



## Key Issues on the Brazilian Foreign Policy

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### Historical background: the main directives of the Brazilian foreign policy

Brazilian society was formed within traditional monarchic and aristocratic Portuguese lines. When the Portuguese royal family left Lisbon for Rio de Janeiro at the wave of Napoleon invasion of Portugal, they transferred its political culture and structures to what was so far a Colony. In 1822, Brazil was declared an independent monarchical state. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was created in 1834 and it served the Emperor well in dealing with international disputes and with the building up of a legal foreign representation to Brazil.

Brazil was a centralized monarchical State until 1889, when a military movement declared it a federation. The new-born Federal Republic of the United States of Brazil was regarded by the intellectual leaderships of the military as the best way to modernize and westernize Brazil. The emerging United States (US) federal model as well as August Comte's positivist principle of *Order and Progress* written at the new Brazilian flag were established as the guiding principles to move the nation away from backwardness.

The history of Republican Brazil has been a struggle to move away from Portuguese political tradition, from agrarian economy, from slavery, colonialism and its consequences and towards economic and political modernization. Political ups and downs during the 20th century Brazilian political life can be understood as a conflict between a will to change by emerging

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new social groups and the resistance from traditional Brazil and its colonial heritage.

The troubles of internal rebellions and external wars Brazil has faced since colonial times were dealt with and solved by the preservation of the centralized state structures created in the Monarchical period. A centralized political power in which the federative units depended on central government was conceived as the only way to keep national integrity. The guidelines for consolidating Brazil as a powerful and important entity, as well as to modernize its political culture and Brazilian elites, are set out within this strong and centralized State model.

The bearers of the Brazilian State are the two most important State bureaucracies that emerged during Brazil's monarchical empire and which expanded their political role in republican times: the military and the diplomacy. The military thinking combined elements from traditional political culture with a will to modernize, exploring the idea of progress and nationalism. The relevance of the military as an actor was very much a consequence of past internal and external conflicts like the *Canudos* War and the Paraguay War, as well as of the social and political ascension of poor and black Brazilians through military ranks in these wars.

The Brazilian Foreign Office, known as *Itamaraty*, served the Monarchy well and adapted itself to serve the Republic even better. It gradually developed a sense of how Brazil should find its own way in the Eurocentric world order. Not much different than the Military concern with order and progress, the idea of modernization was taken by the national diplomacy as the centerpiece of Brazil's national interest. It was during the formation of Brazil's first State structures at the end of the Nineteenth Century and early days of the Twentieth Century that *Itamaraty* gained today's importance and developed its expertise.

The most important issues of Brazilian Foreign policy were set at the Monarchical years and in the first decades of the Republic. They were: 1. to clearly establish Brazil's territorial borders; 2. to overcome dependence, to

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achieve economic development and to become a global trader; and 3. to be a global player on issues of regional and international affairs.

## Borders

The very first important challenge to Brazil was to clearly define territorial borders with its neighboring countries, all of them troubled with unending wars and rifts due to the collapse of Hispanic America. *Itamaraty* has played a central role in exploring the resources of *soft power* to negotiate and reach consensual agreements on border limits, based mainly on the principle of *uti possidetis*. As new and more precise measuring techniques were developed during the 20th century, these agreements were improved.

From 1851 to 1972, Brazil established and refined border treaties with its ten neighboring countries, covering 16.886 kilometers, containing 202 lakes and 9.321 km of rivers and channels. More than 5.632 border marks have been set so far. Today, when marking borders is no longer an issue, the main activity of Brazil's Borders Division is to maintain and keep the borders marks in good condition.

The works of Brazilian diplomacy, particularly of the Baron de Rio Branco and other *Itamaraty* diplomats were done so successfully that, contrary to other South American nations, Brazil has no disputes or conflicts with any of its neighbors on territorial issues.

Repression on arms and drugs trafficking as well as enhancing border control have become the central issues related to borders for Brazil today. Following the track of Brazilian good diplomatic relations with South American countries, new joint initiatives and treaties have been entered into in order to patrol the frontiers, guarantee security for communities on both sides and develop a multi-agency cooperation capable of facing these major security threats.

Besides, and with the unfolding of regional integration initiatives, Brazil has invested in the creation of a South American common regional infrastructure in roads, energy and transport that has made traditional border issues a thing of the past. The positive prospects with today's developments concerning policies on borders issues results from Brazil's long stand in favor of the use of diplomatic means to achieve solutions for disputes over borders as well as to search for partnership, consensus and cooperation.



## Economic and trade development

Until eighty years ago, the Brazilian economy was agrarian and depended on the export of primary products. During the Colonial times, Brazil was a source of wood and sugar for Europe. In the Monarchical years, gold and coffee were the two sources of revenue for Portuguese exploitation of Brazil. After independence from Portugal, Brazil developed a strong and rich aristocracy based on exports of raw materials and food. Gradually, national elites saw that a growing gap between an industrial North and an Agrarian South would enhance the existing colonial and dependent links Brazil still had with Europe. As members of a newly-independent nation, Brazilians regarded their options being limited by the imperial interests of the Great Powers and by the continuation of its unequal colonial economic and trade relationship. At that point, Brazilian elites set out as key national goals to reach economic development by industrialization and to turn the national economy into a global trader.

Industrialization started at Sao Paulo State and was financed with profits coming from coffee exports. New industrial elites emerged and urbanization followed. In the 1950s more than 80% of Brazilians lived in rural areas. In 2010, about 85% of Brazilians are living in cities. The building of a modern State capable of creating an educational and social network to attend to the demands of a growing middle class was also a goal. Universities and technical schools to train skilled labor were created on the basis of traditional Law, Engineering and Medicine faculties. From the 1950s to the present, the federal government, states and major cities have created a growing network of schools, universities, technical schools, hospitals, research institutions and other bodies to attend to the growing need to transform a rural and uneducated population into a skilled labor force.

During the 1930's Vargas regime, Brazil enhanced its bilateral relations with some European countries, particularly with France, Germany and Italy, in order to attract investments, a skilled work force and to diversify its exports. The US was already Brazil's biggest trade partner in the 1920s and it grew in the period between the two World Wars. In order to increase trade with Europe, Brazil acted to become an exporter of many new primary products to Europe as well.

The War drastically reduced trade with Europe while the US and Brazil moved to consolidate a strong security and trade partnership. In 1947, with



the end of Vargas' regime and political democratization in Brazil, there was a positive atmosphere and a belief that the furthering of the successful partnership with the US would give Brazil the means to achieve economic and social growth. Unfortunately the Cold War attracted all US attention to the growing tensions in Europe and Asia. As a consequence, Brazil and the rest of Latin America were considered no longer a priority.

With a reduced set of options to search for new markets, since Europe and Asia were under reconstruction, Latin American hopes for development have turned to both the Organization of American States, and above all, to the United Nations. The most important achievement in that period was the creation of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), in 1951 under the umbrella of the UN. ECLAC became a very important think tank on development thinking by formulating and supporting development policies and fostering regional economic integration.

With the reduction of tensions between East and West and the recovery of Japan and other European countries in the 1960s and 70s, Brazilian diplomacy saw that it was again time to undertake its project of strengthening and diversifying its industry and trade.

Parallel to that, Brazil and Argentina have begun a slow set of initiatives towards cooperation in technology, infra-structure development and trade. These initiatives have led to the formation of the Mercado Común del Sur (MERCOSUR), a project aiming to bring fast growth to the region by creating a common market, integrating and connecting the economies of the region, as well as creating a new powerful international political entity.

In recent decades Brazil has been achieving many of its goals concerning modernization and technological development and transfer. Nevertheless, it acknowledges that there is still in some areas a technological and educational gap to overcome. Lately, Brazil's government has put in place a set of policies involving international cooperation in order to reduce this gap.

Until the 1970s most of Brazilian trade was concentrated on a few products and sent to one big partner, the US. Today Brazil has a diversified trade portfolio in terms of products, and regions of the world. In general, 25% of trade is with Asia, 23% with Latin America, 20% with the European Union (EU), 12% with the US, and 20% with the rest of the world. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and *The Economist*, prospects on the



economy are so positive that the Brazilian Gross National Product (GNP) is regarded to be among the big five GNPs in less than two decades.

Last but not least, the Brazilian economy has become the main source of South and Latin American economic growth. Brazil is today leading a process of infra-structural and economic regional integration that embraces all South American countries from the Southern Cone to the Andean region. This new integration wave is similar perhaps to the one Europe has been through during its early common market period.

Brazil has doubled its per cent share within the total share of international trade. It is expected that Brazil's international trade will reach a total of US \$ 500 billion in 2011. Its trade is not more concentrated in one region or country. For many analysts, its goal of becoming a global trader has been reached.

The possibility that Brazil, together with other emerging countries, could help Europe out of its financial and economic crisis indicates that the time when Brazil was politically independent from Portugal but financially dependent on the Great Powers is over.

## Global player

It is since the years, when Napoleon invaded Portugal and the Portuguese Royal family fled to Brazil, making Rio de Janeiro the headquarters of its Empire, that the Brazilian elite saw the need to understand and actively participate in world affairs.

The 1889 Republican proclamation followed by the exile of the Emperor has directed this drive toward the Americas. The newly-born United States of Brazil sought a closer partnership with its inspirational model, the United States of America. This would counterbalance British hegemonic presence in Latin America and reduce European influence in Brazil. It also created a positive setting for the consolidation of republicanism in Latin America and for Brazil to peacefully deal with its borders issues.

The end of the First World War provided an opportunity for Brazil to participate more closely in world affairs. Brazil was among the four non-permanent member of the Council of the League of Nations and had a permanent and active delegation there from 1919 to 1926 when it decided to leave due to what was regarded as weaknesses of this international body.



In the years before the Second World War relations between Brazil and European powers increased mainly due to their growing need for raw materials and other primary goods. Germany became a trading partner almost as important as the US. The War redirected Brazil's interests again closer to the US and Brazil joined the Allied operations in Europe after its 1942 declaration of war against the Axis powers.

At the end of the World War, Brazil was a key player in the creation of the Organization of American States and in the signing of its central treaty. The Rio Defense Treaty pledges the nations of the Americas to act jointly against any aggression in the hemisphere security zone, stretching from Alaska South to Tierra del Fuego. Brazil also played an important role in the creation of the United Nations, being among its first members.

The high expectations with the onset of a new post-War era of progress collapsed with the sudden emergence of the Cold War. Bipolarity has reduced the prospects for global change to a dispute between two rigid blocs. This limited and disappointed those who expected an era of cooperation and development. It was only at the end of the 1950s that Brazil managed to fully retake its global policy.

From the 1960s onward Brazil re-stressed its independent national diplomacy. Political alignment with the US was no longer automatic. The enhancement of links with Western and Eastern Europe, Asia, Latin American and African countries was regarded as a central aim that would lead Brazil again into the center of international affairs and make it possible for Brazil to stand as equal to international powers.

During the 1970s Brazil went through a stage of rapid growth and social change. The importance of the US in the Brazilian economy and trade was reduced and Germany and Japan became new important partners. At this point Brazil reached a very important agreement with Argentina on cooperation on nuclear research. This was the first step towards further cooperation on security and towards the birth of MERCOSUR project.

Today, the economy of Brazil has reached the level of economic global power and prospects about its continued growth are very positive. Its economy has become the powerhouse of South and Central America. Its borders have been defined and the national State is capable of showing its presence in every part of its territory. Brazilian actions to support and



develop a South American Union has established the region as a priority to Brazil's powerful economic interests and political leadership.

Brazil is becoming a even stronger player in many international organizations. It leads UN peace-keeping troops and national reconstruction in Haiti. It has become an important donor and aider to the nations of Africa and Central and South America. Brazil supports international organizations such as the UN as major fora for dealing with global problems and sees a multi-polar World as the best political setting to guarantee peace, justice and order in the international system.

## **The relations with the main areas of the world since the end of the Cold War**

### **The United States**

The US has been a major Brazilian partner in investments, trade and security since the end of the 19th century. It has also provided Brazil with a Presidential and federal political model that has been at the decision-making core of national modernization process. For decades Brazil exported raw materials the and imported industrial goods from the US. But in the 1960s Brazil concluded that an unequal and automatic partnership was no longer desirable and that it was necessary to transform the strong Brazil-US links into a more pragmatic and equal relationship. Brazil thus acted to diversify its partnerships with other parts of the world in order to best achieve Brazil's national objectives.

In spite of the Brazilian search for strengthening overseas relations, the US had remained the single country that had the most investments and trade with Brazil, until a few years ago. A very close relationship in terms of cooperation on defense and security issues has been kept since the end of the Second World War in spite of which political party is in power on either side.

The emergence of Brazil as a global actor with a global network in trade and investment has fueled its relationship with the US. Today, among other things, there is a partnership for high technology products such as airplanes; there is a growing interest by the US in Brazilian bio and clean energy technology as well as in its agricultural and energetic potential. There are hopes that common interests in energy, trade, investment, education and technology may lead to a stronger and renewed relationship between both countries. The US perception of Brazil and Latin America has im-





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proved lately and a new and balanced US-Brazil relation might be a solution to help the US overcome its economic difficulties and change once and for all its approach towards South America into an even stronger partnership.

### **China**

Trade and investment between China and Brazil rocketed in the last ten years.

China is today Brazil is number one trade partner. It surpassed the US in trade exchange and its potential for continuous growth is huge. In 2011 China will buy from Brazil twice as much as the US or the EU. China buys mainly raw materials and agricultural products and for that reason Brazil has been pushing to diversify trade with China, and to enlarge trade on industrial and high technological products as well. Right now both sides are realizing that they need to define the terms of their complex relationship in order for it to continue producing benefits. Growing Chinese investments in the Brazilian high tech industry during 2011 is a good sign that a stronger partnership is emerging. Investments in Brazil from other Asian countries such as South Korea indicate that there is a tendency for a move towards a technology oriented relationship in agriculture, energy, services and industry. This trend might consolidate Asia as Brazil is number one regional economic partner.

China and Brazil also share the view of a multi-polar world in which international organizations such as the IMF and World Bank will have enlarged the participation of emerging countries of the South from Africa, South America and Asia.

### **Europe and the European Union**

European countries have a long and strong relationship with Brazil. They have been sources of investment, migration and a mirror for Brazilian culture. While France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Britain share with Brazil support for a multi-polar world, the European Union's history is regarded as a model for Latin and South American integration. Europe represents the major source of foreign culture in Brazil and the European



element continues to grow as the core of Brazilian culture as new waves of Europeans arrive to work and live in Brazil.

Germany has traditionally been Europe's is number one investor and trader with Brazil, while France, besides trade and investment, has also been a partner in defense technology.

In the last decades, the European agriculture subsidies have become Brazil's greatest difficulty with the EU. Brazil has supported free trade at the World Trade Organization (WTO) while the EU has not responded in a positive way. Though relations and trade with individual European countries has grown, in many issues, Europe seems to be lagging behind other regions such as South America, Asia, Africa and Central America. The importance of these regions to Brazil is growing fast and this new scenario is helping to shape a new post-Cold War global system.

### **South and Latin America**

South and Latin America integration has been a goal Brazil has pursued over the last three decades. In the 1980s, Brazil and Argentina moved from suspicious to close cooperation on trade, science and investment. Argentina has become a key trade partner for Brazil, rapidly becoming its second main trade partner. South America has gradually taken the status of number two from North America in trade and investments with Brazil. The ongoing South American Union aims to increase the very successful aspects of MERCOSUR by physically and economically integrating the economies of the whole region and creating a dynamic similar to that fueling integration in Europe. Progress has been made in terms of security cooperation, as well. The newly-created South American Defense Council has been regarded as aiming at enhancing dialogue and creating a common regional defense capable of representing the region in a multi-polar global world.

Trade between Brazil and other South American countries was US \$ 12 billion in 2003. In 2010, it reached US \$ 83 billion. Intra-regional trade is consolidated and the region is disputing the title of Brazil's first regional partner with Asia.

### **Africa**

Brazil shares with Africa many important values, ranging from cultural aspects to economics and security. It includes a drive towards economic



and social development as well as awareness about its responsibility to play a key role in Southern Atlantic security. Brazil has supported African decolonization since it started at the end of the Second World War and has vigorously opposed apartheid in South Africa. In the last decade, many Brazilian companies have been engaged in Africa and there is a growing set of cooperation in agricultural technology, education, health and training. Brazil has pardoned Africa's poorest nations' debt of nearly US \$ 1 billion and is committed to African development. Brazil regards the continent of Africa as an emerging regional and global player and believes that a stable South depends on a rich, democratic and peaceful Africa working together with South American countries.

### **Russia and India**

Russia is a traditional buyer of Brazilian agriculture and raw materials. Trade among both sides has increased and a set of agreements on technology, science and defense have been signed. These agreements have been regarded as breakthrough in the Brazil-Russia relationship. As members of BRICS, Brazil and Russia have made close decisions on key international matters and work for a multi-polar world system.

Trade between Brazil and India has increased and Indian businesses are investing in agriculture and pharmaceuticals in Brazil. India is interested in Brazilian industrialized products as well in as raw materials and agriculture goods. The potential for growth in trade and investment on both sides is immense. In terms of international security, Brazil, Russia and India have clearly supported the consolidation of a multi-polar balance of power and are engaged in finding solutions to widening their and other emerging countries' roles in major international organizations.

India has also entered into a number of international initiatives together with Brazil, such as the creation of IBSA (India, Brazil, South Africa), G-20 and other political networks to support the emergence of the developing nations. India has increased its trade and investment exchange with Brazil to the point that in a matter of seven to ten years it may be among its major partners.

Brazil has enhanced its economic and diplomatic relations with many other developed countries, such as Canada, Australia, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Norway and South Korea, and with developing ones, such as Turkey, Egypt, South Africa. Brazil looks for



partners not only to have strong trade links but to work together on issues that Brazil regards as central to its future, such as energy, technology, education.

In order to achieve Brazil's international goals, the structure of *Itamaraty* has been enlarged and foreign and diplomatic affairs are part of everyday debate in both the academy and in the press. There are a growing number of graduate and undergraduate schools and departments of international relations in Brazilian Universities and Colleges, while traditional self-centered Brazilian society has become more responsive and concerned with international issues. This all indicates that Brazil has reached a new level in its search to overcome its colonial structures, modernize and become a key global player.

## The National Interests in Energy and Defense at the United Nations

### Energy

Since the 1970s oil crisis, Brazil has decided to invest in research on bio-energy, alternative and clean energy as paramount to its ambitions of using its resources for producing energy for development, becoming independent from oil imports and to become a global player. Ethanol has very successfully substituted fossil fuel oil as a major source of energy for cars. This, together with D&R and the construction of new hydro-electric plants has placed Brazil at the vanguard of energy research and production. Today, 40 per cent of energy in Brazil comes from hydropower, 30 per cent from petrol, and 30 per cent from ethanol, gas, wind and other sources. There are new technologies developed in Brazil already producing energy from garbage and sewage material that are showing themselves to be profitable and are regarded as new solutions to deal with waste from big Brazilian cities.

Brazilian reserves of natural oil and gas at sea have increased enormously with new findings and with the development of new processing technologies. This shows that Brazil has the potential to become a major energy producer and exporter in the years to come. As solar energy is becoming cheaper the use of this technology is growing, particularly in remote areas of Brazil. But similar to wind energy, Brazil is still using a very small amount of its sun light potential.



In Brazil there has been a growing concern with balancing protection of the environment and energy production. Brazil has decided not to build more nuclear energy plants and to continue to invest in technology and in producing energy with a lower environmental impact. These two great assets, the environment and energy, are regarded by Brazilians as central for national and regional growth and for shaping the future of the planet.

### **Defense and the United Nation**

Brazil has defined itself as a country with no enemies in a region where poverty and underdevelopment are the real threats to combat. Brazil has had for decades a firm cooperation on security and defense with its European partners and the US. Lately it has established closer ties with its South and Central American neighbors. The 2008 formation of the South American Defense Council, including all South American nations, represents a new level of regional cooperation in favor of security and stability in the area. As transport and trade links increase between Brazil and its neighbors, there is a growing need to combat crime and guarantee that border areas as safe for economic development.

Brazil has always supported a stable international community based upon the leadership of international institutions and respect for international law. That is why it supports the reform of the UN. It regards a multi-polar world in which all Continents are represented as the best way to guarantee a stable new international order. As one among other emerging powers, it sees itself as an active player on the UN Security Council as well as in other international fora. For Brazil, as for most countries in the world, the time has come to make the heritage of colonialism and imperialism a thing of the past and to let all regions of the World benefit from economic change and participate in global politics. Brazil believes that could it has an experience and a history that could contribute for this new order to prevail.

### **Conclusion**

Brazil's rise to global power status has brought a new brand of soft power politics to the international diplomatic stage and potentially has the power to provoke positive changes, particularly in South America. Brazil's diplomatic experience and culture based on soft power, cooperation, economic and social development provide a new way of finding solutions to



global challenges and can be of key importance in helping South America deal with some age-old issues, as well as in strengthening the role of South America in the global arena.

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