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Brazil in the Global Security Order: Principled Action and Immediate Responses to Long-Term Challenges

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In these pages, I discuss Brazil's foreign policy with the purpose of informing readers on traditional values and current attitudes that condition the country's decisions in the international realm. Before that, I single out some of the main trends in current international relations to contextualize Brazil's positions. I then portray Brazil's perceptions of these trends and its reactions to the faltering leadership that threatens the existent global order. I begin with a dilemma that involves sovereigns and their citizens, institutions and global governance.

We are trapped in a dilemma. Current global norms and institutions do not provide the levels of governance necessary to effectively manage the prevalent interdependence of economies and societies. Initiated at the end of World War II, only recently has this process become acute. And, depending on how the international community manages it, it may bring promises of peace and prosperity for humanity: Unaddressed, it will endanger the current world order, favoring realpolitik approaches to handle the installed multipolarity. Properly managed, in contrast, it may involve emerging powers in reducing instabilities, strengthening the role played by responsible nation-states.

It is in the interest of both emerging and established powers to pursue the latter, since among the stakeholders of the current order they are the ones that have benefited most. Non-state actors and small countries take less advantage from the current order, but even they will be better off with improvements in the level of stability currently observed in world affairs.

However, existing institutions are unable to reconcile the needs of states and individuals as they evolve nowadays. Two documents illustrate this central dilemma inherent in contemporary international relations: The Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While the former focuses on the interests and preferences of political communities (organized as moral persons known as sovereign states), the latter asserts basic human needs, which ultimately may be at odds with the sovereigns' core preferences.

Brazil's foreign policy acknowledges this challenge. It advances both moral and pragmatic initiatives with the purpose of improving existing international institutions to produce a more functional framework for current international politics. On one hand, it stresses the need to reinforce a global political order based on rules, rather than power. On the other, it singles out processes that are particularly important to stabilize the international society, reducing pressures on governments and creating constructive dynamics that may engage governments in taking responsibility for the destinies of their societies. In brief, Brazil proposes new institutions and political processes to improve global governance, bridging the gap between expectations and possibilities worldwide.

The Context and how Brazil perceives it

Individuals have become the main referent to political decisions regarding security, welfare, and fairness. Yet, the international order is set as a function of polities, particularly nation-states.

Better informed and empowered by new technologies, individuals compare their living condition not only to their own historic record, but also to those of other communities all over the world¹ The many indicators created by international organizations in the last several decades, topped by the Human Development Index, the Millennium Goals and initiatives such as the Social Progress Index, provide the parameters to measure the effectiveness of public policies at the global level². At the end of the day, individuals, human security and their welfare anchor political processes and set the courses for governmental action.

This creates a gap between citizens and their governments. Individuals' expectations are plenty and complex, while governments lack the possibilities to fulfill their citizens' demands. As a matter of fact, governments are requested to act upon processes that they cannot control. Kept under permanent pressure by citizens and firms alike, they have to deal with increasing demands while observing progressive reductions in their room for maneuver. This frustrates citizens, who tend to become agitated and manifest for their rights. These movements appeared clearly in the Arab Spring, but also at manifestations as different as the ones observed in Turkey, Brazil, and the United States.

¹ Freidman, B. *The Moral Consequences of Economic Growth*. Alfred Knopf, New York, 2005.

² Porter, M., Stern, S. & Loría, R. A. *The Social Progress Index 2013*. The Social Progress Imperative, Washington, D.C., 2013. Available at <http://socialprogressimperative.org>

As a result, sociopolitical dynamics create instabilities and challenges to security, both at the domestic and at the international level. The EU Scenario document focusing on 2030 has captured it from different angles.³

Put differently, individuals have become more conscious of their needs, actual or imagined, and push governments to their limits, which are shorter than in previous times. This process has increased the characteristic degree of complexity of the international system. New technologies have fundamentally changed social intercourses, as well as the nature of interactions between agents, including in the international realm, accelerating the pace of change.⁴

As it happens in non-linear systems, the international system suffers substantial transformations that result from unexpected or unpredictable interactions. It is clear that the current global governance architecture is ineffective to promote peace, stability and sustainable growth in the long run. Hence, acute crises emerge every now and then, occasionally motivating ad hoc emergency responses. In the US, scholars like to portray these dangerous turning points as cliffs that, if things go right, we avoid falling in. The problem with this ad hoc system of management is that it will only take us from one cliff to another – if we are lucky. The whole system requires structural adjustments, which are politically very difficult to achieve, as the enduring crisis in Syria illustrates.

In other terms, the international order needs reform. But it lacks leadership. Reforms need to be incremental to avoid confrontation and engage key players. They have to address the anxieties of dispersed individuals, because the political game has changed in their favor. Though the game has evolved in its essence, it happens within obsolete frameworks.⁵ Not surprisingly, SIPRI Yearbook 2013 focuses on four significant fields that exhibit knowledge gaps, two of which are related to institutional failure, poor governance, and the institutions for security and peace; one pertaining to the relation between violence and socio-economic and political outcomes; and only one with the root causes of specific conflicts. It also records increases in world military expenditures, either in absolute terms (1,742 US\$ b. in 2012, up from 1,291 US\$ b. in 2003, at constant 2011 prices and exchange rates), or in military spending per capita: current US\$ 249 in 2012, up from current US\$ 144 in 2003. Even the world military burden, i.e., world military spending as a percentage of world gross domestic product (both measured in current US\$) increased from 2.4% in 2003 to 2.5% in 2013.⁶

These trends highlight one important fact: notwithstanding the significant increase in the costs of war that deep interdependence has produced, so far traditional wars remain

³ ESPAS: Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World. Global Trends 2030. ESPAS / EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2012.

⁴ Reasonable overviews of this process and its implications remain Held, D. et alii. *Global Transformations. Politics, Economics, and Culture*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999; Clark, G. *A Farewell to Alms. A brief Economic History of the World*. Princeton, Princeton Univ. Press, 2007; and Barnett, M. & Duvall, R. *Power in Global Governance*, Cambridge, Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005.

⁵ See the ESPAS Report 'Global Trends 2030 - Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World', available at <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/espas-report-global-trends-2030-citizens-in-an-interconnected-and-polycentric-world/>; and National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*, Washington DC, 2012.

⁶ SIPRI 2013 Yearbook. *Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.

not only a possibility; they are a growing market in many parts of the world. Violent conflicts in Africa, raising tensions in the Middle East and in the South China Sea point to the fact that governments have to deal with traditional and new threats simultaneously. In this context, South America remains an isle of stability in terms of interstate conflicts.

Whatever the case is, bar a handful of peculiar political conundrums, such as the conflicts involving Israel & Palestine, Greece & Cyprus, North & South Korea, and more recently Syria, citizens no longer believe in traditional narratives that attribute to other peoples the responsibility for their social problems. Governments face greater, and increasing, difficulty to manipulate their citizens' opinions and to engage them in wars. This phenomenon is far from new: "Gone were the days of the treaties of Utrecht and Vienna, when aristocratic statesmen and diplomats, victor and vanquished alike, met in polite and courtly disputation, and, free from the clatter and babel of democracy, could reshape systems upon the fundamentals of which they were all agreed".⁷

Indeed, gone they are. Heads of state nowadays approach their mutual relations with one eye on their interest in the international realm and the other on domestic politics. In the Mid-20th Century, Polanyi captured this great transformation, clearly explained, for example in regard to the financial markets – which are among the most regulated areas of international affairs –, by Barry Eichengreen.⁸

In this context, a culture of tolerance is key to provide states with new arrangements to govern their common challenges.

It is a context in which Brazil, with a long history of respect for international laws and institutions, and an experience of peaceful settlement of disputes illustrated in almost 150 years of peaceful coexistence with its ten neighbors, has shown prudence and ability to arbitrate conflicting movements. Therefore it thinks it has much to offer to the improvement of world order. It claims for robust international regimes, articulated in more legitimate international organizations, to provide the nascent international community with the means to create the public goods necessary to promote inclusive and sustainable growth in the global sphere.

Since the early days of the multilateral system, at the Hague Peace Conference of 1907, Brazil has valued structured political networks based on the principle that forbids legal discrimination between sovereigns. As the global governance process has evolved towards establishing plenty of regimes that help states reach consensus on joint actions towards common challenges in different areas of international relations, the UN has emerged as the potential organization to institutionalize global governance. But to become that it requires improvements to adequately represent its constituents.

⁷ Churchill, W. S. *Memoirs of the Second World War*. Houghton Mifflin Co, Boston, 1959: 3.

⁸ Polanyi, K. *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. Boston, MA, Beacon Press, 1944; Eichengreen, B. *Globalizing Capital. A History of the International Monetary System*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1996.

The way to proceed, therefore, is for all governments to operate preferentially within these arrangements, particularly within the UN. After all, embodying the set of institutions built by the international community comes closest to what a global government would be, which is obviously more legitimate than any bilateral or plurilateral arrangements that could be imagined. In a world of deeper and growing interdependence, reforming this institution to stress its structural virtues may be more appropriate than relying on traditional agent-to-agent political dynamics, be they inspired by either neo-realist or neoliberal approaches.

Brazil's Positions and Initiatives

Brazil, thus, defends reforming institutions. Antonio Patriota's call for raising "awareness on the importance of associating development with the security strategies we conceive towards sustainable peace", as well as for increasing the cooperation between the UNSC and the Economic and Social Council, illustrates this commitment⁹. This cry has been reinforced by incumbent Minister Luiz Alberto Figueiredo in his inauguration, with a speech that concentrated on deepening the contributions Brazil may offer to enhance the current order:

"(...) our voice has been gathering strength in defense of our values and interests stated at the multilateral level and the great issues of the international agenda, ranging from sustainable development to human rights and social affairs, from international peace and security to the multilateral trade system. (...) Brazil is a player that cannot be sidestepped."¹⁰

Institutions are necessary to promote stable, roughly predictable political encounters, avoiding unstable environments, where agents fear the future, exaggerating their differences, engendering conflicts, reducing their capacity to negotiate the very rules and institutions they need. They are necessary to guide development efforts with a sense of community without which, collectively, populations often shift their responsibilities for their own failures to others. Reformed institutions may foster sustainable development, serving current and future generations. Hence, governments should reach a consensus on how to promote economic growth while materializing social inclusion and improving the environment. Rio+20 attempted to launch such a process, providing the world with a useful political agenda to guide its collective action after 2015, when the Millennium Goals process will be formally concluded.

In a nutshell, this is the narrative that has informed Brazil's foreign policy through the last decades. It combines common sense with proposals of conservative reforms in the

⁹ Statement by H.E. Ambassador Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Minister of External Relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil at the Open Debate of the Security Council on "Maintenance of international peace and security: the interdependence between security and development", 11 February 2011, available at <http://www.un.int/brazil/speech/11d-AAP-Maintenance-international-peace-security.html> (accessed on June 30 2012).

¹⁰ Statement delivered by Ambassador Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado on the occasion of his inauguration as Minister of External Relations (Brasilia, 28 August 2013). Available at <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/discurso-do-embaixador-luiz-alberto-figueiredo-machado-na-cerimonia-de-transmissao-do-cargo-de-ministro-de-estado-das-relacoes-exteriores> (accessed on September 01, 2013).

world order. Back in the 1960s, The Brazilian Ambassador to the UN, Araújo Castro, denounced the UN Charter as a document concerned with peace and power, rather than justice, and the Security Council, in tandem with the NPT, as a tool to freeze the distribution of power at the world stage¹¹. He pointed out at the San Francisco Conference that the international community had mistakenly focused on military dynamics instead of privileging development, apparently ignoring the extent to which they are intertwined.

An attentive reader of Rui Barbosa, Araújo Castro deepened the arguments put forward by San Tiago Dantas, the Brazilian Foreign Minister who crafted the “Independent Foreign Policy” in the early 1960s. Its leitmotiv lies in the juridical equivalence of sovereigns which should, collectively and through legitimate institutions, take responsibility for managing world affairs: “(...) Il n’y a rien de plus éminemment politique, sous le ciel, que la souveraineté. Il n’y a rien de plus hardiment politique, Messieurs, que de vouloir lui tracer des bornes (...) Par in paren, non habet imperium”¹². These words could have been pronounced by Luiz Alberto Figueiredo, Antonio Patriota, Celso Amorim, Azeredo da Silveira, Araújo Castro, Afonso Arinos or San Tiago Dantas. But it was Ruy Barbosa, with Rio Branco’s due encouragement, who delivered them back in 1907.

At the current levels of interdependence, in the long run only an international order that represents the actual distribution of power in the world stage can effectively regulate the allocation of values on a politically sustainable basis. Hence, Brazil pushes for a reform that helps multilateralize the multi-polarity observed in international relations. At this level of interdependence, the whole political process has to be perceived as legitimate, and this requires offering emerging powers reasonable levels of representativeness in the world institutions.

Evidences abound. We live in a global society structured to administrate an international system. Hence, the consensus on the need to reform institutions such as the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as well as to end the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO), is strengthened on a daily basis. But no one appears to know how to proceed.

As the evolving socioeconomic processes unfold successive political crises that affect the whole world, multilateral institutions fail in managing the world order. If their improvement was an option when the idea of an international community was utopia, the need for a sound global governance infrastructure has become paramount. Interdependence requires appropriate institutions to manage global flows (of information, money, goods, services, persons, and others) and agents’ expectations, cementing what effectively corresponds to a world society. And in this complex environment, different kinds of agents matter.¹³

¹¹ Araújo Castro, J.A. (1972). The United Nations and the Freezing of the International Power Structure. *International Organization*, Vol. 26, N. 1: 158-166.

¹² ACTES ET DISCOURS. DEUXIÈME CONFÉRENCE DE LA PAIX. Available at http://archive.org/stream/deuximeconfrenc00barbgoog/deuximeconfrenc00barbgoog_djvu.txt (accessed on September 27, 2013)

¹³ So important is this perception that some analysts recall the European Middle-Ages, when sovereigns of different kinds interacted purposefully on a legitimate way. See for instance Pfaff, W. *The Wrath of Nations: Civilizations and the Furies of Nationalism*.

Simply put, this is the narrative. Brazil proposes using cooperation to improve the order. This needs to take place at several instances: at the UNSC, to face security challenges; at the WTO, to unleash the energies of free trade on behalf of economic growth; at the FAO, to provide for food security; at the broader sustainable development agenda, especially through the Sustainable Development Goals, to build “the future we want”¹⁴. And all this is based on the country’s foreign policy traditions.

From Words to Deeds

These positions also imply moving from words to deeds. After solving its most serious socioeconomic problems, Brazil gradually becomes a model to other developing countries. The focus on its own development, as well as on maintaining peaceful and cooperative relations with its neighbors, emerges as a priority.

Having ranked 7th among the world’s largest economies in 2012, it improves its infrastructures, which operate above their capacity. Having included over 40 million people in its middle class, being the sole BRICS to reduce inequalities in the last 20 years, it defends social policies. Housing circa 12% of the world’s fresh water reserves, Brazil ranks 7th among the greatest consumers, with less than 3%, behind India (13%), China (11%), USA (9%), Russia and Indonesia (4% each), and Nigeria (3%).¹⁵ Having championed clean-energy production and pushed for the Rio+20, its power generation comes mostly from hydro-electric (76%) and Bio/wind (8%) sources, which are expected to remain the most important by 2035 (67% & 16%, respectively).¹⁶

In 2010, The Brazilian Cooperation Agency published a report that summarizes its initiatives in the previous five years. Only in humanitarian aid, scholarships to citizens from poor countries, Technical and R&D cooperation, and contributions to international organizations it invested almost R\$ 2,9 billion (roughly US\$ 1,25 billion at current exchange rates).¹⁷ According to the same Agency, through 2013 to 2015, Brazil has budgeted US\$ 40 million to invest in Development cooperation in the Americas and the Caribbean and US\$ 36 million in Africa, mainly in the fields of food security, agricultural development, Health, and professional formation.¹⁸ The country is also implementing a debt relief program that will benefit 12 African countries with a pardon that will reach US\$ 900 million when completed. Its rationale is to avoid turning the debt burden

New York: Touchstone, 1994, Gellner, E., “Culture Identity and Politics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, and Cooper, R, “The Breaking of Nations - Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century”, London: Atlantic Books, 2004.

¹⁴ It is not a coincidence that the Outcome document of the Rio +20 Conference considers the eradication of poverty as “the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development”. (See A/RES/66/288, Par 2, adopted by the UN General Assembly in its Sixty-sixth session, in September 12, 2012 Available at <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/476/10/PDF/N1147610.pdf>, Accessed on February 4, 2013.)

¹⁵ Boletim da Associação dos diplomatas Brasileiros, Year XIX, Number 78, Winter 2012: 5-10.

¹⁶ Brasil, MME/EPE, 2011(op cit.): 30. The other sources are nuclear (2% in 2010) and Thermal (14%). By 2035, they are expected to remain stable, with an increase of 1% in thermal generation.

¹⁷ IPEA / ABC. Cooperação brasileira para o desenvolvimento internacional: 2005-2009. Brasília, Ipea, 2010.

¹⁸ Abreu, Fernando, speech at “Os desafios da política externa brasileira em um mundo em transição” seminário na Câmara dos Deputados, Available at <http://www.camara.gov.br/internet/jornalcamara/default.asp?selecao=materia&codMat=75254&codjor=> (accessed on September 26, 2013).

an impediment to economic growth and to overcoming poverty.¹⁹ Investments have also grown in South America. In 2010, the BNDES alone was responsible for projects related to the Initiative for Integrating South-American Infrastructure of over US\$ 300 million. In 2011, it had a portfolio of over US\$ 17 billion for investments in Latin America, an increase of over 1,000% in relation to 2001.²⁰

Summing up, Brazil's message is clear, though seldom explicitly spelled out: We live in a world of deep interdependence, threatened by traditional patterns of conflicts as well as by unrests related to revolts against unbearable socioeconomic inequalities and a widespread sense of injustice. Therefore, promoting international security depends on reliable, legitimate institutions that help solve conflicts through peaceful means as much as on efforts to reduce inequalities both domestically and at the international level. If governments do not manage to negotiate their conflicts of interests among themselves, redistributing power to emerging nation-states to render more representative, legitimate, and effective multilateral institutions, the whole system will partially lose its capacity to shape political processes, as other political groups will become relatively more relevant in world affairs.

Because it thinks it benefits from the current order – as much as other developing countries –, Brazil wants to reform and improve institutions. It also contributes to reducing inequalities and to coping with key challenges to address basic human needs: food security, public health, social development, and economic growth. Hence its cooperation focuses on less developed countries and on the issues prioritized by them, on a horizontal basis. And its participation in international organizations aims at providing global public services, be it through technology transfers at FAO, through using trade as a machine to stimulate the global economy at the WTO, or through defining a balanced long term political agenda to harmonize efforts in promoting social inclusion, economic growth and environmental responsibility at the Rio + 20 Conference. Brazil accepts that established powers may benefit even more from this order than itself, and hopes to persuade them that it is also in their interest to make the world less unfair – and possibly more secure. Pragmatically, it proposes to air the global governance system as a way of strengthening it, enhancing its capacity to influence the flows of history. And, by doing so, it adds deeds to its traditional words.

The Way ahead

This is not an uncontroversial agenda. It may engender conflicts of different kinds: conflicts over rules, particularly those pertaining to the access to key technologies; conflicts over principles, mainly those that oppose the basic values of fairness and freedom; and conflicts of power, related to the possibilities of influencing the evolution of

¹⁹ See Brasil perdoa quase US\$ 900 milhões em dívidas de países Africanos. Em BBC Brasil, 25 de maio de 2013. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2013/05/130520_perdao_africa_mdb.shtml (accessed on September 25, 2013). The countries are Congo Brazzaville, Tanzania, Zambia, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Republic of Guinea, Mauritania, São Tomé e Príncipe, Sudan and Guinea Bissau.

²⁰ BNDES impulsiona maior presença brasileira na América Latina. In BBC Brasil, 11 de novembro de 2011. Available at http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2011/11/111109_mundo_bndes_mdb.shtml (accessed on September 28, 2013).

international events. But where you stand informs what you can do. Brazil considers that emerging powers should have their opinion taken into consideration in key decisions for world affairs. It has shown in the last years that it is ready to take responsibility in important circumstances. With its example, it hopes to lead, offering other developing countries its expertise in international negotiations, its tradition of respecting laws and institutions, its tolerance and temperance in implementing its foreign policy. Inspired by these values, the global governance architecture may gain legitimacy – presumably becoming more effective.

This is not an easy path to take either, but the alternative would be to discredit the existent order in its entirety, reducing the states' capacity to manage the evolution of world affairs on behalf of other political entities. After all, not long ago, leading scholars conceived even war as a phenomenon related not exclusively to nation-states.²¹ This may become the case again, bearing in mind the current relevance of individuals and firms in international economics and of private entities, mercenaries, and terrorist groups, in the security domain.

Yet, this is easily proposed than achieved. The international system is complex, and the imaginary boundaries we use to make sense of it do not help to understand its recent adaptations to the most important shocks it has suffered. Cautiously, Brazil does not fundamentally threaten the system and its defining interactions. But it innovates in applying the political savvy and creativity acquired regionally at the global level, consolidating its condition of a global diplomatic hub. Indeed, despite being relatively richer and more powerful, the country lives in peace with its neighbors and manages to solve almost all conflicts in South America without resorting to force.

The stability observed in the region is seen as a consequence of this general approach to conflicts. Taken to world affairs, particularly in key sectors such as food, water, and energy, it may help avoid conflicts and promote cooperation. Inspired by these principles and focused on the long run, the Brazilian foreign policy perseveres in this strategy to help build a more secure world in the 21st century.

²¹ Quincy Wright, for instance, conceptualized war as “a social recognized form of intergroup conflict involving violence” (See Wright, *Q: A Study of War*. Chicago, Ill., University of Chicago Press, 1942:6).