of their participants. They are able to influence civil society strategies more than directly influencing the BRICS agenda...with regards to the BRICS agenda...I am still slightly pessimistic because of all my experience with trying to influence the agenda of governments at the international or at European level. I feel if there is an impact, it's

rather incremental – small changes in language somewhere rather than having broader influence, considering concerns and issues with many of the decisions [BRICS] make (Interviewee 5, 2016).

From these interview responses, what is observed is the belief of the participants of the Brics-from-below in raising the consciousness amongst wider groups of subalterns. Their affiliation with the Brics-from-above have been passive. Overall, they have not sought to actively associate themselves with the groups with higher degrees of empowerment namely government-sponsored institutions and think tanks, which are more successful at influencing the BRICS agenda with the aim of having their ideas seriously taken into consideration. For these participants involved in the Brics-from-below, an active affiliation with the ones in power contradict the very foundation of their existence. They acknowledge that their declaration is not impactful and that ‘most often [when sent to government officials, it will] be taken and dumped into a basket or file’ (Interviewee 4, 2016). Instead, their large mobilisation from grassroots groups in parallel with the official ones is more important.

The People’s Forum on BRICS, had around 500 participants, [with a significant percentage from the] national fish workers federation. So, when they take it up, and they take it up to their coastal states, they are a political force because when this spreads in the particular south areas ... the government there cannot ignore them. So, by being infused with this understanding about BRICS, about the financial and the political actions of the BRICS, which might impact them, the fish workers federation, will take it up. So, that will have much more political mileage (Interviewee 4, 2016).

The affiliation of the Brics-from-below with the Brics-from-above, therefore, is about expressing their existence and presence and making the ruling classes aware that there are people opposing their contradictory ways of operating. This realisation by the Brics-from-above that the Brics-from-below can express resistances undermining their common sense by orchestrating conflicting political actions, leads to the next stage in the development of subalterns.

6.2. Emergence of the Brics-from-the-middle

The third phase in the development of subalterns happens when the ruling classes realise the extent of the pressure from below. Social groups from above having realised the extent of the subalterns' mobilisation and their potential to disrupt their common sense, because of their capacity to raise the consciousness of the wider community, allow the creation of new institutions such as formal civil society groups or unions to give the subalterns an impression that their claims are being heard. In the BRICS context, this has been through the creation of institutions such as the BRICS Civil Society, the BRICS Academic Forum and the BTTC where people and cultural exchanges are promoted. As shown in [Appendix P](#), civil society only began to be featured in numerous notes rather than fleetingly after the annual declaration of 2015, which welcomed 'the development of relations between the parliaments, businesses and civil society institutions of the BRICS countries' and the dialogue between these on 'important socio-economic issues' (BRICS Information Centre, 2015, notes 70, 74). When analysing the BRICS themes on people-to-people and cultural exchanges, these are found at the bottom of their declaration.

Moreover, such items are generally discussed in less details as opposed to other themes. It indicates that topics with a people and cultural dimensions are not prioritised. Alternatively, they are given attention only when the elites deem it important to accommodate their views. In the context of BRICS, this only happened when the governments felt the necessity to create a pseudo civil society space after they realised that grassroots movements from the individual BRICS countries had been organising to make their voices heard (REBRIP, 2015, p. 4). These movements did so according to their own means and in parallel to the official intergovernmental BRICS summit. To prevent an expansion of their unofficial organisation, REBRIP (2015, p. 4) reported that:

The response from the governments, especially Russia by means of the Civil BRICS initiative, was to create a pseudo space for participation in an authoritarian manner, where the Russian government decided who would participate, what themes would be discussed and the methodology to be adopted.

This allowed the governments to control how to incorporate the people's perspectives and the degree of importance to accord to their views. The Brics-from-above, thus, influenced the dimension of discourses related to the people and cultural exchanges according to their intergovernmental agenda. This is why Russia launched the official Civic BRICS or BRICS Civil Society in 2015. It was both a response to IBSA countries' request for the involvement of grassroots organisations and the popular demand expressed through the People's Forum of the Brics-from-below (REBRIP, 2015).

Thus, during the Russian presidency of the BRICS summit in 2015, Russian authorities defied the assumptions that a civil society platform would be unlikely because of Russia's reluctance. This was against the backdrop of the recently introduced Russian 'foreign agent' law in 2012, which was meant to suppress NGOs and subjected them to intensive audits and hefty fines that led to a significant 33 percent of Russian NGOs' closure by 2015 (Digges, 2015; Koroteev, 2016). The prominent attacks against civil society in Russia and the Russian government's ultimate promotion of the idea of a BRICS Civic Society were contradictory practices. In the BRICS context, on the one hand, the Russian government 'prevented a "Brics from below" or People's Forum from occurring' (Bond, 2017, p. 9). On the other hand, it orchestrated the organisation of this platform according to Russia's own vision and entrenched the BRICS Civil Society with the BRICS Academic Forum and BTTC. The latter are heavily endorsed and funded by the government authorities. These GONGOs 'create mechanisms for the implementation of [government's] policies' (Cumming, 2010, p. 781). This official link

between the Brics-from-above and the Brics-from-the-middle ensured that civil society actions were closely monitored from above.

The Brics-from-the-middle were actively involved in processes of co-optation and appropriation. As stated by activists from below, namely from REBRIP:

[It was] an initiative that violates all principles of participation mentioned previously, such as autonomy, diversity and the presence of those most affected. The result of a process of this nature does not express, in any way, the demands of the civil society movements and organizations, since it is illegitimate. And the argument used by some that it is “better to be there than not to” cannot be supported: it expresses surrender to co-optation and political capture by the governments (REBRIP, 2015, p. 4).

Therefore, the emergence of the Brics-from-the-middle has been controversial because Brics-from-below perceived this official platform as a strategy to confine the space for civil society according to governmental requirements. For them, it defied the very essence of open dialogue and free exchanges of ideas. With the pressure from below and the resistance nature of their counter-summit, Russia created Civic BRICS with the aim of helping the groups, which were illustrating resistances in the form of Brics-from-below, adjust to their intergovernmental agenda and convince them that the governments were working in their interests. It was a situation whereby the Brics-from-below criticised openly the discourses from above. This undermined the ruling leaders’ monopoly and manipulation of the narratives about the BRICS configuration but the Brics-from-below could not advance their ideas either. The Brics-from-above seemingly compromised by creating a formal Civil Society which they thought would moderate the resistances from below. This echoes Gramsci’s ideas on passive revolution.

Additionally, the formal Civic BRICS also provided a means of absorbing intellectuals from below and persuading them to serve their cause. This is relatable to Gramsci’s ideas about trasformismo. In 2014, Brazilian authorities (Brics-from-above) followed a similar strategy as Russia by being meticulously involved in the planning of the organisation of the BRICS

Academic Forum and BTTC. Organisers of the 2014 Fortaleza Brics-from-below's gathering commented that they intended their meeting to coincide with the BRICS Academic Forum but rearranged it when they noted the intensive governmental attempts meant to integrate the groups from below into the formal discussions.

As established in the previous chapter, the overarching purpose of the Brics-from-the-middle is a way of giving authority to the Brics-from-above's common sense by giving the impression that it is forged in the realm of civil society. The Brics-from-the-middle, additionally, exercise two functions. First, they serve as a means for the subaltern groups and the people to articulate their views about BRICS. They create the impression that Brics-from-above are concerned with their ideas and work in their interests. Second, these official platforms help to restrict the articulation of views from below within boundaries acceptable by the Brics-from-above. A participant of the 2016 Brics-from-below commented:

Several people who participated in both [that is, the unofficial and official fora] said very clearly that the depth and range of issues discussed, the animation and the interaction, and the level of participation were far higher in the People's Forum rather than in the Civic BRICS ... [Although we do not discount the Civic BRICS entirely] because there are several civil society groups, which sometimes take out positive issues in a progressive way, in the Civic BRICS, they were constrained ... We had to restrain ourselves, we had to take out some of the critiques because these were not welcome there, not even allowed there (Interviewee 4, 2016).

Overall, there are two important features in the development of the Brics-from-the-middle, that is, the pro-BRICS advocates. These are first, the timeline of their creation and second, the format of their platform. First, the governments called for the creation of an 'Academic Forum' or 'Think Tank Forum' in May 2009 as a preparatory event whose discussions were intended as input for the first BRIC intergovernmental summit in June 2009 (Stuenkel, 2013b). Yet, no input from the Academic Forum was acknowledged in the first intergovernmental declaration (BRICS Information Centre, 2009). Since 2009, the BRICS Academic Forum has been an

annual pre-summit event aimed at bridging the dialogue ‘between academics and policy observers [through a platform] ideally free from political pressure’ (Stuenkel, 2013b). This lack of acknowledgement about the contributions of academic bodies despite the fact that they were formally organised at the governments’ requests suggests that the Brics-from-above did not deem it necessary to recognise and underline the importance of these representatives from the Brics-from-the-middle in their initial intergovernmental declarations (BRICS Information Centre, 2009–12). It is much later that the events and contributions of government-approved platforms such as the BRICS Academic Forum, BTTC, and Civic BRICS began to feature as brief notes in the BRICS intergovernmental declarations (BRICS Information Centre, 2013, note 42; 2014, note 62; 2015, note 73; 2016, note 45; 2018, note 96). The first time coincided with the same year that the 2013 Brics-from-below was happening in Durban. The acknowledgement of Brics-from-the-middle representatives indicates an intentional strategy of the Brics-from-above to give the impression that civil society bodies were formally consulted.

The second feature in understanding the processes of the Brics-from-the-middle is the format of their organisation. As opposed to the unofficial civil society meetings, the Brics-from-the-middle follow rigid guidelines. For example, the first 2015 Civic BRICS organised by Russian authorities stipulated a management structure for the official civil society forum.

[A] Steering Committee is [to be] formed by the Presiding Country from amongst representatives of the civil societies’ organizations. 2015-2016 Steering Committee will be represented by the Russian Group of the Civil Society on BRICS matters under the presidency of Russia. The Steering Committee will approve concepts by the BRICS Civil Forum, set up working groups, select/adapt national coordinators for the working groups and approve programs for the Civil Forum (Civic BRICS, 2015).

This steering committee is set up by the individual countries’ Foreign Ministry that ‘[designate] an institution which puts together a team of thinkers who then “represent” their respective countries’ at the government-approved forum (Stuenkel, 2015c). Thus, there is careful planning

in the processes of organising the Brics-from-the-middle, which are ultimately bound with official structures. The official civil society forum act as transparent bodies and invite wide participation but as evidenced from the 2014 BRICS Academic Forum, the steering committee responsible for organising that year's forum conducted a selection process to limit the number of attendees (das Neves and de Farias, 2014, p. 14). Regarding the processes embodied by the Brics-from-the-middle, a participant who attended both the official Civil Society forum and unofficial Brics-from-below meetings in 2016 reported:

I have not liked to be part of a very constrict, constrained and restricted discussion ... I might take part in one of these preparatory meetings [referring to the official Civil Society Forum] I always like to invest more of my energy and my effort in people's efforts rather than in sanitised [government-approved] meetings (Interviewee 4, 2016).

As opposed to the unofficial Brics-from-below, the official Brics-from-the-middle are deemed a 'sanitised' (Interviewee 4, 2016) version of civil society, which is government-approved, and where discussions are filtered to meet official guidelines rather than free. The implication of the timeline in the creation of the official Brics-from-the-middle and their format is that governments exercise an intentional control over civil society deliberations. They have incorporated the people dimension in their economic-oriented declarations as pre-emptive measures and at strategic times to absorb voices that resist their intergovernmental discourses.

Therefore, what the processes and official structures of the Brics-from-the-middle, reveal is that they exercise an important role as a social group which is affiliated with the Brics-from-above but which feigns linkages with the Brics-from-below. In the intra-state dynamics of the configuration, it is not just about the above-below dynamics, but there are also active above-middle and middle-below interactions, which contribute to shape the overarching BRICS intergovernmental agenda. In the next section, this thesis provides evidences to substantiate its third claim that the Brics-from-the-middle play another significant subtle role similar to

Gramsci's concepts of passive revolution and trasformismo, which are normally engineered from above, but in this context, continue from the middle level of the BRICS configuration.

6.2.1. Obstacles preventing the integral autonomy of the Brics-from-below

The fourth stage in the development of subalterns is concerned with their attempt to overcome their shortcomings by creating their own institutions. The fifth and six stages are concerned with the assertion of their autonomy. However, the Brics-from-below have not reached the stage of integral autonomy yet because their rallying of support with other social movements is fragmented. The first reason is because when the BRICS summits are hosted in China or Russia, they lose the momentum of their previous gatherings. They are unable to organise their marches, protests or People's Forum at all or with the same degree of success. Russian and Chinese authorities provide the pretext of an existing Civic BRICS to override any demand for a people's gathering. Moreover, the insufficient cohesion in the Brics-from-below's coordination and gatherings affect their solidarity. As commented by participants of the People's forum:

Those civil society groups [referring to Russia and China] are not as courageous or vibrant or willing to take the government head on whereas Brazil, South Africa and particularly India are very vibrant civil society groups (Interviewee 4, 2016).

In BRICS countries, social movements are constantly under threat. They spend so much of their time trying to exist ... Basically, they are so focused on surviving themselves, struggling against daily issues that they will not have the kind of capacity, the resources, the energy to focus on the broader kind of the macro issues related to BRICS (Interviewee 5, 2016).

Although the lack of resources and insufficient practical strategising among the Brics-from-below can account for the difficulties in their assertion of integral autonomy, their

ineffectiveness can also be directly related to the strategies deployed by the Brics-from-the-middle.

In the process of enriching the BRICS common sense with additional ideas, the Brics-from-the-middle additionally contribute in the production, accentuation, and circulation of the agenda of the Brics-from-above. In this contributory role, the Brics-from-the-middle imitate the Brics-from-above's pathway and prioritise practical economic convergence, trade systems, and discussions of global economic governance. The Brics-from-the-middle claim to contribute on behalf of civil society and act as a bridge connecting the bottom with the top level of the BRICS configuration (Civic BRICS, 2015). Yet, in reality, their ideas and recommendations have little to do with people-oriented commitments. The Brics-from-the-middle essentially 'deliberate on issues of crucial importance to BRICS' (ORF, 2016a) and this importance is shaped according to the priority that the Brics-from-above allocate to their commitments in the intergovernmental declarations.

To give authority to their deliberations, the Brics-from-the-middle claim, similarly to the Brics-from-above, to reflect the people's voices. For example, the themes of people-to-people exchanges and shared principles are widely employed in the BRICS Academic Forum ([Appendix Q](#)). In their own words, the BRICS Academic Forum claims to be representative of civil society (BRICS Academic Forum, 2014, p. 13). Despite the fact that the context of their forum is embedded in a language appealing to the people, their discourse is masked in subtle narratives of capitalism meant to help subalterns accommodate to the BRICS logic. For example, the extracts in [Appendix R](#) indicate that the BRICS Academic Forum prioritise economic growth first as being in people's interests (BRICS Academic Forum, 2012–16, Fuzhou Initiative, 2017; BRICS Academic Forum, 2018). Similar to the findings from Chapter 5 about the Brics-from-above's fabrication of a common sense intentionally meant for the

benefit of wider society, the Brics-from-the-middle also speak of inclusive economic growth in the overall interests of the people of the BRICS configuration and other developing countries. They claim to have actively consulted a wide range of stakeholders. For example, in 2017, the BRICS Fuzhou Initiative assembled ‘over 400 delegates representing political parties, think tanks and civil society organisations of BRICS and other developing countries’ (Fuzhou Initiative, 2017). One of their themes for deliberation was ‘Stronger People-to-People Bond for Better Cooperation’. During the Fuzhou Initiative, the Chinese government innovated by combining three different fora: BRICS Academic Forum, the BRICS Civil Organisations Forum, and BRICS Political Parties Forum. In addition, for the first time, they invited representatives from more than 26 developing countries. These included representatives from countries such as Argentina, Chile, Laos and Philippines, among others countries, which participated actively in the three fora (BRICS Policy Center, 2017).

However, the cooperation they are referring to is about achieving practical outcomes in world economic growth and improved global economic governance (Fuzhou Initiative, 2017, note 3). This narrative is primarily a strategy of sustaining capitalist accumulation strategies through trade partnerships and integration into the global economy. These serve to preserve the continuation of capitalist thinking. The participants of the Brics-from-below shared their views about the recommendations, which the Brics-from-the-middle make to the Brics-from-above:

A lot of the language of the [unofficial] civil society movements ... has been appropriated or misappropriated and so, sometimes you find even their declarations or even before that the ministers ... at meetings ... before the BRICS ... have been talking the language we [from below] talk about ... So, something has gone wrong. That language got appropriated. We talk about sustainable development, climate change, equality, I mean all these words have taken on very different meanings by being misappropriated in their documents (Interviewee 6, 2016).

The Brics-from-below argue that the Brics-from-the-middle have appropriated the language and principles from their social stratum and translated their meanings with expressions meant

to serve a different common sense than from the ones they have been appropriated. They communicate some of the principles from below but misappropriate these to serve the purpose of the BRICS agenda. These strategies of the Brics-from-the-middle suggest that there is a continuation of the passive revolution initiated from above that are intended to prevent resistant social forces from consolidating their own alternative common sense and developing their integral autonomy.

6.2.2. An update of Gramsci's concepts: *counter* passive revolution and *counter* trasformismo

This thesis refers to the strategies engineered from the middle level of two fundamental social forces as *counter* passive revolution and *counter* trasformismo because they are not being designed from above. Instead, they are from groups from the middle, which are comparatively less inferior than the groups from below and have been established so as to serve the top-level groups' interests. The Brics-from-above constituting political society are responsible for developing and forming Brics-from-the-middle into their official version civil society. Both the political society of the Brics-from-above and the civil society of the Brics-from-the-middle constitute the organic unity of what Gramsci called the integral state.

By proposing the phrases *counter* passive revolution and *counter* trasformismo, this thesis expands Gramsci's concepts of passive revolution and trasformismo. This is to add the new component that subalterns from Gramsci's conceptualisation of civil society are capable of devising strategies, which imitate tactics of elites from the political society. It is meant to accompany or complement the continuation of passive revolution from above and restore and consolidate top-level groups' social order when the latter face threatening contestations.

The word 'counter' is employed to refer to the strategies of the Brics-from-the-middle to connote that despite them being subalterns, this social group composed of co-opted intellectuals, deploys tactics that act in opposition to the interests of the genuine subalterns from below, that is, voluntary organisations from the inferior division of the BRICS configuration. To identify a case of *counter* passive revolution, the following conditions need to be met:

- Social forces, notably, subalterns not belonging to the civil society of the integral state express dissatisfaction with the dominant classes' common sense.
- This discontent threatens the social order within the configuration of the integral state.
- The threatened groups, that is, those from the top-level and the middle division devise ways to mitigate the contestations of the subalterns whom the groups from above are not able to co-opt.
- These subalterns persist with their expressions of discontent and continue to contest the common sense fabricated by the currently leading groups but are unable to overthrow their social order.
- There is a deadlock between the groups from above and below because their competing philosophies or common sense are in contradiction. The latter persist in challenging the leading common sense and the former require their support to substantiate their intergovernmental vision.
- This impasse prompts civil society groups from the middle to act as a bridge between the ruling and subaltern classes.
- However, the groups from the middle help to reorganise the political strategies of top-level groups and complement their passive revolution such as to preserve the existing order. Thus, instead of prioritising genuine subalterns' interests, the co-opted subalterns imitate tactics of the elites in order to sustain the current social order.

- The strategies are also *counter* trasformismo in nature because they are means of absorbing the points and contestations of those from the below level through compromises. The aim is not to project genuine subalterns' interests, but rather intended to be (mis)appropriated for usage in the discourse of the ruling classes. The compromises emanating from middle groups are presented in such a way to convince subaltern groups that top-level groups operate for wider society's welfare.
- These strategies are designed with the aim of blocking subaltern groups' access to controlling the manufacturing of their own mass common sense.
- Ultimately, when successful, *counter* passive revolution and *counter* passive revolution employed by groups from the middle preserve the control of the few top-level groups over the majority of the subalterns from below.

In the BRICS context, the Brics-from-below express their dissatisfaction with the ideas promoted as common sense by the Brics-from-above who claim to be working in developing countries' interests. However, as evidenced in Chapter 5, despite few minor successes in IMF reforms, this common sense is fragmented, lacks continuing practical outcomes, and is incoherently developed as the individual BRICS members have their different agendas. The common sense established by the government authorities about their vision for the Global South is consequently easy to challenge.

Pre-emptively, the governments, seeking to sustain the credibility of their common sense, establish official civil society platforms as a means of giving the impression that they value grassroots input. It is an initial phase of passive revolution. The grassroots Brics-from-below continue, nonetheless, to resist the conception that the Brics-from-above work in their interests and argue that the latter misappropriate the language and principles from below. The Brics-from-below advance their own common sense about the configuration's sub-imperial nature

and its capitalist agenda that neglects the people. They continue to expand the solidarity with grassroots social movements.

Nevertheless, the resulting impasse where neither social group can advance their competing common sense leads the official Brics-from-the-middle to bridge the dialogue between the top-level Brics-from-above and grassroots Brics-from-below. Although they pretend to be apolitical, the Brics-from-the-middle remain government-approved platforms bound with official structures of the configuration's political society. These middle groups play an active role in enriching the governments' common sense and help to sustain it such as the existing social order within the configuration is preserved. They co-opt participants from the Brics-from-below into their level and absorb their principles to consolidate the elite's common sense. Rather than have these strategies of passive revolution and *trasformismo* be continued by the Brics-from-above, the Brics-from-the-middle are the ones responsible for its continuation. They imitate the top-level group's strategies in the sense that they pretend to act in civil society's interests but are in reality counterproductive for the advancement of the subaltern Brics-from-below's voices.

In many ways, the conditions for a case of *counter* passive revolution and *counter* *trasformismo* resemble those for a passive revolution and *trasformismo*. However, in the former, they are devised by middle groups in between the two fundamental social classes. The middle groups imitate strategies of groups from above to complement the latter's initial passive revolution. They claim to represent the genuine interests from below but become a 'counter' force to the ones at the below level because the Brics-from-the-middle act to preserve the given social order established by the existing leaders. The next section elaborates on the implications of using the word 'counter' to update the two Gramscian concepts.

6.3. Implications of the chapter findings and conclusions

Although employing the word ‘counter’ may be confusing for an update of the concepts of passive revolution and trasformismo, the intention is to highlight the context in which it has been applied for BRICS. The Brics-from-the-middle are established by the Brics-from-above but feign to represent the voice of the Brics-from-below. In this update, I could have referred to the strategies as (middle) passive revolution or (middle) trasformismo. However, the word ‘counter’ serves a stronger purpose. It draws attention to the implications of the strategies when they are deployed from social groups, which are presented as in between the two fundamental social classes.

The word ‘counter’ is relevant for this context because of its possible double interpretations. As a noun, it refers to an opposite action. As a prefix, it is used to infer the meaning of correspondence or complementarity. Thus, on the one hand, it is intended to invoke the opposing nature the strategies represent for the social forces from below. On the other hand, the prefix ‘counter’ is employed to complement, correspond, and accompany the actions designed by the social forces from above. In either interpretations, for the context of this study, *counter* passive revolution and *counter* trasformismo refer to the strategies from the middle, which are designed to restore the old and existing order. The new direction that the word ‘counter’ gives to the concepts of passive revolution and trasformismo is an opportunity for understanding the complex roles played by alleged independent middle-level networks in intra-state politics, where to situate them when such strategies from above are deployed, and in whose interests they serve.

This thesis avoids the issue, identified in Chapter 3’s section 3.3.2, about overstretching the scope of Gramsci’s concept beyond their utility. Instead, it has presented a case study of BRICS

whereby the intra-state dynamics is evocative of ideas, which Gramsci shared about the dynamics between political and civil society. However, while Gramscian notes are based on the foundation of the struggle between two fundamental social forces, in the BRICS context, there is an evident middle social force, which merits greater attention. Rather than assuming that these middle-level groups are only organically linked with the Brics-from-above and as such must be considered as units of analysis already embedded in the more dominant social forces, this thesis invites further studies of social groups, which appear as neither in the top nor bottom levels of a class configuration.

By moving beyond the grouping of social forces under the umbrella expression of transnational capitalist classes, distinguishing among social forces with varying degrees of empowerment offers a multi-faceted analytical approach other than a top-down conceptualisation of order. The update of the two concepts contributes to critical IR theory by overcoming the narrow-mindedness associated with the application of Gramsci's ideas in the literature. It has innovated and been creative in the process of devising a framework for analysis of all the forces integral in instances of state convergences, that is, political and civil society with different degrees of empowerment.

A final conclusion drawn from the findings is that the Coxian analytical frameworks have failed to be applied to semi-peripheries because the class dynamics in these non-core settings are a sharp contrast with core states, where the resistances are not as vibrant as in countries faced with ongoing repression. As suggested in the earlier findings, the income inequalities in the BRICS countries are widening and the management of social affairs is little oriented towards improving quality of life. Thus, the vibrancy of civil society especially in unofficial contexts tends to be a contrast with civil society organisations in the core countries. The first implication

is that this could be an explanation for why critical IR and GPE favour an analysis of transnational capital forces given the negligible input from other social forces. The second implication is that the civil society context of the Global South is more effervescent than the Global North. The limited attention Global South actors receives in studies of global politics could mean that IR scholars have not been exploring non-core countries from Coxian critical theory precisely because of the complexity which the intra-state dynamics represents for the discipline.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter's principal task is to summarise the main points that were addressed throughout the entire thesis and to offer final comments on these key areas. The chapter is organised as follows. First, it reiterates this thesis's rationale for choosing to study BRICS. Second, it reminds readers of this study's objectives. Third, it underlines the boundaries set for the feasibility of this study. Fourth, it summarises the overarching research question and hypotheses. Fifth, it outlines the research design. Sixth, it underlines the contributions to knowledge. Finally, it ends with suggestions for further research.

7.1. A reminder of the rationale for choosing BRICS

The BRICS configuration is of both theoretical and empirical importance for studies of international relations. Empirically, the intergovernmental convergence of the five countries is of economic and political prominence for the world order. Their emerging markets gained greater attention after the publication of the Goldman Sachs's research papers and provided the opportunity for businesses within their respective countries to grow. Although growth rates have slowed in some of the economies in the last few years and the economic growth is not even among the five, their economic success is significant in the world order.

More interestingly for the discipline of IR, it is beyond the economic dimension where the BRICS countries are displaying resilience. Despite few features in common, the five countries have initiated an intergovernmental convergence. They have transformed into a political grouping advocating for the interests of emerging and developing countries. In addition to issuing annual intergovernmental declarations speaking on behalf of developing and vulnerable economies from the Global South, the BRICS are succeeding in manufacturing the illusion that they share common stances in a wide range of global issues. They have occasionally

demonstrated mutual collaborative interests in some sectors. In such instances, the five governments give credit for their effective BRICS partnership to the stakeholders across their configuration's different social strata who have supposedly been involved in the intergovernmental vision-formulation through such platforms as the BRICS Civil Society, Academic Forum, BTTC, among others.

Meanwhile, the BRICS countries continue to experience resistances and mass struggles against the governments. There are unofficial civil society movements at the grassroots level, which share a transcultural solidarity with domestic and overseas networks. They distinguish themselves from the formally organised BRICS Civil Society. Time-wise, it was fitting to question the scheduling of the launch of the official BRICS Civil Society in 2015 given that the unofficial Brics-from-below equally began gaining increasing solidarity among their movements from 2013. The initiatives to involve government-approved civil society platforms suggest that the BRICS governments have evolved gradually from a conglomeration of countries that initially prioritised economic convergence to a configuration bent on giving the impression of a bottom-up approach to their vision-making for the world.

On a theoretical level in IR, the evolution of the BRICS configuration also begs the question about how it can be best studied such as to account for the distinct role played by all the political and civil society forces within the grouping. Their intra-state dynamics requires a theoretical framework, which can overcome state centrism and the narrow context of problem-solving theories. The latter tend to exclude non-core countries and actors of a non-state nature in studies of world politics. The BRICS configuration, thus, provided the opportunity to address the shortcomings of IR theories and consider the implications of theoretical biases for studies of semi-peripheries. It also created prospects for a creative engagement with some of these

approaches to overcome their limitations and neglect of non-statist as well as non-corporatist forces in their theoretical frameworks.

In addition, the BRICS leaders and their government-sanctioned platforms are actively involved in discursive practices, which manufacture the conception that the BRICS configuration share a common vision in the interests of the Global South, and intend to redress the inequalities caused by the ways of functioning of the Global North or West. When examined closely, the so-called alternatives offered by BRICS are not different from the existing capitalist model promoted by the Global North or West. Yet, in their intergovernmental declarations, the BRICS leaders paint the latter in a negative light while presenting their own agenda from a positive angle and as a better model for the Global South. There is an active process of othering the Global North or West and persuasive strategies being deployed to convince the people from BRICS and the Global South that the five governments are working in their interests.

Therefore, in studies of world politics, understanding the progression of the BRICS from a financial acronym to a politico-economic configuration necessitates a theoretical framework, which can go beyond an understanding of leadership as a product of coercion and primarily determined by material conditions. The configuration of the semi-peripheral convergence of the BRICS consists of sub-cultures, which merit a theoretical framework that can account for non-coercive and discursive approaches of non-core countries and their different social forces in world politics. In the BRICS context, these social forces refer to the Brics from above, the middle, and below, which contribute directly or indirectly to shaping the intergovernmental vision.

7.2. What the thesis sought to explore

Owing to the complex intra-state interactions among the five countries, this thesis set out to study the BRICS configuration from a critical theory framework that went beyond a restriction to states as the primary units of analysis. It explored the relevance of Gramscian analysis as offering a stronger framework for explaining the political and cultural convergence of the five non-core countries. The first objective was tasked with establishing that problem-solving theories are inadequate to account for the transformation of the BRICS from a financial acronym to an intergovernmental grouping. Despite Cox's critical theory being promising to question the origins of the socio-political dynamics within the configuration, this study's second objective explored the reasons why Coxian scholarship have favoured studies of core countries and neglected semi-peripheries.

Building on the second objective, this study's third task focused on arguing that Coxian critical theory is theoretically strong but flawed because of Cox's analytical frameworks. Consequently, this thesis reverted to the initial inspiration of Cox's critical theory of world order, that is, Gramsci's ideas and concepts pertaining to political society and civil society to explain the state-society dynamics of the BRICS configuration.

Noting that applications of Gramscian ideas are frequently misused and have reached theoretical saturation in IR, this study's fourth objective was aimed at strengthening the point that an update of two Gramscian concepts can reinvigorate engagement with Gramscianism in critical IR theory such as to account for all social forces involved in the BRICS convergence. Ultimately, this objective was concerned with making the academic discipline of IR inclusive of all the fundamental features and actors involved in state-society dynamics irrespective of their differing degrees of economic, political, and social empowerment. Overall, the four objectives in this study were interlinked. The purpose of this thesis, thus, explored a theoretical

framework relevant for the BRICS configuration, which can account for all the integral features of the grouping.

7.3. A reiteration of the boundaries set for this thesis

To ensure the feasibility of this thesis's study of the complexity of the intra-group dynamics within the BRICS configuration, boundaries were set. The primary one was concerned with distinguishing among the Brics from above, the middle, and below. These three distinctions originate from the work of Bond and Garcia (2016) who in reality considered diverging ideological perspectives held within each of the groups. For analytical purposes in this study, the Brics from above, the middle, and below have been treated as three distinct groups holding specific ideological outlooks within their respective social groups.

The context of the study has been concerned with the interactions among these social forces. Dividing the three groups into sub-categories would not have helped with addressing the overarching research question. Instead, restricting to the three groups has served to set parameters for the formulation of the hypotheses and make the research question manageable to substantiate with evidences during data collection. Distinguishing among these three groups alone has also been important to situate the key actors central to the study and allowed for reasonable hypothesis formulation with a theoretical soundness.

7.4. Summary of the overarching research question and hypotheses

This thesis has offered a post-positivist study of BRICS inspired by Coxian critical theory and reverted to Gramscian ideas about how leadership of a social group is achieved when the political society is actively involved in the development of civil society. This thesis addressed

whether the BRICS government leaders manufacture the common sense of representing the interests *of* the Global South. The overarching research question has been concerned with the prospects of the conversion of this common sense into good sense. The first hypothesis necessitated an understanding of how the formation of common sense by the Brics-from-above is manufactured through discourse. The second hypothesis was about identifying the challenges and resistances to this common sense raised by the Brics-from-below. Third, it was about evidencing the hypothetical claim of co-optation of subalterns' principles by the Brics-from-the-middle.

7.5. Recap of the research design

To substantiate the three hypotheses, document research, field observation, and interviews were employed to collect data. These helped to explore the multiple perspectives and resistances about the BRICS discourse. A combination of data sources was helpful to study the complexity of the BRICS configuration. Document research enabled an analysis of the discursive strategies deployed by the Brics-from-above and the Brics-from-the-middle to articulate a positive self-presentation of the governmental vision while actively othering the model of the Global North. Field observation and interviews provided insights on the Brics-from-below.

7.6. Summary of the study's findings

The primary findings pertinent to the overarching research question suggest that the Brics-from-above are actively involved in manufacturing the common sense of representing the Global South's interests. They constitute the intellectuals organically connected with the configuration's political society. The ruling classes' leadership and social power is disseminated through their textual documents, which reproduce and reinforce their positive

self-presentation through discourses. They justify and give authority to their intergovernmental claims and vision by deliberately othering the Global North/West and by using the Brics-from-the-middle to enrich their ideas. They present existing options about the world order as not working in the Global South's interests. Their ideas are presented as new and innovative in a narrative speaking in the Global South's interests.

Nevertheless, a closer analysis reveals that they echo similar principles advocated at other international platforms, thus, confirming Bond's (2016a, 2016b) argument that the BRICS are sub-imperials rather than being contesters of imperialism. For example, the BRICS discourses on practical cooperation, reforms in global economic governance, and international affairs, initiated to redress inequalities between the North and South, are in contradiction with their conception of working in the interests of developing and vulnerable economies. The BRICS configuration's alleged innovation in trade practices perpetuate existing bilateral and multilateral agreements. BRICS governments' continued requests for curbing trade barriers to create an equal playing field are an illusion used to protect their own self-interests because some of the members namely India and China are largely responsible for trade protectionism and are slow at terminating such measures.

Moreover, the NDB, which was initially promoted as a new model to transform global economic governance, complements the existing financial institutions of the IMF and World Bank rather than replace them. In regards to multilateral diplomacy, the BRICS governments fail to deliver their common vision precisely because of their diverging views on the management of international affairs. These findings suggest that the BRICS common sense manufactured by the Brics-from-above is fragmented and structured along contradictory lines. In a Gramscian context, such fragmentations indicate a lack of organic unity among the social

group involved in this fabrication process and, as such, cannot lead to a conversion of their common sense into good sense.

Owing to the contradictions in the BRICS common sense manufactured from above, it becomes easy for other social groups to resist and contest it. The formation of the Brics-from-below has occurred precisely because of the exacerbations they experienced for not being involved in the processes of the intergovernmental vision-making and the changes triggered by the grouping. The convergence remains largely of an economic and monetary nature with unconvincing output or positive impact and a lack of concrete outcomes in the people's interests. The continuing neglect of people's interests and disregard of the social dimension of their economic and governance affairs prompt the Brics-from-below to question the BRICS common sense of working in the Global South's interests. These resistances have manifested in the forms of unofficial civil society movements' gatherings and expressions of solidarity among the groups from below from the five countries and beyond. It further indicates that the Brics-from-above's common sense has not been developed alongside the everyday problem of the people. This disengagement with the bottom level leaves it exposed for their common sense to be resisted.

Meanwhile, in anticipation of the growing resistances, the government-approved platforms encompassing the Brics-from-the-middle have been created with the subtle intention of co-opting participants from other civil society groups. In other words, the Brics-from-the-middle serve other purposes than enriching the common sense from above with additional ideas to strengthen it and give the impression that this conception has been manufactured in the realm of civil society. They are also involved in containing the resistances and persuading the mass population that the Brics-from-above work in wider society's interests. Some of their strategies involve co-opting participants from the resistant movements into their middle-level platform

in order to prevent a conflicting common sense to the dominant one from diffusing into society. These strategies are engineered from the middle.

Furthermore, the findings from my field observation reveal that the Brics-from-below will struggle to transform their own common sense or resistance to the Brics-from-above's common sense into good sense because there is a lack of cohesion about the intent of their gatherings and shared solidarity. The annual rota in the BRICS presidency also means a shift in location of their civil society gatherings. These movements do not share a fixed venue and there are logistical issues about their organisation. The gatherings from below in either Brazil, India, or South Africa differ in dynamics whereas a Brics-from-below meeting has yet to occur in Russia or China. Their practical social experiences are denied collective mobilisation and political expression. It is not only about the difficulties they face for organising their social movements and the overt forms of government oppression. Instead, it is significantly about the inability of the Brics-from-below to disrupt the BRICS common sense and prove that the principles and intellectuals from their bottom level are being appropriated.

Ultimately, the Brics-from-the-middle give the impression of speaking on behalf of the Brics-from-below but articulate a discourse embedded in capitalism using principles appropriated from below while neglecting to mention the resistance nature of grassroots movements. While the Brics-from-below have been gaining in popularity in the last six years due to the work of Bond and Garcia (2016), no scholarship to date has proposed a way of incorporating a study of the group in their discussions of world politics or the global political economy. This results in BRICS discourses and practices in remaining theoretically misunderstood as a semi-peripheral configuration determined to rival the existing global order or bent on integrating the international system. It is not being considered that the discourses on inclusive growth and equitability among others might be a means of the BRICS governments to appeal to the

common sense of the mass population from the Global South in order to strengthen the conception of BRICS as a representative of this hemisphere's interests.

Ultimately, it is not only the Bric-from-below's opposition to the dominant common sense that does not convert into good sense. It is also the Bric-from-above's common sense, which equally does not transform into good sense because it has been fabricated along contradictory lines and disconnected from the everyday problems of the people. In this conflicting situation, the Bric-from-the-middle play an active intermediary role. They are affiliated with the Bric-from-above and feign working in the name of bottom-level groups. Therefore, in between the two fundamental social strata of the BRICS configuration, there is a middle-level group deserving attention as a category of analysis in studies of order restoration or power consolidation.

7.6.1. The interlink between the study's findings and Gramscian concepts

This study has given meaning to the data collected from document research, field observation, and interviews by relating them to Gramsci's concepts from which it has taken inspiration. Common sense, good sense, political society, civil society, passive revolution, and trasformismo are concepts, which have provided the basis to interpret the data collected. The conceptual framework offered by Gramsci about how leadership of a group can be achieved using persuasive strategies to consolidate their dominant discourse as common sense and be contested but not overturned because of pre-emptive tactics has provided direction to my research design. It also enabled me to provide coherence about how my empirical observations and data are linked with my conclusion that opposition from below to the BRICS common

sense of representing the Global South's interests also cannot convert into good sense because of subtle strategies being deployed from the middle.

A Gramscian-inspired conceptual framework also helped to link the data collected with the hypothesis claiming that the government-sanctioned platforms of the Brics-from-the-middle play an important role in devising *counter* passive revolution and *counter* trasformismo. The two concepts of passive revolution and trasformismo, borrowed from Gramsci's notes, refer respectively to subtle strategies initiated by those in ruling power and co-optation of intellectuals from below into agreeing to support the ruling cause rather than coercing them into acceptance. Although Gramsci referred to passive revolution and trasformismo as tactics from above, the strategies from the middle also ought to be accounted for. The Brics-from-the-middle are intellectuals organically linked with the Brics-from-above but, on a discourse level, they claim to be working in the interests of the mass population. Ultimately, they are a platform meant to echo and advocate the BRICS vision. When resistant voices from below challenge this vision, the Brics-from-the-middle imitate and continue strategies from above to sustain the top-level groups' common sense discourse.

On this basis, it is worth considering a dimension, which Gramscian scholarship have not considered to date. The groups in civil society, which are developed as a result of approval from above, are equally capable of imitating their tactics. Empirically, this can be evidenced by considering how the Brics-from-the-middle operate through their BTTC, BRICS Civil Society and other government-approved platforms. They present themselves as open and, on paper, invite free exchange of ideas.

However, in reality, the Brics-from-the-middle set a pre-determined agenda and limit the contributions of grassroots groups. While some of the representatives from below may be invited and be present at the meetings of the Brics-from-the-middle, their views, principles, and intellectuals can be absorbed into the middle level. Meanwhile, the true essence of the concerns from below are not conveyed in the intergovernmental declarations. Instead, these principles are misappropriated and intellectuals co-opted to enrich the discourses from above. For example, the new models of global economic governance, multilateralism in international affairs, or fairer trade practices are formulated using principles, which appeal to the Global South. A few of these articulated principles originating from below but which are widely employed in the governmental documents include: ‘greater voice’, ‘fair burden-sharing’, ‘shared perception’, ‘coherence’, ‘pragmatism’, ‘legitimacy’, ‘resistance to unilateralism’, ‘common but differentiated responsibility’, ‘openness’, and ‘rules-based’ among other appealing values for the Global South.

The Brics-from-the-middle give the impression that deliberations and negotiations with members of all social strata have occurred during the formulation of the BRICS vision. This thesis refers to such practices as subtle strategies from the middle as *counter* passive revolution and *counter* trasformismo. The word ‘counter’ is used mainly to demarcate the strategies as engineered from the middle level rather than initiated from above. The word ‘counter’ is employed to underline the contradictory nature of such practices to groups from below whom they claim to represent but whose principles they appropriate when they are unable to move forward in the negotiations and whose support they need to consolidate the BRICS agenda.

Thus, on the one hand, the word ‘counter’ is used as a verb to mean acting in opposition to the resistant groups. On the other hand, the prefix ‘counter’ is used to refer to the act of complementing the agenda from above. Whether the word is used as a verb or prefix, in this

thesis's context, it is employed to update the concepts of passive revolution and *trasformismo* and suggest that the Brics-from-the-middle are counterparts of the Brics-from-above acting to counter the opposition from below. Giving the impression that the Brics-from-the-middle are present to ensure that the governments incorporate a social dimension in their agenda is a way of compromising with resistant groups of the Brics-from-below, which have been growing and continuing to contest the imperial agenda of the BRICS governments.

The update of these two concepts is to contribute to the argument that while Gramscian theory permeates the field of IR, little attention has been paid to analyse his concepts and innovate in the way that they can be applied. Passive revolution and *trasformismo* are widely employed in IR and GPE literature. In the BRICS context, they are relevant concepts to account for the non-coercive strategies linked with discursive practices of the ones seeking to retain their leadership when this is being contested.

Another strength of dissecting Gramsci's concepts is to highlight that there are numerous ideas from his notes other than 'hegemony' or the struggle between leaders and led. Although these two class divisions are significant, they can also comprise sub-cultures. As evidenced in this study, the major actors within the BRICS configuration are the Brics-from-above and the Brics-from-below. In addition, there are the Brics-from-the-middle. The latter may not constitute a class of their own and are organically linked with the Brics-from-above given that these elite groups approve their development. The point is that the BRICS configuration is complex with different modes of organisation, which merit relevant concepts to explain their ways of operating. Gramsci's concepts can still be helpful to explore these societal dynamics if IR scholars overcome the Coxian tradition concerned with internationalising hegemony and global civil society. The BRICS convergence warrants a study of intra-state dynamics rather than

inter-state relationships, which can best be achieved by using a neo-Gramscian conceptual framework.

7.7. Contributions to knowledge

By adopting a Coxian critical theory framework to question the BRICS configuration's representation *of* the Global South and borrowing Gramscian concepts, this thesis engaged with all the social forces linked with the political society and civil society, which are actively involved in consolidating the BRICS common sense or resisting it. Thus, this thesis's contributions to knowledge in IR are fourfold:

- First, it differs from traditional approaches of studying the BRICS semi-peripheral convergence, which have been framed according to rational positivist frameworks, concerned with the material contributions of the five countries *in* the Global South to either compete with the Global North/West or integrate the existing international system.
- Second, stressing the necessity of a critical theory lens for a study of BRICS as a representation *of* the Global South strengthens scholarly efforts seeking to explore and question historical origins of semi-peripheral convergences.
- Third, identifying the limitations of Coxian critical theory and reverting to Gramscian concepts expands our understanding of the state-society interplay of semi-peripheries. It extends knowledge on BRICS in IR beyond their transnational capitalist classes and contributes new insights on the role of the Brics from above, middle, and below.
- Fourth, the update of two Gramscian concepts shifts the debates from discussions related to the relevance of Gramsci's ideas for contemporary contexts to discussions about how the use of his concepts can be reinvigorated by incorporating new elements.

This thesis differs from problem-solving approaches because it questions the origins of the political and cultural convergence of the BRICS countries. Its intent has not been to explore the transformative capabilities of BRICS to alter the existing world order. It acknowledges that critical IR scholarship dedicate little attention to semi-peripheries' potential as a contributor of change and shaper of world order. It identified the reasons why critical IR theory fails in this aspect. These are due to the inadequate analytical frameworks of Coxian critical theory, which suffer from biases prioritising transnational capitalist classes, at the expense of other social forces. An important contribution of this thesis is about overcoming this theoretical bias.

In addition, this thesis strengthens the argument that there is a distinction between studying BRICS as a subject *in* the Global South and being a representation *of* the Global South. While the former approach has been widely examined in IR, understanding that the link between BRICS and the Global South is not an inherent one but rather a fabricated conception has been one of this thesis's knowledge contributions. It builds on the existing research expanded by Cox upholding the importance of critical IR theory for questioning the origins of a given order to question the leadership established by the BRICS governments in formulating a vision on behalf of the Global South. It expands knowledge on the BRICS cooperative strategies by offering a discursive analysis of the intergovernmental declarations where a social ordering of ideas is evident. This sheds new light on the states' subtle strategies to enrich the governments' common sense and the extent it serves to contain resistant voices.

Borrowing insights from Gramsci's concepts of passive revolution and *trasformismo*, this research adds to the neo-Gramscian literature by arguing that an update of these two concepts would be ideal to overcome the obsolescence of Gramscian application in IR. Current research acknowledges that neo-Gramscian analyses have weakened Gramsci's ideas because they have

been wrongly applied in contemporary contexts. The result is that IR is inundated with Gramscian analysis and suffers from theoretical saturation.

Despite the fact that this thesis's approach is also neo-Gramscian in nature, it is different because it is about updating two of Gramsci's concepts to renew academic engagement with his ideas beyond a mere application to modern contexts. Rather, it is about how they can be expanded within reasonable limits to add extra dimensions to them instead of overstretching them beyond their initial purposes. Therefore, this thesis's additional original input is to contribute knowledge in the field of critical IR theory but it deviates from Cox's analytical frameworks in order to revert to the true essence of Gramsci's concepts such as to reinvigorate engagement with his ideas without overstretching these beyond their original conceptualisation. It shifts the debates from the relevance of his ideas for contemporary contexts to invite discussions about how the use of his concepts can be reinvigorated by adding new dimensions. This requires in-depth analyses of his concepts, which the current body of knowledge on Gramscianism lacks because the literature continue to focus on debates about concept-stretching and the blurring of meaning of his ideas.

7.8. Suggestions for further studies

This thesis has been primarily concerned with Cox's critical theory, that is, the Italian School of IR, which eventually led to the development of the Amsterdam School in GPE. There are a wide spectrum of theories under the umbrella expression of critical theory in IR. This study has not considered the relation of Coxian critical theory with other critical theories. For example, poststructuralism in IR theory could have been employed to deconstruct the BRICS intergovernmental language. However, this would have only helped with the first hypothetical claim concerned with the formation of the BRICS discourse as a representation *of* the Global

South. While poststructuralism could have been relevant to expose the views on BRICS, which have been widely accepted as the truth, a Gramscian theoretical framework has been more beneficial to account for the struggle among social forces for leadership. The latter allowed to situate the position of the actors with varying degrees of empowerment in the configuration and the role they play in the state-society dynamics. Future research work can address the relation between Coxian critical theory and other critical IR theories.

One source of weakness of this study is its neglect of the individual countries' distinct political contexts. Their respective governmental changes have not been explored. One of the reasons is because the aim of this thesis had been to study the BRICS intergovernmental convergence as a class of actors sharing a common vision for the Global South. Expanding the study beyond the transcultural focus on BRICS to encompass the diverging governmental settings and their influence of the respective Brics from the middle and below would have been beyond the word limit of this study. Nonetheless, further research is required to understand the impact of recent elections in the BRICS countries on the different groups of actors within the configuration.

Moreover, although this thesis considered similar political settings in Brazil, India, and South Africa, considerably more attention needs to be paid to the recent developments in each of their democratic environments. Brazil and India's respective country score on civil liberties has regressed during the recent years (Freedom House, 2019). According to the 2019 report of the Freedom House, in Brazil, 'activists working on land rights and environmental protection issues have [been facing] increasing harassment, threats, and violence'. In India, 'central and state governments have frequently suspended mobile internet services to curb collective action by citizens'. In South Africa, citizens are concerned about the government's misuse of changes brought to surveillance laws. All these three countries host a vibrant civil society. Yet, the decline in civil liberties during the recent years suggest deliberate governmental attempts to

deviate from the true essence of a democratic society. Further work is needed to fully understand the implications of the BRICS convergence on the democratic setup of Brazil, India, and South Africa and any impact their civil society may experience as a result of being exposed to Russia's 'managed democracy' and China's 'democratic dictatorship'.

Another argument to explore: could the three democracies in the BRICS be following a contemporary pattern of managed democracy under the guise of converging in the Global South's interest due to influence from the authoritarian regimes of Russia and China? On the one hand, the IBSA forum established by India, Brazil, and South Africa suggests a commitment to projecting a unified conglomeration of the developing world's three largest multi-ethnic democracies. On the other hand, the Indian democracy under President Modi and Brazilian democracy under President Bolsonaro are backsliding (Freedom House, 2019). The double standards of the three democracies in terms of the façade they wish to present as seeking more alliances with other democratic powers while continuing to allegedly build a common vision for the Global South alongside China and Russia is evident. What is needed is a comparative study of the intergovernmental declarations of IBSA and BRICS. The nature of civil society's involvement in both fora also warrants a comparison to understand the influence of 'managed' and 'unmanaged' democracies on official and unofficial civil society organisations, and thus on the formation of social forces from the middle and below in intergovernmental convergences.

For future research, this thesis contends that Coxian critical theory remains relevant and is more pertinent than ever for a study of the Global South in the discipline of IR. It has to overcome many criticisms associated with its Western origins and development but it serves a fundamental purpose in world politics, which is about questioning how social order comes about, how it is sustained, and how it can be contested. Without the theoretical essence of

critical theory, discussions of the Global South will continue to suffer from dissatisfying explanations, which recycle outdated analytical tools and confine the subject of study to fixed variables notably focusing on the state. Certainly, there is a need for more scholars from the Global South to get involved in the production of what would be assumed less artificial and surface-level treatment of the subject in IR. However, this pressure on scholars from the Global South should also not trap them in a conundrum pushing them to reinvent an entire new school of thinking.

Instead, there should be a creative engagement with existing paradigms even though these may be narrow in their analytical potential. This creative engagement involves adding new dimensions or considering what can be done differently. This is essential in IR because we seem to have reached theoretical saturation. Scholarships are not coming up with practical or more inspiring set of tools for analytical purposes especially in discussions related with semi-peripheries. There seems to be a continuing focus on acknowledging the relevance of theories, acceptance of their limitations, but no proposals or initiatives about how to overcome the margins of analysis. In addition to constructing critical theory as more practical, this thesis invites innovative engagement with Gramsci's concepts. His ideas are of contemporary relevance provided they are reasonably applied according to their true essence. The natural progression for overcoming saturation with his theory is a deeper engagement and analysis of his numerous concepts.

Overall, this thesis's contribution would be relevant to scholars interested in enhancing the knowledge production of the Global South and those studying how groups from below can be best examined in order to connect theory with practice. On a practical level, the insights from this thesis may directly contribute to discussions of the Brics-from-below and give greater strength to their solidarity and encourage perseverance of their people-to-people alliance.

Further research in IR requires more contributions and active engagement with participants from these platforms in order to transform theory into practice. An analytical approach grounded in experience, their social history, and participation from the groups being studied would lead to IR becoming inclusive, that is, incorporating actors of a non-West and non-statist nature in the discipline.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Consent for Participation in a Research Interview and Participation Information Form¹⁸

Name of Research Project: BRICS: Conversion of Common Sense into Good Sense

Name of Researcher: Adeelah Kodabux

	Please initial box
• I confirm that I have read and understand the Research Project Description (below) and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• I understand that my participation in this interview is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• I understand that I may withdraw consent for use of any information I provide during the interview at any time.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• I understand my interview will be recorded and transcribed but will be anonymous.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• I agree to take part in the study described below.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• I am aware that information I provide may be used in academic writing, but that all data will be anonymised.	<input type="checkbox"/>
• I understand that I may be directly quoted in the research. However, my name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant	Participant's Signature	Date
<u>Adeelah Kodabux</u> Researcher	<u></u> Researcher's Signature	<u></u> Date

1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher

Research Project Description

I am a PhD candidate registered with the School of Law at Middlesex University. My research is on the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) configuration. I am looking at what kinds of ideas and negotiations are involved in decision-making at BRICS government-to-government meetings, and the role and involvement of civil society and other groups in this process. I would like to identify what alternative strategies are discussed, asking how and why these strategies are being formulated, and what their impact is. I will gather information by interviewing the main coordinators or participants involved in the organisation of the BRICS People's Forum. I plan to reflect on the diverse viewpoints collected from those involved in the setting up of the People's Forum and the major participants who attend or contribute to this platform. I will ask questions about the participants' rationality for joining the collective effort for solidarity, what they intend to achieve from this participation, what are their views on the formal BRICS Civil Society Forum, and how does their involvement in the People's Forum inform the way their organisation operates. My ultimate goal is to gather evidence on the forms of engagement developed by civil society and other groups, what are the expected outcomes of their involvement, how they overcome challenges they may face, and how they intend to continue in the long run.

¹⁸ This is a copy of the consent form. The original one also contained the logo of Middlesex University. It has been formatted differently to fit as a concise document in this appendix.

Appendix B

Interview topic/question guide

Particulars of participant and details about organisation/movement

- Which organisation are you from?
- What is your role in your organisation?
- How long have you been involved with this organisation?
- How many people are involved in your organisation?
- What are the primary objectives of your organisation?
- What challenges does your organisation face?

On the BRICS

- What are your views on the BRICS?
- How do you feel about the statements made by the governments?
- In what ways do you consider the BRICS governments to be influential?
- How do the decisions made by the BRICS governments impact on your organisation?
- To what degree, do you agree with the decisions of the BRICS governments?
- How does your organisation respond to the ideas promoted by the BRICS governments?
- What do you consider to be the limitations of the BRICS?
- How do you view civil society groups to be represented in the BRICS configuration?

On the People's Forum

- How did your organisation hear about the BRICS People's Forum?
- How many times has your organisation participated in the forum?
- Why did you attend the forum?
- Please share with me your experience of the two-day event.
- Why does the People's Forum exist?
- What types of views were raised at the forum?
- How does the People's Forum raise awareness of the items discussed?
- What stood out to you as the defining message of the forum?
- How autonomous from external influence is the People's Forum?

Participant's engagement at the forum

- How does your organisation show its support to the forum?
- What ideas did you express at the forum?
- What are the changes that you have developed at the level of your organisation as a result of your participation at the People's Forum?
- What are your views of other participants who attended?
- What are your expectations of other participants involved in the People's Forum?
- To what extent, do you agree with the views or comments made by other participants?
- What other organisations would you have liked to see present at the forum?
- Why do you think they did not attend?
- What particular themes could have been discussed at the forum but were not covered?

Achievements/Challenges faced by the People's Forum

- What do you consider to be the accomplishments of the People's Forum?

- In what ways can the People's Forum have an impact?
- Since the People's Forum is an informal gathering, how legitimate is the final
- How do you think the BRICS governments view the existence of the People's Forum?
- What can the People's Forum do better?
- What is being done by any of the BRICS government to address the issues raised by the People's Forum?
- What are the challenges in the way of the People's Forum?
- What strategies can be adopted to strengthen the collective solidarity?

On the formal BRICS Civil Society Forum, also known as Civic BRICS

- What are your views about the creation of a formal civil society forum within the BRICS (they call it Civic BRICS)?
- How do you expect Civic BRICS to operate?
- Why do you think it has been created?
- Have you attended, participated, or contributed to the formal Civic BRICS?
 - If yes, how different is it from the informal association the People's Forum?
 - If no, why do you not raise your organisation's views at the formal forum?
 - If no, do you feel that attending the official forum may be a possibility to explore in the future?
- What are your views about other groups who attend the formal Civic BRICS forum?
- To what extent are the statements from Civic BRICS representative of civil society?

On the future of the People's Forum

- In the future, how do you think the People's Forum will look like?
- What concrete outcomes do you hope the People's Forum to accomplish in the future?
- How can the People's Forum reach other groups and raise awareness?
- The next summit will take place in China with suggestions proposing Hong Kong as a logical site for the next People's Forum. What are your views on this? Will you participate again?
- Are there any other comments or views on the BRICS or your organisation that you would like to share with me?

Appendix C

Table 5.1 Number of statement points and open codes per BRICS annual intergovernmental declaration from 2009 to 2018

Year	Location	Declaration statement	Statement points	Number of open codes
16 June 2009	Yekaterinburg, Russia	Joint Statement of the BRIC Countries' Leaders	16	72
15 April 2010	Brasília, Brazil	Second BRIC Summit of Heads of State and Government: Joint Statement	31	55
14 April 2011	Sanya, China	Third BRICS Summit: Sanya Declaration <i>Broad Vision, Shared Prosperity</i>	32	11
29 March 2012	New Delhi, India	Fourth BRICS Summit: Delhi Declaration <i>BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Security and Prosperity</i>	50	19
27 March 2013	Durban, South Africa	Fifth BRICS Summit <i>BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialisation</i>	47	8
16 July 2014	Fortaleza, Brazil	6 th BRICS Summit: Fortaleza Declaration <i>Inclusive Growth: Sustainable Solutions</i>	72	8
9 July 2015	Ufa, Russia	VII BRICS Summit: Ufa Declaration <i>BRICS Partnership – a Powerful Factor of Global Development</i>	77	14
16 October 2016	Goa, India	8 th BRICS Summit <i>Building Responsive, Inclusive and Collective Solutions</i>	110	11
5 September 2017	Xiamen, China	9 th BRICS Summit: BRICS Leaders Declaration <i>BRICS: Stronger Partnership for a Brighter Future</i>	71	3
27 July 2018	Johannesburg, South Africa	10 th BRICS Summit: Johannesburg Declaration <i>BRICS in Africa: Collaboration for Inclusive Growth and Shared Prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution</i>	102	6

Appendix D

Table 5.1.1.1a Examples of identification of open codes from the BRICS declarations¹⁹

	Open code titles
Declaration extract 16 June 2009	
3. We are <u>committed</u> to advance the <u>reform of international financial institutions</u> , so as to reflect changes in the global economy. The <u>emerging and developing economies</u> must have <u>greater voice</u> and <u>representation</u> in international financial institutions, whose heads and executives should be appointed through an <u>open, transparent, and merit-based</u> selection process. We also believe that there is a strong need for a <u>stable, predictable</u> and more <u>diversified</u> international monetary system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment • Reform of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) • Emerging and developing economies • Greater voice • Openness • Representative • Transparency • Meritocracy • Diversification • Stability • Predictability
Declaration extract 15 April 2010	
3. We <u>stress</u> the central role played by the <u>G-20</u> in combating the <u>crisis</u> through unprecedented levels of <u>coordinated action</u> . We welcome the fact that the G-20 was confirmed as the premier forum for international <u>economic coordination and cooperation</u> of all its member states. Compared to previous arrangements, the G-20 is broader, more <u>inclusive, diverse, representative</u> and <u>effective</u> . We call upon all its member states to undertake further efforts to <u>implement</u> jointly the decisions adopted at the three G-20 Summits. We <u>advocate</u> the need for the G-20 to be <u>proactive</u> and formulate a <u>coherent</u> strategy for the post-crisis period. We stand ready to make a <u>joint contribution</u> to this effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared perception • G20 • Financial crisis • International coordination • Economic cooperation • Agreements • Inclusiveness • Diversity • Representative • Effective • Implementation • Advocacy • Proactive • Coherence • Joint contribution
Declaration extract 14 April 2011	
5. We <u>affirm</u> that the BRICS and other <u>emerging countries</u> have played an important role in <u>contributing to world peace, security and stability</u> , boosting global <u>economic growth</u> , enhancing <u>multilateralism</u> and promoting greater <u>democracy in international relations</u> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared perception • Emerging countries • Contribution • Peace • Security • Stability • Economic growth

¹⁹ The underlines are my edits. For the purpose of fitting enough information in the appendix, this table only contains a few extracts from the intergovernmental declarations from 2009 to 2018.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multilateralism • Democracy • International relations
Declaration extract 29 March 2012	
<p>4. We envision a future marked by global peace, economic and social progress and enlightened scientific temper. We stand ready to work with others, developed and developing countries together, on the basis of universally recognized norms of international law and multilateral decision making, to deal with the challenges and the opportunities before the world today. Strengthened representation of emerging and developing countries in the institutions of global governance will enhance their effectiveness in achieving this objective.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared perception • Peace • Economic and social progress • Cooperation (BRICS + Others) • Developed and developing countries • Universality • Rule of international law • Multilateralism • Decision-making • Global challenges and threats • Representative • Emerging and developing countries • Global governance • Effectiveness
Declaration extract 27 March 2013	
<p>3. We are open to increasing our engagement and cooperation with non-BRICS countries, in particular Emerging Market and Developing Countries (EMDCs), and relevant international and regional organisations, as envisioned in the Sanya Declaration. We will hold a Retreat together with African leaders after this Summit, under the theme, “Unlocking Africa’s potential: BRICS and Africa Cooperation on Infrastructure”. The Retreat is an opportunity for BRICS and African leaders to discuss how to strengthen cooperation between the BRICS countries and the African Continent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness • Engagement • Cooperation (BRICS + Others) • Emerging and developing countries • International organisations • Regional organisations • Cooperation (BRICS + Africa) • Infrastructure
Declaration extract 16 July 2014	
<p>3. We renew our openness to increasing engagement with other countries, particularly developing countries and emerging market economies, as well as with international and regional organizations, with a view to fostering cooperation and solidarity in our relations with all nations and peoples. To that effect, we will hold a joint session with the leaders of the South American nations, under the theme of the Sixth BRICS Summit, with a view to furthering cooperation between BRICS and South America. We reaffirm our support for the South American integration processes, and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness • Engagement • Cooperation (BRICS + Others) • Emerging and developing countries • International organisations • Regional organisations • Cooperation • Solidarity • People • Integration • Support • Multilateralism

<p>recognize in particular the importance of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in promoting <u>peace</u> and <u>democracy</u> in the region, and in achieving <u>sustainable development</u> and <u>poverty eradication</u>. We believe that strengthened <u>dialogue</u> among BRICS and South American countries can play an active role in enhancing <u>multilateralism</u> and international cooperation, for the promotion of peace, <u>security</u>, <u>economic and social progress</u> and sustainable development in an <u>interdependent</u> and increasingly complex, <u>globalizing world</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation (BRICS + South America) • Integration • Peace • Democracy • Sustainable development • Poverty eradication • Dialogue • Multilateralism • Economic and social progress • Interdependence • Globalisation
<p>Declaration extract 9 July 2015</p>	
<p>3. With the aim of consolidating our <u>engagement</u> with other countries, particularly developing countries and emerging market economies, as well as with international and regional institutions, we will hold a meeting with the Heads of States and Governments of the countries of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as the Heads of observer States of the SCO. Participants in this meeting share various issues of mutual interest. This lays a solid foundation for launching a broader mutually beneficial dialogue. All of us remain committed to upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and international law and we strive to achieve sustainable economic growth through international cooperation and an enhanced use of regional integration mechanisms in order to improve the welfare and prosperity of our people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement • Cooperation (BRICS + Others) • Emerging and developing countries • International organisations • Regional organisations • Mutual interest • Mutual benefits • Dialogue • Principles • UN • Rule of international law • Sustainable development • Economic growth • Welfare • Prosperity • People
<p>Declaration extract 16 October 2016</p>	
<p>3. We <u>agree</u> that BRICS countries represent an <u>influential voice</u> on the global stage through <u>our tangible cooperation</u>, which delivers <u>direct benefits</u> to our <u>people</u>. In this context, we note with satisfaction the operationalisation of the <u>New Development Bank (NDB)</u> and of the <u>Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)</u>, which contributes greatly to the <u>global economy</u> and the strengthening of the <u>international financial architecture</u>. We welcome the report presented by NDB President on the work of the Bank during the first year of its operations. We are pleased to note the progress in operationalising the Africa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared perception • Influence • Voice • Tangible cooperation • Direct benefits • People • NDB • CRA • Global economy • IFIs • Support

<p>Regional Centre (ARC) of the NDB and pledge our full support in this regard. We look forward to developing new BRICS initiatives in a wider range of areas in the years to come.</p>	
<p>Declaration extract 5 September 2017</p>	
<p>3. Our cooperation since 2006 has fostered the <u>BRICS spirit</u> featuring <u>mutual respect</u> and <u>understanding</u>, <u>equality</u>, <u>solidarity</u>, <u>openness</u>, <u>inclusiveness</u> and <u>mutually beneficial cooperation</u>, which is our valuable asset and an inexhaustible source of strength for BRICS cooperation. We have shown respect for the development paths of our respective choices, and rendered understanding and <u>support</u> to each other's interests. We have upheld equality and solidarity. We have also embraced openness and inclusiveness, <u>dedicated</u> to forging an open world economy. We have furthered our cooperation with <u>emerging markets and developing countries</u> (EMDCs). We have worked together for <u>mutually beneficial outcomes</u> and <u>common development</u>, <u>constantly deepening BRICS practical cooperation</u> which benefits the <u>world at large</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRICS spirit • Respect • Understanding • Equality • Solidarity • Openness • Inclusiveness • Mutual benefits • Support • Dedication • Emerging and developing countries • Mutually beneficial outcomes • Commonality • Practical cooperation
<p>Declaration extract 27 July 2018</p>	
<p>5. <u>We reaffirm</u> our <u>commitment</u> to the <u>principles</u> of <u>mutual respect</u>, <u>sovereign equality</u>, <u>democracy</u>, <u>inclusiveness</u> and strengthened <u>collaboration</u>. As we build upon the successive BRICS Summits, we further commit ourselves to enhancing our strategic <u>partnership</u> for the benefit of our <u>people</u> through the promotion of <u>peace</u>, a <u>fairer international order</u>, <u>sustainable development</u> and <u>inclusive growth</u>, and to strengthening the three-pillar-driven cooperation in the areas of <u>economy</u>, <u>peace</u> and <u>security</u> and <u>people-to-people exchanges</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared perception • Commitment • Principles • Respect • Sovereignty • Equality • Democracy • Inclusiveness • Collaboration • Partnership • People • Peace • Fairness • Sustainable development • Economy • Security

Appendix E

Table 5.1.1.1b The four steps undertaken to analyse the discourse of the BRICS Heads of State's annual declaration from 2009 to 2018

Step 4					Theme binding the four main themes
Step 3 Central Theme	Practical cooperation	Global economic governance	International affairs	People-to-people and cultural exchanges	Principles
Step 2 Abstract proposal	A diversity of world problems cannot be addressed unilaterally. Cooperation among BRICS countries and partnership with other countries in diverse fields has the potential to reach concrete outcomes in international society's interests.	The existing global financial architecture lacks transparency and is discriminatory for emerging and developing countries. The global economic governance structures need to be reformed to reflect inclusiveness and representativeness in the world order.	Global threats and challenges exist in different forms and jeopardise international security. Poor and developing communities are particularly susceptible. Existing institutions should be reformed to address conflicts, threats and reach consensus-based decisions through a multilateral approach.	Cultural diversity is the foundation of BRICS cooperation. Sustainability of common vision and intra-BRICS projects is achieved through exchanges and cooperation in various civil society areas (media, think tanks, youth, parliament, local governments, trade unions, etc.).	All of the previous themes are formulated on the basis of shared 'principles of openness, solidarity and mutual assistance' amongst other ideals and values.
Step 1 Open coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial crisis • G20 • UN • Emerging + developing countries • Diversification of international monetary system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G20 • Financial crisis • Emerging + developing countries • Reform of IFIs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UN • Emerging + developing countries • Reform of IFIs • Democratic process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging + developing countries • Poorest countries • MDGs • Dialogue • Science • Education • Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment • Greater voice • Representative • Transparency • Meritocracy • Diversification • Principles • Mutual assistance

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic process • Implementation process • International trade • Investment • WTO • Doha Development Agenda • MDGs • Commitment • Sustainable development • Environment • Economic development • Dialogue • Socio-economic development • Agriculture • Macroeconomic cooperation • Technical cooperation • Resistance against unilateralism • Poverty • Banking systems • Energy • Industrialisation • Green economy • Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater representation in IFIs • Diversification of international monetary system • Implementation process • International trade • International trade • WTO • Economic development • Macroeconomic policies • Infrastructure • Risk management • Global governance • Transformations • Economic recovery • Emerging economies • Fiscal policies • Currencies • IMF • Predictability • Stability • World Bank • Legitimacy • Voting power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International community • Poorest countries • MDGs • Developing countries • Sustainable development • Environment • Sovereignty • Territorial integrity • Energy • Transit states • Climate change • Socio-economic development • Peaceful resolution • Terrorism • Conflicts • Reform of the UN • Transformations • UN Voting power • Aid • Integration • Health • Piracy • Drug • Corruption • Security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technologies • Development • Support • Diversity • Inclusiveness • Representativeness • Solidarity • Aid • Vulnerable groups • Alliance of civilisations • Knowledge • Statistics • Exchange • Humanitarian crisis • Synergies • People • Communication • Human rights • Gender • Inequality • SDGs • BTTC • BRICS University • Education • Demography • Culture • Awareness • Sports • Academia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic process • Legality • Compatibility • Regulation • Supervision • Fair burden-sharing • Sovereignty • Agreement • Multilateralism • Plurilateralism • Partnership • Sustainability • Coordination • Dialogue • Common but differentiated responsibility • Combined measured • Fulfilment • Support • Democracy • Multipolarity • Rule of international law • Equality • Mutual respect • Collective decision making • Diplomacy • Common vision
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urbanisation • Companies • BTTC • SDGs • Piracy • Drug • Corruption • Crime • EU • Migration • Diseases • Academia • Insurance • Customs • Telecommunications • Disaster management • Budgeting • Railways • Tourism • Sports • Local Governments cooperation Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to unilateralism • Non discriminatory • Protection • Banking system • Rules • Green economy • Accountability • Sanctions • Avoidance of double standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BRICS intelligence forum • Crime • EU • Migration • Diseases • Parliament • North-South 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural diversity • Parliamentary Forum • Fauna and Flora • Youth forum • BRICS Trade Unions • BRICS Film Festival • Media forum • Local governments cooperation Forum • BRICS forum of political parties • BRICS Civil Society Organisations • BRICS Parliamentary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared perception • Equitable • Inclusiveness • Integrity • Diversity • Effective • Proactive • Coherence • Harmony • Pragmatism • Incremental • Predictability • Stability • Legitimacy • Resistance to unilateralism • Non discriminatory • Innovation • Adaptation • Rule-based • Evenness • Openness • Meritocracy • Consensus-based • Flexibility • Accessibility • Universality • Justice • Accountability • Complementarity
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Appendix F

Table 5.1.3a List of BRICS-related ministerial meetings, 2008–18

Annual Head of States' Summits	Agriculture Ministers	Culture Ministers	Disaster Management Ministers	Education Ministers	Energy Ministers	Environment Ministers	Foreign Ministers	Finance Ministers	Health Ministers	Industry Ministers	Labour and Employment Ministers	Migration Authorities	Science, Technology & Innovation Ministers	Trade Ministers
							2008 Yekaterinburg, New York	2008 São Paulo						
2009 Russia							2009 New York	2009 Horsham, London						
2010 Brazil	2010 Moscow						2010 New York	2010 Washington						2010 Rio de Janeiro
2011 China	2011 Chengdu						2011 New York	2011 Washington	2011 Beijing					2011 Geneva
2012 India							2012 New York	2012 Mexico, Washington & Tokyo	2012 Geneva					2012 Puerto Vallarta, New Delhi
2013 South Africa	2013 Pretoria			2013 Paris			2013 New York	2013 Washington	2013 Cape Town, Geneva, New Delhi					2013 Fortaleza, Durban
2014 Brazil							2014 New York	2014 Washington, Fortaleza, Cairns	2014 Brasilia, Geneva,				2014 Cape Town	

								(Australia)						
2015 Russia	2015 Brasilia, Moscow	2015 Moscow		2015 Brasilia, Moscow	2015 Moscow	2015 Moscow	2015 New York	2015 Washington	2015 Moscow, Geneva	2015 Moscow		2015 Sochi	2015 Moscow, Brasilia	2015 Nairobi, Moscow
2016 India	2016 New Delhi		2016 Udaipur	2016 New Delhi		2016 Goa	2016 New York	2016 Washington	2016 New Delhi, Geneva		2016 New Delhi, Geneva			2016 New Delhi
2017 China							2017 New York	2017 Baden-Baden	2018 Tianjin	2017 Hangzhou				2017 Shanghai
2018 South Africa	2018 Mpumalanga	2018 Durban	2018 East London	2018 Cape Town	2018 Gauteng	2018 Durban	2018 New York, Pretoria	2018 Washington	2018 Durban	2018 Gauteng			2018 Durban	2018 Magaliesburg

Source: Compilation from the BRICS official documents (BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18).

Appendix G

Table 5.1.4b Ideas of the Brics-from-the-middle serving to enrich the common sense manufactured by the Brics-from-above

Paraphrased extracts from the BRICS Academic Forum 2014	Extracts from the BRICS Governmental Declaration 2014
Brics-from-the-middle	Brics-from-above
<p>Huaqiao (2014, p. 24) concluded that future BRICS-related visits should enhance discussions of economic and trade.</p>	<p>We are committed to raise our economic cooperation to a qualitatively new level. To achieve this, we emphasize the importance of establishing a road map for intra-BRICS economic cooperation. In this regard, we welcome the proposals for a “BRICS Economic Cooperation Strategy” and a “Framework of BRICS Closer Economic Partnership”, which lay down steps to promote intra-BRICS economic, trade and investment cooperation. Based on the documents tabled and informed by the input of the BRICS Think Tanks Council (BTTC), we instruct our Sherpas to advance discussions with a view to submit their proposal for endorsement by the next BRICS Summit.</p>
<p>Roma (2014) underlined the importance of achieving the MDGs and advancing talks on SDGs. He addressed the issue of biodiversity and recommended BRICS actions.</p>	<p>51. We reiterate our commitment to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Protocols, with special attention to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets. We recognize the challenge posed by the agreed targets on conservation of biodiversity.</p> <p>55. We reiterate our commitment to the UN General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to working together to achieve a consensual and ambitious proposal on SDGs.</p>
<p>Josie (2014) addressed the integration of SDGs and MDGs from a BRICS approach in order to pursue sustainability in projects of global development. She suggested public infrastructure funding as integral in this process.</p>	<p>55. ... We emphasize the importance of the work by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing and highlight the need for an effective sustainable development financing strategy to facilitate the mobilization of resources in achieving sustainable development objectives and supporting developing countries in the implementation efforts, with ODA as a major source of financing. We support the creation of a</p>

	<p>facilitation mechanism for the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies and call for the establishment of a working group within the UN on this proposal, taking into account the Rio+20 outcome document and the Secretary General's reports on the issue. In this regard, we reaffirm that the outcome of each of these processes can contribute to the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals.</p>
<p>Maharajh (2014) proposed that investing in science, technology and innovation would lead the BRICS configuration to perform better in the global political economy.</p>	<p>67. We welcome the holding of the first Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Science, Technology and Innovation and the Cape Town Declaration, which is aimed at: (i) strengthening cooperation in science, technology and innovation; (ii) addressing common global and regional socio-economic challenges utilizing shared experiences and complementarities; (iii) co-generating new knowledge and innovative products, services and processes utilizing appropriate funding and investment instruments; and (iv) promoting, where appropriate, joint BRICS partnerships with other strategic actors in the developing world. We instruct the BRICS Ministers of Science and Technology to sign at their next meeting the Memorandum of Understanding on Science, Technology and Innovation, which provides a strategic framework for cooperation in this field.</p>
<p>Moore (2014, p. 133) advocated a 'pluralist international society [where] BRICS embody the aspiration for an international system predicated on the rule of law, through their own guidelines for interaction, as they seek to manage diversity within the grouping, while still seeking cooperation on key international issues'. As such, they should initiate measures to address terrorism and enhance cyber security.</p>	<p>11. We reiterate our strong condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and stress that there can be no justification, whatsoever, for any acts of terrorism. We believe that the United Nations has a central role in coordinating the international action against terrorism within the framework of the UN Charter and in accordance with principles and norms of the international law. In this context, we urge early conclusion of negotiations in the UN General Assembly of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and its adoption by all Member States. We are determined to strengthen our cooperation in countering this global threat. We express our commitment to cooperate for strengthening international information security. We will pay special attention to combat cybercrime.</p>

<p>On research collaboration between BRICS member states, Shah (2014) encouraged the innovative ideas proposed by the Academic Forum as the way forward for enhancing the grouping's facilitation of shared needs through 'participative, planning, sanitation, mobility and ICT-based applications'</p>	<p>49. We believe that ICTs should provide instruments to foster sustainable economic progress and social inclusion, working together with the ICT industry, civil society and academia in order to realize the ICT-related potential opportunities and benefits for all. We agree that particular attention should be given to young people and to small and medium-sized enterprises, with a view to promoting international exchange and cooperation, as well as to fostering innovation, ICT research and development.</p>
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Source: Huaqiao, 2014; Roma, 2014; Josie, 2014; Maharajh, 2014; Moore, 2014; Shah, 2014; BRICS Information Centre, 2014.

Appendix H

Table 5.2.1a Extracts from the BRICS ministerial and intergovernmental declarations focusing on the interests of non-core countries

2008	We urge all countries and the international financial institutions to take necessary measures to minimize the negative impacts of the crisis on <u>low-income countries</u> .
2009	6. The <u>poorest countries</u> have been hit hardest by the financial crisis ... Developed countries should fulfil their commitment of 0.7% of Gross National Income for the Official Development Assistance and make further efforts in increasing assistance, debt relief, market access and technology transfer for <u>developing countries</u> .
2010	5. We believe the deepened and broadened dialogue and cooperation of the BRIC countries is conducive not only to serving common interests of <u>emerging market economies and developing countries</u> , but also to building a harmonious world of lasting peace and common prosperity. 8. We are convinced that <u>emerging market economies and developing countries</u> have the potential to play an even larger and active role as engines of economic growth and prosperity, while at the same time commit to work together with other countries towards reducing imbalances in global economic development and fostering social inclusion. 11. ...There is a special need to increase participation of <u>developing countries</u> . The international community must deliver a result worthy of the expectations we all share for these institutions within the agreed timeframe or run the risk of seeing them fade into obsolescence.
2011a	7. ...The international community should work together to increase production capacity, strengthen producer-consumer dialogue to balance supply and demand, and increase support to the <u>developing countries</u> in terms of funding and technologies. The regulation of the derivatives market for commodities should be accordingly strengthened to prevent activities capable of destabilizing markets.
2012a	8. We recognize the importance of the global financial architecture in maintaining the stability and integrity of the global monetary and financial system. We therefore call for a more representative international financial architecture, with an increase in the voice and representation of <u>developing countries</u> and the establishment and improvement of a just international monetary system that can serve the interests of all countries and support the development of <u>emerging and developing economies</u> . Moreover, these economies having experienced broad-based growth are now significant contributors to global recovery. 9. We reiterate our support for measures to protect the voice and representation of the IMF's <u>poorest members</u> .
2013	9. <u>Developing countries</u> face challenges of infrastructure development due to insufficient long-term financing and foreign direct investment, especially investment in capital stock. This constrains global aggregate demand. BRICS

	<p>cooperation towards more productive use of global financial resources can make a positive contribution to addressing this problem.</p> <p>15. We look forward to significant and meaningful deliverables that are balanced and address key development concerns of the <u>poorest and most vulnerable WTO members</u>, at the ninth Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Bali.</p> <p>16. We consider that the next Director-General of the WTO should be a representative of a developing country</p>
2014	<p>8. ...<u>Emerging market economies and developing countries</u> (EMDCs) continue to contribute significantly to global growth and will do so in the years to come. Even as the global economy strengthens, monetary policy settings in some advanced economies may bring renewed stress and volatility to financial markets and changes in monetary stance need to be carefully calibrated and clearly communicated in order to minimize negative spillovers</p>
2015	<p>11. The global recovery continues, although growth remains fragile, with considerable divergences across countries and regions. In this context, <u>emerging markets and developing countries</u> (EMDCs) continue to be major drivers of global growth.</p>
2016	<p>30. ...to ensure that the increased voice of the dynamic <u>emerging and developing economies</u> reflects their relative contributions to the world economy, while protecting the voices of <u>least developed countries</u> (LDCs), <u>poor countries and regions</u>.</p> <p>32. ... We call for the advanced European economies to meet their commitment to cede two chairs on the Executive Board of the IMF. The reform of the IMF should strengthen the voice and representation of the <u>poorest members of the IMF</u>, including <u>Sub-Saharan Africa</u>.</p> <p>42. We will continue to work closely with all G20 members to strengthen macroeconomic cooperation, promote innovation, as well as robust and sustainable trade and investment to propel global growth, improve global economic governance, enhance the role of <u>developing countries</u>, strengthen international financial architecture, support for industrialisation in Africa and <u>least developed countries</u> and enhance cooperation on energy access and efficiency. We stress the need for enhanced international cooperation to address illicit cross-border financial flows, tax evasion and trade mis-invoicing.</p>
2017	<p>29. We resolve to foster a global economic governance architecture that is more effective and reflective of current global economic landscape, increasing the voice and representation of <u>emerging markets and developing economies</u>.</p>
2018	<p>68. We advocate for a strong Global Financial Safety Net with an adequately resourced, quota-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) at its centre. To this effect, we reaffirm our commitment to conclude the IMF's 15th General Review of Quotas, including a new quota formula while protecting the voice of the <u>poorest countries</u> by the 2019 Spring Meetings and no later than the 2019 Annual Meetings.</p>

	Governance reform of the IMF should strengthen the voice and representation of the <u>poorest members</u> of the IMF, including <u>Sub-Saharan Africa</u> .
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Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18.

Appendix I

Table 5.2.1b Extracts from BRICS declarations related to the WTO

2009	5. We recognise the important role played by international trade and foreign direct investments in the world economic recovery. We call upon all parties to work together to improve the international trade and investment environment. We urge the international community to keep the multilateral trading system stable, curb trade protectionism, and push for comprehensive and balanced results of the WTO's Doha Development Agenda.
2010	14. We stress the importance of the multilateral trading system, embodied in the World Trade Organization, for providing an open, stable, equitable and non discriminatory environment for international trade. In this connection, we commit ourselves and urge all states to resist all forms of trade protectionism and fight disguised restrictions on trade. We concur in the need for a comprehensive and balanced outcome of the Doha Round of multilateral trade talks, in a manner that fulfils its mandate as a "development round", based on the progress already made, including with regard to modalities. We take note and strongly support Russia's bid for accession to the WTO.
2011a	26. We have agreed to continue further expanding and deepening economic, trade and investment cooperation among our countries. We encourage all countries to refrain from resorting to protectionist measures. We welcome the outcomes of the meeting of BRICS Trade Ministers held in Sanya on 13 April 2011. Brazil, China, India and South Africa remain committed and call upon other members to support a strong, open, rule-based multilateral trading system embodied in the World Trade Organization and a successful, comprehensive and balanced conclusion of the Doha Development Round, built on the progress already made and consistent with its development mandate. Brazil, India, China and South Africa extend full support to an early accession of Russia to the World Trade Organization.
2012a	16. We will continue our efforts for the successful conclusion of the Doha Round, based on the progress made and in keeping with its mandate. Towards this end, we will explore outcomes in specific areas where progress is possible while preserving the centrality of development and within the overall framework of the single undertaking. We do not support plurilateral initiatives that go against the fundamental principles of transparency, inclusiveness and multilateralism. We believe that such initiatives not only distract members from striving for a collective outcome but also fail to address the development deficit inherited from previous negotiating rounds. Once the ratification process is completed, Russia intends to participate in an active and constructive manner for a balanced outcome of the Doha Round that will help strengthen and develop the multilateral trade system.
2013	15. We reaffirm our support for an open, transparent and rules-based multilateral trading system. We will continue in our efforts for the successful conclusion of the Doha Round, based on the progress made and in keeping with its mandate, while upholding the principles of transparency, inclusiveness and multilateralism. We are committed to ensure that new proposals and approaches to the Doha Round negotiations will reinforce the core principles and the developmental mandate of the Doha Round. We look forward to significant and meaningful deliverables that are balanced and address key development concerns of the poorest and most vulnerable WTO members, at the ninth Ministerial Conference of the WTO in Bali.

2014	<p>21. We believe all countries should enjoy due rights, equal opportunities and fair participation in global economic, financial and trade affairs, recognizing that countries have different capacities and are at different levels of development. We strive for an open world economy with efficient allocation of resources, free flow of goods, and fair and orderly competition to the benefit of all. In reaffirming our support for an open, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent and rule-based multilateral trading system, we will continue our efforts towards the successful conclusion of the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO), following the positive results of the Ninth Ministerial Conference (MC9), held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2013. ...We call upon international partners to provide support to the poorest, most vulnerable WTO members to enable them to implement this Agreement, which should support their development objectives. We strongly support the WTO dispute settlement system as a cornerstone of the security and predictability of the multilateral trading system and we will enhance our ongoing dialogue on substantive and practical matters relating to it, including in the ongoing negotiations on WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding reform. We recognize the importance of Regional Trade Agreements, which should complement the multilateral trading system, and of keeping them open, inclusive and transparent, as well as refraining from introducing exclusive and discriminatory clauses and standards.</p>
2016	<p>35. We emphasise the importance of implementing the decisions taken at the Bali and Nairobi Ministerial Conferences. We stress the need to advance negotiations on the remaining Doha Development Agenda (DDA) issues as a matter of priority. We call on all WTO members to work together to ensure a strong development oriented outcome for MC11 and beyond.</p>
2017	<p>32. We emphasize the importance of an open and inclusive world economy enabling all countries and peoples to share in the benefits of globalization. We remain firmly committed to a rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading system as embodied in the WTO. We reaffirm our commitments to ensure full implementation and enforcement of existing WTO rules and are determined to work together to further strengthen the WTO. We call for the acceleration of the implementation of the Bali and Nairobi MCM outcomes and for the WTO ministerial conference to be held this year in Argentina to produce positive outcomes. We will continue to firmly oppose protectionism. We recommit to our existing pledge for both standstill and rollback of protectionist measures and we call upon other countries to join us in that commitment.</p>
2018	<p>62. We reaffirm the centrality of the rules-based, transparent, non-discriminatory, open and inclusive multilateral trading system, as embodied in the World Trade Organisation (WTO), that promotes a predictable trade environment and the centrality of the WTO, and recognise the importance of the development dimension, and will make all efforts to strengthen the multilateral trading system.</p> <p>63. We recognise that the multilateral trading system is facing unprecedented challenges. We underscore the importance of an open world economy, enabling all countries and peoples to share the benefits of globalisation, which should be inclusive and support sustainable development and prosperity of all countries. We call on all WTO members to abide by WTO rules and honour their commitments in the multilateral trading system.</p> <p>64. We recall that the WTO Dispute Settlement System is a cornerstone of the multilateral trading system and is designed to enhance security and predictability in international trade. We note with concern the impasse in the selection process for</p>

<p>new Appellate Body Members that can paralyse the dispute settlement system and undermine the rights and obligations of all Members. We, therefore, urge all Members to engage constructively to address this challenge as a matter of priority.</p> <p>65. We acknowledge the need to upkeep WTO's negotiating function. We, therefore, agree to constructively engage in further developing the current legal framework of the multilateral trading system within the WTO, taking into consideration the concerns and interests of all WTO members, including in particular the developing members.</p>

Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18.

Appendix J

Table 5.2.1c Extracts from BRICS declarations related to reforms of the IMF, World Bank, and WTO

2009	<p>3. We are committed to advance the reform of international financial institutions, so as to reflect changes in the global economy.</p> <p>4. We are convinced that a reformed financial and economic architecture should be based, inter alia, on the following principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) democratic and transparent decision-making and implementation process at the international financial organisations; b) solid legal basis; c) compatibility of activities of effective national regulatory institutions and international standard-setting bodies; d) strengthening of risk management and supervisory practices.
2010	<p>10. Despite promising positive signs, much remains to be done. We believe that the world needs today a reformed and more stable financial architecture that will make the global economy less prone and more resilient to future crises, and that there is a greater need for a more stable, predictable and diversified international monetary system.</p> <p>11. We will strive to achieve an ambitious conclusion to the ongoing and long overdue reforms of the Bretton Woods institutions. The IMF and the World Bank urgently need to address their legitimacy deficits. Reforming these institutions' governance structures requires first and foremost a substantial shift in voting power in favor of emerging market economies and developing countries to bring their participation in decision making in line with their relative weight in the world economy. We call for the voting power reform of the World Bank to be fulfilled in the upcoming Spring Meetings, and expect the quota reform of the IMF to be concluded by the G-20 Summit in November this year. We do also agree on the need for an open and merit based selection method, irrespective of nationality, for the heading positions of the IMF and the World Bank. Moreover, staff of these institutions needs to better reflect the diversity of their membership. There is a special need to increase participation of developing countries. The international community must deliver a result worthy of the expectations we all share for these institutions within the agreed timeframe or run the risk of seeing them fade into obsolescence.</p>
2011a	<p>15. We call for a quick achievement of the targets for the reform of the International Monetary Fund agreed to at previous G20 Summits and reiterate that the governing structure of the international financial institutions should reflect the changes in the world economy, increasing the voice and representation of emerging economies and developing countries.</p> <p>16. Recognizing that the international financial crisis has exposed the inadequacies and deficiencies of the existing international monetary and financial system, we</p>

	support the reform and improvement of the international monetary system, with a broad-based international reserve currency system providing stability and certainty.
2012a	<p>9. We are however concerned at the slow pace of quota and governance reforms in the IMF. We see an urgent need to implement, as agreed, the 2010 Governance and Quota Reform before the 2012 IMF/World Bank Annual Meeting, as well as the comprehensive review of the quota formula to better reflect economic weights and enhance the voice and representation of emerging market and developing countries by January 2013, followed by the completion of the next general quota review by January 2014. This dynamic process of reform is necessary to ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Fund. We stress that the ongoing effort to increase the lending capacity of the IMF will only be successful if there is confidence that the entire membership of the institution is truly committed to implement the 2010 Reform faithfully. We will work with the international community to ensure that sufficient resources can be mobilized to the IMF in a timely manner as the Fund continues its transition to improve governance and legitimacy. We reiterate our support for measures to protect the voice and representation of the IMF's poorest members.</p> <p>10. We call upon the IMF to make its surveillance framework more integrated and even-handed, noting that IMF proposals for a new integrated decision on surveillance would be considered before the IMF Spring Meeting.</p>
2013	<p>13. We call for the reform of International Financial Institutions to make them more representative and to reflect the growing weight of BRICS and other developing countries. We remain concerned with the slow pace of the reform of the IMF. We see an urgent need to implement, as agreed, the 2010 International Monetary Fund (IMF) Governance and Quota Reform. We urge all members to take all necessary steps to achieve an agreement on the quota formula and complete the next general quota review by January 2014. The reform of the IMF should strengthen the voice and representation of the poorest members of the IMF, including Sub-Saharan Africa. All options should be explored, with an open mind, to achieve this. We support the reform and improvement of the international monetary system, with a broad-based international reserve currency system providing stability and certainty</p>
2014	<p>18. We remain disappointed and seriously concerned with the current non-implementation of the 2010 International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms, which negatively impacts on the IMF's legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness. The IMF reform process is based on high-level commitments, which already strengthened the Fund's resources and must also lead to the modernization of its governance structure so as to better reflect the increasing weight of EMDCs in the world economy. The Fund must remain a quota-based institution. We call on the membership of the IMF to find ways to implement the 14th General Review of Quotas without further delay. We reiterate our call on the IMF to develop options to move ahead with its reform process, with a view to ensuring increased voice and representation of EMDCs, in case the 2010 reforms are not entered into force by the end of the year. We also call on the membership of the IMF to reach a final agreement on a new quota formula together with the 15th General Review of Quotas so as not to further jeopardize the postponed deadline of January 2015.</p>

	<p>19. We welcome the goals set by the World Bank Group to help countries end extreme poverty and to promote shared prosperity. We recognize the potential of this new strategy in support of the fulfillment of these ambitious goals by the international community. This potential will only be realized, however, if the institution and its membership effectively move towards more democratic governance structures, strengthen the Bank's financial capacity and explore innovative ways to enhance development financing and knowledge sharing while pursuing a strong client orientation that recognizes each country's development needs. We look forward to initiating the work on the next shareholding review at the World Bank as soon as possible in order to meet the agreed deadline of October 2015. In this sense, we call for an international financial architecture that is more conducive to overcoming development challenges. We have been very active in improving the international financial architecture through our multilateral coordination and through our financial cooperation initiatives, which will, in a complementary manner, increase the diversity and availability of resources for promoting development and ensuring stability in the global economy.</p>
2015	<p>19. We remain deeply disappointed with the prolonged failure by the United States to ratify the IMF 2010 reform package, which continues to undermine the credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness of the IMF. This prevents the increase in the institution's quota resources and the revision of quotas and voting power in favour of developing countries and emerging markets as agreed by an overwhelming majority of members, including the United States in 2010. We expect the United States to ratify the 2010 reforms by mid-September 2015 as agreed in the IMF. In the meantime, we are prepared to work on interim steps provided they deliver equivalent results to the levels agreed as a part of the 14th General Quota Review. We reaffirm our commitment to maintaining a strong, well-resourced and quota-based IMF and, in this regard, urge other Members to continue the reform process through the 15th General Quota Review without delay.</p>
2016	<p>32. We call for the advanced European economies to meet their commitment to cede two chairs on the Executive Board of the IMF. The reform of the IMF should strengthen the voice and representation of the poorest members of the IMF, including Sub-Saharan Africa.</p>
2017	<p>29. We resolve to foster a global economic governance architecture that is more effective and reflective of current global economic landscape, increasing the voice and representation of emerging markets and developing economies. We reaffirm our commitment to conclude the IMF's 15th General Review of Quotas, including a new quota formula, by the 2019 Spring Meetings and no later than the 2019 Annual Meetings. We will continue to promote the implementation of the World Bank Group Shareholding Review.</p>
2018	<p>68. We advocate for a strong Global Financial Safety Net with an adequately resourced, quota-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) at its centre. To this effect, we reaffirm our commitment to conclude the IMF's 15th General Review of Quotas, including a new quota formula while protecting the voice of the poorest countries by the 2019 Spring Meetings and no later than the 2019 Annual Meetings. Governance reform of the IMF should strengthen the voice and representation of the poorest members of the IMF, including Sub-Saharan Africa.</p>

Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18.

Appendix K

Table 5.2.2a Extracts from BRICS declarations highlighting principles and values they support to request reforms related to global economic governance

2012a	<p>9. ...This dynamic process of reform is necessary to ensure the <u>legitimacy</u> and <u>effectiveness</u> of the Fund. We stress that the ongoing effort to increase the lending capacity of the IMF will only be successful if there is confidence that the entire membership of the institution is truly <u>committed</u> to implement the 2010 Reform faithfully. We will work with the international community to ensure that sufficient resources can be mobilized to the IMF in a timely manner as the Fund continues its transition to <u>improve governance</u> and legitimacy. We reiterate our support for measures to <u>protect the voice</u> and <u>representation</u> of the IMF's poorest members.</p> <p>12. We welcome the candidatures from developing world for the position of the President of the World Bank. We reiterate that the Heads of IMF and World Bank be selected through an <u>open</u> and <u>merit-based</u> process. Furthermore, the new World Bank leadership must commit to transform the Bank into a <u>multilateral</u> institution that truly reflects the vision of all its members, including the governance structure that reflects current economic and political reality. Moreover, the nature of the Bank must shift from an institution that essentially mediates <u>North-South cooperation</u> to an institution that promotes <u>equal partnership</u> with all countries as a way to deal with development issues and to overcome an outdated donor- recipient dichotomy.</p>
2013	<p>2. ...The prevailing global governance architecture is regulated by institutions which were conceived in circumstances when the international landscape in all its aspects was characterised by very different challenges and opportunities. As the global economy is being reshaped, we are committed to exploring new models and approaches towards more <u>equitable</u> development and <u>inclusive</u> global growth by emphasising <u>complementarities</u> and <u>building on our respective economic strengths</u>.</p> <p>13. The reform of the IMF should strengthen the <u>voice</u> and <u>representation</u> of the poorest members of the IMF, including Sub-Saharan Africa. All options should be explored, with an open mind, to achieve this. We support the reform and improvement of the international monetary system, with a broad-based international reserve currency system providing <u>stability</u> and <u>certainty</u> ... We support the IMF to make its surveillance framework more <u>integrated</u> and <u>even-handed</u>. The leadership selection of IFIs should be through an <u>open</u>, <u>transparent</u> and <u>merit-based</u> process and truly open to candidates from the emerging market economies and developing countries.</p>
2014	<p>10. ...As a new round of BRICS Summits begins, we remain <u>committed</u> to deliver <u>constructive responses</u> to global economic and financial challenges and to serve as a <u>strong voice</u> for the promotion of <u>sustainable development</u>, <u>inclusive growth</u>, <u>financial stability</u> and of more <u>representative</u> international economic governance. We will continue to pursue our fruitful <u>coordination</u> and to promote our <u>development goals</u> within the international economic system and financial architecture.</p>

	<p>19. We welcome the goals set by the World Bank Group to help countries end extreme poverty and to promote <u>shared prosperity</u>. We recognize the potential of this new strategy in support of the fulfilment of these ambitious goals by the international community. This potential will only be realized, however, if the institution and its membership effectively move towards more <u>democratic</u> governance structures, strengthen the Bank's financial capacity and explore innovative ways to enhance development financing and <u>knowledge sharing</u> while pursuing a strong <u>client orientation</u> that recognizes each country's development needs. ... [W]e call for an international financial architecture that is more conducive to overcoming development challenges. We have been very active in improving the international financial architecture through our <u>multilateral coordination</u> and through our financial cooperation initiatives, which will, in a <u>complementary</u> manner, increase the <u>diversity</u> and <u>availability</u> of resources for promoting development and ensuring <u>stability</u> in the global economy.</p>
2017	<p>6. We will enhance <u>communication</u> and <u>coordination</u> in improving global economic governance to foster a more <u>just</u> and <u>equitable</u> international economic order. We will work towards enhancement of the <u>voice</u> and <u>representation</u> of BRICS countries and EMDCs in global economic governance and promote an <u>open, inclusive</u> and <u>balanced</u> economic globalization, thus contributing towards development of EMDCs and providing strong impetus to <u>redressing North-South development imbalances</u> and promoting global growth.</p> <p>29. We resolve to foster a global economic governance architecture that is more <u>effective</u> and <u>reflective</u> of current global economic landscape, increasing the <u>voice</u> and <u>representation</u> of emerging markets and developing economies. We reaffirm our <u>commitment</u> to conclude the IMF's 15th General Review of Quotas, including a new quota formula, by the 2019 Spring Meetings and no later than the 2019 Annual Meetings. We will continue to promote the implementation of the World Bank Group Shareholding Review</p>
2018	<p>55. BRICS economies continue to support global economic expansion and outlook. We advocate continued use of fiscal, monetary and structural policies in concert, to forge <u>strong, sustainable, balanced</u> and <u>inclusive</u> growth. We express concern at the spill-over effects of macro-economic policy measures in some major advanced economies that may cause economic and financial volatility in emerging economies and impact their growth prospects adversely. We call on major advanced and emerging market economies to continue <u>policy dialogue</u> and <u>coordination</u> in the context of the G20, FSB and other fora to address these potential risks.</p>

Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18.

Appendix L

Table 5.2.2b Extracts from BRICS declarations indicating their frustration with the slow pace of IMF reforms

2010	<p>11. ...We call for the voting power reform of the World Bank to be fulfilled in the upcoming Spring Meetings, and expect the quota reform of the IMF to be concluded by the G-20 Summit in November this year. We do also agree on the need for an open and merit based selection method, irrespective of nationality, for the heading positions of the IMF and the World Bank. Moreover, staff of these institutions needs to better reflect the diversity of their membership. There is a special need to increase participation of developing countries. The international community must deliver a result worthy of the expectations we all share for these institutions within the agreed timeframe or run the risk of seeing them fade into obsolescence.</p>
2012a	<p>9. We are however concerned at the slow pace of quota and governance reforms in the IMF. We see an urgent need to implement, as agreed, the 2010 Governance and Quota Reform before the 2012 IMF/World Bank Annual Meeting, as well as the comprehensive review of the quota formula to better reflect economic weights and enhance the voice and representation of emerging market and developing countries by January 2013, followed by the completion of the next general quota review by January 2014. This dynamic process of reform is necessary to ensure the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Fund...</p> <p>12. We welcome the candidatures from developing world for the position of the President of the World Bank. We reiterate that the Heads of IMF and World Bank be selected through an open and merit-based process. Furthermore, the new World Bank leadership must commit to transform the Bank into a multilateral institution that truly reflects the vision of all its members, including the governance structure that reflects current economic and political reality. Moreover, the nature of the Bank must shift from an institution that essentially mediates North-South cooperation to an institution that promotes equal partnership with all countries as a way to deal with development issues and to overcome an outdated donor- recipient dichotomy.</p>
2013	<p>13. We call for the reform of International Financial Institutions to make them more representative and to reflect the growing weight of BRICS and other developing countries. We remain concerned with the slow pace of the reform of the IMF. We see an urgent need to implement, as agreed, the 2010 International Monetary Fund (IMF) Governance and Quota Reform. We urge all members to take all necessary steps to achieve an agreement on the quota formula and complete the next general quota review by January 2014...</p>
2014	<p>18. We remain disappointed and seriously concerned with the current non-implementation of the 2010 International Monetary Fund (IMF) reforms, which negatively impacts on the IMF's legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness. The IMF reform process is based on high-level commitments, which already strengthened the Fund's resources and must also lead to the modernization of its governance structure so as to better reflect the increasing weight of EMDCs in the world economy. The Fund must remain a quota-based institution. We call on the membership of the IMF to find ways to implement the 14th General Review of Quotas without further delay. We reiterate our call on the IMF to develop options to move ahead with its reform process, with a view to ensuring increased voice and representation of EMDCs, in case the 2010 reforms are not entered into force by the end of the year. We also call</p>

	<p>on the membership of the IMF to reach a final agreement on a new quota formula together with the 15th General Review of Quotas so as not to further jeopardize the postponed deadline of January 2015.</p> <p>19. We remain deeply disappointed with the prolonged failure by the United States to ratify the IMF 2010 reform package, which continues to undermine the credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness of the IMF. This prevents the increase in the institution's quota resources and the revision of quotas and voting power in favour of developing countries and emerging markets as agreed by an overwhelming majority of members, including the United States in 2010. We expect the United States to ratify the 2010 reforms by mid-September 2015 as agreed in the IMF. In the meantime, we are prepared to work on interim steps provided they deliver equivalent results to the levels agreed as a part of the 14th General Quota Review. We reaffirm our commitment to maintaining a strong, well-resourced and quota-based IMF and, in this regard, urge other Members to continue the reform process through the 15th General Quota Review without delay.</p>
2016	<p>30. ...We remain strongly committed to support the coordinated effort by the emerging economies to ensure that the Fifteenth General Review of Quotas, including the new quota formula, will be finalised within the agreed timelines so as to ensure that the increased voice of the dynamic emerging and developing economies reflects their relative contributions to the world economy, while protecting the voices of least developed countries (LDCs), poor countries and regions.</p>
2017	<p>29. We resolve to foster a global economic governance architecture that is more effective and reflective of current global economic landscape, increasing the voice and representation of emerging markets and developing economies. We reaffirm our commitment to conclude the IMF's 15th General Review of Quotas, including a new quota formula, by the 2019 Spring Meetings and no later than the 2019 Annual Meetings. We will continue to promote the implementation of the World Bank Group Shareholding Review.</p>
2018	<p>68. We advocate for a strong Global Financial Safety Net with an adequately resourced, quotabased International Monetary Fund (IMF) at its centre. To this effect, we reaffirm our commitment to conclude the IMF's 15th General Review of Quotas, including a new quota formula while protecting the voice of the poorest countries by the 2019 Spring Meetings and no later than the 2019 Annual Meetings. Governance reform of the IMF should strengthen the voice and representation of the poorest members of the IMF, including Sub-Saharan Africa.</p>

Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18.

Appendix M

Table 5.2.3a Extracts from BRICS declarations related to matters of international relations and which are embedded in positive principles and values

2009	<p>12. We underline our support for a more <u>democratic</u> and <u>just multi-polar</u> world order based on the <u>rule of international law</u>, <u>equality</u>, <u>mutual respect</u>, <u>cooperation</u>, <u>coordinated action</u> and <u>collective decision-making</u> of all states. We reiterate our support for political and <u>diplomatic</u> efforts to peacefully resolve disputes in international relations.</p> <p>14. We express our strong commitment to <u>multilateral diplomacy</u> with the United Nations playing the central role in dealing with global challenges and threats. In this respect, we reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN with a view to making it more efficient so that it can deal with today's global challenges more effectively. We reiterate the importance we attach to the status of India and Brazil in international affairs, and understand and support their aspirations to play a greater role in the United Nations</p>
2010	<p>4. We express our strong commitment to <u>multilateral diplomacy</u> with the United Nations playing the central role in dealing with global challenges and threats. In this respect, we reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, with a view to making it more <u>effective</u>, <u>efficient</u> and <u>representative</u>, so that it can deal with today's global challenges more effectively. We reiterate the importance we attach to the status of India and Brazil in international affairs, and understand and support their aspirations to play a greater role in the United Nations.</p>
2011a	<p>5. We affirm that the BRICS and other emerging countries have played an important role in contributing to <u>world peace</u>, <u>security</u> and <u>stability</u>, boosting global economic growth, enhancing <u>multilateralism</u> and promoting greater <u>democracy</u> in international relations.</p> <p>7. We share the view that the world is undergoing far-reaching, complex and profound changes, marked by the strengthening of <u>multipolarity</u>, economic globalization and increasing <u>interdependence</u>. While facing the evolving global environment and a multitude of global threats and challenges, the international community should join hands to strengthen cooperation for <u>common development</u>. Based on <u>universally recognized norms of international law</u> and in a spirit of <u>mutual respect</u> and <u>collective decision making</u>, global economic governance should be strengthened, democracy in international relations should be promoted, and the voice of emerging and developing countries in international affairs should be enhanced.</p> <p>8. We express our strong commitment to <u>multilateral diplomacy</u> with the United Nations playing the central role in dealing with global challenges and threats. In this respect, we reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more <u>effective</u>, <u>efficient</u> and <u>representative</u>, so that it can deal with today's global challenges more successfully. China and Russia reiterate the importance they attach to the status of India, Brazil and South Africa in international affairs, and understand and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.</p>

2012a	<p>26. We express our strong commitment to <u>multilateral diplomacy</u> with the United Nations playing a central role in dealing with global challenges and threats. In this regard, we reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more <u>effective</u>, <u>efficient</u> and <u>representative</u> so that it can deal with today's global challenges more successfully. China and Russia reiterate the importance they attach to the status of Brazil, India and South Africa in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.</p>
2013	<p>21. We underscore our commitment to work together in the UN to continue our <u>cooperation</u> and strengthen <u>multilateral approaches</u> in international relations based on the <u>rule of law</u> and anchored in the Charter of the United Nations.</p> <p>20. We reiterate our strong commitment to the United Nations (UN) as the foremost <u>multilateral</u> forum entrusted with bringing about hope, peace, order and sustainable development to the world. The UN enjoys universal membership and is at the centre of global governance and multilateralism. In this regard, we reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more <u>representative</u>, <u>effective</u> and <u>efficient</u>, so that it can be more responsive to global challenges. In this regard, China and Russia reiterate the importance they attach to the status of Brazil, India and South Africa in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.</p>
2014	<p>27. We will continue our joint efforts in coordinating positions and acting on <u>shared interests</u> on global peace and security issues for the <u>common well-being of humanity</u>. We stress our commitment to the sustainable and <u>peaceful settlement of disputes</u>, according to the <u>principles and purposes of the UN Charter</u>. We condemn unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions in violation of <u>international law</u> and <u>universally recognized norms of international relations</u>. Bearing this in mind, we emphasize the unique importance of the <u>indivisible nature of security</u>, and that no State should strengthen its security at the expense of the security of others.</p>
2015	<p>4. ...We reaffirmed our strong commitment to the United Nations as a <u>universal multilateral organization</u> entrusted with the mandate of helping the international community maintain <u>international peace and security</u>, advance <u>global development</u> and promote and protect <u>human rights</u>. The UN enjoys universal membership and has a central role in global affairs and multilateralism. We affirmed the need for comprehensive, <u>transparent</u> and <u>efficient multilateral approaches</u> to addressing global challenges, and in this regard underscored the central role of the United Nations in the ongoing efforts to find common solutions to such challenges. We expressed our intention to contribute to safeguarding a <u>fair and equitable international order</u> based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and to fully avail ourselves of the potential of the Organization as a forum for an open and honest debate as well as coordination of global politics in order to prevent war and conflicts and promote progress and development of humankind. We recall the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document and reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council with a view to making it more <u>representative</u> and <u>efficient</u> so that it could better respond to global challenges. China and Russia reiterate the importance they attach to the status and role of Brazil, India and South Africa in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.</p>

	<p>8. We condemn unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions in violation of <u>international law</u> and <u>universally recognized norms of international relations</u>. Bearing this in mind, we emphasize the unique importance of the <u>indivisible nature of security</u>, and that no State should strengthen its security at the expense of the security of others.</p>
2016	<p>9. We remain confident that resolving international problems require collective efforts for peaceful settlement of disputes through <u>political and diplomatic</u> means. Implementation of <u>principles of good-faith, sovereign equality of States, non-intervention in the internal affairs of States</u> and cooperation <u>excludes imposition of unilateral coercive measures</u> not based on international law. We condemn unilateral military interventions and economic sanctions in violation of international law and universally recognised norms of international relations. Bearing this in mind, we emphasise the unique importance of the <u>indivisible nature of security</u>, and that no State should strengthen its security at the expense of the security of others.</p> <p>10. We recall the 2005 World Summit Outcome document. We reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more <u>representative, effective and efficient</u>, and to <u>increase the representation of the developing countries</u> so that it can adequately respond to global challenges. China and Russia reiterate the importance they attach to the status and role of Brazil, India and South Africa in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.</p>
2017	<p>6. We will emphasize <u>fairness</u> and <u>justice</u> to safeguard international and <u>regional peace and stability</u>. We will stand firm in upholding a <u>fair and equitable international order</u> based on the central role of the United Nations, the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and <u>respect for international law, promoting democracy and the rule of law in international relations</u>, and making joint efforts to address common traditional and non-traditional security challenges, so as to build a brighter shared future for the global community.</p> <p>38. We recall that development and security are closely interlinked, mutually reinforcing and key to attaining <u>sustainable peace</u>. We reiterate our view that the establishment of sustainable peace requires a comprehensive, concerted and determined approach, based on <u>mutual trust, mutual benefit, equity and cooperation</u>, that addresses the causes of conflicts, including their political, economic and social dimensions. We condemn unilateral military interventions, economic sanctions and arbitrary use of unilateral coercive measures in violation of international law and <u>universally recognized norms of international relations</u>. We emphasize that no country should enhance its security at the expense of the security of others.</p> <p>40. We recall the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and reaffirm the need for a comprehensive reform of the UN, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more <u>representative, effective and efficient</u>, and to increase the <u>representation of the developing countries</u> so that it can adequately respond to global challenges. China and Russia reiterate the importance they attach to the status and role of Brazil, India and South Africa in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the UN.</p>

	<p>68. We recommit our strong support for <u>multilateralism</u> and the central role of the UN in international affairs. We commit to strengthening the coordination and cooperation among BRICS in the areas of mutual and common interests within the UN and other multilateral institutions, including through regular meetings among our permanent representatives in New York, Geneva and Vienna, and further enhance the voice of BRICS in international fora.</p>
2018	<p>6. We recommit ourselves to a world of peace and stability, and support the central role of the United Nations, the purposes and <u>principles</u> enshrined in the UN Charter and respect for international law, promoting <u>democracy</u> and the <u>rule of law</u>. We reinforce our commitment to upholding <u>multilateralism</u> and to working together on the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals as we foster a more <u>representative</u>, democratic, <u>equitable</u>, <u>fair</u> and <u>just</u> international political and economic order.</p> <p>8. We recommit our support for <u>multilateralism</u> and the central role of the United Nations in international affairs and uphold <u>fair</u>, <u>just</u> and <u>equitable international order</u> based on the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, <u>respect for international law</u>, promoting <u>democracy</u> and the <u>rule of law in international relations</u>, and to address common traditional and non-traditional security challenges.</p> <p>12. We reaffirm our commitment to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and support for the United Nations as the universal intergovernmental organisation entrusted with the responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, advancing sustainable development as well as ensuring the promotion, and <u>protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms</u>.</p>

Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18.

Appendix N

Table 5.2.3b Extracts from the BRICS declarations on Syria

2012a	21. We express our deep concern at the current situation in Syria and call for an immediate end to all violence and violations of human rights in that country. Global interests would best be served by dealing with the crisis through peaceful means that encourage broad national dialogues that reflect the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society and respect Syrian independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty. Our objective is to facilitate a Syrian-led inclusive political process, and we welcome the joint efforts of the United Nations and the Arab League to this end. We encourage the Syrian government and all sections of Syrian society to demonstrate the political will to initiate such a process, which alone can create a new environment for peace. We welcome the appointment of Mr. Kofi Annan as the Joint Special Envoy on the Syrian crisis and the progress made so far, and support him in continuing to play a constructive role in bringing about the political resolution of the crisis.
2013	26. We express our deep concern with the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Syria and condemn the increasing violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law as a result of continued violence. We believe that the Joint Communiqué of the Geneva Action Group provides a basis for resolution of the Syrian crisis and reaffirm our opposition to any further militarization of the conflict. A Syrian-led political process leading to a transition can be achieved only through broad national dialogue that meets the legitimate aspirations of all sections of Syrian society and respect for Syrian independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty as expressed by the Geneva Joint Communiqué and appropriate UNSC resolutions. We support the efforts of the UN-League of Arab States Joint Special Representative. In view of the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria, we call upon all parties to allow and facilitate immediate, safe, full and unimpeded access to humanitarian organisations to all in need of assistance. We urge all parties to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers
2014	37. We express deep concern about the ongoing violence and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Syria and condemn the increasing violations of human rights by all parties. We reiterate our view that there is no military solution to the conflict, and highlight the need to avoid its further militarization. We call upon all parties to commit immediately to a complete cease-fire, to halt violence and to allow and facilitate immediate, safe, full and unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations and agencies, in compliance with the UN Security Council resolution 2139. We recognize practical steps undertaken by the Syrian parties in implementing its requirements, including the practice of local cease-fire agreements reached between the Syrian authorities and the opposition forces.
2015	36. We express our deep concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian aspects of the Syrian crisis and strongly condemn human rights violations by all parties to the conflict. We reaffirm the need to ensure safe and unhindered access of humanitarian agencies to affected population in accordance with UNSC resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165(2014), 2191(2014) and the UN guiding principles of emergency humanitarian assistance. We welcome practical steps taken by the Syrian parties to fulfill the requirements of these resolutions. We reject the politicization of humanitarian assistance in Syria and note the continuing negative impact of unilateral sanctions on the socio-economic situation in Syria. We express support

	for the steps of the Russian Federation aimed at promoting a political settlement in Syria, in particular the organization of two rounds of consultations between the Syrian parties in Moscow in January and April 2015, as well as the efforts by the UN Secretary General, his Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, and other international and regional efforts aimed at peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict.
2016	14. ... We support all efforts for finding ways to the settlement of the crises in accordance with international law and in conformity with the principles of independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the countries of the region. On Syria, we call upon all parties involved to work for a comprehensive and peaceful resolution of the conflict taking into account the legitimate aspirations of the people of Syria, through inclusive national dialogue and a Syrian-led political process based on Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012 and in pursuance of the UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and 2268 for their full implementation. While continuing the relentless pursuit against terrorist groups so designated by the UN Security Council including ISIL, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist organisations designated by the UN Security Council.
2017	41. We reiterate that the only lasting solution to the crisis in Syria is through an inclusive "Syrian-led, Syrian-owned" political process which safeguards the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, in pursuance of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254(2015), and promotes the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people. We strongly support the Geneva Peace Talks and the Astana process, and welcome the creation of the de-escalation areas in Syria, which contributed to decrease the levels of violence and generate positive momentum and conditions for meaningful progress in the peace talks under the auspices of the UN. We oppose the use of chemical weapons by anyone, for any purpose and under any circumstance.
2018	46. We reaffirm our commitment for a political resolution of the conflict in Syria, through an inclusive "Syrian-led, Syrian-owned" political process that safeguards the state sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Syria, in pursuance of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2254 (2015) and taking into account the result of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue in Sochi. We reiterate our support for the Geneva process and the mediation offered by the UN, as well as the Astana process which has been showing signs of positive developments on the ground, and stress the complementarity between the two initiatives. We reaffirm our commitment to a peaceful resolution in Syria and our opposition to measures that run contrary to the UN Charter and the authority of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and that do not contribute to advancing the political process. We also highlighted the importance of unity in the fight against terrorist organisations in Syria in full observance of the relevant UNSC Resolutions. We reiterate our strong condemnation of the use of chemical weapons by any party, for any purpose and under any circumstances and renew calls for comprehensive, objective, independent, and transparent investigations of all alleged incidents. We call for enhanced efforts to provide necessary humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people, bearing in mind urgent reconstruction needs.

Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18.

Appendix O

Table 6.1 Extracts from the statements of the BRICS Trade Union Forum, which failed to feature in the BRICS intergovernmental declaration in 2013

Extracts of the Declaration of the Second BRICS Trade Union Forum 2013	BRICS Intergovernmental Declaration 2013
<p>We discussed the global capitalist crisis, which is increasing inequalities and underdevelopment in several parts of the developing world. Given the location of this year's Summit, we paid special attention to the conditions facing the working people of Africa, who suffered colonial dehumanisation and still suffer extreme conditions of exploitation. This is a consequence of the persisting structures of neo-colonial patterns of accumulation, unfair trade and exclusion in global governance systems</p>	<p>4. Recognising the importance of regional integration for Africa's sustainable growth, Development and poverty eradication, we reaffirm our support for the Continent's integration processes.</p>
<p>The significance and concrete meaning of BRICS to workers under the current global conditions should be positioned as an alternative model of inclusive development that serves the interests of the majority in society.</p> <p>In this regard, we emphasise in one voice the need for the effective and full participation of the working class in all institutions of BRICS. Only in that way will BRICS be different from existing multilateral institutions.</p>	
<p>We cautiously welcome the proposal of a BRICS development bank. We strongly believe that this bank should take a different form from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It should primarily developmental in character. We envisage the BRICS development Bank solely owned by BRICS, publicly funded, taking all decisions on consensus, promoting trade based on own currencies of its member countries, with a core focus on infrastructure and development in consultation and approval by all stakeholders, inclusive of the community and trade unions.</p> <p>BRICS trade unions should be represented on the BRICS bank's highest decision-making body and its various task teams.</p>	<p>13. We call for the reform of International Financial Institutions to make them more representative and to reflect the growing weight of BRICS and other developing countries. We remain concerned with the slow pace of the reform of the IMF...</p> <p>14. We emphasise the importance of ensuring steady, adequate and predictable access to long term finance for developing countries from a variety of sources. We would like to see concerted global effort towards infrastructure financing and investment through the instrumentality of adequately resourced Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and Regional Development Banks (RDBs).</p>

<p>In defending and advancing workers rights, we commit to ensuring that all multinational companies comply with core labour standards, and do not exploit unequal conditions between countries, driving down wages and eroding workers rights by playing workers against one another</p> <p>We will struggle to ensure that the BRICS agenda does not isolate regional and continental counterparts, and will work to advance the interests of the developing world in general.</p>	
<p>It is our considered view that the emergence of BRICS presents the potential to organise it into a progressive force around which various struggles can be coordinated. However, we continue to call for a further decisive shift in the current political and economic outlook of BRICS.</p> <p>In order to enhance our co-operation, we will establish a coordinating mechanism consisting of representatives from all trade union federations based in each of the BRICS countries.</p>	

Source: BRICS Trade Union Forum, 2013; BRICS Information Centre, 2013.

Appendix P

Table 6.2 Extracts from the BRICS intergovernmental declarations on people-to-people exchanges and culture

2012a	48. We encourage expanding the channels of communication, exchanges and people-to-people contact amongst the BRICS, including in the areas of youth, education, culture, tourism and sports.
2014	59. Considering the link between culture and sustainable development, as well as the role of cultural diplomacy as a promoter of understanding between peoples, we will encourage cooperation between BRICS countries in the cultural sector, including on the multilateral basis. Recognizing the contribution and the benefits of cultural exchanges and cooperation in enhancing our mutual understanding and friendship, we will actively promote greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of each other's arts and culture. In this regard, we ask our relevant authorities responsible for culture to explore areas of practical cooperation, including to expedite negotiations on the draft agreement on cultural cooperation.
2015	<p>64. ...We welcome the signing of the Agreement between the Governments of the BRICS Member States on Cooperation in the Field of Culture. This Agreement will play an important role in expanding and deepening cooperation in the fields of culture and art, in promoting dialogue between cultures, which will help bring closer the cultures and peoples of our countries.</p> <p>70. We welcome the development of relations between the parliaments, businesses and civil society institutions of the BRICS countries, aimed at promoting friendship and dialogue between our nations.</p> <p>74. We welcome the initiative of the Russian Chairship in hosting Civil BRICS Forum, which contributes to a dialogue between civil society organizations, academia, business and governments of the BRICS countries on a wide range of important socio-economic issues. We also welcome holding of the Trade Unions Forums as well as the launch of "youth dimension" of our cooperation under the Russian Chairship.</p>
2016	100. We recognise the important role of culture in sustainable development and in fostering mutual understanding and closer cooperation among our peoples. We encourage expansion of cultural exchanges between people of BRICS countries. In this context we commend the hosting of the first BRICS Film Festival in New Delhi on 2-6 September 2016.
2017	<p>60. We emphasize the importance of people-to-people exchanges to promoting development and enhancing mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation among BRICS peoples. We agree to deepen cooperation in such fields as culture, education, science and technology, sports and health as well as among media organizations and local governments, to strengthen the third pillar of BRICS cooperation and foster a meaningful resonance of the BRICS partnership amongst its peoples.</p> <p>61. We value cultural diversity as a precious asset of BRICS cooperation. We stress the role of culture and cultural diversity in promoting sustainable development, and encourage BRICS countries to engage in cultural exchanges and mutual learning to cultivate common values on the basis of diversity and sharing. We welcome the</p>

	<p>formulation of a BRICS action plan to advance practical cultural cooperation and the establishment of the BRICS Alliance of Libraries, Alliance of Museums, Alliance of Art Museums and National Galleries as well as Alliance of Theaters for Children and Young People. We look forward to the success of the BRICS Culture Festival to be held later in mid-September 2017 in Xiamen. We will continue our work on the establishment of a BRICS Cultural Council to provide the necessary platform to enhance cultural cooperation among BRICS countries.</p> <p>66. We note with satisfaction the progress in the exchanges and cooperation in various areas, including governance, film-making, media, think-tank, youth, parliament, local governments and trade union, and agree to further advance such exchanges and cooperation. We commend the first joint film production by BRICS countries and commend the success of the BRICS Film Festival, the Media Forum, Friendship Cities and Local Governments Cooperation Forum, Youth Forum, Young Diplomats Forum and Young Scientists Forum. We appreciate the successful hosting of the BRICS Forum of Political Parties, Think-Tanks and Civil Society Organizations as well as the Seminar on Governance, and will carry these good initiatives forward in the future. In this regard, we note the proposal to establish by China the BRICS Research and Exchange Fund.</p>
2018	86. Emphasising the centrality of people in BRICS and its programmes, we commend the steady progress and exchanges in the fields of sports, youth, films, culture, education and tourism.

Source: BRICS Information Centre, 2009–18.

Appendix Q

Table 6.2.1 Extracts from the BRICS Academic Forum expressing recommendations for the BRICS governments and echoing commitments of shared principles

2012	As home to nearly half of the world's population, BRICS have a <u>responsibility</u> to create pathways for <u>sustainable development</u> . BRICS could learn from policy successes as well as failures of the past from within and outside BRICS, and seek to implement policy solutions for <u>sustainable development</u> . In this context BRICS must bring to the fore <u>inclusive growth</u> and <u>equitable development</u> as the central narrative at global fora such as Rio+20.
2013	<p>The theme for this year's forum, 'BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialisation', represents the <u>common aspirations</u> of BRICS for cementing <u>partnerships</u> with one another and with <u>emerging markets and developing countries</u> including the African continent in order to strengthen <u>progressive development</u> trajectories, promote <u>integration</u>, and expedite industrialisation in developing countries.</p> <p>A <u>shared</u> desire for <u>peace</u>, <u>security</u>, <u>development</u>, <u>cooperation</u>, <u>respect for international law</u> and <u>sovereignty</u> continues to serve as the <u>fundamental principles</u> for BRICS members in pursuit of a more <u>equitable</u> and <u>fair</u> world.</p>
2014	No recommendations
2015	<p>2. While there are considerable differences in our countries and current transformations of the international system add to those divergences, the five countries continue <u>cooperation</u> in the spirit of <u>transparency</u>, <u>friendship</u> and <u>mutual respect</u>. The BRICS do not seek to undermine the current global governance systems, but rather wish to <u>reform</u> it so that benefits of globalization accrue for the <u>common good</u>.</p> <p>3. The five countries <u>share values</u>, based on the <u>principles of sovereignty</u>, <u>cultural diversity</u>, <u>plurality</u> and strengthening <u>international law</u> against unilateral actions. They stress the need to preserve the central role of the United Nations in world affairs, while recognizing the need for <u>reforming</u> of the UN Security Council.</p> <p>31. BRICS should pay attention to <u>people-centered sustainable and inclusive development</u>.</p>
2016	<i>Statements not formulated on the basis of shared principles</i>
2017	<p>7. We are of the view that <u>people-to-people</u> and <u>cultural exchanges</u> play an important role in cementing BRICS strategic <u>partnership</u> and garnering <u>public support</u> for BRICS cooperation. Enjoying rich cultural resources, BRICS countries should capitalize on their respective advantages to actively engage in and <u>collectively</u> promote ever deepening and substantial people-to-people and cultural exchanges, so as to effectively enhance engagement and a sense of recognition of peoples of BRICS countries. As an important modality and an innovative action in people-to-people and cultural exchanges, this Forum has promoted the <u>sharing</u> of cultural resources between BRICS countries and emerging markets and developing countries and advance the <u>mutual</u> learning among civilizations.</p> <p>13. We are of the view that <u>civil society organizations</u> play a significant role in heeding and channelling <u>people's demands</u> as well as in cementing <u>people-to-people</u></p>

	<p><u>bonds</u>. By engaging in BRICS cooperation, civil society organizations should take <u>proactive</u> actions to reflect people’s opinions, prioritize further <u>cooperation</u> in <u>poverty alleviation</u>, <u>health</u> and <u>environmental protection</u>, <u>promote gender equality</u>, drive the implementation of more projects with social and economic benefits so as to ensure more <u>equitable and balanced distribution</u> of cooperation outcomes and deliver more <u>tangible benefits</u> to people and in turn, garner more support for cooperation in a manner that <u>complements</u> and strengthens the inter-governmental cooperation. We suggest the civil society organizations, on the basis of intensified contact and <u>communication</u>, to make full use of new technologies to build a <u>network for interaction</u>, <u>communication</u>, <u>dialogue</u> and cooperation.</p>
2018	<p>First was economic prosperity of the BRICS <u>people or citizens</u> that are the mechanism, processes and institutions necessary for the BRICS nations to develop in a <u>responsible</u> way and achieve their goals. For instance smart manufacturing, defining <u>inclusion</u> and how to look at <u>prosperity</u> and the <u>wellbeing of the people</u>.</p>

Source: BRICS Academic Forum 2012–16; Fuzhou Initiative, 2017; BRICS Academic Forum, 2018.

Appendix R

Table 5.24 BRICS Academic Forum's themes embedded in shared principles appealing to wider society but showing a priority for economic development

	Theme	Extract from statement
4 th BRICS Academic Forum 2012	Stability, Security, Growth	The imperative of economic growth cannot be substituted...
5 th BRICS Academic Forum 2013	BRICS and Africa: Partnership for Development, Integration and Industrialisation	BRICS must continue to create synergies for enhancing economic growth...
6 th BRICS Academic Forum 2014	<i>Technical sessions</i> <i>Refer to Table 5.1.4b, Appendix G</i>	<i>No recommendations made to the government.</i>
7 th BRICS Academic Forum 2015	BRICS: Cooperation for Growth, Security and Prosperity	18. BRICS should generally support priority of WTO multilateral trade regime and work together to ensure that all that is required is achieved to implement trade facilitation steps.
8 th BRICS Academic Forum 2016	<i>No theme</i>	12. Intra-BRICS trade in Global Value Chain (GVC) sector should be promoted as it has high potential to catalyse economic growth...
Fuzhou Initiative	Stronger People-to-People Bond for Better Cooperation	5. ... [BRICS countries] should stand firm to preserve and foster an open world economy, champion multilateral trade regime and facilitate healthy development of economic globalization.
10 th BRICS Academic Forum 2018	Pooling Wisdom and New Ideas for Cooperation	Any adopted recommendation to the BRICS leaders' summit, will make the forum's collective voices heard to support multilateralism and multi-trade system.