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Rising Powers and Their Impact on Global Governance

Master's Thesis

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Year of the defence: 2024

Declaration

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 23.07.2024

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References

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the role and influence of rising powers on global governance. Two case studies, two crises from recent years, were used to analyze this relationship. These are the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The analysis focused mainly on the BRICS and the SCO and the subsequent comparison with EU and NATO states in this time frame. The aim was to examine the ability of states to cooperate and adopt new policies during these crises and the subsequent impact of new policies on the structure of global governance, the organization itself, and the status of rising powers. The thesis is divided into two main chapters: the COVID-19 pandemic, which focuses on the functioning of the BRICS, and the role of China, the leading actor in this crisis. In the second chapter, devoted to the war in Ukraine, the thesis focuses on the role of Russia as the leading actor in the whole conflict with Ukraine, the role of the SCO, and the cooperation between China and Russia. The resulting analysis suggests that the Western countries are capable of greater cooperation and coming up with a common approach that overlaps at the global level, i.e., global governance structures. The paper concludes that the rising powers have been and are weakened by these two crises as they have failed to enforce their practices and policies at the global level. Equally, their cooperation has been weakened by differing approaches, beliefs, and lack of interest in joint action. Organizations such as the BRICS or the SCO have often been paralyzed and unable to unite their members, a significant difference from NATO or the EU, where the opposite has occurred.

Abstrakt

Tato diplomová práce se zaměřuje na roli rostoucích mocností a jejich vliv ve strukturách globální správy věcí veřejných. K analýze tohoto vztahu byly využité dvě případové studie, dvě krize z posledních let. Jedná se o pandemii COVID-19 a válku na Ukrajině. V tomto časově vymezeném rámci se analýza zaměřila zejména na mezinárodní organizaci BRICS a SCO a následného srovnání se státy EU a NATO. Cílem bylo prozkoumat schopnost států kooperace a přijímání nových politik v době těchto krizí a následný dopad nových politik na strukturu globální správy, samotné organizace a postavení rostoucích mocností. Práce je rozdělená na dvě hlavní kapitoly, pandemii COVID-19, která se zaměřuje na fungování BRICS a roli Číny, která je hlavním aktérem této krize. V druhé kapitole, která se věnuje válce na Ukrajině, se zaměřuje práce na roli Ruska, jako hlavního aktéra celého konfliktu mezi ním a Ukrajinou, roli SCO a spolupráci mezi Čínou a Ruskem. Výsledná analýza napovídá, že země Západu jsou schopné větší spolupráce a přicházejí se společným postupem, který má přesah do globální úrovně, tedy do struktur globální správy věcí veřejných. Práce dochází k závěru, že rostoucí mocnosti byly a jsou těmito dvěma krizemi oslabeny, jelikož nedokázaly prosadit své postupy a politiku na globální úrovni. Stejně tak jejich vzájemná spolupráce byla oslabena vlivem odlišných přístupů, přesvědčení a nedostatku zájmu společného postupu. Organizace jako BRICS nebo SCO byly často paralyzovány a neschopné sjednocovat jejich členy, což je podstatný rozdíl oproti NATO nebo EU, kde docházelo k opaku.

Keywords

BRICS, China, COVID-19, East, EU, Global governance, NATO, Rising powers, Russia, SCO, USA, War in Ukraine, West.

Klíčová slova

BRICS, COVID-19, Čína, EU, Globální vládnutí, Rostoucí mocnosti, Rusko, SCO, USA, NATO, Válka na Ukrajině, Východ, Západ

Title

Rising Powers and Their Impact on Global Governance

Název práce

Rostoucí mocnosti a jejich dopad na globální správu

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Introduction

Global governance is a highly complex system encompassing collaboration and coordination among states, international organizations, individuals, and various other actors on a global level. It consists of millions of rules, norms, decision-making processes, and tools that are constantly evolving and influencing each other. This system is continuously tested by various events and crises, which challenge its resilience and effectiveness and, in some cases, may disrupt and alter it. This thesis focuses precisely on these aspects.

Specifically, this thesis examines two case studies. The first case study focuses on the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated socio-economic issues. The pandemic presented a unique opportunity to test global governance systems, actor cooperation, and health system responses. The first case study delves into all these questions. The second case study addresses the ongoing war in Ukraine, which has significant geopolitical consequences and tests inter-state cooperation and security structures.

An essential part of this analysis involves the rising powers, which serve as the main actors in the case studies. Rising powers are countries on the path to becoming global powers, gradually expanding their economic, political, and military influence. They have global interests and increasingly take on more responsibility on the international stage, striving to shape their surroundings and transform them according to their vision.

Rising powers are states that, until the last century, were politically, economically, and often militarily insignificant in terms of global development and did not play a substantial role in shaping today's world and its rules. This changed with the onset of the 21st century, which saw an enhancement of their economic and military power. However, political power may have grown less proportionately with other areas, making these states feel underrepresented in the global governance structures.

This thesis specifically focuses on China and Russia, two rising powers that increasingly seek to have a more significant influence on the creation of international rules and institutions. According to their statements, their goal is to create a fairer environment that reflects changes in their status, interests, and the entire system's dynamics.

This thesis also incorporates specific international organizations to provide a comprehensive analysis of global governance structures and the changing status of rising powers. These organizations play a critical role in shaping policies and cooperation among states during major crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. This analysis is further supported by the theory of new institutionalism, which explores institutions' role and influence on state behaviour.

The first case study focuses on the BRICS group, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The leading actor in this chapter is China, which played a crucial role during the pandemic and holds significant importance within BRICS. Therefore, more attention is given to China, with an entire subchapter dedicated to China's approach to global governance. This case study offers a unique perspective on how the pandemic affected China as the leading actor of BRICS, how the member states managed coordination in handling the pandemic, and how effectively, if at all, BRICS could promote new norms at the global level. The conclusions also compare its limitations with those of the European Union.

The second case study discusses the ongoing war in Ukraine led by Russia, which is considered the main actor in this study. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) also plays a vital role, with this study focusing specifically on some of its members, namely Russia and China. The SCO was initially established to strengthen its members' security and economic and cultural ties. The war in Ukraine again offers an opportunity to test and analyze these bonds. In the context of the war in Ukraine, this analysis examines how the SCO responded to Russian aggression, the dynamics among member states, and the diplomatic and political steps taken to support or condemn Russia. Special attention is given to the relationship between Russia and China and their differing visions of the SCO's functionality and direction. Similar to the first case, this analysis compares the SCO's reactions with those of its Western counterpart, specifically NATO, to assess differences in conflict resolution and member-state support.

By incorporating international organizations such as BRICS and the SCO into the analysis, this thesis provides a deeper understanding of how rising powers use these platforms to coordinate their policies and strengthen their influence on the global stage. Comparing these organizations with Western institutions like the EU and NATO allows for assessing their effectiveness and capability in responding to global crises and their long-term impact on global governance structures.

The conclusion of this thesis highlights that both analyzed crises—the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine—have weakened the positions of rising powers while simultaneously strengthening unity and cooperation in the West. These findings have important implications for future global governance and international relations development.

1 Methodology

Qualitative analysis and comparison of two crises of recent years, two case studies are used as the primary method and approach in this thesis for a better and deeper understanding of the phenomena, contexts, and meanings of global governance structures, the role and influence of rising powers, and responses to two major crises of recent years. The thesis analyzes specific case studies and uses international organizations and new institutionalism theory to compare and contrast different policy responses and dynamics among states and organizations. The first case study is the COVID-19 pandemic, and the second is the war in Ukraine. With the background of these crises, this thesis will focus on rising powers together with international organizations and how these crises have affected them. To achieve this, the thesis will focus on the cooperation between the member states of these organizations and the resulting policies during these crises. Thus, the institutions themselves and their decision-making processes, as well as state actors, are the variables that will be used to analyze these periods. The result should be a comparison between the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine in terms of the impact and influence on global governance and the position of rising powers such as China or Russia. At first glance, it may seem that these two crises are very different and, as such, have nothing in common. One of these crises has mainly socio-economic implications, while the other is important regarding security implications. What they have in common, however, is their gravity, relevance and ability to influence global events.

In the case of the first case study, we focus on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis focuses specifically on the BRICS organization and its states. The entire perspective is centred on China's role as one of the rising powers and its ability to influence and speak into the entire BRICS grouping and global governance structures. For this reason, one whole chapter is devoted to China and its concept of GG, in which this thesis seeks to explain the basic principles and behaviour of China in this environment (see more in section 4.2). The main focus of the whole chapter, which involved BRICS, was the issues of health needs, vaccination, and cross-border cooperation. The same perspective was then applied to the second group of states, represented by the European Union. This group of states receives less space in the thesis and primarily serves as a comparative element.

The second case study is the war in Ukraine. This entire chapter focuses on Russia as the leading actor in the conflict. At the same time, the relationship between Russia and China (as two rising powers) after the launch of the invasion of Ukraine and the dynamics within the international Shanghai Global Organization (SCO) are explored. Again, the specific topics addressed in this chapter are selected. There is a greater emphasis on the willingness to cooperate and support Russia after the invasion was launched; similarly, as in the case of China, the chapter focuses this time on Russia's view of the GG, cooperation between SCO states, impact on the rising powers and global governance structures and last but not least, the whole situation is again contrasted with another organization, this time NATO.

Each of these studies is very different from the other, but both are serious enough to have a chance to change global governance and rising power positions. Because of the nature of this crisis, the first case study is more concerned with socio-economic issues. The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged health systems, international cooperation, and the economic situation worldwide. For these reasons, the specific topics addressed in this thesis were chosen.

Similarly, the second case study deals with the war in Ukraine and, as such, deals more with security issues. Moreover, both crises are recent events and, in the case of the war in Ukraine, still ongoing. Thus, the intention in both cases was to examine their impact on the structures of global governance and the organizations themselves, which are used in this thesis. This is also the case for the two states that are given more space in this thesis, Russia and China, two rising powers.

Finally, there is also a comparison of the two camps and two different approaches to the issue. This is the difference between the West and the East or between the Global North and the Global South. These labels are used by authors in their works, such as Ly and Boateng (2021), Petrone (2023) and Parlar (2019), who point to the transition of power from the Global North to the Global South and the growing role of rising powers (more in chapters 3.2 and 3.2.1). These terms generally refer to a part of the world that is defined by cultural, political and economic characteristics. The Global North refers to countries with advanced economies, high levels of industrialization, high GDP (per capita), strong social systems and strong political

structures. The label West then further illustrates these countries in terms of values when we talk about perceptions of democracy, human rights and freedom in general. These countries include the USA, Europe and other democratic and developed countries. In this thesis, these terms are used to clarify the situation and are labels for the US and organizations such as the European Union or NATO. On the other hand, we have the terms Global South and East. These are countries with less developed economies, often dependent on the export of raw materials, and less developed political cultures. These countries also have a different view of democracy and human rights, often being autocracies. This thesis uses these terms to refer to Russia, China, and organizations such as the SCO and BRICS. In the context of this thesis, it is the rising powers that may exploit the Global South, which may try to unite on the basis of a "common identity", weakening the developed countries and pursuing their own state interests with the support of the rest of the developing countries (more in chapters 3.2 and 3.2.1).

This thesis uses a qualitative analysis approach to examine global governance structures, the role and influence of rising powers, and their responses to two major crises: the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. To achieve this, qualitative analysis of official documents, political speeches and scholarly articles is used, together with comparative analyses of two case studies and analysis of international organizations that examine the role and effectiveness of BRICS and SCO in managing crises and their transformation. The analysis process involves collecting relevant data from various sources, interpreting the findings within the theoretical framework and case studies, and comparing and contrasting the results among different actors and organizations to identify major differences and similarities.

1.1 Research target, research questions and research hypotheses

This thesis focuses on the functioning and principles of global governance. It wants to examine more closely the so-called rising powers, in particular the BRICS grouping. It is also interested in the most influential actors in the global governance system and their ability to enforce norms and influence others in the system through institutions. The US and China are considered the two main actors. They represent oppositional ideas and approaches. In the last few years, we can observe that China is building its own system that could eventually become

an alternative to the American or “Western” one. The rivalry of these two countries and their role in shaping the international system and rules will be the main focus on the background of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine. These two case studies were chosen because of their relevance. Both Covid-19 and the war in Ukraine can influence global governance structures and subsequent world developments.

From a certain point of view, we can say that Covid-19 sparked socio-economic changes and a crisis in society. We have seen the closing and weakening of the international community as well as the institutions themselves. We have also seen the isolation and the rise of anti-systemic ideas that have been expressed through demonstrations, especially in connection with certain measures in the world, such as vaccinations and people's general dissatisfaction.

The crisis caused by COVID-19 is far from over, and in its shadow, a new crisis has begun to emerge, which has amplified the problems as well as created completely new ones. The next crisis is the war in Ukraine, which is the second case study in this thesis. Apart from the socio-economic consequences that the war shares with the pandemic, the war also has another dimension, the political one. We are witnessing a situation where the war in Ukraine is dividing not only society but also the states themselves and the international community into two camps. This division does not refer to an entirely new phenomenon; it is quite the opposite. But these two crises, and especially the war, have made the world's divisions visible again after a long period of relative calm.

Furthermore, this thesis works with the idea that the war in Ukraine has a greater impact on global governance structures than COVID-19. Firstly, the political crises associated with the war in Ukraine have a greater impact than the economic ones associated with COVID-19. If we look at the world before and after the pandemic and compare it to the world before and after the start of the war in Ukraine, we can see greater changes within the GG in the second case, i.e., changes associated with the war. Just think about the restrictions from the time of the pandemic; in many cases, they are no longer observable in the world today. On the other hand, such an enlargement of NATO will remain a reality even after the end of the war in Ukraine. The politics associated with the war in Ukraine have a much longer-lasting (even permanent) effect. And through analyzing these two case studies, the cooperation between states in these

two camps and their rivalry in IOs, this thesis will try to confirm or refuse this hypothesis in the end.

These are the following research questions:

What are global governance's main principles, and how are the West and rising powers shaping it?

Based on an analysis of individual international institutions (BRICS and SCO), which of these two crises (COVID-19 or War) has a greater impact on international cooperation and global governance?

Does the West have stronger and more resilient relationships during crises than the East? Who can cooperate better despite major obstacles (US and Europe – “Global North”, China, Russia, and the rest - “Rising powers” ...)?

How are coalitions and rivalries between major actors evolving, and how does this affect the norms and rules of global governance?

Within this section are outlined some of the areas that will be explored in this thesis, mainly the security aspects of the whole issue. Some of the hypotheses were also outlined. Besides **the hypothesis that "Western" IOs are "stronger", i.e. members are better able to cooperate and find a compromise**, we can find others. Both COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine are crises that have a global impact. However, from the perspective of this thesis, they differ in the area in which they cause the most damage. **COVID-19 caused mainly socio-economic problems, with less overlap in the political sphere. The war in Ukraine, on the other hand, is affecting rather the political sphere** (the reactions of NATO member states and the weakening of Russia's influence in Europe), with less overlap in the socio-economic ones. Of course, in combination, these two crises are putting enormous pressure on global governance, but **in this work is believed that the war in Ukraine is having a greater impact politically and on structures of global governance.** COVID-19 was not inherently an ideological problem; states wanted to fight COVID together. Each state had an interest in protecting its

population by buying sanitary supplies and vaccination doses. It would probably be very difficult to find a state that was on the “opposite side” of this crisis, trying to do the exact opposite of the other states. On the contrary, ideology plays a significant role in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and by no means are all states on the same side. And this fragmentation of international cooperation and the creation of rival systems are weakening global governance.

1.2 New Institutionalism, conceptual and theoretical framework

To analyze the international environment properly, the issue is approached using the New Institutionalism (NIS) theory. NIS is concerned with the role of (international) institutions in policy-making by (not only) stating how institutions influence actors or how institutions are used and saying that institutions matter in the field of international relations. NIS has three main orientations: rational choice (RC), Historical (HI), and Social institutionalism (SI).

The first ideas about this new theory (institutionalism) were already developed during the formation of the League of Nations. There was an attempt to introduce a new theory built on international cooperation, law, interwar idealism and the study of international organizations¹. Today's (new) theory is based on this predecessor. One of the major differences between the "old" and the "new" institutionalism is its understanding of institutions (Jönsson & Tallberg, 2001). Institutions can be defined as "social practices consisting of easily recognizable roles associated with sets of rules or conventions that regulate the relationships between the persons in those roles" (Young, p.32,1989). Institutions, as such, then, do not have to be understood as material objects; the material object is then the organization, which may or may not be part of the institution²

Within this theory, we can then explore several questions. The first and quite logical question is the origin and meaning of institutions. Next, we examine their persistence over time

¹ At that time, the result was not the introduction of a new theory, but rather the first foundations from which the NIS later emerged.

² For example, a market is an institution, a firm that operates in a market is then an organization.

and possible changes³. An important question that researchers ask is also the influence of institutions on the behaviour of actors⁴. Last but not least, the question of the design of the institution and its embedding in the environment is also asked (Jönsson & Tallberg, 2001).

NIS has 3 main directions. The first one is rational choice (RC), which works with the assumption that each actor has its own interests and preferences that it pursues and tries to fulfil. Institutions and organizations then emerge from the interactions between actors and perform important functions for them. An important concept is "transaction cost" and "principal-agent". These concepts are based on economics and thus explain the importance of institutions. Each action, contract, or other transaction consists of multiple types of costs⁵ and this can be unnecessarily demanding for actors. Therefore, the process is delegated to institutions that take care of these things and can thus streamline the whole process. In this case, they talk about "reducing transaction costs" in the form of principal-agent relationships⁶ (Jönsson & Tallberg, 2001). RC explains the position of the state in a similar way to realism, i.e. a strong state that has its preferences and goals and adjusts its strategy accordingly. However, RC equally acknowledges the existence and importance of (international) institutions, where their very existence is explained precisely by their efficiency and already mentioned the concept of "production cost" or the agency/principal and agent relationship.

The second direction is historical institutionalism (HI). In this case, this approach departs from cold calculation, as in the case of RC, and introduces the role of the actor's worldview into the whole issue. This strand acknowledges the unpredictability of history and sees the importance of institutions that can serve as a moral beacon and provide a template for how to behave in a given situation. (Jönsson & Tallberg, 2001). HI relies on studying history. It is the history of the creation of institutions and the background against which decisions were made. This approach argues that we can better predict the future by understanding history and past decisions. HI argues that the past shapes the future.

³ Why some institutions are more stable while others are not capable of lasting.

⁴ How institutions can influence actors' decision-making processes.

⁵ For example, negotiating contracts, plans, preparations, negotiations, maintaining.

⁶ Principal-agent practically means delegating certain powers to institutions and thus reducing the cost of these actions. Such a principle can be observed, for example, in the European Union and the relationship between national governments and supranational EU institutions.

The last strand is normative institutionalism (NI). This takes into account the norms and identities in the environment in which it is situated. It applies a "logic of appropriateness" and looks at how much institutions constrain individual freedom. NI is more concerned with the relationship between the individual and the institution. It brings elements of constructivism, i.e. the concept of identity, ideas, and norms, into the whole theory. According to NI, these are other components that influence actors' decision-making in the international arena. (Jönsson & Tallberg, 2001).

In addition to the basic guidelines of NIS, an essential element is the process of institutional linkage, which creates rules and norms by which the actors who are part of a given organization or community in which these norms and rules have emerged are expected to behave. This implies that multiple international regimes are emerging around the world (Jönsson & Tallberg, 2001). These regimes are then distinguished from each other by the actors they are part of and also by different norms and rules. Many of these norms, which are at the level of international regimes⁷, began to take shape at the state level and eventually became international norms (Jönsson & Tallberg, 2001). International organizations are then an effective means of socializing states. However, dominant countries are present and influence its structure (Ly & Boateng, 2021). NIS is, therefore, a theory that explains the concept of international institutions, their relations with actors and the international environment. It is important for this analysis as it helps us to understand the interactions and cooperation between IOs and rising powers.

International institutions/organizations (IOs) serve as the "main arena" in international politics and are an important part of global governance and this thesis. These institutions can be used by states as a forum, as well as a means to promote their goals in the field of international politics and, last but not least, to achieve possible cooperation between states. This thesis focuses on specific organizations that have been and are associated with the selected crises, but also with the main countries that are the subject of this thesis. In this case, we are

⁷ International regimes are emerging around the world to facilitate communication and cooperation between states. A regime is effective as long as its participants adhere to norms and rules and the extent to which it achieves its goals (Jönsson & Tallberg, 2001).

talking about IOs that Russia and China are members of. In addition to trying to portray the situation within a given organization during one of the crises, it will also be important to attempt a comparison with a Western organization such as NATO or the European Union.

The first organization that this work will focus on is BRICS, which is crucial to this work. This is a political-economic project with an emphasis on cooperation, promoting common values and modernization. It is important to say that this group includes countries that are sometimes in different regions, such as Brazil, which is completely cut off geographically from the rest. Equally, these are states that may have different norms and values from the rest of the group. Furthermore, within this grouping, this work is interested most in the relations between China and Russia. Despite the fact that this organization has more members than just these two countries, it is Russia and China that are most relevant in this thesis, also with regard to the selection of crises and their analysis.

Another organization is the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Here we will delve purely into the relationship between China and Russia. Is this an equal partnership? Or are they merely strategic partners, as China often describes the relationship? In this case, we can run into one fundamental problem with this institution: the sources and validity of the data. Both China and Russia do not exactly have a reputation for being open and trustful states that do not skew their information to some extent. Despite this obstacle, the inclusion of this organization in this study will be important to understand better and portray the relationship between China and Russia.

Other organizations representing the second camp, the West, were also selected to compare the results. However, these organizations are not given as much space in the paper as in the opposite case and, in fact, represent here only a comparative function.

The first of these organizations is The European Union (EU). The purpose of including this organization in this thesis is mainly to be able to compare the actions of BRICS and the European Union during the COVID-19 pandemic and to highlight possible differences in the institutionalization and functioning of the organization during the crisis. Thus, this will not be a direct comparison between BRICS and the EU, but rather the different conceptions and

functions of institutions between East and West. The second organization is The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As with the EU, the main focus will be on comparing the two organizations in times of crisis, but this time during the ongoing war in Ukraine.

1.3 Empirical data and analytical technique

This thesis relies heavily on already-written literature. Its main sources are internet databases such as Taylor & Francis, Jstore, and many others. These databases are very beneficial for their rich content.

In the beginning, a clearly defined period was set. Using keywords to search for articles and gradually include them in literature, in case they were beneficial to this research. But these are not only studies, but also journalistic articles, interviews, and analyses, especially from recent times. This is because it is too early for many questions to have any detailed study or the subject matter continues to evolve. In addition to traditional portals, either Czech or foreign, such as CT24, BBC, The New York Times, etc., alternative sources are also explored, even though they do not have to be considered reliable. This is because regardless of the reliability of information, these articles can help to understand the situation on the "other side". For example, with the addition of Russian-language websites and other media, we can create at least a basic idea of what topics are important for the countries of the "East" and their discourse. Another added value is the possibility of comparing these media with Western ones. In the case of studying sources in the original language (e.g. Russian, Chinese) the translator is used together with the statements of the official representatives of the countries to preserve as best as possible the meaning and the correct translation.

This work is a mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative analysis deals mainly with studying international institutions and data outputs. Data provided by organizations such as WTO, WB, or ministry websites. Here again, there are problems that not all states have this information accessible or accurate, so there may be a considerable distortion of reality. However, it is assumed that it is, in fact, the WTO and its data that will play a crucial

role. Then the resulting data will be used to answer my questions and hypotheses. For example, whether COVID-19 or the current war in Ukraine was worse for international cooperation.

1.4 Literature review

This section will briefly introduce the literature about this topic. The literature focuses on the theory of (new) institutionalism and global governance, as well as the literature about international institutions (IOs) relevant to this thesis. The literature focuses on the relationship between the West and the East, the rivalry between the US and China, and the different approaches to the international system.

One of the articles that was used as the basis for my theoretical grounding is by Jönsson & Tallberg (2001). The authors describe the foundations of institutionalism and its division into three basic groups. That is, into Rational choice, Historical, and Normative institutionalism. Keman (2017) has a similar division in his article, only with a slightly different naming of the three strands. Rational choice, Culture matters, and Shock and Crisis theory. Despite the difference in name, the authors are almost identical in their definitions of each strand. Jönsson & Tallberg (2001) then go on to describe the reason for the existence of international institutions on the production cost principle. Furthermore, these approaches combine the importance of culture and history and show that actors do not always make only strategic decisions. An actor may also behave based on the values of the norms by which it is influenced. On the other hand, Shock and Crisis theory tends to focus on changes in the system caused by a crisis or changes in the existing one. A similar theory is also elaborated by Krasner (1983) called "punctuated equilibrium" (Krasner in Allison, 2015)

In their article, Jönsson & Tallberg (2001) further describe agency theory, i.e., the relationship between the state and the international institution. They further define the institution or the regime itself. Keman (2017) adds to these ideas the way and likelihood of attaching new norms, ideas, and rules.

Keohane & Martin (1995) added more focused literature on international institutions, their functionality, and basic possible processes. Hofmann (2017) also focuses on actors' investments in institutions and the selection of the organizations themselves. He also distinguishes between global and regional organizations. According to him, investments by the state in a regional or global institution are mainly based on shared ideas, norms, and cooperation in the region. A similar argument can also be found in Hinnebusch (2003), who argues that cooperation between states is itself based on the same ideas and norms. This literature was crucial because it focused on the regional level of cooperation before focusing on the global one.

In the case of the connection between global governance and rising power (RP), the article by Parlar (2019) is important in defining RP and placing it in the global governance space. In addition to describing trends within global governance, Parlar (2019) also focuses on the BRICS, SCO, or G20, which serve as the main platforms for so-called "lower-status states" (Parlar, 2019). He further states in the article that today's "elite" institutions are mainly the domain of the West, and the new principles in GG are a way for "lower-status states" to gain influence in the system. Not everything can always be solved by force (Parlar, 2019). Larson (in Parlar, 2019) complements and explains some of the actions of states based on social identity theory (SIT). Besides the actor's status, the actor's identity is also important. Often, a once powerful state bases its capabilities on this historical identity rather than on its actual capabilities today.

Parlar (2019) further points out that rising powers also compete with each other, not just with Western states. In his article, he mentions, for example, the rivalry between China and India or the rivalry between China and Russia. He pointed out that there is a big difference between the rivalry between the powers and the rivalry between the rising powers, which is many times less likely to escalate into an open conflict between the rising powers.

2 Global governance and rising powers

This chapter will focus more on the meaning of global governance, its definition, and its use in this thesis. It will also provide a deeper definition of the theory of New Institutionalism, which is central to this thesis.

2.1 Global Governance

Global governance is a term that covers countless international concepts, agreements and regulations. If we want to study GG, then we most often focus on the logic of decision-making in international environments, coalition building, institutions and complex relationships. Although the name may seem to imply that this concept is only interested in what is happening at the global level, it actually includes the local, national and regional levels. In this sense, we do not have to talk purely about the global level of the problem. If we want to understand GG, we need to understand the interactions and relationships between actors (state and non-state) at all these levels, including regional ones, where links are often formed on the basis of shared values and the need to address common problems and challenges (Brachthäuser, 2011; Farrell, 2005, p.4).

To write a precise definition of GG is difficult because the term includes several non-state actors, and the definition can vary considerably based on which actors the author decides to include. One definition may be as follows: "Global governance is governing, without sovereign authority, relationships that transcend national frontiers (Finkelstein, 1995)". From this perspective, there are two important aspects. First, it is about relationships and processes that ignore not only national boundaries but also economic or geographical boundaries. Second, the relationships between actors have no clear hierarchy and there is no central authority. With less oriented towards hierarchy, GG is interested in complex social processes in society and the world (Brachthäuser, 2011).

Rosenau (1995) further writes about GG as a set of millions of control mechanisms that are influenced by various historical events, goals, and processes from around the world.

Although it is possible to find similarities between certain mechanisms, it is never possible to find attributes common to all GG mechanisms (Rosenau, p. 16, 1995). This means that it is impossible to find common characteristics to all processes and to try to find a single definition and describe GG as a "single world government". Rather, we can try to find common features of the different actors, whether we are talking about states or non-state actors. This thesis will use already frequently defined groups (e.g. BRICS, NATO, etc.) and focus on how these groups speak to GG and how they can influence it. Last, but not least, it is also important to remember that many of GG's norms were originally a product of the West, led by the US, and still share many of the principles and rules that are part of the Western identity. Not all practices may be compatible with the rest of the world, especially China, and there may be efforts to modify or change some practices altogether (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

Similarly, it is difficult to pinpoint the exact origins of GG. Although many authors agree that the main period of the spread and functioning of GG was the beginning of globalization (Honghua, 2018), i.e., the interconnection of the world through new technologies and the solution of global challenges, some argue that the beginning of this system can be observed in the first half of the 20th century. The League of Nations, which was formed after the First World War, was the first organization that sought to solve problems collectively and globally. This was followed by today's United Nations or other attempts, such as the Bretton Woods system. All of these examples are attempts at global cooperation and solving some challenges, and all of these attempts can be considered part of GG (Broome, 2012).

But why not use some better-known terms, such as "interstate, intergovernmental, transnational", that may be more understandable, familiar, and less confusing for many people? The problem is the word "governance" and the whole idea of a Hobbesian world (Ly & Boateng, 2021) of international relations in which there is no hierarchical structure and, therefore, no political power that stands above all, as in the case of a state that has a monopoly on violence and the possibilities to use it. Another important factor is the emergence of the phenomenon (global governance), in conjunction with globalization, and therefore the fragmentation of the power of state actors and the loss of authority, hence sovereignty. In the past, only states and their leaders were seen as the main actors in international relations since the end of the Cold War, and with the beginning of globalization, we can observe a change in this thinking. Non-

state actors, such as non-governmental organizations and the people themselves, are becoming part of these processes in the international arena (Rosenau, 1995). And this new reality is reflected by the word "Governance". This word does not necessarily describe the actions of government but also the actions and statements of non-state actors whose actions resemble those of legitimate governments (Finkelstein, 1995). It can be a set of practices around the world that together form a complex system of GG, or we can think of GG as the ideal norms that should be the goal of any governance (Brassett & Tsingou, 2011). For example, we can include among these norms a preference for a democratic establishment and subsequent cooperation among actors, the spread of basic human rights, and much more. The term "global governance" is a response to the emergence of many new actors in the system and their attempts to address global issues in a collaborative yet decentralized manner (Finkelstein, 1995).

Global governance is a new way of thinking about government. This new thinking is linked to new global challenges as well as the horrors of the 20th century. Addressing these new challenges requires collaboration across all levels of governance. GG thus sees not only states but also non-state actors as its actors. GG is still evolving; it is not a finished process. GG should not be thought of as something physical, as is the case, for example, with state government. It is a set of millions of processes and control mechanisms around the world. These processes are then influenced by local conditions, and together, these processes form an enormous colossus with no central authority called GG. The results of these processes can then be observed through international institutions and everyday interactions in people-to-people relationships.

2.1.1 Power in global governance

Power is another important part of GG. Although it has been mentioned that GG is an environment without a clear hierarchy and centre of power, theoretically, there are centres of power, not on a global level but on a regional level. Power itself is then also important when it comes to solving challenges and problems in GG. Without power, these problems could not be solved (Waltz in Sterling-Folker, 2014). This thesis is concerned with the competition between two ideas and two systems. The logic of the matter is that these two systems, or currents of thought, must interact with each other, and the distribution of power must change over time

according to the power currently wielded by its representatives. This thesis compares two camps - developed democratic countries (the West) and developing, often non-democratic countries (the East). While the first group created the GG system and has had the most influence on it in the past, the second group is trying to influence the system and thus bring new rules into it as it gains more power and relevance. This process must lead to a clash of old values with new ones, and a clash of different ideas emerges, with the outcome of the clash being influenced by the power of the leaders in question. But how can we define power?

Firstly, power can be defined as the ability of actor A to make actor B do something that he would not otherwise do (Dahl, 1957). A second definition of power could be the exercise of one's own will despite the resistance of other actors (Weber in Gilpin, 1981). Apart from these definitions, power can be further divided into two types. Soft power, which rather involves cooperating with others to shape their preferences in favour of the state. And hard power which includes economic and military power (Nye, 2002). The center of power in international relations and hence in GG is not static but constantly evolving. This is why some states (especially today's developing states) may feel that they do not have sufficient representation in the GG structure directly proportional to their present power and position. It is also important to note that the principles and structure of GG are influenced by the principles and structure of the system at the national/state level (Ly & Boateng, 2021). Thus, we can say that whichever system holds more power is more likely to shape global principles and thus reshape the structure of GG.

Compared to the global level, at the regional level, the hierarchy is already defined to some extent, as is the centre of power. But, as in the case of the global level, this is not a stable situation. Centres of power can change, and hierarchies can be modified. And in these conditions, a hegemon can gradually take shape. But how to define such a hegemon? And what is its role at the regional or global levels? Within the regional order, the hegemon is important for enforcing rules as well as for setting them (Gilpin in Ly & Boateng, 2021). As such, the hegemon is able to influence other actors within its sphere of influence who follow it and jointly promote common principles and ideas. There is no other actor in a given system that has so much power that it can influence the various mechanisms on its own; this is attributable only to the hegemon. The actual administration of the system and rules is then most often maintained

through institutions, which are often built by the hegemon itself (or with the help of other actors). These institutions then guarantee stability and continuity, and most importantly, they legitimize the system (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

Closely related to this is the so-called Thucydides trap. This is the tension that arises when a rising power resists (challenges) the ruling power. This old concept was already known in ancient Greece when the rise of Athens led to war with Sparta. There have been several similar situations over the last five hundred years, and most of the time, such situations have ended in war, whether we are talking about World War I or World War II. Or France and Britain at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. 12 out of 16 cases ended in war. Currently, this relationship is observable between the US and China (Allison, 2017).

2.1.2 Crises and global governance

The impact of crises on GG and its transformation is also an important factor in this work. A crisis can then be understood as a tipping point with the prerequisites to change the existing orders and rules⁸ (Broome et al., 2012). As already mentioned, GG does not have any central government, and possible rapid response to (global) crises may thus be quite difficult. Indeed, across the history of the GG, there have been criticisms of the system's occasional inability, for example, to respond on time to impending crises and, hence, to respond effectively after a crisis. In these cases, we can speak of insufficiently timely crisis warning systems or insufficient mechanisms to prevent the crisis itself. Equally, one may find criticism of the system for not adequately addressing and managing a crisis already in progress or not preparing the whole system quickly enough for new challenges in the global world (Broome et al., 2012).

This work uses two examples of such global crises. One is the COVID-19 pandemic, and the other is the ongoing war in Ukraine. Some authors believe that major change in such a robust system is only possible when major crises such as the two mentioned above occur (Broome et al., 2012; Honghua, 2018). How does crisis threaten and transform global governance? Crisis can be used by both elites and non-elites to critique existing orders and

⁸ Such a situation is often declared a crisis retrospectively.

introduce new ideas and structural changes. Furthermore, a crisis can trigger policy responses with short-term effectiveness, for example, in the form of a financial package to stimulate the economy⁹. This may affect the future development of the system. Furthermore, a crisis can catalyze changes in the "centre of gravity" and thus change the centre of political or economic power. This is also linked to the possibility of changing the balance of power in society (Broome et al., 2012)

GG seeks to address these issues and challenges through international cooperation between its actors. They seek common interests and solutions and then promote them through common norms. These norms are created based on all actors' preferences, which may differ based on their history, culture, geography, economics, or ideology. Thus, before a new norm emerges, there is a clash between the preferences of different actors. In a way, GG can resemble a multi-level system (Honghua, 2018).

2.2 Rising powers

This work uses the term "rising powers" (RP) to refer to states gradually gaining political and socio-economic strength. RPs are defined as states that are on the path to becoming a great power, expanding their military and economic power, having global interests, and seeking to change their status. The great powers can then influence the international environment by setting new rules and processes. The RP gradually assumes more responsibility in the international system and in IOs while often criticizing the system and its leaders (Miller, 2016).

New institutions, just like the BRICS or the SCO, can often serve as a platform for "lower-status" states like China, India and other developing countries to gain influence on the global stage and thus within the GG. By joining these groupings, states also gain a stronger voice and may be more visible on the political map as a result, as many of these states may feel overlooked by developed states (Parlar, 2019). Feelings of being overlooked and inferiority may also be fostered by the fact that today's system is very much tied to the history of the former colonial countries of Europe and the US. The world we live in today and its practices are heavily

⁹ We saw this during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in the form of sanctions during the war in Ukraine.

influenced by historical events, particularly the 20th century and the post-World War II world order, which was dominated by the US with the rest of the West. And it is this arrangement and principles that gave the foundations for today's GG (Honghua, 2018).

Although we can say that rising powers share a very similar view of GG and the role of the West in today's world, it is not uncommon for rising powers to be part of the same IO, where there is also competition for power and influence between those countries (Parlar, 2019). For example, the relationship between China and India, or also the relationship between China and Russia to some extent. Although we can also encounter different approaches to problems in Western IOs, the principle of cooperation is still maintained to some extent. On the other hand, India and China are taken as the main rivals in the region, and despite this fact they try to work together within the BRICS framework.

2.2.1 The Global South

The "Global South" concept is closely related to the term rising powers. This concept has already been briefly mentioned in the previous paragraphs. Often it refers to countries in Asia, Oceania, Africa or Latin America. It is not so much a geographical designation as a metaphor for developing countries with a colonial past and low GDP per capita (Dados & Connell, 2012; Rising, 2023). The first ideas regarding the disparity between the poor and underdeveloped South and the rich and often abusive North emerged in the 1920s in Italy. At that time, Antonio Gramsci noticed the disadvantaged position of the South of Italy, which was often exploited by the rich North. I. Wallerstein also came up with a similar concept, describing the centre's strong position and the periphery's weak position, which was often a colony exploited by the centre for its mineral wealth and cheap labour (Dados & Connell, 2012).

Gradually in the 1950s and 1960s, countries with a colonial past began to come together and put pressure on the international system. Countries let it be known that colonialism is not dead; it just has a new face in the form of economic and intellectual control, which, again, only developed countries have. During this period, the G77 was formed, a group aiming to bring together developing countries and push their demands at the international level. Then, in the

mid-1950s, the Bandung Conference took place, which says that countries have the right to choose their own economic and political system (something that China claims and advocates today). Last but not least, these countries in the 70s came up with the NIEO (New International Economic Order), which aimed to correct the mistakes of colonialism, including reparations or, for example, the transfer of technology and know-how in general to developing countries to be able to equal the developed countries. However, these ideas were blocked by countries such as the USA, which preferred to promote free trade. However, no major changes eventually took place, and after the end of the Cold War, even the term Global South, which came to be used during the second half of the 20th century to refer to countries with low GDP per capita (a line first drawn by German Chancellor Willy Brandt in the 1980s), was discontinued (Hogan & Patrick, 2024; Rising, 2023).

However, following the tense world situation, the term Global South has come back into use in recent years. Whether in conjunction with the BRICS or again with the G77. Representatives of individual developing countries have made public statements that the North is making its own rules and ignoring the needs of the South. On the other hand, the South should come together again and start to enforce its policies and take more responsibility. Overall, many authors agree that there is a resurgence of the term "Global South" (Hogan & Patrick, 2024). This argument is also supported by the following analysis, which also works with the label "Global South" or "the East" and the term being mentioned by, for example, China, one of the rising powers in this thesis. Some authors have pointed out that some rising powers, such as China, may abuse the term "Global South" in order to bring emerging states together on the basis of this common identity and use it for their own enrichment (Rising, 2023).

3 The COVID-19 pandemic

This chapter will focus on the first case study, the first crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic. This global pandemic was caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus and was first identified in China, in Wu-Chan, in late 2019. It gradually spread from Asia to the rest of the world in 2020, and it was not until 2023 that the pandemic was officially declared over by the WHO (World Health Organization). According to official sources, the virus claimed over 7 million lives at that time (NZIP, 2024).

During this period, countries have had to deal with many challenges. They often came up with their own solutions to combat the virus, which often took the various form of isolation and restrictions on the free movement of people and goods. This strategy inevitably led to a breakdown in communication and cooperation between states. Or rather, some procedures had to be modified. For example, traditional meetings of heads of state and various summits were initially postponed and later moved to an online environment.

The COVID-19 pandemic required an unprecedented public administration response worldwide at all levels of government hierarchy and required swift action on several fronts simultaneously. At the initial stage, COVID-19 appeared to pose only a threat to public health, but as the virus spread, it became soon increasingly apparent that it in fact posed a multisectoral challenge that had overlapping implications and also threatened the socioeconomic sphere, transport, education and much more (Oliveira et al., 2021).

In today's world, many global norms originate at the regional level, and we can, therefore, assume that some of today's regional norms (connected to COVID-19) have the potential to become global ones over time. This chapter explores the COVID-19 crisis, states' ability to cooperate, promote new norms and ideas, and their subsequent impact on global governance and the status of rising powers. The next section will focus on the BRICS group and its functioning during this crisis. In the case of BRICS, the terms "East", "Global South", or "developing countries" are often used as in Ly & Boateng's (2021) work. The second group of states is referred to as the "West", "Global North", or developed (democratic) countries.

3.1 BRICS

The term BRIC(S) was first used at the beginning of the millennium in 2001 to refer to the group of countries with the fastest-growing economies in the world. Today, this group represents over 40% of the total population and over 20% of the gross world product. It is a group of states today representing a tremendous economic, political and human power (Aslanyürek, 2023). These countries are Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. The BRICS also emerged as a reaction to the unfair redistribution of power in global governance structures, often described along "West-East" or "North-South" lines. This line is meant to represent a stronger West/North and a weakly represented East/South in the field of global politics. Although these states have experienced great economic growth in terms of political influence, this has not been reflected (Duggan et al., 2022). Their history and size also often support the idea of their own importance. China, for example, refers to its 5,000-year-old history and legacy for all of humanity. India also feels similarly, referring to the religious and cultural aspects (Larson, 2019).

Besides fighting for a stronger representation in the GG structures, BRICS also advocates the right of each state to its own path of development, which means non-interference in the domestic affairs of foreign states (Iqbal, 2023). By this is meant the criticism of the West, which restricts states such as China and other developing states in how they can modernize their country and society¹⁰. As such, BRICS perceives the lack of democracy in the GG system and advocates for its multilateralism, as now (according to BRICS) the GG is heavily influenced by the West, which projects its ideas and norms into GG, which the rest of the world, and hence developing states, do not necessarily agree with (Duggan et al., 2022; Petrone, 2023). In contrast, BRICS advocates the idea of non-interference in the affairs of foreign states under any circumstances (Aslanyürek, 2023).

¹⁰ These constraints are, for example, in the form of various environmental targets, where compliance with them limits developing countries in their development. The criticism is that today's developed countries did not have these manmade constraints and thus developing countries are artificially held back in their development and modernisation.

In general, states will gain many advantages by joining together into larger entities such as the BRICS international organization. Through more effective cooperation and reduced bureaucratic and other tasks costs, they can form a group that has a stronger voice in the international environment and can achieve their goals more easily. Which supports the theory of new institutionalism and the concept of "production cost". Another advantage may be a better defence against the enemy or better preparedness for crises. The success of such an organization can then be defined, for example, by the achievement of the goals set by the organization (Eckhard et al., 2023).

In the case of BRICS, however, we are talking about an organization that has very loosely defined responsibilities and rules. Each of the states has its own goals and makes policies independently (Kickbuscha, 2014). The BRICS states are also very different in their structure and performance of economies, military power or political practices (Duggan et al., 2022; Jareño et al., 2023). The organization has no common "grand vision". Rather, they are states united by their criticism of the West and the need for economic cooperation. And while this group may appear to be growing economically, this is more a result of China's success than that of the group as a whole. The other four states, even taken together, cannot match China's economic performance, which often has an interest in economic cooperation with developed countries (Duggan et al., 2022).

One of the important factors that have influenced intra-BRICS cooperation in the past, as well as today and in the future, is their rivalry with each other. In the past, there was a serious rivalry between the USSR and China about two forms of communism. The rivalry between China and India has been known since the 1960s, and the formation of BRICS has not solved these problems (Larson, 2019), as the rivalry between India and China is still relevant. These are the region's two largest and most populous countries, both of which want to become a regional hegemon. In addition, their relationship is also complicated by border conflicts, with even a loss of life in 2020. Furthermore, the two countries also struggle for influence in neighbouring countries, but this is also the case in the relationship between China and Russia. Their rivalry (China and Russia), in turn, relates to the Central Asian region, which is important for its mineral resources and (historical) trade route from Asia to Europe (Duggan et al., 2022).

This fact weakens the cooperation of the BRICS states and the resulting impact on global governance (Larson, 2019).

3.1.1 BRICS and COVID-19

The aim of this chapter is to examine COVID-19 and its impact on BRICS countries in more detail. How did this organization and its members respond to this crisis? In the beginning, it is important to note that COVID-19 was extremely challenging for all countries and their health systems. Complications did not escape even the best and most advanced countries in the world. The situation is even worse when we look at the health systems of the BRICS countries. We can see the difference in medical equipment between the standard health systems in Europe and those of the BRICS countries. We can also see the big difference at the BRICS level, where each member has completely different conditions with completely different structures and levels of modernization of healthcare. This is also the reason why there is a treaty between the BRICS countries (among others) on cooperation in the health sector¹¹ (Moore, 2022). However, a treaty alone may often not be enough for successful cooperation.

The BRICS countries meet on a regular basis at various levels of government. At these meetings, they try to push through new policies that will facilitate trade, information exchange, and cooperation and try to become more assertive overall at the global governance level. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made these meetings more difficult and has also complicated the collaboration itself. Not only did countries in some cases refuse to cooperate, but even the strategies to defeat the disease varied widely across countries, and so did the course of the disease.

Moreover, at first, it may have seemed that the pandemic was an opportunity rather than a complication for the BRICS. BRICS also engaged at the GG level in conjunction with global health¹², and here it could demonstrate that its practices worked and, as an organization, it was capable of facing such challenges, especially at a time when the West seemed to be failing in

¹¹ The first meeting on this topic was held in 2011 in China.

¹² Here, BRICS focuses in particular on issues of inequalities in access to medicines and medical aid, the rising cost of treatment, HIV and the role of the WHO in the world.

this fight, and BRICS could offer an alternative for other countries (Moore, 2022). However, the cooperation between the BRICS countries has been severely limited in the end. The question is, why did this happen, why were the BRICS countries unable to cooperate more efficiently in the fight against COVID-19? Could it be due to too much differentiation in medical equipment and different rates of progress? Is it due to Western influence and "vaccine nationalism" (Moore, 2022)? Although there have been attempts by the BRICS to take the lead role in the fight against COVID-19, these attempts have not been successful in the end. Rather, we can talk about examples where one of the countries has tried to make a case for itself rather than as BRICS. Eventually, the whole system stabilized, no major changes took place, and the main players were once again the Western countries, and the whole system resembled the already established order¹³ (Petroni, 2023).

3.1.2 Progress and complications of COVID-19

COVID-19 affected all economic sectors and was more devastating than, for example, the 2008 financial crisis. These damages are then more observable precisely in developing countries, which often do not have a stable environment in the form of law or strong institutions (Jareño et al., 2023). In such moments, cooperation between countries can be extremely important. It certainly cannot be said that the BRICS countries have not cooperated and have not tried to come up with a common solution. The BRICS countries have tried to find their own way, set an example for other countries, and offer their help. However, COVID-19 has shown that a country and its leaders will not always be willing to cooperate, sometimes because of their own interests and sometimes because of other beliefs.

A good example is the travel ban and border closing. The whole world has had to deal with the travel bans and border closures, not just the BRICS countries. Although this may seem like a practical step to prevent the spread of the virus, it is still a strong restriction on rights and personal freedom. The closing of borders, or the ban on travel from countries, has particularly affected African countries associated with the 2021 variant of the Omicron virus. Developed

¹³ Here the author refers mainly to the West-East relationship and the system of redistribution of vaccines, where the West benefited first, the East only later.

countries have closed their borders, and African countries have taken a very negative view of this move, a decision that is also damaging their economies. Moore (2022) described this situation as a "classic" North-South tension¹⁴. Here, one would expect the BRICS to condemn this move by the West, especially as South Africa was on the list of countries restricted from entering Europe. Instead, countries such as China, Brazil, and Russia have adopted these restrictions. In the case of Russia and Brazil, these bans remained in place long after the rest of the world lifted them (Moore, 2022). In this example, we can observe the non-cooperation between BRICS states.

However, how did the pandemic play out in each BRICS country, and how did their approach differ? Regarding absolute numbers infected, India led the way here, followed by Brazil, and Russia was third. In contrast, China, where the pandemic broke out, had the fewest infected, which is linked to the harsh policies of the local regime (Zhu et al., 2021). However, a change occurs when the number of infected is calculated per million population. In that case, Brazil comes out as the worst country among the BRICS countries. Its health system was unprepared for the virus, and there was much confusion due to ambiguous leadership in the country. The response to COVID-19 in Russia was similarly problematic. Here, the situation is also complicated by, among other things, poor access to treatment and medical supplies in remote parts of Russia. Russia, like Brazil, ranks first in terms of infections per million inhabitants¹⁵, and Russia has also become, among other things, the country with the highest mortality rate in Europe.

Poor access to medical care is also the case in India, where the situation is also complicated by the high level of population, especially around large cities. Medical care is also not well accessible in China, where there is a huge inequality in access to this service¹⁶. China has decided to resort to harsh measures, restricting people's freedom, in order to stop the spread

¹⁴ The relationship between developed and developing states is disrupted on the basis of historical experience - in this particular case, the experience of colonialism and the elevated role of developed countries over Africa. South Africa saw the closure of the borders as an unjustified move that would only harm African countries and the West would thus abuse its position and power.

¹⁵ In 2022, the average number of infections per million inhabitants was 43,000, with Russia at 73,000 and Brazil at 110,000 (Moore, 2022).

¹⁶ This is evidenced, for example, by the large difference in average age - in the Shanghai area it is 78 years, in the poorest provinces the figure is only 65 years (Moore, 2022).

of the virus completely. China has also been very active in the field of donating medical supplies such as respirators. The last country on the list is South Africa (SA), which is also struggling with poor access to healthcare, mainly as a result of its complicated history in the 20th century and the issue of HIV together with its low vaccination rates.

The factor of the different political systems in the BRICS countries is also very important. Brazil, India and Russia are federal states. As such, they theoretically have a strong local administration that can be tasked with combating COVID-19 in problem regions of the country. This has happened in Brazil, India, and, to some extent, also in Russia. But Russia has been very specific in that. Like Brazil, it has been very lax in taking any kind of tough measures. It came only when it was too late, and both in Russia and Brazil, the responsibility was ultimately passed on to the local governments, which could not take coordinated action. Conversely, China decided to fight COVID centrally, and the government remained the main actor (Oliveira et al., 2021). An important point, then, is the authority of the government, especially in China and Russia. Both governments cannot be seen as democratic and, as such, have no problem using their power to impose quick solutions. In both cases, this involved the introduction of harsh quarantine measures and surveillance of the population through CCTV and apps (Oliveira et al., 2021).

The whole issue of the pandemic from the very beginning could have been changed by the development of vaccines. Their development could have been another important point by which BRICS could have proved its strong position in GG and put itself in a leadership role in the fight against the virus. Although Russia came up with its own vaccine (Sputnik), its effectiveness was a matter of question. And rather than a medical issue, Sputnik gradually became a political issue, especially in Europe (Connolly, 2021). China and India also did their work on the vaccine, but the problem was funding these projects. Most of the funding for the vaccine came from Western countries, and they also ended up leading the way in the fight against COVID-19 and the promotion of vaccination (Moore, 2022). Furthermore, the term "vaccine nationalism" gradually became an important element in this issue. In practice, this is when (especially) rich countries pre-order millions of vaccines with the goal of being the first in the world to vaccinate their populations and thus defeat the virus. Here again, we encounter something already mentioned by Moore (2022), i.e., the tension between "North and South" or

also "West and the rest of the world" (Petroni, 2023), where the West exploits its position at the cost of the East.

All along, BRICS has advocated for equal rights and access to health supplies, including vaccines. This also reflects, for example, the struggle against the WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, which regulates patent and trademark protection, something that complicated vaccine development during the pandemic (Kickbusch, 2014). According to BRICS, the West again abuses its position and economic superiority during the pandemic and purchases vaccines for its population as a priority, which directly contradicts BRICS' demand for equitable redistribution of power in the GG. On the other hand, India, which has become an important producer of vaccines, has also committed a similar act. In 2021, India experienced a large increase in infections, and the government decided to use vaccines for its own population, which had originally been intended for Africa (Moore, 2022).

3.2 China and its concept of global governance

China and its influence over the global governance is extremely important and as such deserves its own attention. More than one author has argued that China has the potential to bring new thinking and processes to the system that will transform the whole environment for the new image (Beeson & Li, 2016). China has the political power large enough to achieve something like this to some extent (Ly & Boateng, 2021). Or at least China has tried to do so at some point in the past. However, the question is how such efforts have manifested themselves in the past and, more importantly, what the reality of the experience was during the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine. How does China view global governance? How has China expressed itself about international cooperation, Western dominance, and possible changes? And how did China get to the position it is in today? In a position where China is trying to push for new terms and principles of GG when, in the past, it has tried to stay out of these structures and refused to participate in almost any international institution (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

One answer is China's rise and the weakening of US hegemony. The other factor is China's modernization and its dependence on the outside world. In the 20th century and early 21st century, the system was heavily dominated by the US and its allies (collectively referred to as "the West"). Developing countries perceived their weak position in the GG as an unfair power distribution and sought to redress this injustice. China gradually took the lead in these countries as the main economic power. China drew attention to the need to balance power distribution between developed and undeveloped countries (Ly & Boateng, 2021). Although this may seem like a praiseworthy move at first glance, the question remains whether China is really doing this to help other countries or rather pursuing its own interests.

Regarding repositioning China, the 2008 financial crisis was an important and perhaps even a turning point for many. "This event showed that global governance is not fully prepared to withstand such a huge global test. Respectively, national governments have not been able to address these issues together and are unprepared for the global world, so GG needs to explore new strategies and options. There needs to be a redistribution of international power, interests, and responsibilities" (Honghua, 2018, p. 188). This paraphrases the idea that Chinese professor M. Honghua opened his work on the GG crisis and China's solution. Honghua himself argues that the next 5 to 10 years are crucial for China in integrating into the GG structures, influencing it, and China's full-scale rise¹⁷.

This article may be interesting because it was written by a leading Chinese professor in a senior position within China's strategy team. The author openly acknowledges the importance of the BRI project and China's interest in building a new and peaceful world. And it was the financial crisis of 2008 that opened the door for China to enter GG. Already in 2012, at the 18th CPC National Congress, China made clear the need to engage in the building of the GG. To try to bring emerging countries together and promote regional governance. Xi Jinping said that the reform of GG is inevitable and extremely important, and it will further regulate the new international rules. He also made similar statements in 2017 at the World Economic Forum, where he advocated a model of win-win cooperation among stakeholders based on innovation and equitable power sharing. In the same year, Xi Jinping likened his BRI project to an ideal

¹⁷ That would mean roughly the 20s of the 21st century.

form of cooperation and the promotion of new GG principles (Honghua, 2018; Ly & Boateng, 2021).

Another reason why China thinks it will become a leading actor in building GG is the partial deglobalization process. Anti-globalist ideas and the desire for greater isolationism are spreading in developed countries such as the US and others (Honghua, 2018). This moment may be the time for China to take this place after the US to further develop GG ideas in its own image. It actively engages in international processes, tries to bring its solutions and perspectives on GG issues, and engages in the institution-building process (Ly & Boateng, 2021). According to Honghua, China is aware of the constant struggle between developed states and emerging countries in the form of violent system change. China wants to bring change in a peaceful manner and particularly wants to target countries similar to itself - developing countries. It wants to bring about these changes by building partnerships that are based on mutual benefit (Honghua, 2018).

In the coming years, China wants to focus mainly on building a regional government in its region and strong domestic policies. In addition, it wants to promote new ideas of governance and new theories with "Chinese characteristics". These efforts should achieve a strong position globally, and China should become a world power (Honghua, 2018).

These ideas outline China's basic strategy and thinking on GG, which we can observe to some extent in IOs such as SCO and BRICS. GG is a platform and a way for China to gain influence and resources for its use. Throughout the whole text is possible to identify several criticisms of the current system and the need to open up the system to new ideas and changes inspired by China. China also frequently talks about regional governance and the importance of cooperation with its neighbours. However, the question remains about how the neighbours see such cooperation and whether they do not see China more as a threat. This does not change China's position as a "protector" of developing countries and aims to change the unfair terms of the GG for them (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

However, what are the disagreements between China's and the West's conceptions of GG? China has benefited greatly from economic globalization, which has enabled it to modernize in

recent decades and get to the level it is at today. Economic globalization continues to be important for China as it is a country that needs vast amounts of raw materials and continues to modernize. Whether we are talking about oil and gas or building materials, China cannot secure these commodities independently and thus must rely on the surrounding countries, their willingness to trade with China, and its other partnerships¹⁸ (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

This is one of the main reasons why China perceives GG positively, but what are the problem parts that China perceives negatively? These are domestic policy issues and policies that undermine its sovereignty¹⁹. Traditionally, it may be human rights and other humanitarian issues, such as the treatment of labour, or it may be environmental issues in the form of ecological and climate protection. These aspects are firmly rooted in Western politics and society, and these policies also affect the GG and, ultimately, China itself. To this end, China tries to accuse the West that these policies are only important for Western society and are of no benefit to China and its allies and, hence, to the entire Asian region²⁰ (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

China proposes a new approach²¹ based on respecting each state's choice of development mode. According to China, the current system is strongly influenced by the US and its allies (it has refused to participate in international institutions in the past, but this has changed over time), who vigorously promote their interests and any dissent is punished by market disadvantage²². It gives itself as an example of the rise and possible following "path" to other developing countries, which it tries to win over to its side and convince them that its approach and proposed changes benefit them as well (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

¹⁸ This is what the BRI project serves to a large extent.

¹⁹ The question here is to what extent China really recognizes the concept of sovereignty, or whether it is just an excuse and a strategy to force other states not to interfere in China's unfair practices on its territory, especially related to the Taiwan issue.

²⁰ Another example of how China is putting itself in a leadership role in the region, trying to win partners to its side and convince them that China's policies are also beneficial to neighboring countries.

²¹ China and its Communist Party are selling the effort to change global governance to its citizens as a great achievement and an ability that is important for any leader, a move that seeks to strengthen its position in the domestic political arena.

²² In some cases, China is not afraid to remind the West of its colonial past.

3.2.1 The importance of BRI

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project was first introduced in 2013 and has become China's leading economic project to connect the country with the rest of the global economy. As part of the project, China invests heavily in building infrastructure (roads, airports, ports, mines, etc.) in the participating countries and promotes downstream trade within the BRI. More than 150 countries and organizations are involved in the project, comprising 70% of the population and 50% of the global GDP (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

The BRI is a critical factor in China's opening up to the world and a significant way to influence international institutions, enter into partnerships and engage in global trade (Honghua, 2018; Ly & Boateng, 2021). China has become the world's second-largest economy and, as such, has a considerable influence, especially in relation to its partners, and it is these relationships that are often tied to the BRI project. It is, therefore, not surprising that this project is extremely important for China. It is not just about economic relations; for China, this project is also a tool for disseminating new ideas and perspectives on the world and, for example, on the GG. Another important factor is that the BRI project portrays China as a leader capable of building institutions and creating new rules. The BRI is intended to increase China's influence in direct proportion to the growth of its economy (Ly & Boateng, 2021).

China faced initial resistance from Russia, which perceived the BRI as a threat to its own market and a loss of influence, especially in Central Asia. Today, the situation is different, and Russia has realized that it cannot compete with China anyway; for example, due to sanctions from the West after 2014 (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2019), and today, Russia is also part of the BRI. However, it is different in the case of India. India, like Russia, opposed the BRI project at the beginning. According to India, it is a non-transparent project that sets unfair conditions for its participants in order to benefit China (Larson, 2019).

3.3 Western response to the pandemic

Although the main focus is not on the West, the USA or the European Union, it is essential to partially include this group of states here. This whole first main chapter intended to look at how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the rising powers and, subsequently, the structures of global governance. Alternatively, to look at how it works and who has the most influence within the BRICS. However, in order to be able to evaluate these findings in any way, it is essential to include the second group mentioned here. The aim is not to evaluate politics during the COVID-19 pandemic but rather to compare two different systems and approaches.

An important theme across the chapter was cooperation and institutional engagement between countries. While it cannot be said that there was no cooperation in the case of the BRICS, the institutional overlap was much worse. This is not the case with the EU. Yes, in the beginning, there was a similar situation in Europe to that in BRICS, where borders started closing, and people had to stay home in quarantine. Despite the complicated start, Europe managed to develop the "EU COVID digital certificate" (or "COVID pass"), which was a system that made it easier for vaccinated people to travel and made virus control more efficient. This strategy was later adopted by the WHO to create a global system to help manage similar crises in the future and monitor infected people and, with it, the transmission of the disease (European Commission, 2023).

Cooperation between countries in the EU was also more effective due to the functioning of the EU and a shared vision, a factor not found in the case of the BRICS. Along with the introduction of the COVID-19 pass, the EU has also spent considerable funds to acquire good quality tests to capture the virus and build testing sites. The countries also agreed to purchase sanitary equipment jointly and, later, to purchase vaccines jointly. Apart from the health aspect, the countries also tried to work together to combat the economic difficulties associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU spent over 50 billion euros to support the Member States and their economies. Significant funds have also been spent on vaccine development itself and on helping developing countries, such as those in Africa, that do not have the capacity to develop or purchase their own vaccines (European Commission, 2023). This fact contradicts the claims

of China and other BRICS countries regarding the unwillingness of the West to share vaccines with less developed countries.

3.4 Global impact of the pandemic

The BRICS and other developing countries criticize the developed countries (the West) for abusing their position and undemocratically redistributed influence in the global governance system. A crisis like COVID-19 could have been an opportunity for the BRICS to step up to leadership roles and show other states that they, too, are capable of leading and making decisions on important issues. Furthermore, by doing so, they could also prove that it is indeed a competitive system as it is sometimes presented (Aslanyürek, 2023). BRICS has not achieved this, and on the contrary, has often made mistakes that it criticizes itself. An example is the lack of cooperation in the case of redistribution of medical supplies, including vaccines, a practice that BRICS has strongly condemned in the West. A similar example occurred with border closures, where, in some cases, this restriction remained in force longer in the relationship between BRICS members than in the relationship between a BRICS member and a Western state.

BRICS countries also highlight some inequalities in global governance, which are not necessarily political issues. BRICS criticizes the redistribution of wealth or technology. During COVID-19, there was also criticism of the redistribution of vaccines and medical supplies, and COVID-19 will amplify these differences. This may be due to the economic slowdown of all BRICS members and their frequent isolation from each other (Duggan et al., 2022). Nevertheless, among these negative impacts, we can also find some positive ones. COVID-19 has begun to support the healthcare system on the global governance level. There was a need to ensure that GG was prepared for future situations similar to COVID-19.

In addition, the BRICS countries continued their pressure on other countries to achieve equitable redistribution of vaccines and medical supplies. According to the BRICS, this inequality between North and South is an extreme problem (Zhu et al., 2021). However, there has been no significant change in global governance during the existence of BRICS. Some

authors even believe that BRICS has hit its integration limits and it will take more work to deepen cooperation in the future. This is also a factor in how resources are reallocated within BRICS countries, and only one country really benefits from this cooperation - China (Duggan et al., 2022).

In general, regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on global governance structures, we can talk about a reduction in international cooperation due to border closures and isolationism. This has been accompanied by an increased scepticism in elites and institutions, both state and transnational. Some actors have further exploited this situation to radicalize certain societies, for example, through propaganda and fake news. Across Europe, but also in the US, there has been a debate on the origins of COVID-19, the effectiveness of vaccines, and the limitations of personal freedom (Morris, 2022; Ritzmann et al., 2022). During this period, many groups formed, both at the political and civic levels, which took an anti-systemic position and criticized the existing elites and their practices. These groups often continued to serve as a source and dissemination of disinformation. Interestingly, many of these groups later reoriented from COVID-19 and continued their activities during the war in Ukraine (Ritzmann et al., 2022).

However, the COVID-19 pandemic also had a positive impact on global governance structures. For example, it strengthened the health sector worldwide and made it more prepared for future pandemics. This is also true of science and research, which became a critical factor in defeating the pandemic at that time. Furthermore, the world has had to adapt to new challenges by adopting "new" technologies in everyday life. For example, online space has become much more widely used now than before the pandemic. Companies, schools, and other institutions thus had to invest in online infrastructure to ease some processes. Lessons learned can be used in the future, either in an effort to improve the current structure or in the event of future crises.

If we focus on the impact of the pandemic on rising powers, it has been negative. Countries have long opposed Western influence in global governance structures. A crisis can be an opportunity to change the rules to strengthen their position, for example, by introducing new technologies and regulations to help defeat the crisis. However, if we look at the BRICS group,

it has achieved nothing of the sort. We can talk about partial successes, such as China's initiative in the developing countries and its help, for example, with the facemasks. However, the same steps have been taken by the EU, which has also helped these countries (moreover, in the case of EU aid to developing countries, there may not have been secondary intentions). Furthermore, the EU acted united during the crisis and took common measures, while the BRICS countries went their own way and used different strategies to combat COVID-19. This weakened them in the end, as there was less cooperation than in Europe. The institutional side was also fragile, and often, instead of supporting each other, states turned their backs on each other, as in the case of border closures. Furthermore, the BRICS could not even keep up with vaccine development. The necessary research, funding, and distribution came mainly from Western countries. If the BRICS countries wanted to use this crisis to establish a sense that they, too, could be leaders and have something to offer, this outcome can hardly be seen as positive.

Finally, it is important to mention the announcement of the enlargement of the BRICS group with new members. This expansion may be the subject of future research but has not been addressed in this thesis as it is not directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it occurred in early 2024, making it the first group enlargement since South Africa joined in 2010. These include Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. Although the pandemic seems to have weakened the BRICS, the group is still very relevant. After the expansion, as mentioned earlier, the BRICS represent 45% of the world's population and almost a full third of the world's economy (Vikova, 2024). On the one hand, BRICS has become more robust in the field of bargaining power, but on the other hand, it may take more work to find a common direction and consensus across the group in the future. As already mentioned, apart from the commonly negative perception of the West, there is no other big common idea. Moreover, even the perception of the West differs from member to member, and some are interested in maintaining good relations with the West, only trying to break out of its influence. The fact that BRICS is still a very attractive organization for developing countries is evidenced by the fact that overall, BRICS received 40 applications from countries interested in joining (Senkova, 2023).

4 The war in Ukraine

This chapter will focus on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the second case study. An important point in this thesis will be February 24, 2022, when Russia began a full-scale invasion of Ukrainian territory, long referred to as the "Special Three-Day Operation". At the time of writing, the conflict has been going on for over two years, and the situation does not look like it will be resolved soon. The important relationship in this chapter will be between Russia and China. Russia is the aggressor and one of the main actors in this conflict. Conversely, China is a potential Russian ally who can still strongly influence the war's course. Both countries are part of BRICS, which was discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter will mainly focus on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which has already addressed the security relations between the two countries (China and Russia) in the region in the past, and we will also focus on the cooperation between the countries and the resulting impact of the war on the structures of global governance, as well as the position of the rising powers, namely China and Russia.

4.1 SCO and the China-Russia relationship before the invasion of Ukraine in 2022

The SCO was formed in 2001 as a reaction to the West and its inability to address new global challenges such as terrorism and extremism (Kirton & Larionova, 2022). The SCO is an organization that was initially intended to resolve border disputes and be a security organization in the region. It focuses on three main threats. Terrorism, extremism and separatism (Ambrosio, 2017; Larsom, 2019). It is an organization that aims to bring together actors who make their own rules in the areas of sovereignty, human rights, and many other areas besides stabilizing the region (Kaura, 2019). Like BRICS, state leaders meet annually and make consensus-based decisions. The most important SCO states are China and Russia. In 2017, India also joined the organization²³, which was previously a critic of the SCO, mainly due to the strong Chinese influence within the organization (Lanteigne, 2018). Similar to the example of the BRICS, the

²³ In addition to these three countries, the SCO also includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

most powerful actors influence the SCO in its own image, which again limits the entire organization's functionality. Here, Russia projects its desire to retain its USSR-era influence over the region and perceives the security and military potential of the SCO as a whole. On the other hand, China highlights the economic and political elements of the whole organization and, for example, has proposed turning the SCO into a free trade zone. In contrast, China rejects a military alliance in the SCO. Neither of the attempts and directions can be declared successful (Lanteigne, 2018; Larson, 2019). However, it is questionable to what extent the war in Ukraine will change this reality, if the organization will be restructured in the area of deeper military cooperation between China and Russia.

Russia and China are the main actors in the processes within the SCO. The two countries share a complicated historical relationship and have made no secret of the fact that the current cooperation across the SCO, as well as other IOs, is built on shared interests, mainly in balancing the West and creating new international rules. Indeed, according to China and Russia, the West is responsible for the current tense situation in the world²⁴, as it is too involved in the internal affairs of other states and sets rules that may not suit other actors, especially then developing countries (Wishnick, 2017).

Although relations between Russia and China are pretty complicated (both ideologically and geographically), they have a long tradition (Ding & Ekman, 2024). The first records of their joint interaction date back to the late 17th century (Lotspeich, 2006). The entire Asian space (and especially Central Asia) is now a site of rivalry between Russia and China. Whether for reasons of mineral wealth, prestige (Russia projects its former superpower status here onto the former Eastern Bloc countries) or strategic position. This means that although the two countries cooperate in the field of balancing the West, Russia is also trying to balance itself against China in Asia, for example, by collaborating with states that are not entirely friendly to China. Overall, Russia is in a difficult position here. It is partly in Europe and partly in Asia, and it takes something from both places. On the European side, in recent years, it has been trying to position itself in opposition to the influence of the EU and the US. On the other hand, Russia is trying

²⁴ This feeling has intensified since 9/11 and the increased US military presence in the world. Moreover, this period was accompanied by the "Colour Revolution" in the former Soviet satellites, which demanded a more liberal state. This was a sign to Putin that the West was behind these actions in order to destabilize Russia (Kaura, 2019).

to balance its forces against China in Asia and does not want to be entirely dominated by China. Russia's history drives this need as a former world power in the form of the USSR (Kaura, 2019; Wishnick, 2017).

Although China and Russia have started to grow closer since Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000 (Solomentseva, 2014), the most significant changes occurred after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Ambrosio, 2017; Dharmaputra, 2021) when the primary motive was, also according to Russian media, Western sanctions²⁵. However, the rapprochement did not only occur with China but also with India, Korea and Japan (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2019). Before 2014, Russia was part of Europe and perceived the difference in values and rules between Asia and Europe. Although Putin admires China's economic growth, he does not portray the Asian country as a friend. After the annexation of Crimea in 2014, their mutual dynamics are changing. Putin and his regime see the solution to sanctions from Europe in rapprochement with China. Russia, according to Putin, is becoming a bridge between East and West, and together with China, is trying to build a multipolar world in which Russia and China are friends (Dharmaputra, 2021).

For China, cooperation with Russia is not just about goodwill. In Russia, China mainly sees economic potential in the form of oil, gas and other mineral resources (Wishnick, 2017). As China grows and modernizes, its demand for raw materials, which Russia currently possesses, also grows. Conversely, Russia had hoped for more diversified exports and wanted to sell more value-added products to China, but this never happened in the end²⁶ (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2019). Another important aspect of China and Russia's relationship is their long-shared border. There is a strong population disparity in this area, and in the future, China can be expected to gradually engage in this area by migrating its population (Ambrosio, 2017; Kaura, 2019; Solomentseva, 2014). Overall, the relationship between Russia and China is rather pragmatic and unequal. While Russia has been orienting its exports strongly towards China, China has also been developing trade relations with the rest of the world, including the US and Europe (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2019; Lotspeich, 2006).

²⁵ China and Russia were definitely getting closer even before the sanctions, which only accelerated the process (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2019).

²⁶ Except perhaps gun sales, but even that has begun to decline over time.

Suppose we summarize the importance of the SCO and the Central Asian region. In that case, Russia seeks to maintain its influence and superpower status here, while China sees this space purely economically. The BRI project passes through this region, connecting China to the rest of the world (Kaura, 2019). In relation to the war in Ukraine, this thesis will further focus on the cooperation between China and Russia, not only within the SCO. For example, the two countries have traded weapons with each other in the past. In recent years, China has been able to obtain weapons other than through Russia (Kaura, 2019), and conversely, today, it is Russia that requires arms supplies. Arms sales have been a significant aspect of deeper military cooperation between China and Russia until recently. Otherwise, these countries have not had many other joint military agreements before (Ambrosio, 2017). The question, then, is whether this situation has changed in any significant way and, like in 2014, Russia and China have grown closer, and their cooperation has deepened.

4.2 Joint statement by Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin

A very interesting and important text is the joint statement by China and Russia in early February 2022, just days before Russia invades Ukraine. It is quite a long text, but it outlines some of the ideas and tendencies Russia and China are trying to push. As with China's perception of global governance in the previous chapter, this section will serve as an attempt to introduce and complement their perspective. This statement is dated February 4, 2022, and can be traced on the official website of the Kremlin and the Presidential Office (Kremlin, 2022).

In their statement, Russia and China highlight their relations and describe their relations entry into a new era of international relations and global development. This development must necessarily lead to greater democratization of the international system and a more equitable redistribution of power. Interestingly, democracy is mentioned several times in their declaration. Right at the beginning, these countries talk about their long democratic tradition. At the same time, however, they immediately add the addendum that democracy can take many forms and that there is no one-size-fits-all democracy. History, tradition, and culture influence the final form of democracy, and each state has the right to incorporate these aspects into its

development, which should not be overridden by any external force²⁷. This idea is related to the Chinese and Russian concepts of human rights. Both countries "accept" the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but, as in the case of democracy, they add the importance of local influences and again contradict the idea of the universality of human rights. They also point out that the struggle for human rights and democracy must not be used to undermine the sovereignty of other countries.

Nor should the efforts of another state to build up its defence lead to an erosion of sovereignty and security, or should a state not build up its security at the expense of the security of another state. Here, China and Russia declare that the guarantee of international security, which should be permanent and universal, should be the international community itself. Furthermore, nuclear weapons are very closely linked to the security issue, and the declaration also devotes a significant section to them. Both countries agree on the need to withdraw their nuclear weapons, to end the arms race and, in general, to "abandon the Cold War mentality finally". Nuclear weapons should no longer play a major role in the security policy of any state. Another interesting point is the statements made by these countries regarding the history and legacy of the Second World War. The history of the Second World War should not be falsified and distorted, and this horror must never be repeated. This is also why the actions of the Nazis and all their accomplices must not be forgotten (Kremlin, 2022).

The rest of the statement also talks about the need to shape a multipolar world and change the architecture of global governance and world order. This is to be achieved in the framework of the BRICS cooperation, but also, for example, in the framework of the SCO and other groupings, especially of developing countries. The world powers should build a relationship between themselves based on cooperation and mutual respect. Particular attention is then drawn to the part of the text where both sides talk about the redistribution of power and the growing danger in the world. According to this text, some actors (who today, according to China and Russia, are a minority) are still promoting unilateral solutions that lead to conflict situations, violate international law and affect the state's internal affairs. These facts then prevent humanity's free and peaceful development (Kremlin, 2022).

²⁷ But despite this claim, there are countless reports of these countries trying to influence democratic countries, for example in the US, but also in other European countries.

Again, we can observe similar themes in these statements as in the case of the chapter on China and its perception of global governance. In this case, these are indeed recent statements that only confirm long-standing tendencies and attitudes. We are, therefore, talking about an unfair redistribution of power in a system that is, moreover, under the influence of the West. What is very interesting is what China and Russia perceive as values that are supposed to be universal and that are not supposed to be universal. Human rights and democracy are typical examples of this.

In China, we have long seen the problem of the Uighur minority being locked up in re-education and labour camps. Their labour is often exploited to produce cheap products, which flood into, for example, Europe (Goldberger, 2024). Russia, for its part, recently held a presidential election in which, unsurprisingly, Vladimir Putin won. Just a few days before the election, long-time opposition politician Alexei Navalny died mysteriously (Papachristou, 2024). In both countries, we can observe human rights violations and failure to respect democratic principles. Violations of these norms keep the regime in power, and from their point of view, these actions make sense. Neither China nor Russia wants their authority to be undermined.

On the contrary, China and Russia are promoting values that are not universal today but should be (from their point of view). For example, the access to medicines or new technologies that have been mentioned several times. All in all, both countries are pursuing policies that suit them personally (especially modernization) and despise anything else.

A very interesting chapter in itself, then, is the perception of the Second World War, its legacy and the role of nuclear weapons in politics. In this context, the interview of V. Putin with the American moderator Tucker Carlson. In this interview, V. Putin has just got down to interpreting the history of the Second World War and has committed several lies and distortions of history, for example, in the case of Czechoslovakia and Poland. V. Putin also forgets to mention the cooperation between the USSR and Nazi Germany (Carlson & Putin, 2024; Vock, 2024; Schwamberk, 2024). And the statement about the role of nuclear weapons in foreign policy and the need to abandon the "Cold War mentality"? Here again, Russia is doing the

complete opposite and has repeatedly threatened to use nuclear weapons during the war in Ukraine if the West assists Ukraine and “crosses the red line” (AP News, 2024).

These joint statements by Russia and China are from early February 2022, days before Russia's invasion of Ukraine began. On the one hand, these words carry a call to build a better world. On the other hand, from today's perspective of 2024, these words look like a preparation of the ground for the horrors that were yet to come and a way of justifying these actions to the rest of the world.

4.3 Relationship between countries after the invasion of Ukraine

In the following part, this thesis will focus on the specific politics and changing relations between the countries of the East, or more specifically between China and Russia, the changes in the status of the rising powers, and the potential effects of war on global governance structures.

After the collapse of the USSR, Russia had to decide whether to embrace the Western way of life and governance or to go its own way. Although, at first, it may have seemed that Russia would align itself with the European democracies, due to its complex history, vast size, dysfunctional democracy within the state, and oligarchy, Russia gradually drifted away from the European ideal into isolation. The year 2014 and the annexation of Crimea was a turning point in the relationship between Russia, Europe and China. Europe imposed sanctions on Russia, and Putin decided to become closer to his Chinese counterpart and try to enforce new rules together (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2019; Ambrosio, 2017; Stent, 2016).

On 24 February 2022, Russia tried again to take another part of Ukraine under its administration, but this time, it was not satisfied with Crimea alone and tried to occupy practically the whole of Ukraine, including the capital, Kyiv. After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the West denounced Russia, as it did in 2014. However, the West's response was much more straightforward, tougher and swifter this time. The West imposed sanctions on Russia and gradually began to support Ukraine financially and militarily. Russia had to rely on China and

hope that China would support Russia. Possible future support could also be guessed from, among other things, the already-mentioned joint statement of China and Russia in early February 2022. In this statement, among other things, both countries agreed to deepen their relationship (Zhang, 2024).

However, the reality regarding China's support may be more complicated than it may seem at first glance. The first question is, did China know in advance of Russia's impending attack on Ukraine? Western intelligence suggests that China may have known at least in part about Russia's plans and the invasion of Ukraine, with China trying to delay the invasion at least until after the Winter Olympics (Wong & Barnes, 2022). The second point is China's behaviour after the invasion began. As such, China did not support Russia at the UN. What is more, after stopping the advance of Russian forces in Ukraine and realizing that this "operation" would not be just a three-day operation, China began to position itself as a neutral actor and did not want to be portrayed as an ally of Russia in the event of an invasion of Ukraine (Zhang, 2024). Here, the already discussed fact that Russia is mainly a market for China in terms of mineral wealth, while access to technology and value-added products is located in Europe and America is once again relevant. This is one of the main reasons why China does not openly back Russia; it wants to avoid the Western sanctions that have hit Russia. In other instances, China's efforts to portray itself as a neutral country are also observable. For example, it has reporters on both sides of the conflict, among both Russian and Ukrainian troops. The Chinese ambassador has visited both Kyiv and Moscow. Regarding military aid, Beijing did not officially provide Moscow with such assistance at the beginning of the war²⁸, but cooperation between the countries took place in other areas. Be it on a political²⁹ level or, for example, on the basis of joint military operations in the South China Sea, the Sea of Japan and around Taiwan (Zhang, 2024). However, China's view on sending lethal weapons to Russia has changed over time. The two countries have a long tradition of cooperation in the arms industry. After the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1991, China fell into isolation, and the only major partner willing to sell arms to China was Russia, for whom it was a way to soften the economic impact of the collapse of the USSR (Hart et al., 2022). And although at the beginning of the conflict,

²⁸ This is true on the issue of lethal weapons.

²⁹ China's defense minister has made it clear that cooperation between Moscow and Beijing will not break down, even though the West is trying to do so (Zhang, 2024).

China tried to position itself as a neutral observer who would not provide Russia with lethal weapons, the truth was ultimately elsewhere. According to US documents, China approved the provision of lethal weapons to Russia a year after the invasion began. However, everything was supposed to remain secret (Hawkins, 2023).

The trade between the two countries shows that Moscow depends on cooperation with Beijing. Russia is now a minor state in the field of international trade. It is more heavily oriented towards agri-food, lower value-added products, energy raw materials, and other mineral commodities. In the last two decades, we can say that there has been a shift in Russia's trade away from Europe to the Central Asian region and further east, especially towards China (Arriola et al., 2023). In 2023, trade between Russia and China reached \$240 billion, increasing by 26% compared to the previous year. In contrast, trade between China and the West declined (Zhang, 2024), which may be a reaction to Western doubts about China's neutrality. China is reportedly hardly neutral, trying to help Russia circumvent sanctions and trying to benefit from their cooperation. However, the truth is that China is not willing to lose all ties with the West, and this factor will strongly influence Beijing's next steps in relation to Moscow in the future (Zhang, 2024). However, Russia is not trying to rely only on China. It is also rapprochement with North Korea (where it trades its technology for ammunition) or Iran, which provides Moscow drones (Bennett & Ilyushina, 2023).

A critical piece of information and comparison is a reminder of how China has responded to Russia's aggression in the past, specifically in the case of the 2008 invasion of Georgia and the first invasion of Ukraine in 2014. In the case of Georgia, when Russia hoped for support from its SCO allies, other SCO members (including China) used the summit to express concern about the ongoing situation in Georgia. In the case of Crimea in 2014, China attempted to stay away altogether and, in addition to calling for a negotiated settlement, abstained from voting at the UN (Umarov, 2022). However, it is a question of how to explain such a move. Is it not just indirect support when the state does not directly condemn such an act?

A similar situation occurred in the SCO in 2022. The perception of other members of this aggression damaged Russia's reputation. At the 2022 summit in Uzbekistan, China expressed concern with Russia's failure and vulnerability to Western sanctions. President Xi was fearless

in expressing his dominance not only within the SCO. However, this sentiment later changed, and today, China instead appreciates Russia's „unbreakability" and ability to withstand the onslaught of Western sanctions" (AP, 2023; Hart, 2024). Thus, in late 2023, Putin spoke with China's second-highest-ranking military official and declared that China and Russia should integrate more militarily. In particular, he emphasized cooperation in advanced technology and weapons. Jointly develop better space tools, including satellites and weapons, to ensure strategic superiority and security for both Russia and China. Although Russia and China are not forming any direct military alliances, they said their relationship is an essential stabilizing element for the international situation (AP, 2023).

The two leaders regularly visit each other, whether during foreign trips or various summits such as the BRICS or the SCO. China supports Russia in Ukraine, and Russia, in turn, supports China on the issue of unification of the Chinese mainland with the island of Taiwan. Both countries are thus facing criticism and tensions from the West and are seeking to deepen this (what they call) strategic partnership on this basis. Therefore, despite its initial strategy of acting as a neutral actor, China has gradually denounced the West's sanctions, blaming it for sparking the conflict in Ukraine and for escalating and worsening the overall global situation (AP, 2023).

The role of the West in the Eurasian region is vital to Moscow and Beijing. American cooperation with Asian countries is viewed negatively by Russia and China; according to these countries, their security space is being violated, and the U.S. is trying to expand its sphere of influence (AP, 2023). This rhetoric is dangerously reminiscent of the situation prior to the invasion of Ukraine when Russia had for many years identified the possible expansion of NATO as its security risk (Dawar, 2008). Overall, according to recent official statements and also in conjunction with the previously mentioned joint statement, we can say that Russia and China have entered a "new era" of mutual relations, full of understanding and support in order to counterbalance the influence of the West (AP, 2023; The Guardian, 2023). The good relations are also supported by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov's arrival in China in early April, and Vladimir Putin is also scheduled to visit in May 2024. In addition to close cooperation across organizations such as the UN, G20 and SCO, Russia has become China's fastest-growing

partner since the start of the war, which only illustrates their close ties and (in their words) "the best relations in history".

For China, however, the war in Ukraine remains a deeply unpleasant issue. On the one hand, it would like to continue its rapprochement with Russia, as evidenced by its recent actions, while on the other hand, it wants to honour its policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of foreign states. This puts China in a dangerous situation, where if it supports Russia, it undermines its concept of sovereignty and thereby disadvantages its position on the Taiwan issue. Moreover, this could cause a domino effect, and besides Taiwan, there could also be problems in other provinces such as Xinjiang and the Uyghur Autonomous Region (Umarov, 2022). China is also watching the West's reaction to the conflict in Ukraine, as this may show possible scenarios if it decides to unite with Taiwan. Perhaps to its surprise, the West's reaction at the start of the war was swift, decisive and united. This is exactly the kind of reaction China probably would not have wanted and may be a danger to China in the future (Leonard, 2023).

The situation in the Xinjiang mentioned above province has long been monitored and criticized by the international community. China is violating human rights there. According to the Human Rights Organization, more than 26 million people are restricted in their human rights, and a large number are even forced to stay in "re-education camps". Beijing denies this and claims that it is only fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism. On the contrary, it criticizes the neighbourhood for interfering in its internal affairs (Umarov, 2022). This is also why Russia's direct and vocal support in the fighting in Ukraine may be problematic for China. However, at the same time, not expressing any support for Russia may undermine the friendship and future cooperation between these two great countries. China could lose an important ally in the fight and balancing act against the West.

Three basic principles could further explain the closeness of Russia and China. First, the two countries share a long border, and both countries possess nuclear weapons. Together with the vast armies of both countries, it would be disadvantageous to be enemies. Second, the two countries are now strongly interconnected economically. Russia has a strong focus on mineral and fuel exports. China, on the other hand, is intensely focused on importing them. Again, in this case, cooperation is very much preferable to rivalry or even hostility. Thirdly, both countries

have similar ideologies. It is a similar view of human rights, sovereignty or democracy. Both countries perceive the West, and especially the US, as their systemic rival and enemy. Even in this case, cooperation makes sense for both countries (Umarov, 2022). However, as explained earlier, this cooperation is not unlimited, even though both countries claim it outwardly. In particular, Russia tries to balance against China's influence and tries to maintain a strong position, if not in the world, at least regionally. China is also interested in maintaining at least some links with the West. This is mainly for economic reasons. The West is still a market for China to sell its products. The West also represents a source of information, technology and know-how for China. In short, China still needs the West to modernize itself. In the end, China needs the West more than Russia, although this dependence may not last forever, and we may gradually come to the end of it.

4.4 The West and the reaction to the war

The war in Ukraine is the most significant conflict in Europe since the end of the Second World War. The effects of the war are permeating the international system and international organizations, which are gradually changing. The war also affects other countries, not only Russia and Ukraine but also countries that are involved in the conflict through support or sanctions (Ceelen & Zandonadi, 2023). For these reasons, including the EU or the US in the whole issue is also important. This chapter does not aim to explore how the West views the entire conflict. But, similar to the chapter on the COVID-19 pandemic, to explore some aspects and implications of the war on the European Union, the US and their cooperation.

The West supported Ukraine at the beginning of the war and gradually started to help arm its army as well. Western states condemned Russia's aggression and demanded an immediate end to the war. However, it cannot be said that the West was completely surprised by the Russian operation, which was quite the opposite. For a long time in advance, information about a possible Russian attack on Ukraine was also circulating in the media. Some people, therefore, called for preparation for this possible confrontation; the other part did not give much weight to this information. However, Russia did indeed attack Ukraine in the end, and the West had to act.

As in the case of the pandemic, this time, the European states, together with the USA, i.e. NATO, were able to engage in joint action. They began to support Ukraine financially by sending humanitarian aid, and later, these states were also able to agree to send heavy military equipment, such as tanks and guns, which were often part of their own armies. This helps to modernize NATO, with older pieces being sent to Ukraine and replaced with modernized types. Military aid to Ukraine is currently made up of 99% NATO aid. Additionally, NATO has also taken steps to provide training to the Ukrainian military and has long been working to implement NATO standards in the Ukrainian army (NATO, 2024b).

However, NATO rejects any harsher measures than sending funding, military equipment, and humanitarian aid. This means that NATO refuses to send its troops to Ukraine's territory (this statement does not apply to independent states) and to close the airspace over Ukraine. NATO is a defence pact; such a move could further escalate the conflict, and NATO must prevent this (NATO, 2024b).

4.5 Global impact of the war

As for the global impact of the whole crisis, we can focus on several examples. The first would be the view of the international community and its initial reaction to the invasion (see table below). On 1st March, a few days after Russia invaded Ukraine, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution condemning this brutal invasion. At this time, 141 states supported the resolution, 35 abstained, and five voted against it. These five states included Russia, Belarus, Eritrea, North Korea and Syria. Important states that abstained included China, India, Iran and South Africa. This decision came just days after Russia blocked the Security Council (EEAS, 2022).

What does this resolution tell us? The world is not united on the issue of invading Ukraine. At first glance, it may seem that the outcome is quite clear; after all, only five states have spoken out against this resolution. However, the problem arises in the question of how to perceive the states that abstained. Certainly, some countries abstained because they simply did not want to be involved in the vote, and it may not even be an important issue for them. However, then

there are states that are so important in global politics and the global governance system that their abstention cannot simply be ignored. In particular, we can talk about China, India, South Africa or Iran. Two of them, South Africa and Iran, may follow a story similar to that of China. They may be allies of Russia, but they do not want to directly confront the West and side with Russia by voting purely on Russia's side in the UN. Nevertheless, the question mark for India and its reason for abstaining from voting remains. India has worked with both Russia and the US in the past, but its biggest enemy is China, with whom it shares a border, and both countries have an interest in hegemony in the region. That, too, might make it strange that India would side with Russia and China. Although we can observe that India and Russia have grown closer politically over the last few years (for example, there has been the already mentioned entry of India into the SCO), India still has an interest in maintaining a relationship with the West as well (Hedlund, 2024). In the end, India may end up copying China's story more than it may seem at first glance. It is balancing on the East-West border and also has unresolved territorial disputes (Kashmir) where support for Ukraine could damage its position.

Voting Started		02-Mar-22		11:55:14	
Item 5 - Draft resolution A/ES-11/L.1					
Aggression against Ukraine					
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AUSTRALIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONGO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GRENADA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LIECHTENSTEIN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOLOMON ISLANDS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AUSTRIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COSTA RICA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GUATEMALA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITHUANIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PAKISTAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOMALIA
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BAHAMAS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CROATIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GUINEA-BISSAU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MADAGASCAR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PANAMA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOUTH SUDAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BAHRAIN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CUBA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GUYANA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MALAWI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PAPUA NEW GUINEA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SPAIN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BANGLADESH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CYPRUS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HAITI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MALAYSIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARAGUAY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SRI LANKA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BARBADOS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CZECH REPUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HONDURAS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MALDIVES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PERU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SUDAN
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BELIZE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DENMARK	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MARSHALL ISLANDS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PORTUGAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SWITZERLAND
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BENIN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DJIBOUTI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDONESIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MAURITANIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> QATAR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SYRIAN ARAB REP...
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOLIVIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DOMINICAN REP...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IRAQ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEXICO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REP OF MOLDOVA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> THAILAND
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOSNIA-HERZEGOVI...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECUADOR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IRELAND	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MICRONESIA (FS)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ROMANIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TIMOR-LESTE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTSWANA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EGYPT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ISRAEL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MONACO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RUSSIAN FED...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TOGO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BRAZIL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EL SALVADOR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ITALY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MONGOLIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RWANDA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TONGA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BRUNEI DARUSSAL...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EQUATORIAL GUINEA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JAMAICA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MONTENEGRO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAINT KITTS-NEVIS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRINIDAD-TOBAGO
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BULGARIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ERITREA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JAPAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOROCCO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAINT LUCIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TUNISIA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BURKINA FASO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ESTONIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> JORDAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOZAMBIQUE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAINT VINCENT-GR...	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TURKEY
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BURUNDI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ESWATINI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KAZAKHSTAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MYANMAR	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAMOA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TURKMENISTAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CABO VERDE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ETHIOPIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KENYA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NAMIBIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAN MARINO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TUVALU
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CAMBODIA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FIJI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> KIRIBATI	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NAURU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAO TOME-PRINCIPE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UGANDA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN FAVOUR: 141	<input type="checkbox"/> AGAINST: 5	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ABSTENTION: 35			

Obrázek 1 Source: UN (2022)

The war in Ukraine also posed a huge danger to food security at its beginning. The war has made exporting grain from Russia and Ukraine difficult, causing food shortages in Africa

and rising food prices in the rest of the world³⁰. Ukraine and Russia account for 30% of the world's grain for low- and middle-income countries. Weaker and smaller countries were then in a worse bargaining position and, in some cases, threatened famine in addition to higher prices (Arriola et al., 2023; Ceelen & Zandonadi, 2023; OECD, 2024). Thus, the Black Sea Grain Initiative was created at the UN in response to the crisis in the Azov and Black Seas and the complication of grain exports from Ukraine and Russia. However, the grain shortage on the global market has also been responsible for the increase in prices not only for this commodity but also for other commodities. This shortage has thus affected several million people in different parts of the world. This initiative was, therefore, intended to ensure that grain could continue to be exported from these affected areas including the countries of Ukraine, Russia and Turkey. However, this cooperation was not extended in July 2023 (UN, 2023).

Another impact on global governance structures is forming and strengthening alliances and relationships between countries. This chapter frequently mentions the strengthening relationship between Russia and China. Today, we can observe an increase in economic interdependence between Russia and China. In the case of Russia, there has been a complete change in trade ties, with Russia reorienting its focus towards Asia and a new large portion of its oil and gas exports going there (OECD, 2024). This is also accompanied by greater military cooperation than ever before. This cooperation also includes sharing military technology, research and intelligence (Erickson, 2024). On the other hand, we can again observe the expansion of the NATO defence military alliance. Which, by the way, was something that Russia strongly fought against and criticized any possibility of NATO expansion towards its border (for example, through Ukraine). With Sweden and Finland joining its structures, NATO is stronger and closer to Moscow than ever before (NATO, 2024a).

The expansion of military alliances is accompanied by a general cooling of relations between the two camps. The EU, for example, has perceived China as a rival and systemic competitor since 2019. China's rapprochement with Russia and its often indirect support for Russia's efforts in Ukraine has not added much to China's credibility, and the EU continues to take a more cautious approach to this global player (Ding & Ekman, 2024). The US also

³⁰ This was also accompanied by a lack of harvest in India, which lost much of its crop due to climatic conditions.

perceives China as a rival and Russia as a threat. Joe Biden has said that the 21st century will be defined as a contest between democracy and autocracy (Faulconbridge, 2023). In addition, the US Congress has stated that the US must prepare for a clash with Russia and China, strengthen alliances around the world, expand its conventional forces, and modernize its nuclear program (Faulconbridge, 2023).

Respect for international law and norms is also an important aspect of the entire conflict. Russia is committing war crimes. It attacks civilian infrastructure and non-military targets, including schools and hospitals. It tortures its prisoners and commits the abduction of young children, as well as Russian troops committing sexual violence against victims of the conflict (OHCHR, 2024). So, the question is, can the conflict in Ukraine and the disregard for international rules mean undermining the authority of the West, and in particular the authority of the US and the system that the West has built and that has been in place since at least the fall of the USSR? For example, actions such as disconnecting Russia from the SWIFT system, "building camps and erecting barricades", and other similar actions contribute to the disintegration of global connectivity. Once again, the debate about authoritarian and democratic states and their clash is gradually replacing the debate about terrorism. The earlier norms, rules and themes that characterized global governance are now being challenged or even replaced. This phenomenon is not new, but Ukraine could be a turning point (Lewis, 2022). This fact may create a sense that the rules that previously existed no longer apply today, and individual actors may be more emboldened in their efforts, contributing to the gradual disintegration of the global governance structure.

The social impact of the whole conflict is no less important than these mainly political aspects. This means, in particular, the struggle for the right narrative, ideology and opinion. Something similar could be observed already at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic when a certain part of society refused to believe the information provided to it and instead tried to find its own information, its own "truth". Scepticism and curiosity are not necessarily bad, but unfortunately, in some cases, they can turn into a belief and spread misinformation, which can then radicalize a part of society and create instability within the state. This misinformation can then be deliberately spread by the state in pursuit of its own interests. An example of this is China, where most of the media refer to the conflict only as the "Russia-Ukraine conflict" or

"Special military operation". In addition to downplaying the whole situation surrounding Ukraine, China is actually further supporting Russia through unofficial channels. For example, it has launched a massive campaign on the social networking site Facebook to promote Russian narratives and propaganda. For example, it spread the news that there was a US biological weapons development program in Ukraine (Umarov, 2022).

Not only does China have experience in spreading disinformation, but Russia is also very well known for this strategy. In the past, they have discussed so-called "troll farms", which are facilities in which real people sit and try to use the Internet to spread disinformation on various social networks. However, over the last few years, their strategy has improved, and today, it can be very difficult to correctly identify such a troll, especially for people with no experience or knowledge of the danger. Moreover, in recent months, artificial intelligence has also entered the picture, which can make the whole process much simpler and more efficient. To give an idea, there are fake accounts on the social networks Telegram, WhatsApp and Twitter that can create or share thousands of fake posts in order to influence social sentiment. In recent months, for example, they have tried to influence public opinion in Germany regarding support for Ukraine (Jones, 2024). However, this is not only the case in Germany; in the US, there is a conflict between Republicans and Democrats on the topic of future support for Ukraine. Similar issues are also being addressed in other democratic countries and, in conjunction with the economic crisis, contribute to political instability (Zhang, 2024), further amplified by the disinformation just mentioned.

5 Results

In the course of this thesis, two case studies and their impact on global governance structures were analyzed, as well as the impact on the main actors and organizations affected by these crises. This chapter serves as a summary of these findings and answers the research questions and hypotheses presented.

One of the first research questions was to answer **the main principles of global governance and the ways in which actors can influence this environment**. This part was primarily addressed in the theoretical part, where it was found that there is no single definition of GG. Finkelstein defines GG as **"Global governance is governing, without sovereign authority, relationships that transcend national frontiers"** (Finkelstein, 1995). Rosenau (1995) adds to this definition that **"it involves millions of control mechanisms and decision-making processes that interact with each other"**. Thus, it is a set of rules, values and ideas from around the world that together form an idea of how the world works. These values, ideas and rules influence each other and clash when they oppose each other. The actors, which can include states and IOs or individuals, decide which ideas and norms prevail and become global values (but can still change over time). These values, norms and practices are then perceived by the actors as the correct rules of the game, and they interact with each other based on these rules. **According to the theory, there is no central power in gg; there is no hierarchical structure. However, this thesis does not work with this principle.** On the contrary, this thesis perceives certain actors who have a more significant role in the whole system and, as such, are more capable of changing the system in their own image. Edward Carr (1939) has already worked with a similar argument in his "The Twenty Years' Crisis", where he argues that the international system is maintained by the dominant powers that benefit from the system and have a self-interest in maintaining it. In his words, it is "international tyranny masked by lofty idealistic rhetoric". His work implies that the states that maintain the system must not lose their dominance, in which case the system becomes unstable and vulnerable to change and any potential peace becomes unsustainable (Bull, 1969). **In this thesis, we are explicitly talking about states such as the USA or the European Union** (if we look at this organization as a state), which have been called **"the West"**. At the same time, this thesis also looks at the other

camp, called "**the East**", where **China** is the leading actor, and **Russia** has a strong position. In a case where we are talking about a million control and decision-making mechanisms that influence each other, these two camps are trying to promote different ideas and thus influence the GG structures.

New ideas then often enter the GG through (not only) international institutions. This work has focused on some of these linked to the case studies. Specifically, we discuss the European Union, NATO, the BRICS group, and the SCO. In all cases, we can observe that institutions serve mainly to facilitate interaction between actors based on the principle of "reducing transaction costs", which was introduced in the theoretical section. At the same time, actors seek out institutions in order to have a more substantial presence on the international stage, which can also be observed in all the organizations mentioned. In the example of the BRICS, we can see how states are coming together and working together to promote new norms, even though they often have unresolved disputes among themselves.

This **cooperation and ability to overcome the challenges of crises within international organizations** was another research question. In both case studies, the specific themes found that **the West has more functioning and deeper cooperation and generally more robust and more resilient relationships with each other than the East**. This is because Western IOs have a more profound vision of their existence and goals. A deeper institutionalization and harmonization of norms and ideas supports this. On the other hand, in the case of the BRICS and the SCO, we can observe different actors with different perspectives on democracy and human rights, as well as on the perception of the West itself. Often, even the members themselves have tense relations with each other, which in some cases prevents deeper integration and cooperation and can also lead to rivalry between actors. In both the BRICS and the SCO, the main connecting factor is the desire to assert themselves on the international stage and to impose their own rules on this environment. There is a general criticism that the West has an absolute influence on the functioning of this environment. Therefore, there is a need to come together in larger entities that allow weaker states to counterbalance the power of the West. This concept is introduced in the theoretical section, and this analysis only confirms this rule. However, as already mentioned, criticism of the West alone does not mean that the states

of the East do not compete with each other and are in conflict on specific issues (for example, the thesis has touched briefly on the rivalry between China and India).

As for comparing the two case studies and the question of **which of the two crises has a more significant impact on the GG structures, this thesis concludes (and thus confirms the hypothesis) that the second case, the war in Ukraine, has a more significant impact on GG structures.** This is mainly because of the different consequences of these crises. COVID-19 was a genuinely global crisis that needed to be fought together and ideally collaborated in all sectors across the world. This crisis was not accompanied by ideological conflict but rather by socioeconomic problems, and it would be challenging to find anyone who would willingly support the opposite outcome to the rest of the world (in this case, we are talking about the defeat of a virus). Despite this, the analysis of this study suggests that the actors were not always able and willing to work together. Instead, there were different approaches and perspectives on dealing with the situation. This fact could be observed within the BRICS group, where each country used different procedures and laws to deal with the pandemic. This was due, among other things, to the healthcare system's distinct structure and political cultures. In some countries, the restrictions were very light from the beginning (Russia), while there are examples where the restrictions were stringent (China). Despite these differences, observing shared practices and cooperation across BRICS in the fight against the pandemic was very difficult. This is only further underlined by the fact that in the case of the new Omicron variant, which emerged in 2021, the BRICS countries took the same measures as the West and closed their borders to arrivals from South Africa. This is a specific case where, instead of helping South Africa, they have taken the same measures, and even these measures have remained in effect much longer than those taken by the West. The last important point of the first study is the development of vaccines. Here again, the BRICS failed to develop and distribute them, which was one of their goals at the beginning of the pandemic. The countries believed this crisis was an opportunity to show they could deal with such a situation. In the end, most of the funding and the first massive vaccination of the population was attributed to the West.

Overall, the first case study suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic did not improve the position of the rising powers. China, which uses the BRISC platform mainly to spread its influence, has been unable to assert itself in dealing with the pandemic. Many norms and

constraints that emerged during the pandemic were lifted after the end and were thus not permanent. The GG structure benefits from this crisis in terms of future (perhaps) better preparedness for similar situations. Thanks to the West, which has been able to harmonize its practices across the EU better, there is talk, for example, of the possibility of a global certificate to serve as confirmation of vaccination against the next pandemic. It has to be said, however, that this is also a time when misinformation is becoming more widespread and society is generally becoming more radicalized, which could negatively affect GG.

This analysis suggests that the second case study, the war in Ukraine, has a more significant impact on the GG structures. One of the main reasons is that this conflict is military, and ideology also plays a powerful role here. In the previous case, it was said that it would be challenging to find anyone who would voluntarily take the other side and thus support the pandemic. In the case of the Ukraine war, the side of the issue is unclear for many states. Conversely, we find two large camps here. One supports Ukraine, and the other (sometimes not directly) supports Russia's demands. The East often supports Russia's demands in our division between the West and the East. **This case study has focused on the relationship between Russia and China, the SCO's functioning in the region, and how Russia's aggression affects this relationship. The analysis showed that these states do not always directly support Russia. Instead, they try to orient their policies towards both sides of the conflict, often appearing neutral** when, in fact, this may not be the case at all.

A typical example is China, which has turned over time from criticizing Russia after finding that Russia could not conquer Kyiv. Today, when the situation on the battlefield has stabilized, China is a more vocal supporter of Vladimir Putin. However, China is still trying to keep its support at a level that does not provoke the West, and it is also not affected by the sanctions imposed on Russia in connection with the war in Ukraine. This also characterized other countries and their attitudes towards Russia. For many of them, the West is simply too big an actor, with a strong economy and political power, and they do not want to antagonize this power. And like BRICS, SCO cooperation is not good and is often limited by the different perceptions of the leading players - Russia and China. On the other hand, the West and its support for Ukraine is strong, speaking with one voice and loudly criticizing Russia. But the question remains: how long can such support last? Signs of declining support are present throughout the

West. The aforementioned radicalization of society and the spread of disinformation are also present here and have often intensified. Often, these changes are directly supported by Russia and China in an attempt to divide the West on the issue of aid to Ukraine.

The final research question analyzes the relationships, coalitions and rivalries between actors. Throughout the work, we find that **the relationship between Russia and China is not built on an equal partnership.** China sees Russia as a market for cheap and available raw materials that it needs to grow rather than a partner in the struggle against the West. Moreover, China needs the West for trade; it cannot afford to cut itself off entirely from the West and its capital in this situation. On the other hand, Russia does not have much choice, as it has gradually become increasingly detached from the West since 2014 and has had to cooperate more with China. Although on the outside, they appear as equal partners who respect each other immensely, their relationship is characterized by strong rivalries, especially in the Central Asian space, which is partly the focus of this work.

And here is the space for a final summary of the differences between the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. While **the pandemic** undoubtedly disrupted trade links, altered trade routes and isolated some actors, many of these impacts **were not permanent.** Trade, albeit with difficulty, has gradually returned to normal, and international ties that were disrupted by the necessary isolation have often been restored and sometimes even improved (for example, by taking the meetings to the online world). The world has learnt where it is lacking and is trying to prepare for future similar situations. Whether in the form of research into dangerous diseases or greater institutionalization of the whole issue (for example, through the COVID-19 passes mentioned above).

On the other hand, **the war in Ukraine has had lasting consequences that may change the whole structure of GG considerably.** First, the analysis suggests that **Russia has necessarily had to become more aligned with China.** In the wake of the sanctions, Russia has found a trading partner in China and seeks to deepen this relationship. There is thus a change in trade routes, whereby Russia, precisely in the wake of the sanctions, is focusing more on exports to China. Both countries talk about their relations entering a new phase and look forward to future and deeper cooperation. Linked to this are efforts to redistribute power in the

GG, which China and Russia have been trying to achieve for a long time. **Although China is currently at something of a disadvantage, needing the West and its economic power to further its modernization, this condition may not be here forever,** and we may see more evident support for Russia and stronger Chinese efforts to bring changes to the GG in the future. So, without a doubt, **the war in Ukraine has already definitively assigned Russia to the East.** If there were still considerations that Russia could integrate more with Europe, the war has put an end to these considerations. However, a similar convergence also occurred in the case of the West, when **NATO expanded** again after many years and welcomed two new members who were not interested in joining the alliance until then. At the very least, these two points change the world's political map significantly, and they are permanent changes that are hardly likely to disappear after the war's end. Russia is doomed to cooperate with China, and NATO has welcomed two new states into its family.

However, beyond these impacts, this analysis also deals with others. The war in Ukraine has put Africa at risk of famine because of grain shortages, and the rest of the world has seen the price of food rise. If famine occurs, Europe will be at risk again as a new migration crisis emerges. Last but not least, there has also been a return to the relevance of some organizations and possible industries considered redundant today. We are talking here, in particular, about the arms industry. This also involves the arming of practically the whole of Europe with new weapons systems. This is one of the effects that is not talked about much in connection with the war in Ukraine, but Europe is massively modernizing its armies and replacing the old equipment that it donated to Ukraine. Last but not least, it is also important to keep in mind that **China still has a great chance to play a mediator in the conflict between Russia and China instead of US and as such can contribute to calming down the whole situation. In that case, it would certainly enhance its prestige on the global scene.**

6 Conclusion

This thesis examines the structures of global governance (GG), the position of rising powers and their influence and ability to influence this environment, all in the background of two major crises, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. Global governance is heavily influenced by the West due to the history of the 20th and 21st centuries. The system we live in today is based firstly on the outcome of the Second World War and secondly on the result of the Cold War, where, in both cases, liberal democracies won and thus had the opportunity to shape new rules. These rules often date back to when the rising powers, which today include Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and more, did not have a strong voice at the global level to speak up and influence the making of international rules. All of these states mentioned are then part of the grouping called BRICS, which was the subject of the chapter related to the first case study – the COVID-19 pandemic, and some of them are also part of the SCO, which was the subject of the second case study – War in Ukraine.

Global governance is the structure that brings together all the decision-making processes across the world. It includes decision-making by elites at the state level and processes at the level of the individual or non-state actors. According to the theory, GG should not have a hierarchical structure, but this thesis nevertheless approaches a form of hierarchy as it believes that certain actors have more influence and ability to shape and transform the system. In this case, we are talking about the US, China, and the European Union.

According to this approach, some countries were chosen to be the focus of this thesis more than others. These are, in particular, Russia and China on the one hand and the USA and the European Union countries on the other. The choice of Russia and China was conditioned by the selection of the crises that this thesis has focused on: the COVID-19 pandemic, where China plays an important role, and the war in Ukraine, where Russia's role is essential.

In both crises, it was found that **the cooperation of developing countries, hence the rising powers, reached a different level than in the case of the West.** In the case of the BRICS, there is no consensus on a shared vision and course of action, apart from the unifying element,

which is the negative perception of the West. This has resulted in countries not making joint decisions and developing common policies. **In cases such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these countries have often acted independently and have not been able to cooperate more deeply within the organization. This has resulted in weak cooperation and little influence on global policymaking, which is still mainly shaped by the West.** The EU and the US, on the other hand, have achieved quite opposite results, mainly through closer cooperation and harmonization of rules but also of standards. BRICS is not able to do this, in part because the countries have different legal environments, ideologies and objectives. Moreover, there is often rivalry within BRICS between its members, further weakening the whole organization.

The inability to act together can also be seen in the case of the war in Ukraine. While the West within NATO was able to agree on common approaches and was able to support Ukraine by various means, the other side was unable to do so. **The SCO itself was not united on how to approach Russian aggression in Ukraine. In addition, China's support of Russia faces many complications.** One reason for this may be that China needs to maintain at least some ties with the West and, for that reason, cannot afford to fully support Russia as much as Russia would need. However, China's role in the future development of this conflict is very important and it may become a mediator of the whole conflict, replacing the U.S.

Both crises negatively impact global governance structures, but the war in Ukraine has a more significant impact on the system. COVID-19, in particular, has had socioeconomic impacts. There have been border closures and suspension of international communication. However, it cannot be said that the world was changing significantly in the political sphere. On the other hand, in the case of the war in Ukraine, we are talking about the exact opposite. While COVID-19 was not an ideological issue, the war is. We can observe the formation of two distinct camps that approach the war in Ukraine differently. There is an increase in weaponization worldwide and a strengthening of often military alliances. One example is the enlargement of NATO to include states that have been neutral for many years. In the case of the East, **there is also a deepening of relations, particularly between Russia and China, which, in their own words, are entering a new era of relations.**

In general, both crises have harmed developing countries and rising powers. In the case of COVID-19, economic problems deepened, and trade links were often disrupted, not only between developing countries but also with the West. The West, too, did not escape the problems but was able to adapt better thanks to its institutionalization. The war in Ukraine has, in turn, pushed some countries into isolation. On the other hand, the West began to invest more in the arms industry, restoring relevance to some organizations that might have seemed no longer relevant. This has weakened the position of the rising powers, as the West has so far emerged from this crisis more united and aware of who threatens its security. The only question for the future is whether this unity of the West will last.

7 Summary

This thesis has shown that global governance remains heavily influenced by the West, with rising powers such as the BRICS members still struggling with a lack of coordination and unity. The two crises analyzed - the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine - highlighted the differences in the approach and ability of these countries to cooperate and respond to global challenges. While the West has been able to harmonize its policies more effectively and maintain strong alliances, the BRICS and SCO face internal contradictions and divergent interests that limit their influence on the global stage. These findings suggest that it will be crucial for the rising powers to find ways to overcome their differences and improve cooperation if they are to influence global governance more effectively and advance their interests internationally.

8 Shrnutí

Tato práce ukázala, že globální řízení je stále silně ovlivňováno Západem, přičemž rostoucí mocnosti, jako jsou členové BRICS, se stále potýkají s nedostatkem koordinace a jednoty. Dvě analyzované krize – pandemie COVID-19 a válka na Ukrajině – poukázaly na rozdíly v přístupu a schopnosti těchto zemí spolupracovat a reagovat na globální výzvy. Zatímco Západ dokázal účinněji harmonizovat své politiky a udržovat silná spojení, BRICS a SCO se potýkají s vnitřními rozpory a rozdílnými zájmy, které omezují jejich vliv na globální scéně. Tato zjištění naznačují, že pro tyto rostoucí mocnosti bude klíčové najít způsoby, jak překonat své rozdíly a zlepšit spolupráci, pokud chtějí účinněji ovlivňovat globální správu a prosazovat své zájmy na mezinárodní úrovni.

9 Acronyms

BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCTV	Closed circuit television
EU	European union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GG	Global governance
HI	Historical institutionalism
IOs.	International organizations
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIEO	New international economic order
NIS	New institutionalism
RC	Rational choice
RP	Rising power(s)
SCO	The Shanghai Cooperation organization
SI	Social institutionalism
UN	The United Nations
US	The United States of America
WB	The World bank
WHO	The World Health Organization
WTO	The World Trade Organization

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