

# Without Sticks or Carrots: Brazilian Leadership in South America During the Cardoso Era, 1992–2003\*

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Throughout the Fernando Henrique Cardoso presidency Brazil actively pursued a South American leadership project. The distinctive and central feature of this policy was its attempt to operate without the coercion or explicit payoffs often associated with ‘leading’ in mainstream international relations literature. Instead, efforts were devoted to constructing an inclusive project that sought extended and unconscious cooperation from other states through a transfer of ‘ownership’ of the continental project. An examination of three cases – the 1994 Summit of the Americas, interregionalism and South American infrastructure integration – is used to demonstrate the techniques employed by Brazil as well as to highlight the limitations implicit in the Brazilian leadership strategy.

Keywords: Brazil, foreign policy, South America, leadership, Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

Brazilian diplomatic discourse has long been marked by consistent efforts to avoid suggestions that the country is seeking a leadership role. During the Rio Branco era (1902–1912) fears that perceptions of Brazilian imperialism might lead to a coalition of Spanish-speaking republics launching a coordinated attack against the country prompted a foreign policy emphasising multilateralism and equality among nations (Burns, 1966; Ricupero, 2000). Since then the stance adopted by the Itamaraty Palace, home of the Brazilian foreign ministry, has shied away from explicit pursuit or even acknowledgement of a leadership role. In effect, official Itamaraty discourse came to equate leadership with notions of coercive domination, making the status of ‘leader’ something that Brazil would not officially seek (Lampreia, 2002). This article, however, argues that during the ten years Fernando Henrique Cardoso dominated Brazilian foreign policy, first as foreign minister (1992–1993) and then as president (1995–2002), Itamaraty was explicitly engaged in a leadership project, one which revolved around the articulation of South America as a distinct region. Significantly, the

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Brazilian method of advancing this regional project did not follow mainstream theoretical propositions that leadership is only a short step away from imposition. Instead, the carrot and stick tactics typified by (neo)realists and neoliberal institutionalists were replaced by a consensus-generating style that operated through discussion and inclusion, precepts that find their grounding in an approach to hegemony that is best understood through the writings of Antonio Gramsci.

Two factors explain the Brazilian turn to a consensual style of leadership. The first, as outlined above, is an historical aversion to direct and visible coercion, a policy stance that is complemented by a shortage of the resources necessary to force and maintain the compliance of others. The second relates to the character of the project that Itamaraty was attempting to lead. As a range of writings and statements by Brazilian diplomats in the 1990s suggest, Itamaraty's response to a major foreign policy review implemented by Cardoso (Itamaraty, 1993) was to frame the country's reaction to the changed post-Cold War international scenario around the idea that South America is a valid geopolitical and geoeconomic entity (Amorim, 1991, 2003; Lafer, 1992, 1994, 2000; Abdenur, 1994; Barbosa, 1994). In short, the strategy devised by Itamaraty during the Cardoso era was to pursue a continental policy of regionalism. While such a strategy could have been implemented by offering pay-offs to neighbouring countries, which is an approach to leadership that finds resonance in key realist texts (Kindleberger, 1973/1989), the associated costs were simply prohibitive for post-debt crisis Brazil. The result was the consensual style of leadership discussed below.

The focus of this article is on the style of leadership that Brazil used to advance the South American project formulated by Itamaraty in the early 1990s, rather than on the character of or the logic behind the idea of South America as a distinct geopolitical and geoeconomic entity. As will be explained in the first section below, the Brazilian case offers an opportunity to go beyond mainstream theoretical approaches to leadership by drawing on Gramsci's approach to hegemony, which suggests that leadership can operate without relying on either coercion or bribery. Evidence about recent Brazilian attitudes towards leadership provides the empirical contribution of this article, demonstrating that despite public disavowals Itamaraty has in practice been acting as a quiet, consensual leader in South America for well over a decade now. Section two of the article will therefore set out the broad parameters of Brazilian leadership before detailing specific instances in the subsequent three sections. Attention will first be turned to the strong attempts to generate consensus before the 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas and the launch of the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Next, the latently coercive impulse behind Brazil's consensual leadership style emerges more clearly from analysis of its efforts to secure interregional agreements between the Common Market of the South (Mercosul) and the Andean Community (CAN) as well as the European Union (EU). Finally, discussion of the *Integração de la Infraestrutura Regional na América do Sul* [IIRSA – Regional Infrastructure Integration in South America], a programme to advance the consolidation of a South American region by constructing integrated infrastructure matrices, offers an example of how Brazil sought to disperse and avoid the costs associated with consensual leadership. Here it should be made clear that the argument of this article does not depend upon ultimate success in terms of policy outcomes. Rather, the

emphasis is on the process; a brief assessment of the strategy and its achievements will be offered in the conclusion. Supporting evidence will be drawn from official reports and statements, news reports and personal interviews with Brazilian diplomats and government officials.

## **Leading and leadership**

As Ikenberry notes (1996: 386), the concept of leadership in international relations and international political economy has received little sustained study. In part this is because the subject has been subsumed into larger debates examining questions of domination, hegemony and power. This oversight is particularly strange given that the question of leadership lies at the heart of key texts of all stripes on hegemony in international relations. Kindleberger (1973/1989), for example, explicitly highlights the importance of leadership in his examination of the Great Depression, attributing some blame to the USA for its unwillingness to assume some of the costs associated with leading the international economy. The realist Gilpin (1981) also focuses on costs and leadership, linking the eventual downfall of a hegemon to the increasing drain on resources involved in leading and maintaining an empire. Indeed, later work by Gilpin (1987) focuses on the possible struggle for leadership in the changing global political economy of the late 1980s, asking what will happen to international order as the sources of power gradually escape the control of a single state, yet he does not enter into any detailed exploration of the concept of leadership.

The implicit view of leadership as imposition that emerges from (neo)realist literature is amplified by the neoliberal institutionalist Keohane (1984), who posits that a dominant state will create world order to suit its own interests, but adds the caveat that the process may involve the creation of international regimes to defray some of the costs of leadership and manufacture a sense of consensus that will sustain the new institutional arrangements. Strange's (1994) political economy approach to structural power follows a similar line, arguing that a state with structural power possesses the capacity to establish rules and norms of operation that will systemically entrench its interests long after it has faded from power. Hegemony thus emerges as something that is constructed and led by a state or, what Gramsci (1957: 161) might term the organisation of 'intellectual and moral reform', suggesting that the question of precisely how that state leads others to accept the new order is of some importance to the study of international affairs.

The main shortcoming in much of the literature is an implicitly monolithic approach to leadership that equates it with domination and coercion. As Ikenberry's (1996: 385–402) examination of leadership highlights, the emphasis has been on the ability of a state to shape the nature of the international system for its own ends, thereby creating a widespread sense that leadership is marked by an exclusionary character that privileges the stronger. The significant interjection that Ikenberry makes to the debate is his point that the end of the Cold War opened up space for new approaches to leading, especially for states that cannot hope to exercise the domination associated with realist conceptions of hegemony. Particular emphasis is given to the changed nature of

leadership, marking a shift from the coercive connotations of gunboat diplomacy to the inclusive intimations of coalition building and consensus generation (Ikenberry, 1996: 401–402).

The suggestion that emerges from Ikenberry's conclusion is that change in the new order is not likely to come through the force of arms – the transformative end-of-war events that marked previous changes in international order – but rather, through the processes of dialogue and negotiation that mark a Gramscian approach to hegemony (Femia, 1987; Fontana, 1993; Cox, 1996). Gramsci did not cast hegemony in terms of the omnipotent power suggested in most of the works discussed above. Instead, he framed it in a manner closer to Strange's (1994) vision of structural power, comprising a system of over-arching beliefs and practices that work subconsciously to delimit the range of actions that can be contemplated, let alone pursued, by a state. While Gramsci (1957: 161) did not discard the use of force in the formation of a hegemonic project, the clear suggestion he made was that hegemony is greatly weakened if it depends on coercion instead of consent for its legitimacy. The question of leadership can thus be seen as relating to a state's ability to conceptualise a potentially hegemonic project – i.e. a vision of world or regional order – and persuade other countries to embrace the project, an approach that provides some solidity to notions of soft power and ideational diffusion.

Effectiveness as the leader of a hegemonic project depends on the ability of a state to persuade other states that all share a particular set of interests and aspirations, recruiting their support and active participation in the new project; successful leadership in its ultimate expression is not based on the capacity to forcibly suppress dissent, wield the threatening stick, or provide pay offs, the rewarding carrot. Indeed, the ability to deal with dissent by adopting an inclusive attitude that modifies the outline of the hegemonic project to absorb and include divergent positions is a hallmark of a Gramsci-informed approach to leadership (Gramsci, 1957: 143–144; Gill, 1990: 44). The operational element here is something Gramsci termed the student-teacher dialectic, which sees the leader presenting the initial vision for the project and then encouraging a process of dialogue that allows others to develop the sense of ownership that will cause the guiding precepts to be internalised by others and autonomously perpetuated by the collected group without the need for oversight by the leader (Gramsci, 1971: 349–350).

From the Gramscian conceptualisation of hegemony we can thus derive an approach to leadership that allows us to determine if a state is attempting to act as a leader and whether or not it is experiencing any success in its efforts. The first element is the elaboration and dissemination of a vision of how a particular set of relations should be ordered, be it on a local, national, regional or international level: in the Brazilian case under discussion here the project is a South American region. Second is a willingness to initiate the student-teacher dialectic, relinquishing some measure of control over the original ideas in order to begin the process that will allow competing goals and aspirations to be absorbed into the project. Success comes in the third stage, when other states not only actively embrace the dissemination of new ideas from the leading state, but also autonomously engage in the further development and application of these ideas. This form of leadership not only avoids the costs that preoccupied Gilpin (1981) in his theory of hegemonic decline, but also allows a

diplomatically skilled state to lead despite an otherwise apparent deficiency of power resources. Indeed, the strength of a leadership style informed by a Gramscian approach to hegemony lies in the extent to which the substance of the project is willingly adopted by the encompassed states. The central facts of the leading state's conduct thus centre on creating consensus through consistent, clear and open communication that seeks to include divergent positions in a manner that strengthens the overall structure.

## **Establishing Brazilian Leadership**

The disjuncture between the reality of Brazilian diplomatic activity and the impression that foreign policy makers wished to create pervaded much of the Cardoso era, with a willingness to acknowledge publicly Brazil's emerging role as a consensual leader coming only after the 2000 Brasília Summit of South American Presidents. The discomfort Brazilian diplomats displayed with the concept of leadership during interviews can be attributed to many of the factors set out in the previous section, namely that the act of leading is often seen as being predicated on coercion or a project of domination (Chohfi, 2002). When confronted with the idea of consensual leadership, Cardoso's foreign minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia (2002) responded with a tentative agreement, before offering the qualification that leadership means military power and a willingness to intervene and accept the expanded costs of leadership, two items that the Brazilian populace would not support.

The prevalent fear in Brazilian diplomatic circles was not so much that the country could not act as an effective leader of a continental project, but that policies directed towards this end would be construed as a disguised attempt at neo-imperialistic domination. An interview given by Lampreia shortly before the 2000 Brasília Summit suggests that a critical problem facing Itamaraty was the global shift in the styles and implications of leadership posited by Ikenberry. After offering the clear statement that 'Brazil has no wish to assume regional leadership nor does it want to be a candidate for the position of South American leader', Lampreia immediately proceeded to point out that 'Brazil is not a country exactly equal to the others,' and that Brazil has no 'intention [of using] South America to build up its leadership but only of using its critical mass to strengthen the idea of South American integration' (Lampreia, 2000).

Embedded within these comments is an implicit reconceptualisation of the role of a leader and its potential motivations. Suggestions that Brazil intends to use its 'critical mass' – i.e. ideational creativity, market size and security capacity – to strengthen the idea of South America as a viable geo-economic space and as an effective geo-political actor constitute an almost explicit statement that Brazil wished to lead the other South American countries in the construction of a continental project. The difference comes in the approach to leading this project. As one interviewee notes, the language of leadership and hegemony is very unhelpful to Itamaraty because it carries connotations of coercion and domination that overshadow policies designed to function through consensus and dialogue. The focus before the 2000 Brasília Summit was instead on using the space available for consensual leadership, taking great care to reassure the other South American countries that Brazilian leadership was neither inevitable, nor

permanent and certainly not the precursor to the emergence of a new sub-regional power.<sup>1</sup>

A more explicit approach to Brazilian leadership was offered by Itamaraty Secretary General Osmar Chohfi (2002), who observed: 'when we say that we don't want to be the leader, we don't want to impose, it depends on what the concept of leadership is. We are very well prepared to give momentum ... and to present ideas'. Subsequent remarks by Chohfi emphasised the extent to which Itamaraty wished to collaborate with Brazil's South American neighbours to articulate a common project, that while obviously being good for Brazil, would bring substantial benefits to all. The need for the type of consensual leadership acknowledged by Chohfi was highlighted as critical by a close observer of Brazilian foreign policy who noted that many other South American countries lacked the institutional capacity necessary to formulate and advance the sort of overarching regional vision set out at the 2000 Brasília Summit.<sup>2</sup>

Here we can return to the discussion of different styles of leadership outlined above, positioning the approach adopted by Itamaraty as more in keeping with that found in the student-teacher dialectic than that of Gilpin's domineering state. Within this framework Brazil emerges as the instigating actor, the framer of the hegemonic project that is then presented to the other states for discussion and further elaboration. In itself this is not an entirely new role, being but a repetition of the sort of past efforts at pan-Americanism pursued by President Juscelino Kubitschek in the late 1950s. The change comes in the approach taken to the goal of continental integration, eschewing the relatively easy path of securing agreement for grandiose ideals and weak treaties with a commitment to articulating a clear strategy and the making of sometimes difficult political choices.

One interviewee sought to downplay Brazilian leadership on the grounds that a leader must provide solutions to problems,<sup>3</sup> suggesting that Brazil would have trouble fulfilling this role due to its unwillingness forcibly to implement policies beyond its own borders. A similar theme was repeated by an Itamaraty observer, who pointed out that the spill-over effects of insurgency and narcotrafficking in Colombia called for a degree of interventionist leadership inconsonant with Brazilian diplomatic traditions.<sup>4</sup> While it would be stretching the point to suggest that Brazilian diplomats actively coerce other countries into adopting particular policies, comments from a NAFTA-country foreign trade official on events at two consecutive Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) negotiating sessions strongly indicated that Itamaraty was willing to cajole its partners, in this instance nudging an errant Argentine minister back towards the Brazilian-led Mercosul position on the separation of labour and environmental provisions from trade questions. Indeed, Itamaraty willingness to exercise a consensual leadership style was apparent in FTAA negotiating sessions, where the Brazilian contingent consistently had a selection of alternative texts prepared whenever it appeared that negotiations on a particular treaty provision had reached an impasse.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (September 2002).

2 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (October 2002).

3 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (October 2002).

4 Interview with upper-level Brazilian government official (October 2002).

5 Interview with NAFTA-country trade official (July 2001).

It is in the nexus of quiet cajoling – reminding partners of previous agreements – and the proposition of draft treaty text that the operational basis of Brazilian leadership can be found, hidden within a discourse of ‘consensus creation’. By consistently offering draft text for discussion, whether it be an entirely new integration proposal such as IIRSA or contentious sections of the FTAA treaty, Itamaraty found an opportunity to frame the terms of discussion by implicitly shaping the content of the debate. By encouraging negotiations to reach a consensus version of the idea originally presented by Brazilian diplomats, Itamaraty was effectively able to diffuse ownership of the final decision across all of the participating countries, masking a leadership role that might otherwise be attributable to Brazil. When Itamaraty encountered difficulty initiating consensus-building discussion processes, an oblique approach to cajoling was pursued by discarding the multilateral approach in favour of the sort of bilateral negotiations that create implicit pressure for other countries to join in or risk exclusion from a possible new reality – a process that amounts to an indirect and passive form of coercion.

Three interlocking elements are central to the ‘inoffensive’ style of leadership pursued by Itamaraty. First, commands and edicts were studiously avoided by Itamaraty, strong preference instead being given to invitations to form joint positions or attend summit meetings. The leadership function here is that of coordinator, using the position of instigator and organiser as a device to shape the positions and strategies Brazil’s South American and Mercosul partners adopted to shared challenges and opportunities. Backing up these shared stances and adding to Brazil’s credibility as a potential leader was the tactical aspect of ideational leadership, namely the conceptualisation of new initiatives and the creation of alternative projects. Indeed, this last aspect proved particularly important in the FTAA process that was to be the dominant hemispheric question during the Cardoso era. Underpinning these elements was the indirect and passive form of coercion inherent in Brazil’s desire to be inclusive and consensual: a corresponding willingness existed to pursue policies unilaterally that might ultimately impose costs through exclusion on regional countries reluctant to join the ‘consensus’.

## **Creating Consensus – Miami 1994**

In the early 1990s integration plans were bubbling up in the Americas. Brazilian proposals to expand Mercosul into a South American Free Trade Area were precipitated by concerns that NAFTA might cause Mexico to displace Brazil as the pre-eminent South American state (Barbosa, 1993). In the USA the Clinton White House was becoming increasingly worried that the rancorous passage of the NAFTA treaty through congress might harm hemispheric relations and result in restricted access to regional markets, particularly in the face of a quiet diplomatic challenge from Brazil (*Financial Times*, 2 July 1994). To repair the damage of the NAFTA debate and forestall the emergence of Brazil as a competing leader, the White House decided in 1993 to propose that a 1994 presidential summit launch negotiations for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The Brazilian response to the US proposal was cautious, reflecting a concern within Itamaraty that the national economy was still reeling from

the rapid opening that took place under Collor and that more liberalisation of the sort implicit in an FTAA might prove unduly damaging. Moreover, the analysis within Itamaraty was that if Brazil needed a period of adjustment, then the same was probably true for other South American economies.<sup>6</sup>

The Brazilian position was thus a more measured approach than that advanced by the USA, advocating a preliminary step of freezing existing tariffs before gradually rolling them back. In the interim created by the tariff negotiations Itamaraty hoped that regional arrangements such as Mercosul, the Andean Community (CAN) and the Caribbean Common Market would solidify and link up, providing an intermediate stage of a hemispheric arrangement. It is this latter aspect, a slower construction of hemispheric trade arrangements, that troubled US negotiators, especially a principal Clinton Latin American advisor, Richard Feinberg (1997: chapter 8). Addressing the FTAA process nearly eight years after the Miami Summit, Chohfi (2002) captured the theme dominating the Brazilian approach to the meeting, namely that Brazil wanted something greater than simple accession to NAFTA. This stance was underpinned by a belief that it was possible to reject the initial US offer; by cooperating the South American countries could negotiate an agreement with the USA that offered benefit for all.

While Brazilian assertions of autonomy were not new (Hurrell, 1986), the change that bothered Feinberg was Itamaraty's success at broadening that concept to include the rest of South America and the resultant, almost explicit, connection between Brazilian and South American interests (Simões, 2001). Emblematic of this shift was a Heritage Foundation (1994) seminar on the Summit where Paulo Tarso Flecha da Lima, the Brazilian Ambassador in Washington, spoke. Focusing on the ideas of symmetry and asymmetry in the Americas, specific reference to Brazil was discarded in favour of the broader concept of Latin America, with particular emphasis being placed on the need for the USA to deal with the region as an equal, not subservient, partner. Significantly, this stance found resonance throughout Latin America. Another participant at the seminar, Mexican Ambassador Montano, expressed full agreement with his Brazilian colleague and offered the humorous quip that 'Brazil is now the secretary *pro tempore* of the Rio Group and so they are our bosses at the moment'. Here the concept of leadership emerges again and forms the core of Feinberg's concern. Montano's suggestion was not that the Rio Group members were being ordered about, but that Itamaraty was making effective use of Brazil's *pro tempore* presidency of the Rio Group to organise a coordinated approach to the Miami Summit.

The Itamaraty response to the Summit invitation was to take what had been a primarily political organisation, the Rio Group, and use it as a device for formulating a common position in an economic negotiation.<sup>7</sup> Preparations began early in 1994 when Itamaraty established an internal task force to examine the FTAA question, resulting in the building block and 'stand still and roll back' strategy (Magalhães, 1999: 52–54). Of particular relevance to our discussion of "carrotless" leadership was the observation from the task force co-chair Ambassador Geraldo Holanda Cavalcanti that an antagonistic approach to hemispheric free trade would not work because open access to the US

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6 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (September 2002).

7 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (September 2002).



market remained a central goal for many Latin American economies. The proposal made by Cavalcanti was that Itamaraty devote its efforts to developing a consensus position through the Rio Group, using the organisation to create the collective political density necessary to defuse the almost unilateral tenor of early US proposals while simultaneously deflecting suggestions that Brazil was attempting to derail the entire process.

The Brazilian approach thus came to revolve around the provision of alternatives instead of blind opposition to the Summit. With this in mind Itamaraty conducted an August 1994 seminar on the future of hemispheric relations and the potential impact of the Miami Summit. The position that emerged from the discussion was that hemispheric integration should be guided by the sort of slow, achievable goal approach that marked the evolution of Mercosul, not the ambitious and sweeping aspirations characteristic of Latin America's bevy of failed integration treaties. This measured approach would seek a middle ground that acknowledged both the widespread desire in Latin America for access to the US market as well as the domestic political reality that the economic dislocations associated with free trade would provoke popular resistance that might slow the process (Magalhães, 1999: 64–68). By the time the Rio Group presidents arrived in Brasília for their 9–10 September 1994 meeting, Itamaraty had dissected the USA's fourteen hemispheric trade initiatives and formulated a counterproposal for consideration by the other Rio Group states. The outcome of their discussions was a Rio Group draft declaration and action plan. Significantly, these documents sought to disassociate provisions on the environment, labour and good governance from those concerning trade, as well as pushing for a slower and steadier approach to the negotiation and implementation of an FTAA (Grupo do Rio, 1995: 539–601), both of which positions were at the core of the Brazilian vision of hemispheric trade liberalisation.

US dissatisfaction with the Rio Group counter-proposal became apparent at the final pre-Miami Summit meetings in Virginia when US negotiators sought to cast Brazil as an obstructionist actor (Feinberg, 1997: 140–144). Their disparaging tone was coupled with a negotiating atmosphere that saw the US attempting to divide the Rio Group members and push countries into agreeing with the US text. One side effect of this high pressure negotiating style that particularly disturbed Brazilian diplomats was the secretive nature of the actual US proposal, a document that, until that point, had never been shown in its entirety to any of the other 33 participating countries.<sup>8</sup> Brazilian efforts were consequently devoted to reminding the other Rio Group members that collective action offered the best prospects for a workable final agreement. To bolster solidarity at the September Brasília meeting, Brazilian diplomats tabled a document that placed the US text of the Miami declaration in one column and the Rio Group wording in an adjacent column. The intent was to remind the Rio Group countries not only that maintaining a collective position would result in a stronger agreement, but also that Brazil wanted the Miami meeting to be more than a photo-opportunity (Magalhães, 1999: 121–123). This initiative was paralleled by an

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8 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (September 2002).

overnight meeting with US negotiators to explain clause by clause the logic behind the Rio Group language. By the end of the meeting in Virginia the final text agreed for signature at the Miami Summit of the Americas was comprised of roughly 85 per cent Rio Group text.<sup>9</sup>

Deployment of the Rio Group as a consensus-generating body required some surrender of ownership and control over the final declaration. But by providing the initial text Itamaraty was able to frame the final product in much the same way that Gramsci saw a teacher setting the implicit boundaries for what a student might contemplate. The power inherent in this style of leadership became apparent in the Virginia pre-Summit meetings when Brazilian diplomats were able to maintain Rio Group solidarity in the face of sustained US pressure by highlighting the consensual nature of the document. That Brazil played a leadership role in the process is clear and was acknowledged at the end of the Miami Summit by President Clinton (Federal News Service, 11 December 1994). The important point for our theoretical discussion was that Brazilian leadership in Miami did not function through coercion or imposition, but through a process of coordination, consultation and discussion.

## **Expanding Regionalism**

Paralleling the willingness to coordinate, consult and discuss that marked the Miami Summit of the Americas was an emerging tendency for Itamaraty to pursue a policy of leading by initiating action, pump-priming the consensus creation process. Indeed, this aspect of leadership was to prove important in tackling the two main barriers to a South American region. The first, as outlined above, was the allure of open access to the large US economy, which caused regional countries to gravitate to the USA on a bilateral basis without necessarily giving full considerations to the benefits of a collective approach to multilateral trade negotiations. A second hurdle was grounded in historical failures (and the Brazilian role in these failures) to achieve greater regional integration under the ALALC (Latin American Free Trade Association) and ALADI (Latin American Integration Association) processes. Lacking the capacity or political will necessary to force adherence to the continental project or provide the incentives necessary to buy compliance, Itamaraty adopted an approach to external relations that sought to initiate new agreements with the EU as well as building trade relations with neighbouring countries. The overt intent was not to construct an exclusionary system, but to use the prospect of access to the large Brazilian economy as a lever to forge new trade agreements that would advance the continental project and open up international markets (Abdenur, 1997). Ultimately the intent was to create a situation where other states could not afford to exclude themselves from the process.

While the decision to form Mercosul had precipitated a jump in intra-regional trade in the Southern Cone, at the time of the 1994 Miami Summit the treaty had yet to be fully implemented and as such could not begin to provide an attractive alternative to open access to the US market. Prospects for some sort of agreement between the Rio

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9 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (September 2002).

Group and the EU, a potential counterweight to the USA, also appeared to be in doubt after a fractious ministerial meeting in April 1994 (IPS, 23 April 1994). Yet there remained a clear awareness within Itamaraty that Brazilian and Mercosul closeness to the EU might provide a critical counterweight in FTAA negotiations, drawing other South American countries to the continental project (BBC, AL/2375/L), or at least point out that there was an alternative to the USA. Not surprisingly, then, plans to strengthen the EU-Brazil linkages that might transmute into a wider Mercosul-EU accord were quickly formulated. Within days of the 1994 ministerial meeting ending Brazilian diplomats had expressed a desire for closer political and commercial links with Europe (Lampraia, 1999: 121). This sentiment was almost immediately reciprocated by the EU's Commissioner for Development, Manuel Marín, who lamented the sense of a growing divide between the two regions (IPS, 12 May 1994). By 1995 the potential for a Mercosul-EU agreement had achieved a certain degree of momentum in the Southern Cone, emerging as one theme addressed during Cardoso's speech at the annual summit of bloc presidents (BBC, AL/2375/L). The idea of a Mercosul-EU accord continued to be advanced by Brazilian diplomacy in September, most notably when Cardoso sought to draw a parallel between the Franco-German axis in Europe and Argentina-Brazil relations (AP, 21 September 1995).

Impetus was given to interregional relations by the signature of an EU-Brazil Framework Cooperation Agreement in late 1995 (*European Report*, 25 October 1995). By December of that year a similar interregional protocol had been agreed, offering the promise not only of a trade deal, but also of an interregional association covering wider political and economic issues (IPS, 13 December 1995). The decision to enter into talks did not guarantee an agreement; however, discussions remained centred on the need to negotiate a free trade agreement, with efforts being devoted almost exclusively to debating what sectors should be included in an interregional accord. June of 1999 saw some progress on this front when sustained pressure from Brazilian diplomats succeeded in securing French consent to the inclusion of agriculture in trade talks (IPS, 22 June 1999). However, further details about the exact terms of discussion and consensus on a timeline remained elusive (*Lloyd's List*, 29 June 1999).

The significant point about the 1999 Mercosul-EU meetings for our discussion of leadership is that they took place in the midst of the bloc-wide economic crisis caused by the devaluation of the Brazilian real, suggestions that Mercosul was about to collapse and that Brazil should pursue an independent path. Indeed, continued talks for a separate EU-Brazil agreement implied that the economic attraction of South America was not in Mercosul, but in the industrialised Brazilian market (AFX News, 30 September 1999). Cardoso's response was to redirect these overtures to a bolstering of Mercosul by using the Brazilian market as a lever to extract concessions from Europe. French acquiescence to negotiations on farm issues at the June 1999 EU-Mercosul meeting emerges as a case in point, coming after Cardoso issued veiled threats to abandon the EU-Brazil and interregional process if Europe did not allow him to demonstrate a Brazilian capacity for leadership that could bring tangible benefits to all members of the South Cone economic bloc (BBC, AL/W0586/WL). Significantly, the costs involved in this attempt at leadership were implied and not actual, allowing Brazil to present itself as investing in the future of Mercosul without any real

expenditure, especially since EU willingness to discuss agriculture remained quite distinct from actually signing any substantive agreement on the topic.

Although progress in the EU-Mercosul talks fell short of expectations, with 2000 and 2001 bringing repeated meetings seeking agreement on the terms of discussion (Hoffmann, 2002; *European Report*, 11 November 2000; 24 March 2001), the larger point of interest for Itamaraty was the tenor of interregional relations. European interest in Mercosul was not limited to economic questions, but encompassed the goal of seeing similar regional projects formed in other parts of the world to counter-balance US power (Santander, 2002: 495). An important aspect of the 1995 agreement between the EU and Mercosul related to capacity building and technical assistance to strengthen Mercosul (Devlin, Estevadeordal and Krivonos, 2003: 21). Indeed, at this point there is a certain consonance between Brazilian and EU ambitions for Mercosul, with both actors viewing the bloc as the core of a larger South American Free Trade Area (SAFTA) capable of acting in a significant manner on the global stage (Whitehead, 1999: 63–64). The difference between the two approaches to the creation of SAFTA was that the EU was restricted to making statements in favour of a continent-wide region – preferring bloc-bloc negotiations over bloc-country talks – while Brazil could actively pursue the concept. Considerable efforts had already been focused in this direction through the elaboration of the 4+1 mechanism that brought Bolivia and Chile into Mercosul as associate members. The next logical step was to pursue a free trade agreement between the continent's two economic blocs, a prospect enthusiastically embraced by the CAN in 1997 (AFP, 22 April 1997).

The initial enthusiasm that led to an April 1998 agreement on the need for a Mercosul-CAN free trade agreement soon ran into difficulties (IPS, 14 April 1998). Within a year the talks had fallen victim to a combination of the economic crisis caused by devaluation of the real and disagreement on preferential tariff policies (AFP, 27 February 1999; BBC, AL/W0584/WL). Itamaraty's response to this setback points to the masked coercive possibilities implicit in the continued pursuit of a regional project on a unilateral basis. Withdrawal from negotiations by the other three Mercosul countries was met with formal notification that Brazil would use the attraction of its internal market and continue with the talks on its own (IPS, 13 April 1999). Substance was added by Itamaraty's announcement of a 90-day unilateral extension of the existing bilateral trade agreement with the Andean countries. Yet concomitant care was taken to assure Brazil's bloc partners that independent continuation of the talks was not an attempt to rupture Mercosul. Explicit acknowledgement was given to the difficulties afflicting Mercosul and the impact they had on the formulation of a joint position, particularly with respect to reconciling the different importance given by each country to market access in agriculture and manufactured goods (AFP, 27 February 1999; BBC, AL/W0584/WL). The consistent Itamaraty message was that Brazil was pursuing a shortcut towards a future interregional deal, words that were cautiously accepted by Argentina with the proviso that a full trade deal with the CAN must involve all of Mercosul (LAWR, WR-99-15). Indeed, Brazilian officials were careful to point out that they were not seeking a trade deal, but a harmonisation of existing arrangements that should lay the groundwork for a future pact between the two blocs (IPS, 13 April 1999). The unspoken reality was that such a deal would largely be of

Brazilian design and would require the other Mercosur countries to accept participation in the process or risk losing preferential access to Brazil.

The bilateral talks resulted in a one-year agreement between Brazil and the CAN that created a preferential tariff system for over 3000 products. Significantly, Brazil declined CAN requests for a three-year agreement, insisting that it should be revisited after one year with a view to including the other Mercosul countries (IPS, 5 July 1999), a stipulation that also implicitly held forth the possibility of non-renewal by Brazil. Although the deal was extended for one year in August 2000, it took another year for the Mercosul to resume negotiations, despite Lampreia's 1999 call for a deepening and expansion of the bloc (LAWR, RB-00-07), a measure that would be relatively costless in terms of gross trade flows. Again, the concerns of Brazil's Mercosul partners were acknowledged when Itamaraty reversed standing policy and agreed to a two track approach that would see the Andean countries gain access to Argentina and Brazil more quickly than to Paraguay or Uruguay (*Gazeta Mercantil*, 20 August 2001). Talks between the two blocs nevertheless ran into many of the old barriers, with a December 2002 deadline being missed due to a combination of internal CAN tariff harmonisation issues and the residual impact of the economic crisis caused by Argentina's economic collapse. As in 1999, Itamaraty continued to work towards a future interregional deal, in this case accepting a Peruvian invitation to pursue a bilateral accord as part of the framework for a continental agreement (LAWR, RS-02-10).

Although these negotiations were marked by unilateral tendencies to the extent that Itamaraty was determined that the reticence of Brazil's bloc partners would not prevent an eventual agreement, a central feature was a willingness to welcome the other Mercosul countries back to the negotiating table, but not to restart the talks at the stage where these countries had left the process. A crucial point here is the patient approach to foreign policy within Itamaraty, a strategic stance that some observers contrast with the impetuous and tactical diplomacy of the other Mercosul countries.<sup>10</sup> Direct pressure was not exerted on the other countries. Rather, pressure was implicit, bundled into the knowledge that new rules for intra-continental relations were being formulated without input from the weaker, abstaining regional countries. The problem that Brazilian diplomats ran into in their attempt to extend the consensual aspect of their leadership in South America was the question of costs. In particular the Andean Community, under pressure from domestic leaders fearing Brazilian competition, wanted rewards for signing an interregional deal, emphasising the need for special concessions in any such agreement and for expanded flows of Brazilian investment. The problem, explained one Brazilian official close to the interregional talks, was that the mindset in Brazil and Itamaraty during the Cardoso era all but precluded the material expenditure involved in either option. Indeed, the institutional structures in Brazil – primarily the National Bank of Social and Economic Development (BNDES) and the ALADI Reciprocal Credit Convention – necessary for the sort of investment programmes sought by the CAN members were configured in a manner that would not have allowed Brazil to assume the relatively minor financial costs of sealing the

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10 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (September 2002).

agreement even if the political will had been present in Itamaraty or the presidency.<sup>11</sup> In short, the public unwillingness to assume the fiscal costs of leadership highlighted by Lampreia (2002) required that an alternative route be found for providing the material payoffs necessary to advance the South American project.

## South American Infrastructure Integration

Cardoso's response to the slow pace of interregional talks deviated from the tradition of frustrated acceptance. Instead Itamaraty was tasked with pursuing a policy of active leadership that sought to add tangible substance to the prevailing rhetoric. In effect the goal was to restart the Gramscian student-teacher dialectic style of leadership seen before the 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas, framing it around the Brazilian-led design of the continental integration project to be launched at the 2000 Summit of South American presidents in Brasília. Indeed, the fact that Itamaraty was able to bring all of the continental leaders to Brasília for the 31 August to 1 September 2000 meeting and achieve strong consensus on and adherence to a plan of action suggested an implicit acceptance of the consensual leadership role that Brazil had been accruing over the previous six years (*Correio Braziliense*, 24 August 2000).

Two aspects of the 2000 Brasília Summit of South American Presidents are central to our discussion. In historical terms the meeting was the first exclusive gathering of South American presidents, giving symbolic gravitas to South America as a viable geopolitical entity. Second, the document signed by the assembled continental leaders represented a concrete and realisable vision of a South American region, incorporating agreements on five key issue areas. The first four areas – the need to protect democracy, encourage trade, combat illicit drugs and cooperate in the pursuit of the technology needed to compete internationally – restated existing positions formulated in groupings such as Mercosul, the Rio Group and the OAS. It was the fifth issue area – physical infrastructure integration – that represented a new approach to continental integration and formed the substance of Brazilian leadership. The idea presented in Brasília was to construct 'axes of development': corridors of energy, transportation and communications infrastructure connecting the different regions of South America. Critically, the elaboration of the axes was to be based on demand – not central planning or competing national political considerations – in an effort to foster the creation of regionally integrated production chains (Silveira, 2001).

Implicit in the programme of physical, as opposed to commercial or political integration advanced at the Brasília Summit was a view of the global system that saw the beneficial insertion of South American countries into the international economy as being dependent on heightened continental cohesion and unity.<sup>12</sup> The attractiveness of the axes of development approach to continental integration was that it provided ostensibly apolitical support for the substantive linkages necessary to implement the South American project. As Brazilian architects of the concept note, commercial

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11 Interview with mid-level Brazilian government official (October 2002).

12 Brasília Communiqué, paragraphs 12 and 13.

integration is fraught with complaints from vested political interests and axes with threats of the protectionism that derailed previous efforts at regional integration. The potential advantage of the proposed axes of infrastructure is that they circumvent questions about specific industrial sectors by focusing on providing the conditions for economic growth, offering opportunities for grass roots level economic relationships that transcend national borders (Silveira, 2001). Indeed, the section of the Brasília Communiqué dealing with infrastructure integration (paragraphs 36–46) focuses on the changes that expanded physical linkages might bring about in intra-continental economic relations, positioning the resulting interdependence as a support strut for continued and deeper cooperation in other issue areas.

Significantly, the Brazilian infrastructure proposal was having a deeper impact on the ideational approach to development and foreign relations in South America. Here Itamaraty was again exercising a subtle degree of leadership, encouraging a homogenisation of national positions through patient discussion about the formation and direction of IIRSA. Implicit in the IIRSA framework was a shift in national priorities, inculcating neighbouring countries with the ideational element in the Brazilian vision of a South American region. The unstated element in the push to encourage initiatives towards greater regionalisation of national economies was the impact that greater interdependence would have on the Itamaraty goal of advancing South America as an operational concept, binding the interests of continental countries closer to Brazil as elements of national economies became increasingly embedded in the Brazilian market. The process was imbued with a self-reinforcing dynamic strongly reminiscent of the mercantilistic notions of a commercial ‘fifth column’ outlined by Hirschman (1945) in a European context, increasing the potency of the ideational aspects of the Itamaraty foreign policy as linkages between Brazil and the rest of South America grew closer. Elements of this sort of transformation began to appear in the revivification of the Mercosul-CAN negotiations towards the end of the Carodoso presidency (Mercosul/Comunidad Andina, 2002) and increases in Brazilian continental energy purchases.

The substance of Brazilian leadership came to be the predominant material discussed at the South American Presidents’ Summits, with a continuation of infrastructure integration being of particular importance. A version of the Gramscian student-teacher dialectic can be superimposed here, with Itamaraty serving as teacher and introducing physical integration as the subject for discussion to mould the thinking of the other states. Explicit in this Gramscian dynamic is a point where the teacher effectively becomes the student, learning from the independent thought and exploration of the pupil. But for this transformation to come about – for the follower to autonomously and independently act to protect and advance the leader’s project – the substance of the lesson must become embedded in the thought processes of the student, suggesting the need for a period where the teacher acts to maintain focus on the topic at hand. The central task for Itamaraty was thus maintaining continental focus on the subject of infrastructure integration, implementing the plan devised at the Brasília Summit and elaborated by ministers and technocrats at a series of IIRSA meetings.

As preparations for the 26–27 July 2002 Second South American Presidents’ Summit in Guayaquil, Ecuador progressed, Brazilian diplomats found that they had to exert some pressure to resist plans that would narrow the focus of the summit

process. Of particular concern were moves by host nation Ecuador as well as Venezuela to turn the meeting into an energy summit (*El País*, 27 July 2002). One diplomat described the initial draft text proposed by the Ecuadorians as problematic because of its concentration on energy issues, raising fears that unnecessary repetition of statements agreed in the Brasília Communiqué might cause the process to lose 'the punch' needed to drive continental integration (Gonçalves, 2002). Indeed, at 34 paragraphs in length the Consensus of Guayaquil was just over half the size of the Brasília text. Although considerable attention was given to energy issues (paragraphs 16–18 and 20–24), the focus was not on the quasi-nationalist agenda advanced by Venezuela, but on building an integrated South American energy matrix. New clauses in the South American summitry process were in the area of security, resulting in the assembled presidents declaring the continent a zone of peace as well as adopting several provisions to combat terrorism.<sup>13</sup> In these terms the Guayaquil meeting can be likened to the second teacher-student encounter, where the theme of the lesson is restated and elaborated by the student, but still within the guiding framework established by the teacher.

## Conclusion

This article has argued that Brazilian diplomacy during the Cardoso era demonstrated a style of leadership predicated on consensus-building rather than the more traditional approach of active coercion or domination. To a certain extent this strategy proved successful, particularly with respect to the core priority of maintaining Brazil's autonomy and independence in the hemispheric and international system (Lampreia and da Cruz, 2005). An expansion of NAFTA to include all of the Americas was viewed with some alarm in Brazil and as the discussion of the 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas demonstrates, elicited a carefully constructed defensive response. Extension of this response to form a new regional structure, first in the guise of the mooted South American Free Trade Area and then a continental infrastructure matrix, was less successful and points to the limits of the consensual strategy as pursued by Itamaraty during the Cardoso era.

In Miami the sense of shared trepidation about the relative costs and benefits of a hemispheric bloc in South America was clear; unfortunately for the larger Brazilian strategy a similar sentiment permeated discussions that might have led to a South American bloc via an interregional agreement between Mercosur and the Andean Community. The areas where IIRSA has made the greatest strides – the articulation of new energy matrices – provide some justification for the hesitance that is slowing formation of a SAFTA or the solidification of the South American Union launched in December 2004. Networks of power transmission lines and gas pipelines pursued since the launch of IIRSA in 2000 are notable for their concentration on Brazil, providing the country with the energy resources that were in short supply in the final years of the

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13 II Reunião de Presidentes da América do Sul (2002), *Declaração sobre a Zona de Paz Sul-Americana* (Guayaquil, 26–27 July).



Cardoso administration. This is also the shortcoming of the consensual leadership strategy pursued by Itamaraty after 1994. Where Miami saw a genuine confluence of interests that prompted states to enter willingly into something similar to Gramsci's student-teacher dialectic, the IIRSA focus on securing energy flows for Brazil points to an attempt to gain something for almost nothing, offering little corresponding reward for acquiescence to prospective partner countries. Thus, much as students rebel against lesson plans that appear to offer little that is new or of use, a state's decision to occupy the 'student' role in our framework requires a sense of some clear benefit. As the drawn out Mercosur-CAN discussions on differential access and preferential treatment suggest, furthering the South American project would have required Brazil to shoulder a substantial portion of the costs associated with the project, something that would have been difficult in the tumultuous financial environment leading up to the October 2002 election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva as president.

In this context IIRSA emerges as an example of a new attempt to restart the student-teacher dialectic and launch another cost-free version of Brazil's consensual leadership strategy. Again, initial success was limited, although not for a lack of protestations of enthusiasm or recognition of a need for the project, but because the resources necessary to transform the initiative into reality were simply not provided. Progress beyond technical discussions and presidential espousing of ideals of continental solidarity remained decidedly limited until the Lula administration had found its feet in Brazil and committed itself to supporting IIRSA projects with BNDES financing. Yet, even here the tendency to seek a relatively costless leadership remained in place, with stipulations that BNDES funding for projects in other countries be used to contract Brazilian consultants, engineers and suppliers (Burgess, 2005) falling well short of the 'aid' needed to make IIRSA a rapid reality. Similar phenomena can be seen on the wider international stage where Brazilian leadership of the G-20 group of developing nations in the WTO has proven smooth and successful in the area of agriculture, where member-interests sharply align and Brazil was able to capture a collective *zeitgeist*, but an almost complete failure on issues of non-agricultural market access (Oxford Analytica, 5 April 2005).

The Brazilian case demonstrates an approach to leadership in international relations that can function independently of the power requisites underpinning mainstream approaches to the discipline. Indeed, the leadership project outlined here strongly suggests that direct coercion can be set aside and an emphasis placed on consensus generation. The depth and breadth of the consensual leadership project, as suggested by Brazil's example, then begins to rely on the extent to which interests align and on the leader's willingness to assume or creatively distribute the costs of leadership. In a post-Cold War context marked by increased interdependence and a relative decline of US and European economic power in relation to the global system, the consensual approach to leadership discussed in the article provides another avenue for understanding how a middle or emerging power might marshal support for a clearly defined project that is not favoured by traditional power centres. As has been suggested here, this was precisely the strategy followed by Brazil since the early 1990s, resulting in an increasingly obvious Brazilian leadership role in inter-American affairs. Extension of this strategy to areas with less congruence of interests, however, returns us to the

question of incentive provision. The main question for further research and which can be answered through continued examination of contemporary Brazil's foreign policy, is whether a consensual leadership strategy allows a would-be leading state dramatically to minimise the costs of regional and global pre-eminence.

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