

THE RIGHT TO (AGRICULTURAL) DEVELOPMENT UNDER SOCIALISM WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS | the current Sino- Brazilian Relationship¹

O direito ao desenvolvimento (agrícola) sob o socialismo com características chinesas | a atual relação sino-brasileira

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Abstract: This paper aims at introducing some theoretical and first analytical reflections on the possible implications or directions that the Chinese foreign policy under the premises of Socialism with Chinese characteristics to Brazil could have in the agricultural sector. The underlying hypothesis it intends to explore is that, although incipient, the international trade on primary commodities, specifically on food, may offer room to reframe the implications that models such as the dependency theory point out as a challenge to balanced tradeoffs in the Latin American context. The theoretical analysis offers an initial approach to the interconnections between socialism's international political economy with Chinese characteristics and the Chinese South-South cooperation. Afterward, it places the debate in Brazil's peasantry movement by exploring its correlation with the agribusiness sector and food security, discussing threats and potentialities for alternatives to trade cooperation under a capitalist framework.

Keywords: Sino-Brazilian relations; South-South cooperation; Peasant movement.

Abstract: Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar algumas reflexões teóricas e primeiras reflexões analíticas sobre as possíveis implicações ou direcionamentos que a política externa chinesa sob as premissas do Socialismo com características chinesas para o Brasil poderia ter no setor agrícola. A hipótese subjacente que se pretende explorar é que, embora incipiente, o comércio internacional de commodities primárias, especificamente de alimentos, pode oferecer espaço para reenquadrar as implicações que modelos como a teoria da dependência apontam como um desafio aos tradeoffs equilibrados na América Latina. contexto. A análise teórica oferece uma abordagem inicial das interconexões entre a economia política internacional do socialismo com características chinesas e a cooperação Sul-Sul chinesa. Em seguida, coloca o debate no movimento camponês brasileiro, explorando sua correlação com

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o setor do agronegócio e a segurança alimentar, discutindo ameaças e potencialidades para alternativas de cooperação comercial no âmbito capitalista.

Keywords: Relações sino-brasileiras; Cooperação Sul-Sul; Movimento camponês.

Introduction

This paper aims at introducing some theoretical and first analytical reflections on the possible implications or directions that the Chinese foreign policy under the premises of Socialism with Chinese characteristics to Brazil could have in the agricultural sector.

The broader research departs from an attempt to understand how the Chinese rhetoric for the South-South cooperation can conciliate a non-interventive approach to promote a common destiny in the sustainable development realm, as for keeping the final goal of scientific socialism to internationalize development. It departs from the hypothesis that an attempt would be feasible even from the existing geopolitical and international capitalist structures but weighs up its threats.

Also, it suggests that the prioritization of the domestic growth policies and the national development as a precondition for fostering development abroad should be taken into account because of its implications for what is defined as a pragmatism regarding the very cooperative agenda from the comparative advantage's perspective.

We want to explore how the food security issue emerged in China as a critical element in that sense. It might relate with the impacts on the qualitative dimension of domestic consumption and production (a call for sovereignty in the food supply and a trend towards organic food). From this perspective, such concerns can enforce the possibility of adding value to the productive organic chains.

We suggest that the deindustrialization of Latin America-LA and the cyclical trend towards the production of some commodities, mainly food, could either push the region in the direction of the latifúndios and capitalist spoliation or towards changes in the productive chains that prioritize the family farming system and, accordingly, new subjects and ways to deal with nature and capital.

Given the importance of the domestic agribusiness elites and the politicization of the land struggle, as well as the parallel trends in China to both amplify its participation in the global chains of the agribusiness while rising the standards for food security, these possibilities must be analyzed vis-à-vis the existing challenges to reshape the food chain supply from the Sino-LA perspective. Also, because of the peculiarities of different countries and societies, narrowing down the investigation to the Sino-Brazilian dynamics seemed to be a logical starting point. China is the most important Brazil's trade partner and leads the world's exports in many agricultural commodities. It has historically dealt with the peasantry's movement as an ideological and political menace to the status quo, which resulted in a paradoxical scenario where family farming heads the statistics for food production and organic supply. At the same time, agribusiness is prioritized in terms of policies and land distribution.

We believe that further considerations on comparative research about agrarian policies in China under the implementation of socialism's political economy with Chinese characteristics and Brazil could be valuable, but not as a premise.

From now, we will only provide some initial remarks on that theoretical framework while emphasizing why the peasantry movement and the agrarian sector in the Latin American continent, specifically in Brazil, would illustrate these challenges well as their possibilities.

The Marxist dependency theory provides some insights to understand how some of the premises were set up throughout time. However, a glance at the post-capitalist claims from the marginalized groups disclose how racial minorities, the peasantries, and the rural dynamics might be interrelated and probably a way to build up revolutionary paths.

Given the interdependency between China and Brazil and the agribusiness field's size, we would argue that the Sino-Brazilian relations could be reshaped under alternative premises, like agroecology, while addressing the demands for food security in qualitative terms. That would depart from the trend towards organics and its added value as a means to use trade partnership to foster development under socialist principles.

Finally, we would suggest that some attempts could already occur by exploring the WTO's regime and alternative mechanisms to finance development, such as the green bonds, about which we have talked elsewhere.

The article has more questions than answers, more variables than correlations, and more efforts than outcomes. It attempts to provide some insights to reshape South-South cooperation under a Marxist-Leninist approach with Chinese characteristics.

1. Socialism with Chinese characteristics and South-South cooperation

When Deng Xiaoping made an international disclose of the Mao Zedong's "Theory of the three worlds" or "three worlds theory" (*Sān gè shìjiè de lǐlùn*) during his speech in the United Nations (1974)¹, he probably provided some of the most important theoretical basis for what would be the role of the South-South relations within the Chinese framework.

It might also have launched one of the distinctive features of a Socialism with Chinese characteristics, not only because it was innovative from the Marxist-Leninist literature (Red Dawn Committee 1980).

The approach challenged the existing academic constructions for the world's division into three groups of countries, such as proposed by Sauvy (*Trois mondes, une planète, L'Observateur*, August 1952), Fanon (*Les Damnés de la Terre*, 1961) or Balandier et al (*Le Tiers-Monde: sous-développement et développement*, 1961). It also went differently from the premises already employed at the state level during the Bandung Conference of Asian and African Nations (1955), motivated, among other reasons, by the tensions between Russia and China. Yet, the Chinese diplomacy in the convention, then led by Zhou Enlai, offering support to the Asian non-aligned countries, provided indications of what the Chinese rhetorical politics for the "Global South" would become.

Since 1946, when describing a large zone including capitalist, colonial, and semi-colonial states in Europe, Africa, and Asia, where China was placed, Mao had already set a segment in the international community that should unite against domination (Yee 1983). In 1974, and, later on, 1977 (year of the publication), this

perspective, relying on many of the Leninist theoretical constructions in "The Discussion on Self-Determination Summed Up," emphasized that hegemonism could take place from both capitalist and socialist sides. Also, Mao highlighted the relevance of Lenin's comprehensive perspective of the oppressed, who could be states or populations within their structure:

Marxist-Leninists invariably adhere to the stand of the international proletariat, uphold the general interests of the revolutionary people of all countries in international class struggle and persist in the replacement of the capitalist system with the communist system as their maximum programme. But the situation with regard to this struggle is intricate and volatile. The international bourgeoisie has never been a monolithic whole, nor can it ever be (...) Like Lenin, we should hail and support the liberation movement of the oppressed nations in Asia, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere and regard it as an important component of the socialist revolutionary movement of the world proletariat. We should divide the countries of the world today into three new categories on the basis of the new international class relations now prevailing and find complete and absolute assurance of the ultimate victory of socialism throughout the world in the united struggle of the international proletariat and the third world people who make up more than 70 per cent of the world's population.

In practical terms, however, some intellectuals perceived the shift as a contradiction regarding the former Chinese view against revisionism and the attempts to support the anti-imperialist struggles by adopting an opportunist approach to its international policy. In Latin America, the open letter released by the *Partido Comunista Revolucionario de Chile* summarized some of this discontentment. The Chilean communists accused China of being connivant with the military coup and massacre of the working class, mostly after the country's vote to keep supporting Chile in international events, by January 1975. Under the mandate of Salvador Allende, the two countries have established diplomatic relations (December 1970), sending back the representatives of Taiwan yet in Santiago right after the publication in the Chilean Official Journal.

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On the other hand, in the previous decade (1961) and, likewise, because of a quarrel involving the URSS, but with Cuba, the Maoism sponsored important initiatives in Central America. Mediated by Cubans, some guerrilla movements were financed, mostly under the recruitment and scholarship of young students to participate in the revolution (Pastor 2011). Also, a 1965 US Central Intelligence Agency-CIA survey about communism in Latin America concluded that, excepting for Venezuela and Guatemala, the guerrilla warfare tactics, as outlined under the 'Castroist ideology,' were mostly "influenced by the example of Peking." According to the document, that would be critical to change the strategic patterns in the region's revolutionary endeavors (CIA 1965, 7).

Although from the strictly discursive point of view, the three-world theory could be understood as a natural outcome of the Maoist values and the rupture with the URSS, it is probably the Reform and Opening (Gǎigé Kāifàng) process, led by Deng Xiaoping, the premise to understand the changes in the foreign policy. In the Latin American case, the official visit of Richard Nixon to Beijing by February 1972 was significant to reduce the tensions with the Sino-communism and open the official LA doors to China as a diplomatic partner. For instance, Peru (1971), Brazil (1974), and Argentina (1972), under dictatorial military regimes, established diplomatic relations with China. In the same period, Venezuela (1974) and Mexico (1972) also started an approach to the Maoist regime.

As for understanding some of the changes, Chile, again, seems to be an interesting example. China supported the state on its pledge to extend its continental shelf beyond the 200 nautical miles and provided economic assistance during the fragile financial years before Pinochet (Matta 1991 apud Ruiz 2016). From the tensions with the URSS, while adopting a pragmatic vision that would approximate non-supporters, China had opportunities to expand its foreign relations in LA, mostly

after Cuba restored its relationship with the soviets (1968). The Reform and Opening underscored the importance of economics over political affairs in that context.

The premises for this dynamic were already set up since the December 1953 negotiations between Premier Zhou Enlai and the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru regarding the necessity to come up with good terms in both security and trade issues in the Tibetan Region. China put forward its Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence that ended up as a milestone at the Bandung Conference. When referring to the event in 1982, Deng Xiaoping that China was pleased by introducing the notion of South-South Cooperation, but the change of the international economic order would require new ways to increase it³.

However, given the roots of the Socialism with Chinese characteristics in the Scientific Socialism itself, the ultimate goal to promote humanity's liberation under comprehensive development results in an intrinsic international dimension to understand the Socialist Political Economy with Chinese Characteristics (Pang 2018).

It was under Deng Xiaoping's leadership that the concept of socialism with Chinese characteristics was outlined, as he encouraged the development of a modernization of a Chinese type⁴. The "Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Economic System Reform" was "the first draft of political economy integrating the basic principles of Marxism with the practice of socialism in China" (Deng 1993, 59).

Its repercussions for the Sino-foreign policy were well summarized in 1984 (Deng 1993, 43):

China's foreign policy can be summed up in two sentences. First, to safeguard world peace we oppose hegemony. Second, China will always belong to the Third World. It belongs to the Third World today, and it will do so even when it becomes prosperous and powerful, because it shares a common destiny with all Third World countries. China will never seek hegemony or bully others, but will always side with the Third World.

³ Promote the Friendship Between China and India and Increase South-South Cooperation. October 22, 1982 (Deng 1993).

⁴ We are on the right track, and our policies will not change. June 18, 1983 (Deng 1993).

Since then, the Chinese Premier had stated the short-term priority to modernize the country and later "contribute to mankind" while keeping an independent foreign policy and "truly non-aligned."⁵ However, the emphasis on peace and security issues progressively moved towards a broader agenda on China's role in the Third World.

Under Deng Xiaoping's later directives, elements like culture and science were introduced during the CPC preparatory works for the "Draft Resolution of the CPC Central Committee on the Guiding Principles for Building a Socialist Society with an Advanced Level of Culture and Ideology." As a Third World member, China should benefit the other countries with its scientist and engineers to push modernization forward.⁶ A peaceful international environment would foster the economic development as the central task within the Third World⁷.

When chairing, on September 26, 2015, the High-level Roundtable on South-South Cooperation co-hosted by China and the United Nations (UN), forty years after Deng Xiaoping emphasized the Chinese sense of belonging to then called "Third World" at the UN General Assembly, Xi Jinping underscored the necessity to keep local development strategies, as well as using the existing fora to foster global development.

In the international law and foreign affairs arenas, the recall of the (neo-)Confucianist principles emphasized that a shared future would ground the common environmental and security challenges and the inequality gaps, requiring coordinated answers. It departed from the joint 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development to UN General Assembly (Our Common Future), as well as a combined Chinese practice since 1949 and elements of the traditional Chinese culture, such as the idea of the state as the core propulsor of domestic order and development (as self-strengthening, recalling, for instance, the Analects), and the concept of equality (*rénzhě yǐ dàshì xiǎo; zhìzhě yǐ xiǎoshì dà*).

The notion emerged after three decades of Deng Xiaoping's "peaceful

⁵ We must safeguard world peace and ensure domestic development. May 29, 1984 (Deng 1993).

⁶ China cannot advance without science. October 18, 1986 (Deng 1993).

⁷ Circumstances oblige us to deepen the reform and open wider to the outside world. June 22, 1988 (Deng 1993).

development" policy. Recently, President Xi Jinping in the First Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation (Beijing, May 2017) had specified that "a new model of win-win cooperation" would encompass "a big family of harmonious co-existence," highlighting, for example, that "in pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative, we will not resort to outdated geopolitical maneuvering." Those discursive elements point out an approach to a Chinese view of economic development not as an end-in-itself and reinforce the 1953's constitutional principles of diplomacy in China and the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence.

2. **Practical impacts: financing development and international solidarity**

As a trend of development financing among the emerging economies, Zheng (2019) suggests that grants and concessional and non-concessional loans are combined with other trade and investment modalities, and therefore do not qualify as Official Development Assistance-ODA. Some of these transactions prioritize export-facilitating mechanisms, either for developmental purposes, such as China, or for core trade and investment goals in the Global South, in India's case.

On that basis, some scholars even propose the concept of New Development Assistance as for highlighting the conciliation of the Bandung Conference principles with horizontal cooperation patterns. For instance, the non-interference in the domestic affairs⁸ and the sovereignty and territorial integrity premises lead to a disentangled relationship between politics and economic relations may also constrain any attempt to overcome the partnering country's governmental machinery when implementing a particular project (Zheng 2019, 52).

In 2016, under the framework of the G20 Summit, the country committed with the Hangzhou Consensus, a package of policies and actions based, among other principles, in the integration, i.e., "pursue innovative growth concepts and policies by forging synergy among fiscal, monetary and structural policies, enhancing coherence between economic, labor, employment, and social policies as well as combining demand management with

⁸ The non-interference is among the 1954 Chinese foreign affairs "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence," namely, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful co-existence and are still relevant to understand the core guidelines of its current foreign policy.

supply-side reforms, short-term with mid-to-long-term policies, economic growth with social development and environmental protection" (G20 Leaders' Communique Hangzhou Summit, 2016).

While the trade dynamics have deliberately emphasized reciprocity (hùtōng yǒu wú), reinforcing singularities vis-à-vis the traditional ODA's approach, the historical refutation of the United States hegemonic pledge has led China to outline an ideological framework towards cooperation.

When analyzing the Sino-African relationship, some scholars would argue that China has employed its dual-track approach of 'reform without losers' to provide its ideological and concrete framework for South-South development for cooperation, which also relies on its millenary tradition of 'teaching how to fish' instead of merely 'offering fish.' Therefore, China would prioritize the employment of its comparative advantage to spread its know-how under development cooperation (Lin 2012; Lin & Wang 2014). On the other hand, it can be argued that the trade patterns regarding such countries depart from domestic structures and the very pursuing of its comparative advantages, that is, it is not a result of a foreign policy towards the African continent.

Nevertheless, in Africa, the manufacturing sector is the core target of the Sino-investments, which enforces the theses that claim the country, instead of a goose (as a reference to the Japanese-led 'flying geese model'), is a dragon in the South-South cooperation, establishing a co-transformative process. From this perspective, the interactions with the continent, specifically the Sub-Saharan African countries could be explained through the New Structural Economics, given the role of structural transformation (Lin 2012; Lin & Wang 2014).

While it is argued that SSA cannot replicate the manufacturing-led growth model of East Asia (Stiglitz 2017), its peculiar structural transformation towards less traditional industries, encompassing tradable services and ICT, still leave room to develop a non-smokestack industrialization process (Monga 2018).

In that context, China can be critical if changing its preferential trading agreements from bilateral deals to a single and comprehensive Africa-wide initiative (Monga 2018), replacing the commodity-based imports former trends, or fostering further turnkey contracts as a supplier in fields like energy and transport (Chen &

Nord 2018).

In recent years, some new concepts have been proposed to broaden the scope of development cooperation beyond ODA as a necessary means to foster sustainable development goals (SDGs). For example, Justin Yifu Li and Yan Wang use "development finance" to capture both official and private finance to pursue development objectives (Lin & Wang, 2015). In addition to ODA, it would include OOF, OOF-like loans, and investments for development as a whole. They emphasize that special attention should be paid to the non-monetary development assistance provided by Southern partners, such as "turnkey projects," "real sector (barter) exchanges," and "resource financed infrastructure" (RFI).

Although the rise of public debts and the decrease of mega-infrastructure projects due to the reduction of such exports in sub-Saharan Africa remain unclear and comparisons with Latin America go beyond this work's scope, this scenario illustrates a significant discrepancy with the latter vis-à-vis China.

Aside from a long-term relationship with the African continent, the peculiar threats and potentialities to its development justify some considerations about the commodity-based and deindustrialization processes.

The Prospects for 2030 based on the Chinese structural reforms, published in the 2018 edition of the Latin American Economic Outlook, emphasized that the Chinese per-capita consumption of sugar, poultry, and sheep meat should have a 20% increase. Also, fish, vegetable oils, fruits, vegetables, milk, and beef are expected to have a double-rate increase.

While it is expected that the Chinese structural reforms and sociocultural changing patterns lead to a double-rate increase of fish, vegetable oils, fruits, vegetables, milk, and beef, having significant impacts in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Guatemala, the features of those shifts for the local communities and spaces are still unclear and rely on a law and policy framework to a large extent.

In the socio-political realm, the project for a common destiny for humanity might get along with the inequality challenges for fairness throughout the countries. Latin America is an unequal region in the world. Ten from the top fifteen world-ranked countries with the highest inequality levels are in the region (PNUD 2010).

Concomitantly, the foreign direct investment in Latin America and the Caribbean has had a controversial role in the area's development itself, mainly due to the profits repatriation and the imbalances it provokes in most of the balance of payments (CEPAL 2015). Therefore, the Chinese trade and investments' potential to promote sustainable development in the region also relies on attention to these variables.

Those differences might be necessary to understand the relevancy that changing agriculture patterns might have for both regions. In other words, we would explore the extent to which an alternative approach to agricultural commodities, by aggregating value to the goods as for changing the agrarian exports could be explored.

Since 2009, China has surpassed the US as the leading trade partner of Brazil, and since the first beginning, the former has mainly exported manufactured products. In contrast, the latter is mostly qualified as a commodity provider, encompassing petroleum, iron ore, and some agricultural products, such as soybeans, of which China has demanded over thirty percent of the worldwide production.

This aspect underscores a controversial issue in academia in the Global South. The agribusiness itself raises the debate on whether the Chinese investments to control transnational companies in the regions are cooperation or neocolonial, mostly regarding environmental issues and sovereignty on natural resources.

One of the core Brazilian think tanks, the "Fundação Getulio Vargas", under its Agribusiness Center (*Centro de Agronegócios da Fundação Getulio Vargas*) has recently released a bilingual edition on "Brazilian Agribusiness: China and international trade" (FGV 2017).

Among the potentials and challenges for the Brazilian farmers, the study highlights the necessity to invest in the processed food market instead of commodities and raw materials, mainly concerning the items that are not on the list of essential products for Chinese self-sufficiency. Therefore, it would help the country to increase its diversity and expand the trade itself.

The report also emphasizes the vast contrast between greater and lesser aggregate value activities because of the two contracts' competitive distinctions and the diplomatic and geopolitical challenges to reduce the existing trade barriers.

Despite the close commercial relationship between Brazil and China, the latter

is not among its largest investors, which correspond to the Netherlands (18,6%), United States (16,6%), Luxemburg (7,9%), and Spain (7,4%), from 2001 to 2014.

In 2017, the global FDI to Brazil increased by 8% compared to the previous year. The country is currently the fourth largest beneficiary of the FDI, mostly related to foreign companies' large acquisitions. In Latin America, nine out of ten took place in Brazil, and seven consisted of Chinese purchases in gas transmission, oil and electricity, and agribusiness (UNCTAD 2018).

In comparative terms, the agribusiness field consists of a small percentage of the FDIs in Brazil, considering the inflows in the industrial, extractive, and service realms. The main reasons are related to legal restrictions and bureaucratic issues concerning the FDI in the rural sector.

Nevertheless, because of the progressive shifts in the Chinese development strategy, as we will discuss and released in the 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development, Brazil can play a relevant role in sustaining Chinese food security.

A recent example that illustrates the Brazilian focus on this potential is its investments in the Chinese state-owned company China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation-COFCO, and the Sino-investments in the expansion of its business in Brazil. The enterprise incorporated Nidera and Noble Group in Brazil (two major agribusiness companies). It had recently restructured its high command, which now has Brazilian officers as the soy division heads and the financial assets.

According to national sources, COFCO intends to double in up to two years the exportation of commodities in the Brazilian territory, which nowadays correspond to about nine million tons, and spend about US\$ 3bi until 2021. In 2017, the company represented almost 8% of the Brazilian exports in corn, soy, and beans (Relatório Reservado 2018).

On the other side, China may raise its criteria on Brazil's infrastructure to develop such a role as an essential and strategic partner to direct its investments to optimize the relationship between the two countries. Still, Brazil can comply with lower environmental costs if compared to the progressively high standards from sustainable agriculture procedures in the Chinese territory (Leusin Jr. 2017).

In Argentina, COFCO also purchased the national companies Nidera and Noble and had the highest exports of grains in 2018. The Argentinian president, currently at the end of his mandate, during the campaign, disclosed a 'strategic development plan that he summarized as transforming the country into the 'world's supermarket' (Calzada y Ramseyer 2019).

From 2000 to July 2018, the large land acquisitions (also known as land grabbing)⁹ in Latin America and the Caribbean took place in Argentina and Brazil, both in terms of the number of transactions and land stretch. Over fifty percent of the tracked concluded transactions (601) were led by foreigners (outside the subcontinent itself), respectively the United States (1.518.584 hectare and 73 transactions), the Netherlands (1.125.683 hectare and 27 transactions), and China (1.095.501 hectare and 19 transactions). Over 65% of the activities relate to agriculture, among which 48% are the cultivation of crops for nutrition, 24% for livestock, 21% for biofuels, and the remaining of no commodities and non-specific agriculture (Calzada y Ramseyer 2019).

The Sino-Brazilian alliance consists of a specifically relevant epicenter of that analysis in both abstract and concrete terms. On the one hand, the two countries have adopted congruent speeches about global governance challenges in the realm of the G77+China, encompassing the push for reforms in the international organizations' structure and some sustainable development variables.

It goes beyond its economic dimension. For instance, the environmental and climatic change agenda include underlying challenges to the Global South, such as the principle of the common but differentiated responsibility and the focus on national economic development as a means to pursue sustainable economic goals. More recently, Brazil, China, India, and South Africa (BASIC) fostered the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as an own coalition (Hallding et al. 2011; Downie & Williams 2018).

⁹ The data source defines land grabbing as the transferences of the right to use, control, and possession of land through purchases, leasing or concessions from the year 2000. They are taken into account if the acquisition surpasses the 200 hectares and whether it might cause a potential conversion of the land ownership from small farmers and local communities, or the provision of ecosystem uses to commercial use. The concept is based on Anseeuw, W.; Boche, M.; Breu, T.; Giger, M.; Lay, J.; Messerli, P. and Nolte, K. (2012) "Transnational land deals for agriculture in the Global South. *Analytical Report based on the Land Matrix Database*, CDE, CIRAD, GIGA. Bern, Montpellier, Hamburg.

The cross-institutional dynamics between the two states have also focused on the green infrastructure, in both multilateral and bilateral levels, as a conceptual milestone that comes along with the discussion on the new trends for multilateralism. The concept emerged from the New Development Bank (NDB), the BRICS multilateral development bank, and encompasses agriculture, energy efficiency, and development finance, emphasizing the South-South cooperation for development (NDB 2015). In the BRICS countries, the environmental rhetoric has been raised since the creation of a workgroup in Moscow (April 2015) to deal with such matters to discuss priority areas of cooperation.

For example, in 2017, the NDB issued its first green bonds, pushing to the regional cooperation realm a tool explored by Brazil and China in their domestic domains, once the credits must be allocated into environmentally responsible initiatives. Since 2016, Brazil has issued several laws and administrative acts to implement this model as a core legal instrument in its development bank, BNDES, encompassing the Climate Bonds Initiative to create a Sustainable Energy Fund (December 2016) with the Vinci Partners, a fund of R\$ 500 mi (2017) should allocate 24% of the bonds for forest/sustainable agriculture.

On the other hand, the Chinese yuan represents 74% of the total transactions regarding this mechanism, underscoring the growing relationship between the green bonds and the country's infrastructure projects. In June 2017, Brazil and China established a joint fund to sponsor infrastructure, industry, and agribusiness projects, reinforcing this financing model. In the same year, the G20 raised a strategic partnership to enhance the development plan's green bonds employment.

Nevertheless, the challenge remains to give substantial content to the sustainable dimension that lies beneath the trade and investment outline between the countries. The emphasis on the agricultural sector turns to be especially relevant to such qualitative analysis.

The domestic normative backgrounds regarding land issues are also essential to disclose non-state actors' role in discussing and promoting sustainability. Besides the recent legal reforms in Brazil to specifically address the pressure against the land acquisition by Chinese companies (Fernandes 2018; Oliveira 2018), recent shifts in administrative and environmental issues should have consequences over the current

commodities scenario.

Thus, these data disclose important premises to reflect on the kind of development that is fostered under the expansion of agricultural trends in the subcontinent, and that should be further explored by looking into the Brazilian example.

3. Understanding the role of agriculture: food as commodity

Like the other Latin American countries, Brazil was an Iberian colony that emerged as a state while preserving some of its former power and economic dynamics. Although a more in-depth analysis of these features would be valuable, we will focus on some of the core issues relevant to understanding the ongoing impacts on agrarian issues.

In Brazil, the country's modernization in the 19th century did not change the rural elites' patterns, which preserved their patriarchal, catholic, and enslaver values and will be the axiological ground for the urban middle class. To a certain extent, there was transplantation of traditional privatism and individualism to life in the city. Simultaneously, the European anti-Iberian mindset was selectively absorbed to legitimate ideas like progress and modernity (Souza 2017). Those are some of the reasons why the very perspective of modernization is challenged in Brazilian political thought.

Since its inception, the Brazilian state had a conservative basis because its political independence did not prevent the country from relying economically on the relationship with England. The state kept a two-folded subservience to rural oligarchies (for instance, introducing the paid work only by the late 19th century) and subordination to the foreign power, in a phenomenon defined as "patrimonialism" (Fernandes 1987; Faoro 2013).

Because of such peculiarities in the Brazilian historical process – some of them shared with other Latin American countries – and as a consequence of adopting the historical materialism as a method (Marx 1982, I, 338), we cannot generalize the role of the peasant farmers in the social struggle. Instead, we will superficially cover some of the elements to support our argument on their relevance for creating alternatives

to capitalism before describing family farming in current Brazil and its possible correlation with other development options within capitalism.

When emphasizing the importance of the peasantry in building socialism, Engels (1981, 59), referring to Western Europe, warned that there was a progressive decay in the small farming, being critical that a strong socialist workers party should go towards the countryside, once the peasantry is an essential factor in both production and political power.

Although the excerpt, along with other Marxist texts on the collapse of the Russian communes, could lead to a secondary or passive role to the peasantry in the construction of socialism (Malagodi 2005; Bombardi 2004), it also shows the complexity that autonomy and integration have to understand the peasant movement.

As opposed to the European and the Russian contexts, the agrarian factor preserved specific stability on its importance because the land and its use have historically mediated the economic and political transitions in Latin America. As we said, beyond the exploitative premise that underlies the exploitation colonialism, the posterior socioeconomic dynamics reinforce similar patterns in the "inception" and "modernization" of these states.

Speaking of a "pre-capitalism" would be, then, inaccurate because the dependent capitalism should be better defined as a *sui generis* capitalism. The modern industries in Europe relied on the availability of agricultural commodities from the dependent countries, besides their potential as a demander for manufactures. Some of these patterns will be kept throughout history to integrate Latin America in the international labor division and in different phases of the capitalism itself (Marini 1973).

As Marini also argues, in peripheric societies, such as the Latin-Americans, the natural logic of the capital's spoliation is maximized, either by extremely precarious conditions of the labor market in broad terms or because the state never assumes its role as a national planner or producer (what he calls 'superexploitation').

In Brazil, for instance, such dynamics were preserved and exacerbated under the military regime, consolidating the ascension of monopolies and finance capital

domestically, what he calls "subimperialism" (Marini, 1972, 21):

Just as the dictatorship broke with the myth of a redistribution of income which would reduce the social disparities within the system, so it also renounced a policy of agrarian reform which would reduce the inequalities existing in the countryside. Since 1964 (year of the military coup), under the pressure which the rise in agricultural prices exercised on the inflation rate, the government opted for containing prices by force, offering, at the same time, promising conditions to the latifundistas for the exploitation of labor. The mechanization of agriculture, the extension of labor legislation to the countryside (which led to a reduction in the number of permanent employees on the latifundios), and the extension of the area devoted to cattle raising, all demanded tearing the land away from the small producer (co-proprietor, posseiro, mini-fundista), thus turning him into a day laborer and incorporating him into the agricultural proletariat¹⁰.

The Marxist dependency theory departs, then, from this fragile composition of the state but underscores, as its economic reasoning, the role that Latin America displayed in incrementing the rates of plus-valia and profit in the industrial nations, arguing that it had an opposite effect over the continent's countries. On the domestic level, the nations will try to compensate the losses in the unequal exchange of goods in the international market by over-exploring the workers instead of finding out ways to rectify the goods themselves.

Unlike the operating mechanisms within the same productive sphere, the very fact that nations can exchange different products (e.g., manufactures vis-à-vis raw materials), generally based on its lack of productive capacity, leaves room for undermining the law of value, with consequential free cessions of part of the value generated in the production process within the disfavored nation (Marini, 1973).

In that sense, the deterioration of the agricultural commodities has proved to be artificial and, at the same time, critical to understanding the development process in Latin America. As for our hypothesis, this premise is important. That is, the discrepancy among the products and its chains would increase the variables to influence the price of the good during the exchange process. Obviously, and in a very rudimentary analysis, speaking of goods, it has been used to aggregate value to technologies that could impact the rates of

¹⁰ In the same work, Marini advocates for an increase in the rural proletariat and its dynamic as a *conditio sine qua non* to keep the importance of the peasantry for the Left by stating that the life in the periphery of the provincial cities would create a link between the urban worker and the rural worker (p. 24).

plus-valia and/or profit.¹¹

However, this model explores one of the basic contradictions of capitalism because, by offering the basic demand for nutrition that was critical to raise the working class to industrial countries (and, thus, increase their need for such goods), Latin America reduced the actual value of the labor power, enhancing their relative plus-valia (Marini 1973, 107-108):

(i)t should be noted that it is not only within the scope of its economy that Latin American dependence is contradictory: the participation of Latin America in the progress of the capitalist mode of production in industrial countries will also be contradictory. As we indicated before, the increase in the work's productive capacity leads to a more than proportional consumption of raw materials. To the extent that a greater relative surplus-value effectively accompanies this higher productivity, this means that the value of the variable capital decreases concerning that of the constant capital (which includes the raw materials), that is, that the composition value of the capital rises. Now, what capitalism appropriates is not directly the surplus-value produced but the part of it that corresponds to it in the form of profit. As the rate of profit cannot be set only concerning the variable capital, but over the total advanced capital in the production process, that is, wages, facilities, machinery, raw materials, etc., the result of the increase of surplus-value tends to be — as long as it implies, even in relative terms, a simultaneous rise in the value of the constant capital used to produce it — a decrease in the rate of profit.¹²

Therefore, the contradiction arises from the structural demand for food. The artificial devaluation of the productive process emerges from a blend of international oversupply (for its predictable impacts on the competition) and the superexploitation of the dependent country's productive factors.

Under the commodification of nature on its multiple dimensions and by different actors (over traditional knowledge, the natural resources, for example), this process can be maximized and gets more complex connotations. It also provides space for reshaping and adding more value to the so-called "raw products" (specifically under the sustainability rhetoric) in favor of marginalized classes. Accordingly, for the current challenges, we are not advocating for an intrinsic

¹¹ We are aware of some important variables, like what Marx points out in *Das Kapital* about the contradictory means through which foreign trade can contribute to the rise of profit rate. From now, our initial analysis will not be able to entertain them any further.

¹² Translated by the author from the Spanish (original) version.

relevance of the category "country" or "dependent country" as such, but questioning other ways to think of the class struggle for land in this context.

4. Agriculture, family farming, and struggle

It is undeniable that Brazil lived some industrial waves, mostly in the 20th century, when the average of ten percent growth in the manufacturing sector between 1935 to 1985 (Oliveira 2003) had led to the rise of a significant urban union movement (which, for instance, created the grounds for the Workers' Party).

However, the process was neither sustained nor resulted in replacing the importance given to raw materials and commodities. In the opposite direction, the democratic re-opening of the country and the adoption of neoliberal policies allowed an increasing participation of transnational corporations and international banks that ended up being the driving forces for enhancing the extractive growth model, reinforcing trends towards deindustrialization. Such dynamics were mainly kept under the leftist governments (Petras 2014, 303), also helped by contextual factors like the "commodities boom," strengthening the debate's importance.

Despite the many examples of rural insurgencies during the colonial and republican times and the critical role that the Catholic Church had in organizing the peasant movement historically, the unions' and leagues' inception is controversial in the country (Ribeiro 2013). Formally, some of them relate to the Brazilian Communist Party (Partido Comunista Brasileiro-PCB) and the origin of the Brazilian Working Party (Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro-PTB).

The Brazilian state promulgated its first relevant legislation for agrarian reform during the military government's early years. The small enforcement during the dictatorship was followed by a constitution that, under the pressure of multiple segments of the civil society, established provisions on both rural and urban reform. After the military coup, the first directly elected president, as for implementing the internationalization strategy of the Brazilian economy, and followed by other governments with a deliberate neoliberal orientation, kept the peasantry's space substantially marginalized and reduced until the election of Lula da Silva, in 2003.

Here, we would like to emphasize the ideological dimension of such a process.

Two main groups emerged: the agribusiness sector as opposed to non-extensive producers, a large group of family farmers together with the victims of land concentration, urban gentrification, as well as historical minorities, such as the indigenous, riverside communities, and the quilombolas (original communities with direct African heritage).

Until 2003, the Brazilian civil law considered the indigenous to be incapable of carrying out certain civil life activities. The mindset of agribusiness as progress enhanced the stigma towards the land struggle. Accordingly, while some of the social movements organized their educational systems and curricula (encompassing educators for emancipation, like Paulo Freire), and the rise of the Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores-PT) provided some space for discussing alternative education (e.g., the introduction of History of Africa and the Indigenous in the curriculum and shifts in the policies for indigenous schools) and developing family farming, few guidelines had a more confrontational approach to challenge the land concentration or its protagonists¹³.

We can argue that it enhanced the ideological and anti-capitalist connotation of this struggle, but, on the other hand, this process amplified the gap between the debate and the rest of the society. Of course, this is a simplistic approach to the issue once the agrarian elites have substantial control of communication and are a traditional political class, both in the Legislative Power and the Executive at the local level (municipalities). However, it is still important to highlight its revolutionary potential, that is, a more elaborated theoretical approach to think of sustainability, environmental protection, land rights that have taken place in the country. As an illustrative reaction, a massive advertisement strategy, combining different vehicles, started in July 2011. It was called "Movimento de Valorização do Agro-Sou Agro," "a multisectoral initiative of companies and entities representing Brazilian agribusiness and rural producers". The campaign was sponsored by large groups like the Brazilian Association of Rural Marketing and Agribusiness, Vale, Monsanto, and Nestle (Bruno 2012).

¹³Yet, some authors, as Sader (2003, 185-187), state that PT chose a kind of program of exit from neoliberalism based on the alliance of productive capital against speculative among others, aimed at "encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises, the internal consumer market, the expansion of food production, support for land reform, to advance socially(...)".

The concept of agribusiness relies on large-scale production, the employment of biotechnologies, the connection with the financial capital, and new production dynamics (Frederico & Cárdenas 2017).

In peripheric capitalism, the processes that emerged in former exploitation colonies and under which the rural issue has resulted in the two main groups that dispute the land. The agribusiness is organized mainly into the Associação Brasileira de Agronegócio (Brazilian Association of Agribusiness-ABAG) and the Confederação da Agricultura e Pecuária do Brasil (Soybeans and raw sugar are among the four largest exports of Brazil, and China is its hugest trade partner (\$48B), followed by the United States (\$25.1B), Argentina (\$17.8B), the Netherlands (\$7.57B) and Germany (\$6.18B). When it comes to the profile of the exports to China, in 2017, soybeans (42%), iron ore (22%), and crude petroleum (15%) led the list, with a total of \$48bi.

Yet, family farming has set up some of the resisting patterns that agricultural development may take outside the spread-out of monocultures and large-scale exporting models that were modernized under agribusiness and the emergence of corporations as social actors. As we pointed out, beyond the claim to reshape the rural workforce, it introduces its own approach to education and the relationship with nature.

Under the current concept of 'food sovereignty,' the discussions around hunger have recalled a political approach that emphasized it as an outcome of predatory social relations of production (Castro 1983).

Agroecology as a scientific field emerged as a means to "study, design and manage agroecosystems that are both productive and natural resource-conserving, and that is also culturally sensitive, socially just and economically viable". It claims to be non-neutral and a critique of the conventional-industrial agricultural paradigm, aligned with economic viability as social justice for farmers and consumers. Therefore, it relies on a perspective of food security related to the conservation of natural resources and agrobiodiversity while encompassing different knowledge systems (SOCLA 2019).

In that context, agroecology displays a role in reshaping the relationship between labor and value, given its premise that nature itself (and processes

encompassing the worker-nature interactions) would add value to a specific good. Given the historical and contextual variables to explain the exchange value, in the Marxist perspective, the social relations and the "social existence" of their totality (Marx 2008) bring more flexibility to think about the interactions with the land at different levels. If, as Marx emphasized, the commodification of the land ownership led to establishing a social class (the 'agricultural entrepreneurs') and showed the cyclical value of agricultural commodities¹⁴, there is room to discuss different shades of what the "ground rent" would consist in nowadays.

If, on the one hand, the small-peasant land proprietorship through an excessive fragmentation would result in a threat to productive social forces of labor, on the other, the lower price of agricultural commodities was not an intrinsic outcome of the labor productivity but from the producers' poverty (Marx, Capital Book III apud Lenin 1904). As the very Marxist methodology would implicate, given the unfinished nature of this work, and as suggested mostly in chapter 37, the issue of ground rent should be interpreted under the limits of an abstract notion of progress and taking the representation of historical development.

Those antitheses got more complex shades under different waves of marketization, where the initial commodification of labor, land, and capital expanded towards more in-depth and more sophisticated fictive goods, such as the rights over natural resources (for instance, water, power resources, GMOs and carbon emissions), fostered by new financial instruments and environmental crises (Burawoy 2010).

Thus, we argue that the Marxist methodology and the introduced complex categories and interactions among land, labor, and value allow resignifications and are useful to understand some of the connections on the role of agriculture with attempts to take it as a tool in alternative approaches to development in the Global

¹⁴ As Lenin highlights, "The difference between this price and the price of production on better soil (or in better conditions) constitutes differential rent. Analyzing this in detail, and showing how it arises out of the difference in fertility of different plots of land, and out of the difference in the amount of capital invested in land, Marx fully reveals (see also Theories of Surplus Value, in which the criticism of Rodbertus is most noteworthy) the error of Ricardo. The latter considered that differential rent is derived only when there is a successive transition from better land to worse. On the contrary, there may be inverse transitions, land may pass from one category into others (owing to advances in agricultural techniques, the growth of towns, and so on), and the notorious "law of diminishing returns", which charges nature with the defects, limitations and contradictions of capitalism, is profoundly erroneous." (Lenin 1977).

South. From the epistemological perspective, then, Latin America, mainly under the remembrance of its original communities' knowledge has its foundations for alternative approaches to development. Concepts such as 'Pacha Mama' (or Mother Nature) or 'Sumak Kawsay' (*buen vivir* or good living) called for sustainable development and harmony and were encompassed by normative texts, as some constitutions in South America, and environmental provisions.

The remarkable and profound aspect of these alternative approaches on their multiple dimensions is that they arise from traditionally marginalized groups. They encourage to break from the roots with several concepts assumed as indisputable and question the homogenizing and totalizing capitalist structure. They are the voices of "the others" that, from alterity, demand the construction of the Good Living and the recognition of their legitimacy to propose alternatives, emerging from non-capitalist community roots, poses a different worldview than the western construction of hegemonic civilization. It breaks equally with the anthropocentric logic of capitalism as a dominant civilization as well as with the various "real" socialisms existing so far and their intrinsic contradictions.¹⁵

It is worth stating that such approaches should not be taken as categories or a theoretical unfoldment of the ecosocialism as such, given their decolonial claims and disruptive epistemological goals. However, some of the ecosocialist premises and its final goals to agricultural production are similar.¹⁶

5.Transforming development through agriculture? The Sino-Brazilian challenges and potentials

¹⁵ Translated from the Spanish (original) by the author.

¹⁶ Löwy advocates for a global transition (the "Great Transition"), that assumes, for instance, intensive assistance from the Global North to the Global South, which arguably goes against the emancipatory premises of some of the mentioned decolonial movements in Latin America. On the other hand, the qualitative transformation of development as suggested by him lately may comply with revindications in other post-capitalist theoretical constructions. He argues that "while many poorer countries will need to expand agricultural production to nourish hungry, growing populations, the ecosocialist solution is to promote agroecology methods rooted in family units, cooperatives, or larger-scale collective farms—not the destructive industrialized agribusiness methods involving intensive inputs of pesticides, chemicals, and GMOs" (Löwy 2018). Elsewhere he also states for a 'global democratic planning' based on the failure of the bureaucratic socialism of the former Soviet Union in creating new forms of production and the necessity to achieve ecosocialism under democratic means (Löwy 2015). That may leave less room to think of other forms of transition and cooperation, as we are speculating here.

There are substantial differences between food security and food sovereignty within the debate about food justice that cannot be further explored here; they have been used in multiple contexts and with different scopes throughout time. Also, the idea of food security in the official UN system discussion varied according to the concept of human development and sustainability itself. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), currently headed by the Chinese Qu Dongyu, food security would be defined as "a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (2002).

The concept of food sovereignty has a broader dimension because it will discuss the conditions under which the food is produced concerning its socioeconomic premises. A definition was provided in the Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty, as "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations" (Niyéléni 2007).

In China, both expressions, "security" (ānquán) and "sovereignty" (zhǔquán) for food seem to have been employed according to with this distinction. For example, the former appears on the text of the 13th Five-year plan on National Economic and Social Development and other official documents. The perspective of food sovereignty, in the other side, names the People's Food Sovereignty Network (Rénmín Shíwù Zhǔquán Wǎngluò Xíngchéng), that exists since August 2013 and congregates members from the academia, peasants, traditional populations, and other organizations. Aside from a currently updated website, the network has a forum to discuss issues about food sovereignty.

The market for organics and its correlation with food security is not only a feature in Brazil but also in China. The country increased its national standards in 2011 (Guójiā Biāozhǔn, under the GB/T 19630-2011), and, by then, it published a list of 24 domestic bodies that were authorized to certificate organics¹⁷. The regulation

¹⁷ The original list is available in the Certification and Accreditation Administration of the People's Republic of China-CNCA's website (http://www.cnca.gov.cn/ywzl/rz/spncp/zspj/201205/t20120516_2010.shtml).

for organics, from 2005, was progressively enforced to encompass foreign goods, with stricter rules for the label.

Afterward, there was a trend towards the internationalization of the debate in China, including the recognition of four foreign certification organizations by 2016–Ecocert China, Ceres, IMO, and BCS (KIWI). The country had the domestic guidelines approved by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM–Organics International) in 2017. It hosted events where foreign organic goods were also promoted, such as the China International Import Expo and the BioFach, both in Shanghai.

According to IFOAM and the Global Organic Trade database, China is the fifth country in extension in organic farmland and the fourth largest global consumer, with a domestic market of \$2,839.2mn in 2017 that should increase by 20% the following year.

In the current 13th Five-year plan on National Economic and Social Development (2016-2020), China highlights green development as one of its five principles and emphasizes the necessity¹ to implement a strategy for food safety, being self-sustainable in grain production (gǔwù jīběn zìgěi), and ensure agricultural supply¹⁸. The plan also underscores the goal to ensure the quality and safety of agricultural products.

Agriculture was included in the Going Out since its first beginning, and other programs also emphasized its importance. Among them is the National Medium and Long Term Food Security Plan (2008-2020), which noted the need to accelerate agricultural FDI abroad for China's food security. Likewise, the 12th Five-Year Plan recommended increasing international agrarian cooperation.

Currently, domestic crops cannot be based on genetically modified seeds. However, China imports commodities with this feature for livestock, which is the soybean case from Brazil, under the approval of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and its National Biosafety Committee.

It also keeps a regularly updated site for consultation (<http://ogasearch.food.cnca.cn/oga/query/index.jsp>).

¹⁸ The original provision states “确保谷物基本自给、口粮绝对安全，调整优化农业结构，提高农产品综合生产能力和质量安全水平，形成结构更加合理、保障更加有力的农产品有效供给。”

What remains uncertain is whether and how the demands for better crops, including organics, and the goals towards food security and food sovereignty will impact the Chinese foreign policy and trade patterns. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the Land Matrix database, the crops for human consumption have led the statistics about the destination of lands purchased by Chinese State-owned companies, followed by deforestation and non-agrarian commodities.

In Latin America, the call for an 'integral and inclusive agrarian reform for Buen Vivir' often refers to the Chinese agrarian reform (Tórrez & Martínez 2019). However, the recent incursion of the three principal owners of over 50% of the commercialized seeds (Monsanto-Bayer, Syngenta-ChemChina, and Dupont-Dow) towards international protection and domestic laws of patent rules had put the China National Chemical Corporation-ChemChina (Zhōngguó huàgōng jítuán gōngsī) at stake¹⁹.

For instance, in October 2018, Vía Campesina²⁰, the largest world peasants' movement, released the Global Campaign for Seeds, a heritage of Peoples in the Service of Humanity", point out the lobby of the four major agricultural corporations (BASF added to three mentioned above).

In December 2018, the UN General Assembly initially adopted the United Nations declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas (A/HRC/39/L.16), based on the draft presented by Vía Campesina in 2008 to the Human Rights Council (HRC), with the support of other organizations.

The draft was first submitted to scrutiny at the HRC by the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador and South Africa, and China participated in the preparatory working group.

The Chinese representative, Mr. Jiang Yingfeng, emphasized the government's commitment to its provisions, which were already enforced by domestic laws, showing concerns about some definitions, such as peasants and land (Yingfeng 2018).

¹⁹ In May 2017, the State-owned company purchased the Swiss-based corporation, which by then was the number three in global production of seeds, and was the world leader in producing pesticides, insecticides, and herbicides (Colvin 2017).

²⁰ The movement was created during the II Congress of the Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos (UNAG) in Managua (Nicaragua, 1992), and, until 2017, had 87 of its 182 members in Latin America and the Caribbean; South America is the subregion with the highest amount of affiliates (46) and China is not represented (Vía Campesina 2018).

During the General Assembly's procedure, China ratified its support, contrasting Brazil, Argentina, Colombia's abstentions, and the United Kingdom's opposition, United States.

In Brazil, the *Via Campesina* is formed by the MST, the Movement of the Small Farmers – MPA (Movimento dos Pequenos Agricultores), Movement of Those Affected by Dams (Movimento dos atingidos por Barragens), Movement of Peasant Women (Movimento das Mulheres Camponesas-MMC), the Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra-CPT), the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura-CONTAG) and the National Federation of Workers in Family Farming (Federação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura Familiar- FETRAF).

Since 1995, the Union Movement of Farmers (Movimento Sindical de Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras Rurais-MSTTR) has outlined its Alternative Plan for Sustainable and Solidary Rural Development (Projeto Alternativo de Desenvolvimento Rural Sustentável e Solidário-PADRSS), focused on family farming as the basis for development, as well as the break with patriarchy and the emphasis on public policies (Contag 2019).

It is estimated that the organized agrarian movement in Brazil has over 20 million members, fighting for the rights of more than 15.7 million (PNAD / IBGE, 2009) of rural and forest men and women who are family farmers. Mostly, campers or land reform settlers and wage earners, such as rural, sharecroppers, lenders, extractivists, quilombolas, artisanal and riverine fishermen²¹.

The definition of family farming is provided under the Law n. 11.326/2006 and the Decree n. 9.064/2017, which changed some of the criteria, nearly related to the primary income sources. About 80,89mn hectares (23% of the Brazilian agricultural area) are cultivated under family farming, but 77% of the country's rural establishments. It shows a large discrepancy between the land occupation and

²¹ On the past October 25, 2019, the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) released the 2017 Agrarian Census. For the first time, it had specific information about family farming, based on an agreement between IBGE and CONTAG. We could not look at the data further yet, but, between the former census in 2006 and 2017, 9,5% of the family farms disappeared. With the increasing mechanization, the agriculture field has lost 1.5 million workers in these 11 years, and the number of establishments that use pesticides has risen 20% (IBGE 2019).

economic activities, given that 77% of the land is occupied by 23% of the total establishments (IBGE 2019). They are legally defined as a small establishment (up to 4 fiscal modules, varying by city), having half of the family workforce; also, the establishment's agricultural activity must make up at least half of family income and have strictly family management.

In contrast, in May 2018, a significant organization in biotechnology (Conselho de Informações sobre Biotecnologia) disclosed a joint report with CropLife International about the impacts of China's procedures to approve GMOs in the Brazilian market. The document concluded that "Brazil would have a profit of US\$ 3bi in five years if China had predictable and science-based procedures". Based on the current exports of soy and corn and the fact that China imports about 60% of the Brazilian production, the study by the Agribusiness Consulting Group-Informa shows a loss of 8 billion tons from 2017 to 2022 (CIB 2018).

Until October 2019, Brazil had 1.348 authorized agricultural companies exporting to China, which is about 67% of the total companies with formal operating authorization by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. Despite the criticisms about the procedural deadlocks (it takes about 120 days to have the goods approved), China is the country that has authorized the highest number of Brazilian agricultural exporters. Only 250 companies are operating in the European Union market (Brazilian Ministry of Agriculture and Foodstock 2018).

Since July 2016, the State Administration for Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine of China implemented the Decree AQSIQ N° 177/2016 for inspection, quarantine, supervision, and administration of inbound and outbound (including transit) grains. It applies to the seeds of the cereals, beans, and oil crops and the tuberous root or tuber of tuber crops, to be used for processing but not for breeding purpose²².

In the same year, the total goods and services resulted from R\$ 1,3 trillion (23,6% of the Brazilian GDP). By 2017, the country was the fourth-largest exporter of agricultural commodities (led by sugar, coffee, orange juice, and soybeans). It is also

²² 第二条 本办法适用于进出境（含过境）粮食检验检疫监督管理。本办法所称粮食，是指用于加工、非繁殖用途的禾谷类、豆类、油料类等作物的籽实以及薯类的块根或者块茎等。（The resolution was disclosed in January 2016).

the biggest exporter of organic sugar, fruits, and nuts that are produced under environmentally protected or traditional zones (Cerrado, Amazon, Atlantic Forest, Quilombola and Riverside lands etc.), which generally involves the work of traditional or settled populations (Decree n. 6040/2007). However, Brazil lacks official statistics on organic products and producers' sources; there was an estimated Agrarian census to take place in 2016, but it never happened.

In 2003, during the first year of the Workers Party's presidential mandate, Brazil issued a law to define organic goods, excluding GMOs, and recognizing the processes under traditional and rural communities and the reduction of non-renewable power resources (Law n. 10.831/2003).

As we said, throughout history, Brazil has preserved its colonial patterns of land concentration and preserves latifundial structures. Currently, only 93,000 properties (1.6% of the total) correspond to about 47% of rural properties, about 30% of the Brazilian territory.

Nevertheless, over 70% of the domestic consumption of food comes from family farming. Over 82% of this production under the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra (Peasants Workers Movement, MST), organized under a hundred cooperatives, over 1,9 thousand associations, and 350,000 families.

Until October 2019, Brazil had 19,979 enterprises registered as organic producers, but no data about its exports aggregated by product or country. Over 75% of the registered producers in the National Register of Organic Producers (Cadastro Nacional de Produtores Orgânicos, CNPO) were family farmers until 2017.

Yet, the agribusiness sector's domestic pressure to enhance GMO production and increase the use of pesticides is a relevant political factor to take into account. The International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), until 2017, Brazil was the second world-largest user of GMOs, following the United States and Argentina. It means that, until 2016, over 49,1 million hectares of land had transgenic yields in the country.

Since 2002, a bill, known as the "Poison Pack" (PL n. 6.299/02), with the scope of flexibilization of the procedures to approve pesticides, has met resistance in the Brazilian Congress. However, since 2005, successive administrative acts replaced the

Legislative Branch in giving practical effects to the law. In 2018, the unprecedented approval of 314 new pesticides was record-breaking. Still, in 2019, over 382 items were already approved under President Jair Bolsonaro, justified to reduce production costs and enhance competitiveness.

Another countertrend worthy of being further explored is related to Brazil's rising land grabbing because of the growing participation of Chinese State-owned companies in those dynamics. In 2017, Brazilian MST disclosed in Portuguese data about the property of foreign investors, among which the soybeans producer Universo Verde Agronegocios, controlled by the state-owned Chongqing Red Dragonfly Oil Co. Ltd.²³, is pointed out as owning 100 thousand hectares. In 2015, the movement occupied one of its farms in Porto Alegre (southern Brazil), defined as unproductive. The Chinese are also reported as an owner of over 145 thousand hectares of sugarcane plantations²⁴ (MST 2017). These two acquisitions jointly represent about nine percent of the 2,74 million hectares owned by twenty foreign groups.

The dangerous impacts of land grab taken by international actors have recently been in Brazil again because of the fires over biodiverse areas in the past months. Environmental organizations found evidence between large US investors, such as Harvard University Endowment and TIAA (an American private pension fund), and the destruction of Cerrado. The two groups acquired more than \$1bi in agribusiness in the Brazilian farmland in the past twelve years and are two of the largest biome owners (GRAIN 2019).

Despite the international common sense regarding China's role in the post-2008 crisis global land rush, the country has been far from being the leading player in Brazil's land foreignization (Oliveira 2010; Oliveira 2017, 2018).

Yet the acquisition of Syngenta by ChemChina in 2016, as well as the interest

²³ The Brazilian Econodata (a national enterprise directory) specifies that CHONGQING RED DRAGONFLY OIL CO. LTD., as well as DAZU CEREALS & OIL TRADING CO. LTD., LE LE, and SONGQING WEI, are registered as shareholders Available: <<https://www.econodata.com.br/lista-empresas/BAHIA/BARREIRAS/U/12150631000338-UNIVERSO-VERDE-AGRONEGOCIOS-LTDA->>>).

However, we found divergent information about Chongqing Ltd in Brazil, mostly relating to the reported purchases.

²⁴ COFCO did not purchase lands directly, given the legal reforms that Brazil took from 2010 to prevent land acquisition by foreigners. Thus, it followed the trend towards the purchase of companies already operating in the country, in that case, Noble Agri and Nidera.

of other national enterprises of agrochemicals and seeds, can be a threat to the Global North-centered pressure for the expansion of agribusiness in Brazil and other countries in the Global South (Oliveira & Schneider, 2016; Oliveira 2017). In December 2017, the Chinese LongPing High-Tech Agriculture (Lóngpíng Gāokē) and Citic Agrifund (Zhōngxìn Nóngyè Jījīn) acquisitions of DowSementes merged into the company LPSementes, which had, by that time, 18,5% of the corn seed market, being one of the three enterprises in the field (SeedInfo 2017).

These contrasts demonstrate that the feasibility of partnerships in the agricultural field based on alternative economic choices and towards an inclusive and non-capitalist project for development requires clear domestic, bilateral and conjectural priorities.

Conclusions? Possibilities?

One of the open reflections we want to leave, then, is whether those rhetorical (re)constructions of socialism would be able to reframe to any extent the dynamics of interaction and cooperation in the Global South by taking into account the relationship between China and Latin America. If the existing structures, in both trade and financial levels, can encompass either a transition or at least a first step to reshaping the capitalist architecture, from agriculture and food security, and the respective productive systems they engage.

As we suggested, one of the feasible possibilities departs from China's increasing role in adding value to organic products, which also includes the cooperation on the structural and service logistics that assume increasing non-GMOs goods.

Another open remark relates to whether the current Chinese foreign policy's current guidelines, mostly towards the Global South, can lead to other paths towards socialism and the very limits of non-intervention and pragmatism. The challenges and deadlocks are apparent. Aside from the strong ideological dimension that such concepts assume on bridging traditional communities with the law and the state, the local elites of those countries, taking Brazil as an example, consist of the agribusiness sector and are deeply connected with politics, and rulemaking.

In the meantime, though, we believe that even under the existing international

trade system, it is also feasible to set out instruments to facilitate rules and mechanisms of control of organic production. Shared productive strategies and simplified sanitary and phytosanitary measures and standards are diplomatic means to create bilateral or regional dynamics that might work as a means for better imports from the sustainable point of view we are discussing. Brazil and Chile signed a Memorandum of Understanding²⁵ in that sense in 2014, although the Chilean authorities' recent ratification does not allow them to come up with conclusions about its repercussions.

It is essential to state, though, that an occasional increase of such goods as high-value products necessarily relies on effective logistics and trade dynamics that can uphold their respective global value chains.

In that sense, China's role may go from FDIs in infrastructure at the state level cooperation to strategies to overcome deadlocks in the export patterns. Since China does not adopt an interventive approach, we suggest, as a first outlook, that other legal and bargaining means can be employed, and we intend to explore them afterward. They can be alternatives to the conditionality regime and the very lack of FDIs as the core element of the relationship between LA countries, Brazil included, and China.

Another alternative that we explore elsewhere relates to the green bond system, which has been incipiently implemented in the New Development Bank and led the paths of some Chinese infrastructural reforms domestically, e.g., the railway transportation boom of the past ten years.

Given their intrinsic link between investments and environmental standards, the green bonds could be a feasible alternative for the intensely criticized conditionality regime of ODAs and investments and loans under development agencies and by the States themselves. This model has been targeted by China and jointly among the BRICS countries (Alden et al. 2019). In the international trade realm, the developing countries benefit from the "special and differential treatment" (S&D)²⁵ provisions under the WTO Agreements and this could be used to create special regimes for the circulation of organic goods within the Global South. For instance, on September 30, 2018, the Chinese State

²⁵ Nevertheless, on April 1, 2019, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a press release (Nota n. 82, Itamaraty) as a follow-up of President Jair Bolsonaro's official visit to the United States. According to the document, Brazil will start to renounce its privileges under the S&G system to claim its admission as a full member of the OECD (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). Although occasional measures taken in that direction cannot change the status quo of the already implemented or negotiated advantages, it might have implications over what we suggest in this paper, further exploring the preferential regime as a possible premise to facilitate sustainable trade.

Council Duty Commission announced the reduction of the import tariffs for 1,585 food and agriculture related products under the most-favored-nation (MFN) rates regime, such as seafood and juice, to facilitate imports from November 2018. Also, the State Council Tariff Committee reported to WTO the temporary elimination of the import tariffs for plant-based oil meals from January 2019, as for replacing soybean meals, such as coconut, peanut and palm nut oil, which could have an impact in the organic market (Global Agricultural Information Network 2019).

The extent to which these possibilities can be explored or how to think of them in the current scenario of crisis and disruption in Brazil and Latin America maybe varies from optimistic to idealist – or from rhetoric to cynic – but it is at least an attempt to problematize some of the threats for development vis-à-vis the critical role that we believe China can take. Thus, it is always important to remember that “the attractiveness of Marxism does not decrease, as is well proven, with its concrete failures. For the believer of this and other religions, neither the bad priests nor a Church transformed into brutal machinery of repression can compromise the promise of redemption made by the prophets”²⁶ (Rangel 1982, 162-163).

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²⁶ Translated from Spanish (original) by the author.

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