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The EU and Brazil: on Different Meanings of Multilateralism

Alessandro Scheffler

While reports on civil unrest and sluggish economic growth have dominated the news this summer, as of 2013 Brazil can actually look back at a decade of steady economic development, which is likely to turn it into the world's 6th largest economy by the end of this year.¹ At the same time, the country has developed a solid middle class, and social programs such as “Bolsa Familia” have aided in getting almost 40 million people out of poverty.

This economic success story has been accompanied by an ever-more prominent role in international affairs, as demonstrated recently by the election of Brazilian Robert Azevêdo to director-general of the World Trade Organisation, a bid Brazil had still failed with some years ago. Rather than by flexing its hard-power muscles like other BRICS countries, Brasilia has increased its international status primarily by diplomatic measures, establishing itself as a leader of emerging and developing countries in inter- and multinational institutions and fora. Stefan Zweig's famous vision of Brazil as a country of the future, which echoes a claim to great power status inherent in its political belief system, seems to be finally coming true.

The European Union has recognized the rise of Brazil with the establishment of a Strategic Partnership in 2007, a status reserved for global big

¹ Gross Domestic Product (Current Prices). International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, April 2013.

shots such as the USA, Russia and China. It did so in public recognition that Brazil “has become an increasingly significant global player and emerged as a key interlocutor for the EU.”² More than just an acknowledgment of its increasing importance – or even simple use as a regional Strategic Partner representative – the recognition of Brazil was also based on a feeling of like-mindedness in terms of culture, values and interests. The EU has explicitly praised that both “share core values and interests, including respect for the rule of law and human rights, concern about climate change and the pursuit of economic growth and social justice at home and abroad.”³ This like-mindedness is believed to shape similar preferences not only in the matter, but also in the form of foreign policy: “Brazil and the EU share a common understanding that today’s global challenges can only be addressed through a strong multilateral framework.”⁴

Yet six years after the founding of this partnership, results have been meager. While many have argued for the EU and Brazil to be “natural partners” on the global stage, their foreign policies have seldom aligned and clear differences in style and substance have emerged. Under these circumstances, what does the future hold for the EU-Brazilian relationship? Given high expectations when the partnership was started, what are European perceptions of Brazil in 2013? How at ease is the EU with the idea of a rising Brazil and what role does it envisage for the South American giant?

This chapter will try to outline the EU’s perception of the coming or already present multipolarity and how it perceives Brazil’s emerging international posture. To this purpose, the chapter will first look at the EU’s vision of the future international system, its own role in it and the way it wants to use its Strategic Partnerships. With this concept in mind, the chapter then turns to Brazilian foreign policy in the last decade and looks at how it fits in with the EU’s vision, and which consequences their differences will have on the future relationship.

The European Vision of Multipolarity

The EU’s multilateral vision of a multipolar global order

Politicians and scholars alike agree that the international system finds itself in a period of transition, marked by a process of decentralization and diffusion of power. While many have shied away from the term “multipolarity”, common agreement exists that the rise of new centers of power will be a defining characteristic of the new system.

The EU’s reaction to the arrival of a multipolar (or at least a “more” multipolar) order has been cautious: It has welcomed this development as a hedge against Washington, whose absolute preponderance it had – even while maintaining close ties – only accepted with considerable unease. But on the other hand, the EU has also worried much that multipolarity may simply mean a return to an old logic of balance-of-power, in which countries simply contain mutual unilateralisms. Such a traditionalist conception

² European Commission, Towards an EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership, p. 2

³ Ibidem.

⁴ Ibidem., p. 4

of multipolarity overlooks three aspects which have been core tenants of the EU's perception of the post-cold war environment: The rise of non-state actors, networks and institutions, the growing interdependence between states and regions which transcends classical conceptions of sovereignty, and the globalized nature of modern threats.

To counter this tendency, the EU has developed the concept of effective multilateralism, which features prominently in both the 2003 European Security Strategy (ESS) and its 2008 addendum, the Implementation Report. This concept is based on the two pillars - multilateralism and global governance, which are also enshrined in § 21.2 h of the Treaty of the European Union when speaking about a "system based on stronger multilateral cooperation and good global governance."

For the Union, multilateralism ideally refers to cooperation by all important global players to counter globalized threats, which is based on the Implementation Report's acknowledgement that "faced with common problems, there is no substitute for common solutions."⁵ Rather than in just checking the power of others, as Giovanni Grevi puts it, in the EU's conception "the power of major actors rests not just on relative gains but on the coordination and cooperation required to preserve stability, enable growth, fight illicit traffic and avoid the worst effects of climate change."⁶ The EU is hereby aware that shifting power relations must be echoed in this system and that there is a necessity for "sharing decisions more, and creating a greater stake for others."⁷ The Implementation Report even asks for an active promotion of this change and that "Europe must lead a renewal of the multilateral order."⁸

The second dimension of this concept is effectiveness, which is closely connected to the idea of global governance. The EU is convinced that to make multilateralism truly effective in managing multipolarity, it must be rule- and institution-based.⁹ The ESS indeed affirms that its objective is "the development of a stronger international society, well-functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order."¹⁰

Multilateralism as an EU tool to gain and maintain influence in the global system

The strive for multilateralism and institutionalization of the international system are a firm part of the EU's normative compass and derive to a great deal from the fact that the EU is itself built on these principles. Some experts argue therefore that its vision is a mere externalization of the Union's own order, and its setting "great store by the refinement of international norms and institutional forms" is part of an "attempt to frame international negotiation processes as a reflection of its own internal logics."¹¹

⁵ Council of the European Union, "Providing Security in a changing world," Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, p. 12

⁶ Grevi, Giovanni, "The EU and Brazil: Partners in an uncertain world," p.7

⁷ Council of the European Union, "Providing Security in a changing world," Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, p. 2

⁸ Ibidem., p. 12

⁹ Grätius, Susanne, "Can EU Strategic Partnerships deepen multilateralism?", p. 2

¹⁰ Council of the European Union, "A secure Europe in a better world," European Security Strategy, p. 9

¹¹ Smith, Michael, "Beyond the comfort zone: internal crisis and external challenge in the European Union's response to rising

To limit its motivation to this aspect would though overlook an essential dimension of this policy, namely that the EU as an institution is itself “externally a form of emerging ‘power’”¹². For the European Union, multilateralism and global governance are therefore an essential part of the EU’s own strategy for establishing itself as an important global actor in the system. While its member states are an established part of the old and new international order, the EU is a new player on the field. With most of its resources bound to its member states, it faces the challenge of creating a role for itself in international affairs without much hard power, a fact exacerbated by a lack of diplomatic capacity and its struggle to maintain a coherent strand in its individual member states’ policies. As a consequence, the EU has so far only really become a global player in its fields of exclusive competence, as for instance trade.

As an entity which lacks other classical great power capabilities, establishing itself as a kind of hub between great powers would give the Union an important opportunity to emerge as an important player itself. Becoming a builder of great power coalitions in an institutionalized multilateral framework and a “progenitor of a certain style of diplomacy and negotiation, building on its internal deliberative and coalition-building processes”¹³ would create formats that are able to tackle globalized challenges and at the same time serve as “validation of its status in the world arena”.¹⁴

When one author describes that “a great deal of the EU’s international role and identity is predicated on replacing the rule of power with the power of rules”,¹⁵ this is closely related to the EU’s understanding that the power of rules opens opportunities to those who under a mere rule of power would have very little to say. It is no wonder that the drive for such a policy has been particularly supported by its smaller member countries.

The EU’s Perception of other Great Powers

In its European Security Strategy, the EU commits itself to pursue its foreign policy through “multilateral cooperation in international organisations and through partnerships with key actors”. The EU knows that if it wants its multilateralism to be effective, it cannot be achieved without the active participation of the system’s major powers. This approach differs sharply from the 1990s, when the EU approach to partnerships used to be centered on regions, as e.g. the EU-Latin American Strategic Partnership. So while the ultimate goal remains institution- and rule-based global governance through multilateral organisations, bilateral Strategic Partnerships have become its main means for achieving its “effective multilateralism”.¹⁶

powers”, p. 653.

¹² Smith, Michael, “Beyond the comfort zone: internal crisis and external challenge in the European Union’s response to rising powers”, p. 653.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Ibidem., p. 653

¹⁵ Grevi, Giovanni, “The EU and Brazil: Partners in an uncertain world,” p. 6

¹⁶ Gratius, Susanne, “Can EU Strategic Partnerships deepen multilateralism?”, p.1

As a consequence, its Strategic Partnerships have a more than just purely bilateral character and are designed with a view towards a comprehensive partnership in multilateralism, with the overall task of containing and positively managing partners. As described by Grevi, the EU's strategic partnerships attempt to reach this goal by three means: Positioning the parties as pivotal mutual interlocutors, establishing structured bilateral relations providing an opportunity for tradeoffs on important issues and, finally, addressing the big global issues together. One of the major hopes of this endeavor is to gain enough influence over partners to function as a hub and interlocutor between them, gaining the autonomous important role in global affairs to which it is aspiring.

Especially in the case of the 'emerging' partners South Africa and Brazil - with China and Russia being more 'emerged' in terms of hierarchy and power - this initiative is closely connected to the hope to make these countries "effective partners". The "reward" of a Strategic Partnership and the associated increase in status is accordingly, apart from its bilateral dimension, intended as an incentive for those countries to become "responsible powers" that share in the maintenance and further solidification of global order.

When speaking about the EU's Strategic Partnerships, commentators often rightfully question the effectiveness of these frameworks in both bilateral and global dimensions. In bilateral dimensions, emerging powers have often applied divide et impera strategies and prioritized relations with member states. And even where engagements on bilateral matters have yielded some results, the EU has not been able to establish itself as the intended hub, able to bring together its strategic partners for common goals. Rather, where interests by these partners converged, as most visibly in Climate Negotiations, they have on occasion actually actively sidelined it.

The next part of this chapter will therefore now turn to Brazil's policy for navigating multipolarity and seeing how it relates to the previously explained European approach.

Brazil's Strategy for a Multipolar World

Brasilia's multi-vectoral Strategy to Greatness

Previous sections have described how the EU is attempting to carve out a greater international role for itself by becoming a hub between the great powers. Brazil is actually a great example of how such an interlocutor policy can yield great improvement in status on the global stage.

As described by Grevi, over the last decade Brazil has been pursuing "a multi-vectoral strategy of 'insertion' into global markets and leading governance clubs."¹⁷ The objective of this strategy has been clear: The establishment of Brazil as a global player and as the leading nation in South America, both with the underlying intent of strengthening its

¹⁷ Grevi, Giovanni and Gratius, Susanne, "Brazil and the EU: Partnering on Security and Human Rights," p.1

national development.¹⁸ This aim has been pursued along three not completely separate but rather mutually reinforcing lines of action: In the global South, through its region, and on a global level. In this way, Brazil was able to leverage its multiple identities as a traditional developing country of the South and the G-77, as a Latin American country promoting regional integration, as an emerging global power – politically as member of BRICS and IBSA and economically as member and leader of the G-20 – and finally as a country with Western identity and values.

Brazil's Leadership in South America

Brazil has recognized the need to underline its global aspiration by some “regional clout”, and that it needs to unite South American countries to more of a bloc under its leadership.¹⁹ At the same time, its strong traditional drive for autonomy made it weary of attempts at regional institutionalism that might constrain it and limit this autonomy. During the Lula da Silva presidency, Brazil has therefore on the one hand slowly started to “assume the financial burden of cooperation, governance and integration in South America.”²⁰ Through its leading role in the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti, it has also shown that it can serve as the regional leader and bring the region together to tackle challenges in its neighborhood. But it has at the same time combined this approach with an attempt to sideline traditional supranational frameworks in which it could be balanced or contained by local and global rivals: The creation of UNASUR and CELAC as opposed to traditional organizations as the Organisation of American States (OAS) are attempts to establish sub-continental Brazilian leadership, that clearly reduce US and other external influence and do not come with any costs in terms of restrictive frameworks.

Brazil's Policy as a Leader of the Global South

In addition to its regional policy, Brazil has built on its traditional ties to the global South and positioned itself as a role-model and leader for the developing world.²¹ Its political consolidation as a democracy, strong economic development and successful management of domestic social challenges have resonated strongly in the South and some are already referring to a ‘Brasilia-Consensus’ consisting of a strong macroeconomic framework and public spending with a strong social focus. This position gave Brasilia an opportunity to build on its traditional G-77 relations with the South, and particularly Africa, by stepping up South-South engagement activities and establishing itself as a new partner with political, development and commercial opportunities for those countries. As opposed to “traditional donor” behavior, Brazil focuses on technical and financial cooperation and strengthening bilateral relations. The benefit Brazil hopes to extract from these activities is diplomatic support for its own initiatives: By establishing

¹⁸ Gomez Saraiva, “Brazil's Strategies and Partnerships: The Place of the European Union,” p. 45

¹⁹ Gratius, Susanne and Gomes Saraiva, Miriam, “Continental Regionalism: Brazil's prominent role in the Americas,” p. 2

²⁰ Ibidem., p. 1

²¹ It is important to note that many countries in South America are also part of the global South and that Brazil's engagement at this level also affects its claim to regional leadership.

itself as a leader of the global South, Brazil could use the latter's sheer voting power to counterbalance the North in international fora and institutions.

Brazil's Global Engagement in BRICS and as a Key Interlocutor

International and multilateral institutions can benefit emerging powers: By following established rules and procedures, they give these powers an opportunity to reassure smaller states. At the same time, they offer a space to build coalitions that affect emerging norms according to one's own interests. Brazil is a master in this art of diplomacy and has used it actively in its interest: Rather than challenging or trying to replace the existing global governance structure, the Brazilian strategy has been to maintain these settings while attempting to get a better seat at the decision-making tables and influence developments from this enhanced position. Instead of using classical hard-power resources, it uses the very cost-effective instrument of "reframing debates and influencing others with ideas and allusions to future prospects."²²

Brazil has pursued this strategy through two vehicles: Minilateral fora such as BRICS and IBSA, through which it attempts to strengthen its own particular role as an emerging power, and multilateral fora, where it tries to establish itself as a potential leader of the South by using classical anti-North rhetoric and demanding greater representation of developing countries in global institutions. Brazil has been particularly successful in the multilateral fora, extracting political support from global South countries for Brazilian initiatives such as the G-20 and its UN Security Council bid, fulfilling key Brazilian interests.

Simultaneously, it has used constructive approaches in these settings to establish itself as an interlocutor both between the West and BRICS and between the traditional North and South. Accordingly, Brazil has attempted to portray itself as a "bridge builder, working diligently to ensure stability and predictability in the face of rising tensions between major powers as well as the North and the global South."²³ This strategy has been highly successful while low in cost, a fact which is particularly important as Brazil's economic, military and political power projection capabilities are actually quite limited, at least if compared to other BRICS countries.

Burges gives a nice example of this Brazilian diplomacy in the Doha round: When the North arrived with an unacceptable proposal, Brazil stayed committed to the negotiations and assumed an expressively constructive role, thus forcing a recomposition of the Quad, putting Brazil in the room along with India, the EU and US. It thus made itself a key bridge to the South for the US and EU. At the same time, Brazil was able to block unwanted initiatives from both sides by occupying the middle ground as interlocutor between the two. Almost more importantly, it was included in a prominent role at global decision-making tables as the main interlocutor with the South. So while not included in its own right, it has still won the ability to influence key elements of the emerging global governance framework.

²² Burges, Sean, "Brazil as a bridge between old and new powers," p. 579

²³ Burges, Sean, "Brazil as a bridge between old and new powers," p. 577

How Compatible is Brazilian Policy with the EU’s Multipolar Vision?

The previous two sections have outlined the EU’s vision of multipolarity and Brazil’s grand strategy in the last decade. As outlined in the beginning of this chapter, at first glance Brazil appears to be a perfect partner for the European Union and its vision of the international system: A civilian power that commits to a multilateral system based on rules and institutions. Yet when having a closer look at Brazil’s policy, the previous section has shown that Brazilian policy is much more interest-driven and marked by a strong aversion against any kind of institution-based framework. Additionally, it is also explicitly anti-Western in many cases. This section will therefore look at the compatibility of Brazilian policy with the EU’s vision of effective multilateralism. As Brazil’s two main aims are the achievement of great power status on the global and leadership status on the regional level, the section will use these categories as a basis for its assessment.

Brazil’s Regional Approach

As explained above, the establishment of Strategic Partnerships is partly a result of the EU’s acknowledgment of the limits of interregional integration. In principle, the EU would therefore welcome a strong regional role for Brazil and particularly also regional integration in South America under Brazilian leadership. Yet Brazil and the EU have very different ideas about what integration should look like, and not everything Brazil promotes as an integration initiative truly deserves that name, with many not being more than mere inter-governmental ventures for presidential summit-diplomacy.

It has been mentioned that Brazil tends to view South America as a “strategic anchor” for its global foreign policy and that it has accordingly pursued integration primarily with a view towards the global stage. While such a “pragmatic and interest-driven”²⁴ approach to integration is not problematic per se, it has led to a high degree of alignment with the anti-liberal countries of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA), a tendency that was also supported on ideological grounds by foreign policy advisors from the ruling Workers’ Party. This runs contrary to the EU’s intention of using the award of a Strategic Partnership to bolster Brasilia’s regional role, particularly vis-à-vis Caracas and its allies.

Even more concerning for the EU is the prioritization of these relations over human rights concerns, a development last seen in the acquiescence to a Bolivian–Ecuadorian initiative to censure the OAS’s democracy and human rights monitoring mechanisms: While Brazil is officially a strong proponent of human rights, it decided to concentrate on relations with ALBA countries and marginalize external influence in the region. Despite its public advocacy for non-interference in other countries’ affairs, Brazil has also reserved itself the right to massively intervene and lobby for preferred left-wing candidates during elections in South America, a process aided by massive investments and market penetration in the region.

²⁴ Gratius, Susanne and Gomes Saraiva, Miriam, “Continental Regionalism: Brazil’s prominent role in the Americas,” p. 11

This stands in opposition to the EU's vision of the emergence of a South American regional complex along the lines of the EU, that is an institution- and rule-based framework that benefits the entire region. The Brazilian interest instead is the exact opposite: It strives for more of a bloc of influence and a (political) alliance system, in which Brazil would, due to its mere size and global status, assume a natural leadership position. This is in fact what it has achieved with Unasur, which is an almost solely intergovernmental organization.

So while it might even have welcomed a South American regional complex under Brazilian leadership, it is clear that the Union does not share Brasilia's vision of largely intergovernmental regional relations under its leadership.

Brazil's Global Policy as a BRICS Member and Leader of the Global South

As mentioned above, Brazil's claim for global status is not only based on its regional role but also on its role as an emerging BRICS power and as leader of the developing countries of the South.

On the global stage, given their common values and strong commitment to an "effective multilateral system centered on the UN", the EU should in principle not mind Brazil's ascendancy and welcome another democratic state among the great powers. After all, the EU's vision of "effective multilateralism" and Brazil's "efficient multilateralism" seem not too far apart. Yet, as Susanne Grätius describes it, both stand for a different vision of the future: "Brazil seeks a 'multilateral multipolarity' and the EU a 'multipolar multilateralism'".²⁵

In practice, this means that when both speak about the need to reform the United Nations, the EU's intent is a UN more efficient in dealing with global issues, while Brazil's main goal is a better seat at the table for Brazil. Moreover, it intends to use this better seat to check other, and particularly Western, states and prevent them from using the UN as a means of interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. Thus it could be said that its main aim is the exact contrary of the EU's vision. Even more problematic in this regard is its membership in clubs such as BRICS, a political alliance which explicitly challenges the West. While Brazil's use of BRICS and IBSA may have been useful as a strategic tool, it poses a significant hurdle for the EU-Brazilian partnership.

Also, Brazil's posture as a leader of the South is challenging for the EU due to its explicitly anti-Western stance. Given that the United States is unlikely to give up shares of its representation in international and multilateral institutions, such shares must inevitably come primarily from EU countries, which will be hesitant to cede influence. The struggle on IMF quotas, which the EU finally lost, will only have been the first of a couple of similar conflicts which will see Brazil and the EU on opposing ends. The identity of an underprivileged underdog, which yields Brazil its Southern leadership position, is also hard to combine with the image of a responsible strategic partner.

²⁵ Grätius, Susanne, "Brazil and the European Union: between balancing and bandwagoning," p.14

Future EU – Brazilian Relations

Prospects for EU-Brazilian Convergence and Cooperation

It was mentioned in the first section that the aim of the EU's Strategic Partnerships is, apart from bilateral issues, to address the big global issues together. This is clearly echoed in the EU commission's statement that "The [...] strategic partnership between Brazil and the EU should help Brazil to exercise a positive leadership globally and regionally, and to engage with the EU in a global, strategic, substantial and open dialogue both bilaterally and in multilateral and regional fora."²⁶

The last section has shown that Brazil and the EU often diverge on many matters. While Brazil commits itself to a multilateral system, as put by Oretto, it "is clear that it does not favor a rigid, rules-based international regime, which could be more to the EU's liking." The central point of divergence here is the Brazilian belief that "preservation of full autonomy and sovereignty is compatible with multilateralism."²⁷

Brazil's version of multilateralism, as described by Gratius, is "less value-oriented and more pragmatic, with a clear development focus" and "instrumental to the country's national interest and its candidacy for a permanent seat at the UNSC."²⁸ While this might disappoint those who have argued that the EU and Brazil are natural partners in addressing global issues, on the positive side this means that besides its often ideological rhetoric, Brazil is very much a pragmatic, interest-maximizing player on the global stage.

This opens a range of issues for the EU where cooperation with Brazil is feasible and in mutual interest. Four sectors will hereby be particularly important for EU-Brazilian relations, with two representing an upward risk and two representing downward risks for the relationship.

Trilateral Cooperation on Development

"Trilateral" development activities in which the EU and Brazil could team up are amongst the most heralded opportunities for cooperation and could compensate for shrinking European donor contributions. Especially given the EU's current economic state, it should welcome an increase in development activities by a democratic country. On the other hand, the Brazilian approach to development has so far actively distanced itself from 'traditional' donor behavior and always underlined its business character. It has not joined the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and avoids attaching conditions to its investments. On the positive side, its assistance has been based on technical cooperation and avoided the Chinese model, by using local forces as much as possible.

²⁶ EU Commission, Towards an EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership, p. 2

²⁷ Otero-Iglesias, Miguel, "The EU and Brazil: What crisis? What partner? What strategy?", p. 14

²⁸ Gratius, Susanne, "Can EU Strategic Partnerships deepen multilateralism?", pp. 3-4.

Trilateral Cooperation on development has been included in the EU-Brazil “Joint Action Plan 2012-2014” and defined as “one of the major areas of the strategic partnership”. Particularly lusophone Africa has been mentioned in this regard. So far, this concept however neglects the purpose and nature of Brazilian engagement in Africa: Working with the North, possibly even conditions-based, would undermine Brazilian political narrative and not further Brazilian economic interest as much as bilateral relations. But if Brazil can manage to overcome these hesitations, trilateral cooperation could in fact provide a great field of common engagement.

Human Rights

On a domestic level, Brazil is a fervent implementer of UN regulations on human rights. At the UN, Brazil has instead interpreted these rights mainly as economic and social, echoing its G-77 foreign policy agenda. On other issues, such as Iran, Syria and North Korea, Brazil has been between sluggish, unhelpful and problematic. While many expected that Dilma Rousseff would bring a more Human Rights-centered approach to Brazilian policy and dampen camaraderie with populists in South America and the Caribbean, this has not happened and relations with these regimes have been prioritized. As mentioned, Brazil acquiesced to an ALBA-backed initiative in 2012 to suspend OAS democracy and human rights monitoring mechanisms. Even when this initiative was finally discarded in March of this year, Brazil found itself again on the wrong side of the aisle.²⁹ While the EU might accept a weakening of the OAS and diminishing of United States influence, it is very critical of moving human rights protection mechanisms to organizations dominated by countries such as the ALBA states or Cuba. On the global level instead, the transition from Lula to Rousseff has led to a greater distancing from problematic countries such as Iran.

As described by Gratius and Grevi, Brazil’s engagement with democracy and human rights is likely to increase in the future. But the EU should recognize the limits of cooperation with Brazil on this issue, as it will “be filtered by the country’s distinctive domestic experience, its reluctance to contemplate limitations to sovereignty and by sheer interest calculations.”³⁰ Both countries already share and implement the same values at home. Overloading the Strategic Partnership could therefore result in disappointment from both sides.

Peace and Security

Both Brazil and the EU share a focus on conflict prevention and often underline the interdependence between security and development. Yet Brazil has, along with other BRICS countries, taken a very negative stance towards military intervention and peace enforcement and has been an outspoken critic of NATO’s Libya intervention and the UN concept of “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P). Brazil’s obsession with observance of national sovereignty and non-interference clearly puts it at odds with the R2P concept advanced particularly by EU member states at the United Nations.

²⁹ Oppenheimer, Andres. “Surprise! Mexico backs human rights cause.” In my opinion, Miami Herald, 24.03.2013.

³⁰ Gratius, Susanne and Grevi, Giovanni, “Brazil and the EU: Partnering on Security and Human Rights”, pp. 5-6.

Rather than simply voting against R2P resolutions along with other BRICS countries, Brazil has supported the analogous concept of “Responsibility while Protecting” in 2011. While defending a moral purpose and a focus on the protection of civilians, the concept is actually an attempt to weaken R2P by delaying military intervention and attaching enough conditions and risks to make the concept impracticable. Its seemingly constructive attitude and mastery of procedural diplomacy has made Brazil in this case even more dangerous to the EU’s interests than other BRICS countries.

The different stances on sovereignty and R2P are likely to remain. But at the same time a window of opportunity for common engagement has opened: The financial and economic crisis, which has significantly decreased European defense budget levels, drastically lowered European member states’ willingness to engage in local conflicts. Brazil and the EU should use this opportunity and concentrate on those parts of peace and security where they agree: developing effective conflict prevention mechanisms.

Free Market Policies

Brazil recently announced that it will pursue negotiations with the EU on a bilateral free trade agreement, as a result of the ongoing inability to come to terms on an EU-Mercosur agreement.³¹ Brazil has actively contributed to creating this problem by trying to convert Mercosur into a political alliance and neglecting its economic coherence, now being faced by an Argentina promoting protectionist policies (a role previously often played by itself). Its siding with ALBA states in suspending Paraguay’s membership in Mercosur and accepting Venezuela into the organisation, which it currently even chairs, will all but further the possibility of an agreement.

The Brazilian initiative is mainly based on its reclassification as a middle-income country by the EU, which will suspend trading preferences enjoyed by Brazil. Despite the Brazilian role in preventing an agreement with Mercosur in the past, the EU should welcome the Brazilian initiative. It is a sign that Brazil is moving towards pragmatic policies and offers opportunities to expand the agreement to other Mercosur countries at a later stage.

Moreover, an agreement would counter the entrenchment of an anti-free trade ideology in the region and ultimately distance Brazil from ALBA countries.

³¹ Rathbone, John Paul and Leahy, Joe, “Brazil reaches out to EU for free trade deal,” *Financial Times*, 13.08.2013.

Conclusion

This Chapter has provided a more critical look at the conventional wisdom that the EU and Brazil share several important world views and that in principle the EU should welcome the arrival of another like-minded power on a global scale. As the previous pages have shown, the EU and Brazil are currently divided by two major, interconnected differences: Different conceptions of multilateralism and Brazil's strong anti-Western/North rhetoric and action.

While the EU strives for an international order based on binding rules and institutions, the Brazilian view is more in favor of a traditional multipolarity, with multilateral frameworks mainly used to prevent predominance of power. Susanne Gratius' comparison of European "multipolar multilateralism" and Brazilian "multilateral multipolarity" is a particularly apt description in this regard.

One might argue that differences in Brazilian and EU visions of multilateralism stem from the fact that both find themselves on opposing courses: The EU is in decline and attempts to maintain its traditional role in world affairs by trying to replace the rule of power with the power of rules. Brazil on the other hand is rising and does not see a need for the establishment of a rule-based world at the exact moment in which it would finally be strong enough to succeed in a power-based one.

The future may hold better times for EU-Brazilian alignment once the Brazilian strategy becomes less viable. Both on the regional and global levels many countries have already started to notice that their Brazilian leaders – just as anyone else – care first of all for themselves and are often big in promises yet slow in delivery. And more importantly, the simultaneous identity as a global South and BRICS country is a problem in the long run: As a BRICS member it ultimately supports the idea of hierarchy in the international system, a concept that is highly contested by the global South. Once Brazil establishes itself as a more developed country that sits at most of the important decision-making tables and promotes its own interests, it will less likely be able to count on the support by this movement of the powerless.

Finally, if Brazil wants to achieve its final aim of a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, it will need to define itself as a more 'responsible' country and effective partner. In the end, what distinguishes it from other major BRICS powers such as Russia and China is that it is not a global political big shot yet, and that it will require Western acceptance into this club.

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