

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Foreign Lobbying: A Case Study Of China's Lobbying For Pakistan's Entry Into BRICS

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Abstract

Shortly after the BRICS Summit 2023 in Johannesburg, Indian news channels claimed China to be lobbying for Pakistan's entry into BRICS, however, without sufficient substantial or theoretical evidence. This study, thus aims to determine the extent to which this claim might hold ground. Moreover, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive framework to analyze and validate international lobbying from the Chinese side in accordance with its foreign policy behavior. For this purpose, the rational policy model of foreign policy analysis has been bridged with a conceptual framework that projects lobbying on the international level. This paper follows a causal design and derives its supporting material from primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. Moreover, this paper establishes that to counter west dominated global system, China has to have an increased influence in BRICS; the addition of Pakistan into BRICS serves as a favorable option in this regard. Thus, it is in the ultimate interest and capability of China to lobby for Pakistan's entry into BRICS.

Keyword: BRICS, lobbying, foreign policy, Pakistan's Entry, projects lobbying, global system,

Introduction:

In August, it was claimed by Indian publications and news outlets that China has been lobbying for BRICS expansion, especially in relation to the Pakistani membership, however, this claim lacked any sufficient evidence. The aforementioned claim came soon after the 2023 BRICS Summit in Johannesburg. With Pakistan

having formally applied for BRICS membership, the focal point of this study remains to specifically determine the extent to which claims about China lobbying for Pakistan are true. Thus, this paper is guided by the research question, "To what extent the Indian claim regarding China's lobbying for Pakistan's entry into BRICS might hold grounds with reality?" An educated guess to

this question is: Pakistani entry into BRICS serves to enhance China's influence in the global political arena, thus China has been lobbying for Pakistan's entry into BRICS. The increased Chinese influence in global politics is the dependent variable, and lobbying for Pakistan is the independent variable. This paper thus, utilizes the rational policy model of foreign policy and bridges it with the conceptual framework of lobbying to justify China's lobbying for Pakistan as a rational choice of foreign policy; that would in turn contribute to an increased Chinese influence in world politics. This study thus aims to provide a comprehensive framework to explain the process of international lobbying; to test, validate, or negate the claim regarding Chinese lobbying for Pakistan; and justify it according to China's foreign policy. This paper starts with reporting the contemporary intra-BRICS dynamics in relation to expansion agendas, identifies China's aspirations for domination, and the sustenance and performance of BRICS despite inherent differences in the member states. Secondly, it provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing lobbying, projecting it on an international level, and aligning it with foreign policy. Thirdly, the conceptual framework is applied to the case under discussion. Lastly, the limitations within the research and areas for future research have been highlighted.

Literature Review:

China has been advocating for BRICS expansion for quite a long time, however, these efforts have been marred because expansion requires a unanimous vote from all existing members. Recent BRICS expansion has triggered several queries and presumptions from both within the BRICS and from the Western media. The recurring themes of these presumptions and predictions mostly constitute claims about

China trying to contradict the Western world or the degree of efficiency BRICS may provide in its conduct. However, more recently an Indian news outlet claimed that China had been lobbying to arrange BRICS membership for Pakistan.

Recent Expansion in BRICS:

In August 2023 Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Iran were admitted to the BRICS following a unanimous agreement among the five sitting members; other countries hoping for admittance however, such as Turkey could not secure BRICS membership on the formerly mentioned grounds. In the past as well as in present times, ambiguity and confusion have been persistent regarding the efficiency of this institution based on the following argument: the internal differences and conflicting ideologies of the member states.

Moreover, China's advocacy of BRICS expansion has also been challenged by India numerous times. However, with the BRICS chairmanship to be accorded to China and South Africa in the upcoming years, BRICS expansion has been inevitable. Moreover, the diplomatic pressure due to requests made by different countries aspiring to be BRICS members to the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also played a key role in recent BRICS expansion- it was publicly acknowledged while naming Iran, as Iranian Prime Minister Ebrahim Raisi has been claimed to be lobbying at numerous fronts for its membership into BRICS. This might be the reason India had the largest list of candidates for admission when the delegations arrived in Johannesburg. It was called a "bit of a surprise" by one of the BRICS member's officials. The addition of Ethiopia to BRICS signals economic conditions to hold low significance for BRICS membership, though settling for

Ethiopian membership had a dramatic backdrop.

China's Quest for International Domination:

According to Dov S. Zakheim, China's assertion for BRICS expansion, the pursuit of its worldwide economic objectives, and military aggressiveness in East and Southeast Asia signals the will of China to replace the United States as the global economic epicenter; especially after the American decision to downgrade global south and Middle east.

Xi has been presenting BRICS as a way for the global south to have a stronger voice in global affairs; the admission of Iran into BRICS has also been regarded as an anti-western and non-democratic approach. Margaret Myers, the director of the Asia and Latin America program at the Inter-American Dialogue called BRIC expansion as historic as it has signaled an attempt to reshape the west-led global order. Beijing has been lobbying in BRICS for years. Moreover, Xi while addressing a press conference called BRICS expansion as historic and that it reflected the determination of BRICS countries for unity and cooperation with broader developing countries. Moreover, BRICS is seen by Beijing as a potential counterweight to G7. It has also been called the G7 of the non-western world, and the BRICS leaders have called for greater representation of emerging markets and economies in the UNSC and the IMF. These are Xi's statements in which he had repeatedly criticized America and the West.

BRICS represents a smaller proportion of a larger conflict going on between Western capitalism and the so-called market-oriented communism of China, to bring down the West's economic dominance; and the Middle East is the area of competition as identified by Eric Mandel. Additionally,

Sarit Zehavi, CEO of the Alma Research Center maintains that China is converting its economic power in the Middle East to political influence that will cultivate a military foothold, systematically and strategically. Moreover, according to Sadanand Dhume BRICS expansion represents an attempt to reshape the global world order marked by countering the US and its allies.

BRICS is considered to be a byproduct of American rivalries in the East i.e., with China and Russia. Moreover, it has been equated with the Cold War competition between the USA and USSR. China has been assembling nations aiming to be free of American influence, Russia has been utilizing BRICS to circumvent the European sanctions ensuring economic and diplomatic survival, and Iran has been benefiting from sanction-resistant trade from China and military modernization through Russia. Jamshidi- political deputy for Iran's prime Ministry has called it a strategic victory for Iran. Moreover, Iran has been taking advantage of two significant initiatives of BRICS: a development bank that competes with the World Bank and a Contingent Reserve Arrangement designed to compete with the International Monetary Fund. Investment of \$1 trillion in BRI has been countered by the G7 by creating a partnership for Global infrastructural investments with a goal to raise six hundred billion dollars for infrastructural development in poor countries; specifically focusing on clean energy, digital connectivity, health, and gender equality.

China has also signaled Africa's industrial development and agricultural modernization after sideline meetings during the BRICS summit under the wish of African countries. Furthermore, Xinhua News Agency also reported China's intent on expanding African agricultural imports and helping Africa's food sufficiency. According to

Parks, China has already started moving towards African industrialization while simultaneously downgrading the frequency of infrastructural projects. In 2009, he reported, China had issued grants of eighty-eight billion US dollars for infrastructural projects, while in 2021 infrastructural projects amounted to twenty-four billion US dollars. Moreover, David Monyae, director of the Centre for China Africa studies at the University of Johannesburg, calls Chinese ambitions of African industrialization to be backed up by the movement of factories into Africa due to over capacitation in China, and good progress of industrial zones in Ethiopia and Kenya.

Cohesion in BRICS Despite Internal Differences:

Almost all BRIC members have different modes of governance and societal freedoms. According to the Freedom House, China and Russia are not at all free societies; Brazil and South Africa are free societies; and India has been ranked as partially free. These differences in domestic structure in the aforementioned states highlight a difference that is supposed to have complications, according to Western scholarship; and further expansion is supposed to complicate it further. BRICS is so far neither a union nor a military union at least completely.

However, the most prominent similarity among all countries is the trade relationship with China. Trade relations between Brazil and China are quite well. China's commitment to spending six hundred billion dollars for the development of a complex in Brazil's Bahia province, which can produce electric and hybrid vehicles is the manifestation of such healthy diplomatic relations. Moreover, in 2022, nineteen billion US dollars were invested by China in such similar complex in Sao Paulo.

Argentina became a member of the Belt and Road Initiative in February 2022; and China is the second largest trading partner of Argentina, second to only Brazil. Chinese assistance to Argentina includes various military and financial aid. Selling of military aircraft and ground systems to Argentina, and provision of critical financial assistance in repaying the IMF loans in 2018 is the practical representation of Argentina's dependence on China. Moreover, it had been agreed in April 2023 that Argentina could pay for Chinese imports in Chinese currency i.e., Yuan rather than the US dollar. China also holds the position of a major trading partner with the three new members of the BRICS from the Middle East i.e., Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Iran. Saudi Arabia has been a member of the Belt and Road Initiative for five years. Moreover, in June a deal worth ten billion US dollars featuring Chinese investments in mining, electric vehicles, and renewables was signed. Additionally, China has been Saudi Arabia's Largest trading partner in 2022, worth one hundred and six billion US dollars. This amount is twice the trade between America and Saudi Arabia. China's trade with the United Arab Emirates is approximately of similar magnitude to Saudi Arabia, as the United Arab Emirates is also a member of the Belt and Road Initiative. China has established approximately six thousand companies in the United Arab Emirates, and is the third largest trading partner of the United Arab Emirates; the largest trading partner is the US and the second one is India. In the case of Iran, China is the second largest investor, second to Russia which has invested heavily in Iran's Military modernization. Moreover, China has been the largest trading partner of Iran since the last decade. Additionally, China has signed a two-and-a-half-decade trade and military agreement with Iran. China's investment in Egypt has increased

by 317 percent since 2017, though it is not on the list of top five investors in Egypt. However, China has become a leading exporter to Egypt its second largest trading partner; the largest trading partner is United Arab Emirates. A similar pattern can be identified in the case of Ethiopia. Though China does not hold a spot in Ethiopia's major trading partners, the magnitude of China's imports from Ethiopia has significantly increased from 2022. Moreover, China has been the largest foreign investor in Ethiopia, accounting for sixty percent of all foreign investment within the country. India, though being a major opponent of China in both intra-BRICS and international politics is heavily dependent on its trade with China. In 2023-2022 China was the second largest trading partner with India. Several announcements regarding trade with South Africa have been made after the BRICS summit in 2023. These announcements include deals to buy South African products worth approximately two and a half billion US dollars; plans to increase South African beef and agricultural import; the donation of Chinese energy equipment worth 8.9 billion US dollars; and a separate grant of 226.9 billion US dollars to help South Africa cope up with its energy crisis. On December 18th, the China-Russia trade has surpassed 200 billion dollars.

The aforementioned literature neither provides nor allows a comprehensive explanation of Chinese lobbying for Pakistan's admission into BRICS, nor do they justify it being consistent with Chinese foreign policy behavior. Lobbying has been addressed in the existing literature as an intra-state process; it lacks international projection and addressing in operational terms. Additionally, the literature remains largely devoid of any kind of evidence to test, validate, or negate the claim of Chinese lobbying for Pakistan. This study thus bridges the rational policy model of foreign

policy and the conceptual model of lobbying having international projection to address the aforementioned gaps.

Methodology:

This paper follows a causational research design, as it aims to identify a cause-effect relation between China's alleged attempts to lobby in favor of Pakistan, and its effects on China's international standing. The data for this purpose has been gathered from primary secondary and tertiary sources, and this research primarily lies on qualitative data. The primary resources include journal articles, secondary resources include online news outlets and tertiary sources such as encyclopedias and dictionaries have been used in order to develop a background understanding of certain phenomena. Tertiary sources have primarily helped in the development of the conceptual framework of lobbying mentioned in the upcoming sections

Framework:

In the Rational Policy Model of foreign policy, the policy is essentially guided by the national interest and the key actor in policy formation is the government. The government is a single rational decision-maker. The policy-making essentially follows the following process:

- Identification of national interest; usually reflected by the decision maker.
- All possible options are identified.
- Cost-benefit analysis is conducted to filter out the most favorable policy option
- Adoption of the best policy option and its subsequent implementation.

Given the dynamics of BRICS; lobbying is to be the most favorable option. Lobbying exerts its influence on both domestic and international levels, however, in its essence, it bridges international and domestic levels of international politics. Domestic influence is generated by grassroots lobbying, direct

lobbying, and electoral lobbying. The aforementioned processes may or may not accompany each other. Direct lobbying offers the shortest path toward a decision as it engages interest groups and policymakers on a much more straightforward level and ensures direct communication between the interest groups and policymakers. Direct lobbying is more effective in influencing short-term policy outcomes, however grassroots level lobbying and electoral lobbying are done for long-term goals and relatively more important political problems. Two approaches can be evident in international lobbying.

In the first approach, the interest group (Primary Government) might lobby in the secondary State to influence the secondary government, as mentioned in the following flow chart. The influence might be in terms of monetary benefit, or it might be a persuasive rhetoric usually rooted in shared benefits or shared grievances.

Primary Government → Secondary State → Secondary Government → Desired Policy

In the second-tier approach, the interest group (Primary Government) can lobby a secondary government to influence the tertiary government, as mentioned in the following flow chart. The influence might be in terms of monetary benefit, or it might also be a persuasive rhetoric usually rooted in shared benefits or shared grievances. This approach is more feasible within international organizations

Primary Government → Secondary Government → Tertiary Government → Desired Policy

The aforementioned approaches are directly dependent on the nature of government. Democratic government allows more space for the lobbying process as compared to an authoritarian

Results and Discussion:

China's dissatisfaction with the existing international order and its subsequent measures to influence change in the international arena guide its intra-BRICS conduct. Given the nature of the state of Pakistan as a Chinese ally, it offers a way out for China from the Malaccan dilemma and energy crisis if CPEC succeeds. The addition of Pakistan into BRICS serves as a favorable option for China. Since China functions majorly as a financier for developing countries within the BRICS it already exercises a certain degree of influence on the BRICS. The monetary superiority gives China an edge and makes lobbying for Pakistan highly probable.

A Changed Global Order as Chinese Interest

China has been highly critical of the West-led international order and at numerous times has shown its intent to replace or at least modify the West-led international political order. Xi has repeatedly criticized US hegemony, however, it has maintained the rhetoric that China itself is not in pursuit of hegemony. Opposition to international political order having its roots in Western political thought and the primacy of Western interest is primarily driven by China's perception of Western interference in the Chinese sphere of influence i.e., the South China Sea and the inefficiency of global institutions in maintaining global affairs. Thus, expanded BRICS stands as a tool for enhancing the Chinese interest in countering Western global domination. This is however coupled with other states' interests and projected globally under the rhetoric of unity and cooperation of broader developing countries. Moreover, BRICS expansion represents China as a way to turn a loose economic coalition into a geopolitical counterweight to G7. By positioning BRICS

as the primary platform to project global south grievances against the Western economic institutions, China has called for greater representation of developing countries on important international forums such as the UN Security Council and IMF.

Identification of Possible Options for China

Rationales for overthrowing the Western-dominated international system can be categorized into direct confrontational and gradual progressive approaches. Attempts to overthrow an international system have been historically military-centric however in contemporary times direct military confrontation with the West to get grievances addressed does not appear to be a rational option for China. Moreover, a direct confrontational approach is also problematic for China given its geopolitical landscape and most of its neighbors being Western allies. The gradual progressional option features achieving economic integration and challenging the international financial institutions. This is to be achieved primarily through BRICS and BRI. BRICS expansion offers a wider range of intraregional cooperation and opportunities for challenging the international institutions; given the already present grievances of developing states regarding the western institutions. The addition of Pakistan to BRICS- which is a crucial member of the Belt and Road Initiative as it hosts CPEC, the flagship project of BRI- ensures not only the domination of geopolitical space by China but also serves as a crucial step in having a greater say in BRICS.

Pakistan: The Best Option for BRICS Expansion

The diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China have been quite fine lately; these relations have transcended from geostrategic partnership to economic and strategic

interdependence. The epicenter of Chinese interest in Pakistan is the CPEC, which is one of the six corridors under BRI and is also known as the flagship project of BRI. CPEC collectively represents a way out for China by neutralizing the effects of growing anti-China alliances in the Indo-Pacific region and ensuring a decreased dependence on the straits of Hormuz and Malaca.

Pakistan is one of the few Chinese neighbors that lacks anti-China sentiments and is not a part of any anti-China alliance. With rapid economic, military, and technological growth come challenges to energy security. Despite importing large volumes of petroleum and gas from Russia, seventy percent of oil and gas is imported by China from the Middle East. Moreover, sixty percent of this imported petroleum and gas passes through the Strait of Malaca. Additionally, Chinese clashes in the South China Sea and with its neighbors; and Chinese attempts to extend influence into the Pacific region have triggered US containment policy for China, and India has joined as its comprehensive ally. Thus, QUAD, AUKUS, and I2U2 represent the geostrategic alliances against China. Furthermore, any conflict in the Pacific might disrupt eighty percent of the Chinese oil imports and critical mineral imports from the Middle East and Africa respectively, and Chinese exports to India and Europe. CPEC (Pakistan) provides a possible alternative to the Strait of Malacca, thus solving the Chinese energy crisis rooted in the Malaccan dilemma. Moreover, Pakistan being a Chinese ally also opens roots towards central Asia giving China an edge over geopolitical space.

Lobbying for Pakistan in BRICS

Having established the addition of Pakistan in BRICS as a Chinese interest, lobbying for Pakistan in BRICS appears to be the favorable option and it follows two

approaches. The first approach acknowledges events that signal China's ability to influence BRICS (outside-in approach), and the second one acknowledges the BRICS's capacity to be influenced by China (inside-out approach).

The first approach is enforced by China's position as a financier in BRICS and most of the other countries being the recipients. Chinese investment in countries as mentioned in the previous sections puts them heavily under Chinese influence. Moreover, China utilizes a two-pronged strategy that features establishment and maintenance of alliances with developing countries, and international financial institutions. Both of the developments are backed up by China's monetary capabilities and its potency as a financier; its large human capital and sense of its efficient utilization; and the BRICS states' need for investments. China has a large amount of investable funds, a domestic overcapacity that can be projected outside by locating demands abroad for capacity absorption. China while simultaneously ensuring its national interest fills the infrastructural gaps across the developing nations, and pushes for reforms in the global financial system; as China has made infrastructural development a prioritized form of foreign direct investment in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Moreover, China holds a leading power in NDB and AIIB; this in turn allows China to direct its funds towards China's projects. Furthermore, to leverage the Multilateral Development Banks that allow emerging powers to mitigate their dependence on the US dollar, China aims to use AIIB and NDB to promote the internationalization of its currency. Additionally, linking BRICS to BRI by China under the rhetoric of "China willing to share her fruits" again puts China in a higher position in BRICS as compared to the other members. Accordingly, the

Chinese Discourse on reforming the international system has been adopted by most of the countries of BRICS as a common discourse. Though China has extensively utilized the rhetoric of utilizing the power of emerging economies; the clubbing of China within BRICS holds maximum importance. BRICS without China appears to be the League of Nations without the USA or worse. This primacy of China resides against the backdrop of China being the second largest economy, a nuclear power, and holding the largest foreign reserves.

The first approach adopted by China accounts for the first-tier approach of lobbying that features interest groups (China) making investments in the BRICS countries, or propagating anti-Western rhetoric, and thus influences the secondary government for its desired policy. In the second approach, China lobbied with secondary governments to put diplomatic pressure on some third countries to ensure BRICS expansion. It has been reported that certain other countries have been lobbied by China to put diplomatic pressure on India which Prime Minister Narendra Modi eventually gave up.

Thus, China's increased influence in BRICS, the ability of BRICS to be influenced by China, and Pakistan's formal application for admittance into BRICS especially given its regional position signal China's support for accommodating Pakistan within BRICS through lobbying.

Limitations

No study is ever perfect; as there are always some degree of limitations either in data gathering or during the analysis. This study though carefully conducted and present might have certain limitations due to lack of experience (being students), lack of time, lack of financial capabilities as most of the international journals require subscriptions,

and lack of accessible data due to the presence of China in the research as data regarding China political conduct is seldom available to open sources given the nature of government in China. Thus, data regarding contemporary Chinese actions has been primarily gathered through online news sources. These sources being secondary and tertiary may be subject to flawed or incomplete information.

Conclusion:

The extent to which claims China's lobbying efforts to secure BRICS membership for Pakistan hold ground is implicit in China's national interest. Pakistan's position as a Chinese ally, a route to expand the Chinese stronghold in the geopolitical space, a way out from the Malaccan dilemma and subsequent energy security, makes it a favorable candidate for BRICS, keeping China's interest in consideration. Moreover, the aforementioned characteristics of Pakistan further supplemented by its presence in BRICS alleviates China's position both within BRICS and within the global arena. This makes lobbying for Pakistan a favorable policy option for China. Thus, it can be predicted that China might be lobbying for Pakistan's entry into BRICS. With China's position as a financier and the position of other BRICS states as the receivers, China has an upper edge in BRICS. This position is further strengthened by China's hold in dictation of NDB and AIIB by directing their funds towards the projects of its interest. Moreover, given the democratic nature of states like India, it becomes easy for China to lobby and influence them indirectly. Thus, based on these arguments, and with Pakistan's formal application for securing membership in BRICS, it is highly probable that China has been lobbying for Pakistan's entry into BRICS.

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