

CHAPTER 10 – FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

10.1) Introduction

In the 1990s and the 2000s Brazil experienced a geopolitical and diplomatic rise. It became more active in its own region, forming new multilateral organizations. These include the Mercosul trade bloc, created in 1991 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay; the Union of South American Nations (Unasur in Spanish, Unasul in Portuguese), with 12 South American nations as members, created in 2008; and the South American Defense Council, linked to Unasur and established in 2010. Brazil also became more active in resolving disputes in the region. For example, it hosted negotiations between Peru and Ecuador after their brief border war in 1995, defused an attempted coup in Paraguay in 1996, helped to ease tensions after Colombian forces attacked a camp of the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*) in Ecuador in 2008, and took sides in the constitutional crisis in Honduras in 2009.

Globally, Brazil became more active as well. It joined the expanded G20 group of nations after the financial crisis of 2008-9. It formed part of the IBSA group of democratic emerging powers (India, Brazil and South Africa), whose first summit was in 2006. In 2009 Brazil participated in the first BRIC summit of large emerging market nations (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), which in 2011 added South Africa (Stuenkel, 2017), and in 2014 it contributed to the establishment of the BRICS-managed New Development Bank.¹ Brazil also expanded its diplomatic presence in Africa in the 2000s, opening several new embassies there. Brazil has also been a prominent voice in international negotiations over and initiatives involving global finance, trade, climate change, poverty alleviation, global health, peacekeeping, and internet governance.

¹ The BRIC acronym was coined in a 2001 report by Goldman Sachs economist Jim O’Neill, who was trying to attract investors to these large countries. See O’Neill, 2011, pp. 11-23, p. 239. The first BRIC Summit was proposed by the Russian government.

At the same time, domestically, Brazil is internationalizing. It is receiving immigrants from Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru, Haiti, Syria, and other countries. More of its people now travel abroad and more of them learn English, especially young people. Direct investment both into and from Brazil is robust. If you have recently eaten a Burger King meal, drunk a Budweiser beer, or flown on an Embraer jet, you are consuming or visiting a product of Brazilian investment and Brazil's internationalization.

Brazil's rise in the 1990s and 2000s received wide recognition. When President Obama of the United States saw Brazilian President Lula at the G20 Summit in London in April, 2009, he greeted him by saying, "This is my man right here! I love this guy." He later remarked that Lula was "the most popular politician on earth", attributing this to his "good looks"² (see Figure 10.1). The Brazilian press commented widely on Obama's praise of Lula. Such a moment, however, generates several questions. What was behind Brazil's apparent recent rise in prominence and influence in world affairs? Why did that rise apparently stall after 2010? What does Brazil want in global affairs, and how does Brazil's foreign policy establishment see its country and the world? What are the major disagreements on foreign policy in Brazil, and what are the country's major challenges in dealing with the world?

[insert figure 10.1 here]

Figure 10.1 *Presidents Obama and Lula pictured here in Washington D.C. in March 2009. Celso Amorim and Abraham Lincoln look on in the background.*

Source: www.whitehouse.gov, Wikimedia commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:President_Barack_Obama_meets_with_President_Luiz_In%C3%A1cio_Lula_da_Silvia.jpg

This chapter explores these questions. It first describes Brazil's distinctive diplomatic tradition and doctrine. It then compares and contrasts the different foreign policies of two administrations in which presidents were active in shaping policy: those of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and Lula (2003-2010), in order to highlight some of the

² See Saxenat, 2010.

debates about foreign policy in the country and describe the ups and downs of Brazil's global influence. Then, in the conclusion, it summarizes the main challenges of Brazilian foreign policy.

10.2) Brazil's Diplomatic Tradition and Experience

As noted in Chapter 2, Brazil is an iconoclastic country with few national heroes. Among the heroes that *do* exist, very few are military figures. This is different from other countries like the U.S. and the UK, where military leaders have long been celebrated as national heroes. One of the few military figures venerated in Brazil is the Duque de Caxias, who won most of his awards putting down secessionist rebellions in Brazil in the nineteenth century.

Brazil's diplomats tend to be more fêted than its military leaders. Like its former colonizer Portugal, Brazil is a country with a relatively weak armed forces, and thus “must, perforce, rely more on guile than on strength”.³ For former diplomat and government minister Rubens Ricupero, understanding how Portugal survived as an independent country in western Europe up to the present day is key to understanding Brazilian diplomacy. The Portuguese-Brazilian “diplomacy of weakness” involved compensating for military inferiority by other means, including “the search for alliances and the influence of intangible factors, such as knowledge, intellectual arguments, careful preparation for negotiations, and the ability to negotiate from unfavorable positions” (Ricupero, 2017, p. 37). This is what Ricupero calls smart power, or power based on intellectual and cultural resources rather than military force (see also Burges, 2017, p. 241).⁴

³ The quote is from a letter written in 1749 by the Marquis of Alorna in Goa, to King João V of Portugal. Cited in Hatton, 2011, p. 44.

⁴ Burges complements Ricupero's view of Brazilian foreign policy. “Rather than wielding power through imposition or coercion, the attempt is to reorient the policies and actions of other states through engagement and discussion” (Burges, 2017, p. 241). Some analysts follow Joseph Nye (2005) in calling this “soft power”, but we prefer the term smart power in this context. Soft power, or the power of attraction rather than economic or military “hard power”, is used frequently with reference to Brazilian foreign policy but in a variety of inconsistent and sometimes confusing ways, which is why we avoid using it here.

In the pantheon of Brazil's diplomatic heroes, Alexandre de Gusmão has a special place. He is valued for negotiating the Treaty of Madrid in 1750 (see Pimentel 2013, pp. 53-85; Ricupero 201, pp. 57-69). This treaty ended armed conflict between Spain and Portugal in the region that is now southern Brazil, Uruguay, and northeastern Argentina. It allowed Brazil to expand the borders of the country westwards, beyond the limit originally established in the Treaty of Tordesillas in 1534. If the latter treaty had remained in effect, São Paulo and the lands west and south of it would have been in Spanish hands, and two-thirds of the current national territory would have been outside the country's borders. This makes Brazil very unlike the United States, which acquired territory largely through purchase and military conquest. In the words of Rubens Ricupero (2017, p. 27), "Few countries owe as much to diplomacy as does Brazil."

Another key figure in the history commemorated by Brazil's Foreign Ministry is Rui Barbosa de Oliveira. In 1907, he participated in a peace conference in The Hague where he argued for a rules-based international order founded on the principle of the equality of sovereign states, a recurrent theme in Brazilian diplomacy for which he earned the nickname (at least among Brazilians) "the eagle of The Hague" (Cardim, 2008; Lafer, 2009, pp. 6-7; Pimentel, 2013, pp. 489-527; Stuenkel, 2016, p. 57). Eager to uphold the principle articulated by Rui Barbosa at The Hague, Brazil joined the League of Nations in 1920 and contributed to the creation of the post-WW I international order. It left the organization in 1926, however, because it was not awarded a permanent seat on the Council, the principal governing body of the League of Nations.⁵

⁵ The Brazilian government of the time, led by President Octavio Mangabeira, issued a note in 1926 declaring its intention to withdraw from the League of Nations, and the withdrawal occurred in 1928. See *The League of Nations*, 1928. See also Leuchars, 2001.

The patron saint of the Brazilian diplomatic corps is the Baron of Rio Branco, José Maria da Silva Paranhos Junior (1845-1912 – see Figure 10.2).⁶ He was a diplomat, historian, politician and professor. He was also a royalist who lamented the end of the monarchy in 1888 and used his title throughout his life even though this was supposed to be prohibited by the government.

[insert figure 10.2 here]

Figure 10.2 *A monument depicting the Baron of Rio Branco that stands in the Praça da Alfândega in central Porto Alegre, RS.*

Source: Ricardo André Frantz, Wikimedia commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Monumento_ao_Barão_do_Rio_Branco_1.jpg

Upon returning to Brazil, Rio Branco became involved in the settlement of border disputes between Brazil and its neighbors. He took a scholarly approach to these conflicts and studied geography and history to press Brazil's claims. He negotiated treaties with Argentina over the border between Argentina and the Brazilian states of Santa Catarina and Parana (1895), and with France over the border between the Brazilian territory of Amapá and French Guyana (1900). Rio Branco became Foreign Minister in 1902 and served in that role until 1912. During that time, he continued to negotiate Brazil's borders, with Bolivia over the area that is now the state of Acre in the Brazilian northwest (1903), and with Ecuador over a disputed region of the Amazon (1904). He is credited with consolidating the Brazilian nation by establishing the present-day borders, and doing it through peaceful negotiations rather than military force (Pimentel, 2013, pp. 263-299, pp. 405-438; Ricupero, 2017, pp. 27).⁷

⁶ A more recent figure in Brazilian diplomacy, someone who worked for the United Nations rather than the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, is Sergio Vieira de Mello (1948-2003). He worked for the United Nations for 34 years and was the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Iraq in 2003 when he was killed in a bombing in Baghdad. See Power, 2008.

⁷ Even though we think of Brazil as a relatively new country, its contemporary borders are actually older than those of the UK and some other European nations.

Rio Branco also realigned Brazilian strategy to make the country closer to the United States. The United States was a rising power in the early twentieth century and it had become the largest foreign buyer of Brazilian coffee, Brazil's most important export at that time. Rio Branco established the first Brazilian Embassy in the United States in Washington DC in 1910, and sent one of his top diplomats, Joaquim Nabuco, former Ambassador to Great Britain, to head the Embassy as Ambassador. Brazil's good relations with the United States were an important asset to it in the border disputes with France, Argentina, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

The Baron of Rio Branco and his role in national consolidation forms part of the official narrative promoted by Brazil's Foreign Ministry (known as *Itamaraty* after the palace in Rio where it was originally housed). In essence, this narrative is that Brazil is *sui generis* and has a distinctive approach to diplomacy. For Rubens Ricupero, Brazil is a country that is satisfied with its territorial status, at peace with its neighbors, confident in international law, accustomed to and skilled in the achievement of negotiated solutions, and keen to be recognized as a constructive, moderating force in world affairs, working to make the international system more democratic and egalitarian, but also more peaceful and balanced (Ricupero, 2017, p. 31; see also Patriota, 2010).

Celso Lafer, a former Brazilian Foreign Minister, makes similar points about the essence of Brazilian foreign policy. He emphasizes how Brazilian diplomats search for the Aristotelian mean (between rich and powerful states, on one hand, and poorer and weaker ones on the other), articulate consensus, and use international law and multilateral institutions to seek solutions to conflicts (Lafer 2009, p. 115).⁸ For Lafer and many other analysts,

⁸ Lafer calls these "Grotian" solutions, meaning oriented towards international law. This is a reference to Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) a Dutch jurist and philosopher of international law and society. See Hurrell, 2007, p. 13, pp. 83-84 and "Hugo Grotius" in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Available at: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/grotius/> [Accessed 19 February 2018].

Brazil's key characteristics are its isolation from the centers of global power and its condition as a developing country. In consonance with these conditions, the thread of continuity in Brazilian foreign policy is the concern for autonomy in order to pursue national economic development (Lafer, 2009, pp. 101-119; Vigevani and Cepaluni, 2009, pp. 1-9).

The thinking of the sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1900-1987) was influential in the creation of Itamaraty's core doctrine (Freyre, 1946). Freyre's book *Casa Grande e Senzala* (in English, *The Masters and the Slaves*), published in 1933, challenged negative assessments of Brazil's racially-mixed society. It argued for Brazil to be considered a new and hybrid civilization that combined, in the Americas, the contributions of European, African, and indigenous civilizations (Vieira, 2018, p. 156).⁹ In later works Freyre described this civilization as "lusotropical." For Freyre, the Brazilian people were essentially generous, happy, sensual, peaceful, orderly, tolerant of racial and religious differences, and at peace with the world (Chauí, 2017, p. 37). Freyre also saw in the Baron of Rio Branco a representative of these values (Ricupero, 2017, pp. 709, 711).

For some, Itamaraty's core doctrine, high degree of professionalism, and relative insulation and autonomy from other government agencies and from civil society make it a uniquely effective government ministry. The examination to enter Itamaraty is famously difficult, giving the ministry prestige. (This characteristic gives rise to the criticism that the diplomatic corps is distant from the concerns and culture of ordinary Brazilians.) For Ricupero (2017, p. 30), the Foreign Ministry and its role in foreign policy have been met with almost universal approval inside Brazil. Itamaraty has overcome some of the deficiencies found in other parts of the Brazilian state and, in a boxing metaphor often used by diplomats, consistently "punched above its weight." Similarly, for the political scientist Philippe Schmitter, "No other 'third world peripheral' state has such a consistently well-trained and

⁹ For more on Gilberto Freyre and views of race in Brazil, see the chapter on race and ethnicity in this volume.

autonomous diplomatic service. Whatever regime or government in power, Itamaraty had always guaranteed a high degree of continuity in its foreign policy” (Schmitter, 2009, p. x).

Other analysts identify Brazil’s ambiguous identity as a key asset in its diplomacy. For example, is Brazil “Western” or “non-Western”? For some, Brazil is a country that is comfortable being, at the same time, both.¹⁰ Much of its population has European ancestry. The indigenous population is small, with fewer than 1 million people in a population of 207 million. Moreover, there are no records of large-scale indigenous civilizations (similar to the Incas in Peru or the Aztecs in Mexico) in Brazil before European conquest. Brazil’s institutions look Western to European or North American eyes. On the other hand, roughly half of the population has some African ancestry, and Brazil has one of the largest black populations in the world outside of Africa. At the level of the general population, there are beliefs, practices and customs that some would describe as non-Western, especially in the interior of the country and in indigenous reserves. Brazil also has a colonial history, giving it affinities with the more recently decolonized countries of Africa and Asia. This gives Brazilian diplomats a unique ability to dialogue with counterparts across the main dividing lines in global politics, including West and non-West, North and South. According to the political scientist Matias Spektor, many Brazilian diplomats are critical of the role of race in determining who gets access to decision-making in institutions of global governance, and some of them at the United Nations even refer to U.S. and European officials, as well as their allies, as “the whites” (Spektor, 2016, p. 32).

Not all observers share a positive assessment of the Foreign Ministry, its portrayal of Brazil, and its role in articulating and implementing Brazilian foreign policy abroad. For philosopher Marilena Chaui, for example, the Freyrian vision of Brazil’s peaceful and

¹⁰ For an argument that Brazil is an important player in the construction of a “post-Western” world order, see Stuenkel, 2016. Brazil’s identity as a Latin American country can also be seen as ambiguous. See Bethell, 2010.

harmonious national development is a myth. She argues that some of Brazil's most important political changes, such as the creation and end of both the first republic (1889-1930) and the Estado Novo (1937-1945), were the result of military coups d'états. Furthermore, Brazilian history is littered with the violent repression of popular rebellions (Chauí, 2017, p. 36).¹¹

The Itamaraty narrative of Brazil's peaceful history also glosses over the Paraguay War (1865-1870), a bloody conflict that led to the reduction of Paraguayan territory to about half its previous size and the decimation of much of the male population of that country. It also ignores inequalities of power. Brazil did not have to use force in dealing with many of its smaller neighbors because it was so much more powerful than they were. In the dispute over Acre, for example, Brazilians invaded the area and the Bolivians felt they had very little choice but to demand compensation for the loss of their territory, which was already a fait accompli (Jacobs 2012). The Baron of Rio Branco himself recognized that his success in negotiations depended at least in part on the threat posed by the Brazilian Navy (Alsina Jr., 2014).

For political scientists Sean Burges and Jean Daudelin, the Brazilian Foreign Ministry has historically been “oligarchic.” This is because Itamaraty monopolized decision-making within an “old boys’ network” (Burges and Daudelin, 2017, p. 224), and also because the interests represented by the Foreign Ministry were narrow, often benefiting a small circle of “national champion” firms like Odebrecht (construction), Petrobras (oil), Vale (mining), the state-owned Bank of Brazil, and a handful of others.

¹¹ These rebellions include the movement for independence in Minas Gerais in 1789 (the *Inconfidência Mineira*), the liberal and federalist revolt in Pernambuco from 1848-1850 (the *Revolução Praieira*), the community of runaway slaves in what is now Alagoas between 1605 and 1694 (*Palmares*), the settlement led by a messianic leader in Bahia in 1897 (*Canudos*), the revolt of peasants and rural workers in Paraná and Santa Catarina between 1912 and 1916 (the *Contestado*), the revolt of Rio Grande do Sul from 1835 to 1845 (the *Revolta Farroupilha*), the uprising of enlisted seamen against corporal punishment in the Brazilian Navy in 1910 (the *Revolta da Chibata*), the armed column of renegade military officers that traveled the country from 1925 to 1927 (the *Coluna Prestes*), the attempted Communist uprising in 1935 (the *Intentona*), and the guerrilla movements of the 1960s and 1970s. See Chauí, 2017, p. 36.

In the view of international relations scholar Marco Vieira, Brazilians' ambiguous or hybrid identity masks deep-seated anxiety and a desire to measure themselves "according to largely unattainable standards of Western modernity" (Vieira, 2018, p. 162). In the time of the Baron of Rio Branco, according to Vieira, this resulted in a "whites-only" policy of recruitment to the Foreign Ministry (Vieira, 2018, p. 156). For Vieira, even Freyre's "lusotropicalism" is still "centered on the "desire" to be of the West, even if different or even better than conventional Western civilizational standards" (Vieira, 2018, p. 163). For critics such as Vieira, Itamaraty represents a patriarchal and elitist society, and its portrayal of Brazil largely reflects the interests and experience of the upper, largely white strata of that social order. Ricupero gives ammunition to such critics when he reminisces that his enchantment with the Foreign Ministry reached its pinnacle when, during his examination to enter the diplomatic corps in the Itamaraty Palace in 1958, "servants in gloves and white uniforms with golden buttons served us coffee in elegant cups with gold trim and the coat of arms of the republic". According to the former Ambassador, who had grown up in a working-class neighborhood in São Paulo, he never lost this "love at first sight" of the Foreign Ministry (Ricupero, 2017, p. 24).

Despite the continued relevance of the debate between critics and defenders of Itamaraty, it is true that in South America war has been less important and much smaller in scale than in many other parts of the world. As Andrés Malamud argues, state formation in South America was "softer" than in other regions such as Europe and South Asia. Wars and the destruction of states have been relatively rare and limited, and borders have often been demarcated peacefully (Malamud, 2017, p. 153). Today the whole of Latin America and the Caribbean is a nuclear-free zone, the result of the Treaty of Tlatelalco in 1968. And Brazil is a relatively rule-abiding and peaceful global actor, even in the region that it dominates. In the

words of Rubens Ricupero, it is a dinosaur, but a “vegetarian dinosaur.”¹² For example, Petrobras’s gas facilities in Bolivia were nationalized by the government of Evo Morales in 2006. Some countries might have saber rattled, sent troops to the border, and issued threats. Brazil simply negotiated compensation for the loss of Petrobras’s assets (Burgess, 2017, p. 242).

There is another important element to Brazil’s foreign policy tradition. This is its role in shaping the post-WW II order, whose institutions are still important in twenty-first century global politics. The view of Brazil’s Foreign Ministry is that Brazil’s special role in shaping that order make it deserving of access to the highest tables of global governance. Before and at the beginning of World War II, Brazil’s President Getúlio Vargas played a “double game”, maintaining cordial relations with fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, as well as the United States. When he felt that he had been forced to choose sides, Vargas chose the Allies, and Brazil was the only Latin American country to send troops to fight in World War II. Brazil sent 25,000 soldiers to Italy to fight under U.S. command in Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna (Hilton, 1979; McCann, 1995). Brazil also allowed the United States to establish air bases in Recife and Natal in the Northeast during World War II. These bases were vital to getting supplies to north Africa. Brazil also signed agreements pledging to sell natural resources to the US as part of the war effort. As a result of Brazil’s declaration of war against the Axis powers on 22 August 1942, it lost shipping to German U-boats. Thirty-three of its ships were sunk and more than 1,000 people lost their lives in these attacks (McCann, 1995).

Brazilian policymakers believed that their loyalty to the Allied war effort – which took time but was eventually wholehearted - would bring them rewards at the end of World War II. Brazil did receive military assistance and private investment from the US after the

¹² Comment made during a presentation at the Brazil Institute, King’s College London, 23 October 2012. The presentation was entitled “Smart Power, Rio Branco and Brazilian Diplomacy in the Early Twentieth Century”.

war, but Latin America was not a priority for the US and no Marshall Plan-type aid was supplied to Brazil (Hilton, 1981). Brazil strengthened its military and became the most important industrial power in South America after the war, but its aspirations for international recognition were thwarted at the United Nations, created in 1945. Brazil pressed for but failed to win a permanent seat in the Security Council. The Soviet Union and Great Britain successfully argued that a seat for Brazil would give the United States a second vote in the body, since the US and Brazil were closely aligned at the time. Since that time, Brazil has continued to press for a reform of the United Nations and its inclusion as a permanent member of the Security Council. In recent times, it has joined the G4, with India, Japan, and Germany, who also would like permanent membership of the Security Council, to lobby for this reform (Patriota, 2010, p. 22).

In Brazil's post-WW II diplomacy, its relationship with the United States looms large as a major concern. This relationship is asymmetric: it is far more important to Brazil than it is to the United States. The ties have at times been very close, as under the Presidency of Castelo Branco (1964-67), the leader of a military regime, when Brazil sent troops to participate in the U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1965. US-Brazil relations were again close in the early 1970s during the Nixon administration in the U.S. and the Médici administration in Brazil (Spektor, 2009).¹³ But they have also been more distant under governments of various ideological complexions, such as during the independent foreign policies of presidents Jânio Quadros (1961) and João Goulart (1961-64) (Loureiro, 2017). President Ernesto Geisel (1974-79), another military president, also had a cool relationship with the United States due to tensions over West German cooperation with Brazil in the

¹³ For an analysis of US-Brazilian relations from the point of view of a former Brazilian Ambassador to the United States, see Barbosa, 2015.

development of the latter's nuclear energy industry, and criticisms of Brazil's human rights record by the Carter administration (1977-1980).¹⁴

More recently, Brazilian foreign policymakers have worked hard to retain autonomy vis-à-vis the U.S., making sure not to align automatically with it, but also maintaining cordial and meaningful relations. Under President Lula, the Foreign Minister Celso Amorim talked about a foreign policy that was “active and assertive” (*ativa e assertiva*; see Amorim, 2015; 2017). Scholars debate the extent to which Brazilian foreign policy has been genuinely autonomous of the U.S. For example, Maria Regina Soares de Lima argues that Brazil's default position is a foreign policy of prestige (or status-seeking), the claiming of a special position in the international hierarchy due to Brazil's unique characteristics. This default position does not challenge the international status quo and seeks only a special position for Brazil, not a structural change in the rules and institutions of the global order. For Soares de Lima, the only really autonomous foreign policies in Brazil's republican history were the brief “double game” of President Vargas at the beginning of World War II, the independent foreign policies of Presidents Quadros and Goulart in the early 1960s, and the active and assertive foreign policy of President Lula.¹⁵ However, this typology seems too restrictive to other observers, and neglects other moments of autonomy, such as those that occurred during the Geisel presidency and described above.

In summary, Brazil is a country with a strikingly consistent foreign policy doctrine and a remarkably professional Foreign Ministry, one which historically has had broad autonomy to devise and implement policy. Numerous debates surround Itamaraty, such as whether its portrayal of Brazil as fundamentally peaceful is accurate, to what extent it represents a broad “national interest” or instead the interests of an oligarchy, whether Brazil's

¹⁴ For evaluations of the more recent pattern of US-Brazilian relations, see Hirst and Pereira, 2016, and Whitehead 2010.

¹⁵ From a lecture by Professor Maria Regina Soares de Lima of the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), University of São Paulo, 26 April 2018.

ambiguous identity is an asset or a hindrance to it, and whether its aspirations can be matched by its resources. In recent years Itamaraty's monopolization of foreign policy has been challenged by two developments. These are the increasing activism of civil society, reflecting a population with rising levels of education and interest in foreign affairs, and the involvement of Brazilian chief executives who have on occasion "presidentialized" foreign policy (Cason and Power, 2009). In the next section, the administrations of two presidents who are said to have presidentialized foreign policy will be examined in order to highlight some of the recurrent tensions in Brazil's approach to world affairs.

10.3) Foreign Policy Under Cardoso and Lula

The foreign policies of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and Luiz Inácio "Lula" da Silva (2003-2010) reflect two different views of the international order and the best way for Brazil to behave within that order. In the view of international relations specialists Tullo Vigevani and Gabriel Cepaluni (2009, pp. 53-80, pp. 81-100), these contrasting visions can be summarized as autonomy through participation under Cardoso and autonomy through diversification under Lula.

The Cardoso administration's orientation is captured in President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's second inaugural address on 1 January 1995. On that occasion Cardoso said:

"Brazil is respected abroad again. Foreign investment has multiplied, generating new horizons for Brazilians. Again on the external level, Brazil is reaping the benefits of democracy, economic stability and a renewed confidence in the potential of our market. The country has become more relevant to the world. At the same time, the world has become more relevant to the well-being of Brazilians... The national interest, today, is not achieved through isolation. We affirm our sovereignty by participating and by integrating, not by distancing [ourselves]. This is what we are doing in MERCOSUL – an irreversible priority of our foreign policy. It is what we are achieving with the creation of an integrated space of peace, democracy and prosperity shared with South America. And it is reflected in our vision of hemispheric integration and more solid relations with the EU, Russia, China

and Japan, without taking away from our historic links with Africa” (quoted in Bonfim, 2004, pp. 427-428).¹⁶

The Cardoso administration’s foreign policy is associated with the traditionalist wing of the Foreign Ministry, represented by Cardoso’s two Foreign Ministers, Luiz Felipe Lampreia and Celso Lafer. It sought the Aristotelian mean and the “constructive moderation” advocated by Lafer (2009, p. 115), generally accepting the rules of global capitalism. It implemented neoliberal reforms domestically, lowering tariff barriers and privatizing state-owned industries. It generally respected the international hierarchy of states and the rules of various international regimes. For example, it controversially signed the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) in 1998, despite the fact that the Foreign Ministry had denounced the NPT for years. When the Brazilian government signed the NPT, Itamaraty abandoned the position that the treaty reflected Cold War inequalities because it was mainly used to prevent nuclear proliferation rather than to reduce the arsenals of the already-existing nuclear powers (Vieira, 2018, p. 158).

The Cardoso administration prioritized relations with traditional partners such as the United States and the European Union, despite occasional complaints about “asymmetrical globalization” (US unilateralism) by President Cardoso. Its foreign policy generally met with the approval of commentators who are comfortable with the existing distribution of power within the international system. Mares and Trinkunas (2016, p. 66), for example, see Cardoso’s foreign policy as prudent and effective (see also Gordon, 2001). Brazil maintained good relations with the US while resisting the US project of a Free Trade Agreement for the Americas (a hemispheric economic union), quietly strengthened ties with China, India and

¹⁶ In these and other instances, the authors have translated the Portuguese text into English.

South Africa, and on occasion defended democracy in South America without provoking too much criticism from neighbors about Brazilian interventionism.

The Lula administration had a different and more critical approach to the global order. This can be captured in Lula's first inaugural address of 1 January 2003:

“Our foreign policy will reflect also the hopes for change that are being expressed on our streets. In my government, Brazil's diplomatic action will be oriented towards a humanistic perspective and will, above all, be an instrument for national development. Through external commerce, the capture of advanced technology, the search for productive investments, Brazil's external relations must contribute to an improvement in the life conditions of the Brazilian woman and man, raising levels of income and generating dignified jobs... The democratization of international relations without hegemonies of any kind is as important to the future of humanity as the consolidation and development of democracy within each state. The resolutions of the Security Council must be faithfully complied with... We are beginning today a new chapter in the history of Brazil, not as a submissive nation, abandoning its sovereignty, not as an unjust nation, watching passively the suffering of its poor, but as a proud (*altiva*) nation, noble, courageously affirming itself in the world as a nation of all, without distinction of class, ethnicity, sex, and belief” (quoted in Bonfim, 2004, pp. 449-453).

While there is a debate about to what extent Lula's foreign policy represented a departure from that of his predecessor, this speech contains an insistence that the global order should not permit “hegemonies of any kind,” and that Brazil is not a “submissive nation.” During the Lula era, one tradition of Brazilian foreign policy became more accentuated. That is the criticism of global inequalities of power and resources, in which 85 percent of the world's income goes to the richest 20 percent of the world's population (Hurrell, 2007, p. 11). For Spektor, “The core belief [of Brazilian foreign policymakers] is that the United States and its European allies should treat non-Western states with greater respect and some degree of “equality.” In the Brazilian view, U.S. behavior is often imperialistic, unilateral,

and dismissive of third countries and of the United Nations – in sum, illiberal” (Spektor, 2016, p. 34).¹⁷

Acting on the basis of this view, the Lula administration diversified foreign relations in order to increase autonomy from the U.S. and Europe, though it usually avoided openly clashing with these powers. In fact, in sending troops to Haiti and assuming command of MINUSTAH, the United Nations’ peacekeeping operation in that country, Brazil supported U.S. strategy in the Caribbean. (Brazilian troops were stationed in Haiti from 2004 to 2017 – see Figure 10.3.) Lula’s “South-South” diplomacy was intended to complement, not substitute, Brazil’s relations with its traditional partners. Brazil opened new embassies in Africa, strengthened the integration of South America, and sought allies in the developing world. It also carefully cultivated relations with China, which became Brazil’s biggest trade partner, supplanting the United States.¹⁸

[insert figure 10.3 here.]

Figure 10.3 *A Brazilian soldier undertaking peacekeeping operations in Haiti in 2010.*

Source: United States Navy, Wikimedia commons –

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Navy_100316-N-9116F-](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Navy_100316-N-9116F-001_A_Brazilian_U.N._peacekeeper_walks_with_Haitian_children_during_a_patrol_in_Cite_Soleil.jpg)

[001_A_Brazilian_U.N._peacekeeper_walks_with_Haitian_children_during_a_patrol_in_Cite_Soleil.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Navy_100316-N-9116F-001_A_Brazilian_U.N._peacekeeper_walks_with_Haitian_children_during_a_patrol_in_Cite_Soleil.jpg)

There were times, however, when conflicts with the United States flared up. For example, Brazil, acting with India and other developing countries, rejected a U.S. proposal at the Cancun meeting of the World Trade Organization in 2003, drawing the ire of then-U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick. President Lula’s foreign policy advisor Marco Aurelio Garcia, a long-standing member of the Workers’ Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, or PT), built alliances with other center-left governments in Latin America. When Honduran

¹⁷ Burges (2017, p. 242) echoes the point made by Spektor: “...the fundamental critique Brazil brings to its engagement with multilateral structures is that the norms driving the system and the rules used to enforce them are designed to privilege the North and limit the policy autonomy needed throughout the South to advance national developmental priorities.”

¹⁸ For the impact of the rise of China and the decline of US hegemony on Latin America, see Dominguez, 2016. For a more positive view of the impact of China on the region, see Li and Christensen, 2012.

President Manuel Zelaya, a leftist leader, was removed from office and sent into exile in 2009, Brazil was one of the strongest critics of the new interim government and even sheltered Zelaya in the Brazilian Embassy in Tegulcigalpa, the Honduran capital, for several months in 2009-10. Brazil took longer to recognize the subsequent elected government in Honduras than did many other countries in the region, finally doing so in May 2011. Brazil was also criticized by some observers for not being sufficiently constructive in finding a solution to the crisis (Casas-Zamora, 2011; Pereira, 2017; Roett, 2011, p. 146).

During this time, Brazil also dissented from the evolving international doctrine of Responsibility to Protect, or R2P. First articulated in 2000, R2P asserted the right of the international community to intervene in the affairs of a sovereign state in order to prevent genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity (Bierrenbach, 2011, p. 206). Sparked by misgivings over the UN's failure to act in response to the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia in 1995, and influenced by concerns about terrorism in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the United States, R2P was adopted at the UN General Assembly in 2005.

The Brazilian response to R2P was to call for caution. Brazilian diplomats conceded the principle that sovereignty does not excuse governments for failing to respect the rights of their citizens. But they pointed out that the application of R2P was inevitably political, and that the instruments of its application, usually armed forces, could pose a risk to the people they were supposed to protect.¹⁹ For Brazil's Foreign Ministry, states had a duty to weigh the costs and benefits of intervention and refrain from intervention if the former exceeded the

¹⁹ R2P was invoked at the UN Security Council in 2011 in Resolution 1973, authorizing the use of force to prevent the slaughter of civilians in Benghazi by the regime of Muammar Gaddafi. Brazil abstained from the vote on Resolution 1973, along with Germany, and invoked the idea of a Responsibility while Protecting. In the Brazilian view, Resolution 1973 was an intervention by NATO forces that began as a humanitarian effort, but was transformed into an act of regime change, as NATO-backed rebels toppled the Gaddafi regime and eventually killed Gaddafi himself. In the eyes of some Brazilian diplomats, the chaos in the post-Gaddafi environment in Libya justified Brazil's position in 2011. For the international relations theorists Kai Kenkel and Cristina Stefan, Brazil's invocation of RWP, while never fully developed, contributed to the evolution and refinement of the concept of R2P. See Kenkel and Stefan, 2016.

latter. This was not simply an invocation of traditional sovereignty, but a concern with the unintended consequences of intervention conducted in the name of humanitarianism, and a fear that the big powers could use R2P as a cover for aggressive interventionism in their own interests (Beirrenbach, 2011, pp. 14-15; pp. 203-211; Kenkel and Stefan, 2016, p. 43).²⁰

The foreign policy activism of the Lula administration reached its apogee on 17 May 2010, when Iran, Turkey and Brazil signed the Tehran Declaration, an agreement which placed limits on Iran’s nuclear power program. Hailed as a breakthrough by Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim, the deal was condemned by the United States and then ultimately rejected in the United Nations Security Council, when China and Russia joined the UK, France and the U.S. in tightening economic sanctions against Iran (Reid, 2014, p. 240).²¹ The Tehran Declaration sparked heated debates. The disagreements centered on the perceived wisdom and effectiveness of Lula’s foreign policy, but also on whether Brazil was essentially a system-supporting or a system-challenging actor in the global system. “Does it only want a seat at the table, or does it want to change the menu?” was a question asked of Brazil by many international observers, using a culinary metaphor to frame the country’s global aspirations. The question has generated heated debate, with observers often projecting their own hopes – whether for change or an upholding of the status quo – on to Brazil.

With regard to the Lula administration, critics lined up to condemn the Tehran Declaration as unhelpful showboating in an area outside of Brazil’s traditional area of influence. Prominent diplomats from the Cardoso era condemned the “ideologization” of foreign policy, lamenting the influence of advisor Marco Aurelio Garcia, whom they accused of being “anti-American” and criticizing Foreign Minister Celso Amorim’s decision to join

²⁰ Brazilian diplomat Ana Maria Bierrenbach implies that Brazilian concerns about R2P might have been driven partly by a worry that the high bar for intervention – genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity – could eventually be lowered, exposing Brazil to the risk of outside interference to mitigate human rights abuses in the country. Bierrenbach, 2011, p. 207.

²¹ According to Celso Amorim, Hillary Clinton telephoned him on 11 May 2010 and urged him not to go to Tehran (Amorim, 2017, p. 73).

the PT (Hunter, 2010, p. 159; Ricupero, 2010, p. 41). These critics abhorred the images of Lula celebrating the Tehran agreement with then-Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and decried the authoritarian tendencies of these two leaders (see Figure 10.4). Rubens Ricupero claimed that the Tehran Declaration and other examples of overreach by the Lula government reflected the excessive personal involvement of Lula in policymaking, and the president's lack of ethical and democratic values (Ricupero, 2010, pp. 41-42).

[insert figure 10.4 here.]

Figure 10.4 *President Lula with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, pictured here in 2009, several months before the Tehran Declaration was officially signed.*

Source: Agência Brasil, Wikimedia commons:

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mahmoud_Ahmadinejad_and_Luiz_Inácio_Lula_da_Silva_2009.jpg

Defenders of Lula's foreign policy responded that the charges of "ideologization" missed the point, and that all Brazilian governments had ideological and political perspectives from which they viewed the world. They objected to what they saw as the conformism and quietism of the diplomatic old guard, and argued that Brazil was correct to challenge the status quo of global governance. For these observers, Brazil had every right to negotiate the Tehran Declaration. As a country that had developed a nuclear power program for its energy needs but had decided, in tandem with Argentina, not to build a bomb, it had the necessary technical expertise to talk to the Iranians about their nuclear program. In this view, far from being an unhelpful intrusion by Brazil, the Iran-Turkey-Brazil negotiations were a constructive attempt to break a deadlock that was endangering global security, and they did so within guidelines laid down by the U.S. In the words of Celso Amorim, "The arrogance of the P5, including China and Russia, which negotiated exemptions in accordance with their own exclusive interests, has prevailed over the conciliatory efforts of two outsiders [Brazil and Turkey]. The global political system is still incapable of absorbing the changes [that have taken place] in the geometry of power. But inevitably that will happen, even if [the

wait] lasts twenty or thirty years. And [when it happens] it will help bring peace to the world” (Amorim, 2017, p. 66).²²

10.4) Brazilian foreign policy going forward

With regard to Brazil’s stance towards the international system today, opinion is divided. For some commentators, Brazil is a mildly reformist power that is largely system-supporting. For Spektor, Brazil’s primary aim is “accruing power and influence”; it does not have a grand strategy, or “an explicit and comprehensive vision of the reformed global order” it would like to see constructed (Spektor, 2016, p. 35).²³ Burges concurs, arguing that

elements of the revisionist structural game being advanced by Brazil thus take on system-supporting characteristics that further entrench the norms of market economics, democratic political processes and security provision in a way that could almost be likened to a traditional middle power but for the Brazilian tendency to not privilege the interests of core Northern countries (Burges, 2017, p. 243).²⁴

Brazilian diplomat and former Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota has a similar analysis. For him, one of the most striking features of the contemporary world order is that China – a non-European, non-Western power – will become the world’s biggest economy in future decades. Brazil appears comfortable with this, and the trend towards multipolarity – the diffusion of power away from a single hegemon towards a variety of competing and cooperating states – is already advanced. For Patriota:

It is wrong to imply that the rising powers aspire to create a radically different world order. Visibly, for the majority of the international community – rising powers included – the real issue is one of compliance by all with existing rules, without unilateralism, and with expanded opportunity for participation in decision-taking...it is possible to affirm that the contemporary world order, rather than being “Western” or “American-led” already reflects a plurality of influences and is not single-

²² The P5 are the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: Russia, China, France, Britain, and the United States.

²³ For an attempt by the Temer government (2016-2018) to articulate a grand strategy, see *Presidência da Republica*, 2017. The attempt is not very convincing, and the Temer government was not generally seen as having a well-defined foreign policy.

²⁴ Middle powers are states that are not great powers but that have more influence than small or weak states, both regionally and globally. They tend to work through multilateral institutions and informal coalitions of states and avoid unilateral actions. The category usually includes Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey as well as Canada, New Zealand, Norway, and the Netherlands. See Cooper, 2011.

handedly led by anyone. Clearly, rising powers are more attached to it than those who feel a nostalgia for unipolar unilateralism (Patriota, 2017, p. 18).

Other analysts argue that as Brazil rises, it might clash with more powerful states more frequently, and is at least potentially a system-challenging actor. For Milani, Pinheiro and Soares de Lima (2017), for example, Brazil faces a “graduation dilemma” that could take it in one of several different possible directions. The graduation dilemma only applies to a handful of non-nuclear rising powers: Brazil, South Africa, Turkey, Mexico, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and South Korea. These powers aspire to “graduate” from being rule-takers to rule-makers in the international system, but they are dependent on recognition by other actors. Established powers may contest their positions, and the leaders of neighboring countries could see them as bullies. They often attempt to use regional integration to enhance their own global prominence, a process that generates tensions. The leaders of these states must try to convince both domestic and international audiences that they should graduate, but they may encounter criticism and resistance both at home and abroad.

According to Malamud (2017), Brazil’s rise in the 1990s and 2000s was facilitated by two sets of favorable factors. Internationally, the commodity boom enhanced the value of Brazil’s exports such as iron ore, soybeans, and meat. The rise of China and the shift of the locus of global economic power spurred the demand for Brazilian commodity exports. Brazil’s peaceful region helped also, allowing Brazilian policymakers to prioritize global issues while furthering integration with their neighbors. Domestically, Brazil benefited from good leadership during the Cardoso and Lula administrations and a high degree of consensus about policy priorities. What is striking is that several of those factors no longer existed in the 2010s. The commodity boom ended and Chinese growth slowed down. Brazilian leadership changed under the presidencies of Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) and Michel Temer (2016-2018), and the prior policy consensus broke down under the weight of economic recession

and political crisis in 2015-16. The Carwash anti-corruption investigation implicated several of the national champions that had been beneficiaries of Brazilian foreign policy, including the Odebrecht construction company. Some observers, including Mello and Spektor (2018), argue that the evidence produced by Carwash requires a thorough re-evaluation of Brazilian foreign policy, including the alleged autonomy of Itamaraty.²⁵ While it is not within the scope of this chapter to conduct such a re-evaluation, this is an important topic that will no doubt attract researchers in the future.

It is not clear whether Brazil will “rise” again after this period of relative stagnation in the 2010s. Brazil is unusually dependent for its influence on favorable external perception of its political and economic model. As Fernando Henrique Cardoso said in 1995, “I believe that Brazil has a place reserved amongst the successful countries of the planet in the next century. I am convinced that the only important obstacles that we face to occupy this place comes from our internal disequilibria – the inequalities between regions and social groups” (quoted in Bonfim, 2004, p. 411). This is in part because Brazil is not seen as a military power. Unlike fellow BRICS countries China, India, and Russia, it lacks the capacity to project military power beyond its own borders and within its region (with the exception of its peacekeeping deployments). Admittedly this is partly because Brazil has not needed to project military power in its region, but in a world in which hard power matters, this limitation is important. Brazil’s armed forces are used exclusively to defend the national territory and help with public security and social welfare inside the country.²⁶ Because of this dependence on external perception, and because of the cyclical nature of its economic and

²⁵ It is also unclear to what extent the Carwash anti-corruption investigation and the information it has uncovered about bribes paid by Brazilian firms has damaged Brazil’s image abroad. See Gaspar, 2017.

²⁶ It is not correct to see Brazil as an entirely non-military power. The country has invested in its military technology, including in a nuclear submarine program undertaken with the French and the purchase of Swedish fighter planes. Its defence budget is one of the 15 largest in the world. See SIPRI: Brasil e o 12o Orcamento Defesa, 13 Abril 2014. Available at: <www.defesanet.com.br/defesa/noticia/14978/SIPRI--Brasil-e-o-12o-orcamento-Defesa/> [Accessed 19 January 2018]. However, Brazil’s claims to global influence largely rest on its ability to live in peace with its neighbors and encourage peaceful international dialogue.

political development, Brazil is perhaps destined to be something of a “yo-yo” country, rising and receding in international influence in accordance with its image abroad. While Spektor (2016, p. 35) is right that behind the scenes Brazil’s diplomatic infrastructure remains impressive, and “Brazilian leaders and diplomats now have the clout to facilitate or complicate collective action as never before”, this pattern of boom and bust could endure for the short and medium term.

10.5) Conclusion

Brazil at the start of the 2020s appears to be neither a rising nor a declining power, but one paralyzed – perhaps only temporarily – by its own contradictions and internal conflicts. In its foreign policy it stands for peace, but internally, it is wracked by high levels of violence. It insists in global fora on the need for non-intervention, multilateralism, and a rules-based order, but in its own region it often prefers ad hoc maneuvers that preserve its own autonomy, and its dominance sometimes leads to accusations of interference by its neighbors.²⁷

Brazil had a period of rising influence in the 1990s and especially the 2000s, but this was followed by an economic and political crisis. Both the governments of Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016) and Michel Temer (2016-2018) were preoccupied with their own survival and the domestic economic and political situation. Neither government evinced much interest in an activist foreign policy, and not even a humanitarian crisis on its own northern border triggered by the meltdown of the Chavista regime in Venezuela was enough to rouse the Brazilian foreign policy establishment to action.

Brazil is a power that does not project military force abroad in an offensive fashion. It prefers to build up its military capability for defensive purposes. Its priorities are to guard the green Amazon, the fresh water and biodiversity of the Amazon basin, and the so-called blue

²⁷ For a polemical analysis of Brazil’s problems with its neighbors, see Malamud, 2011.

Amazon, the offshore oil deposits of the south Atlantic coast in the southeast. It also uses selected components of its military for international peacekeeping, as in Haiti in 2004-2017. Because of its distinctive profile, Brazil's global influence depends – to a much greater extent than regional military powers such as China, India, and Russia – on the perceived attractiveness of its economic and political model. When that model appears to be successful, as it did under President Lula (2003-2010), reasonable levels of economic growth of three and four percent per year were accompanied by social inclusion, the reduction of poverty, and even a slight dip in levels of income inequality. During this period Brazil's visibility and influence rose significantly. But when Brazil appears to be politically polarized and in economic crisis, as it did in 2015-16, its claims to greater global prestige and decision-making power look less plausible, and are less likely to be accepted by other actors.

In the best-case scenario Brazil would reset its political and economic model after the 2018 presidential election and resume an activist foreign policy, reclaiming its place at the table in the numerous multilateral fora in which collective problems are confronted. If that were to occur, its diplomatic capacity in areas such as global finance, trade, climate change, poverty alleviation, global health, peacekeeping and internet governance, which has risen steadily despite the vicissitudes of its domestic politics, would be augmented by a coherent strategic vision and a clearer voice in international affairs. Brazil can and has contributed to the improvement of global governance. To what extent it will reclaim this role, and whether it will develop a clearer grand strategy to guide its international relations – and whether it will largely be a status quo or reformist power – remain open questions.

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