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DOKUMENTATION

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.

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Brazil, Latin America and the European Union towards new global agendas

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Brazil and European Union are both strongly committed to global multilateralism, as well as to regionalism, however they do not share the same vision regarding the meaning of those two integration mechanisms. It is thus hard to establish affinities among both when examines their multilateral global and regional dimensions. The aim of this paper is to contrast Brazil's and European Union's (EU) actions on the global agenda in multilateral and inter-regional forums

Three different channels measure Brazil's relations with EU: Brazil-EU, Brazil's bilateral relations with EU Member States, and EU_MERCOSUR/CELAC within the framework of inter-regionalism. According to the Brazilian diplomacy tradition a few member of the EU – especially Germany, United Kingdom, France, Spain and Portugal – are considered important partners for a number of reasons, while the EU as a block is identified as an actor that brings complications to the trade arena. Brazilian diplomacy still have not found the best way to interact with the European External Action Service (despite the strategic partnership favor this interaction between the parties). Brazilian foreign policy still has not defined its landmark towards its perception of EU as an international political actor that defends common positions facing new topics on the international agenda.

This article is situated in two dimensions in which can be identified the success and limits of Brazil-EU interaction facing multilateral themes on the global agenda. First, it is identified the existence of divergences between them in multilateral global institutions. Second, interactions and difference of behavior of both are presented in the framework of Latin-American regionalism.



It is important to highlight, building up on the premise that Brazil is a Nation-State, while the EU is a regional entity with a body of supranational action and with possible exceptions in the behavior of its Member-States; and Latin America is an unequal region with strong asymmetries and divergences regarding its countries visions on politics and economics.

The limits of the impact on multilateral forums of the Brazil-European Union strategic partnership

In the beginning of the Lula da Silva's government the idea EU and its member-states could be important allies to counterbalance US power in the global arena prevailed in Brazil. The consolidated perception on Brazilian diplomacy was that the Brazil and EU shared common values on themes such as development, democracy and international peace, and regarding the defense of multilateralism on global politics.

When the Strategic Partnership was signed in 2007, the document expressed the reinforcement of multilateralism and the search for joint actions on issues as human rights, poverty, environment and energy, as common goals. The structuring of triangular cooperation initiatives with countries with fewer resources was also seen possible by both sides.

As substantive grounds for this initiative provided the European perspective can be pointed out the active role of Brazil in international issues with emphasis on the Doha Round; the EU search for partnership with emerging countries; Brazil's perception as a potential partner on multilateral forums. Brazilian policy makers on the other hand, identified the partnership with the EU as a tool to strengthen the country's international prestige and saw it as a channel to approximate Brazil to most relevant European countries to Brazil's perspective. The Brazilian expectation of increased investment and technology transfer to Brazil also favored the signing of the agreement.

After six years the Strategic Partnership showed progress at bilateral level. In 2008 was established a Joint Action Plan for three years, renewed in 2011 for a new Plan with a duration until the end of 2014 that reinforces the desire of its parties to act together in topics of the global agenda among thirty areas of dialogue that were established.

However, the biggest advance in the framework of the partnership is happening on bilateral level between Brazil-EU. The new exchange programs of students and researchers increased and the yearly summits have strongly



contributed to the consolidation of an integration mechanism among Brazilian agencies and the European External Action Services. In the commercial field EU imports to Brazil has grown. In the cooperation field the first triangular initiative was signed, to take place in Mozambique.

At the multilateral level, facing the new agendas, there was little progress. Despite the shared values between Brazil and EU that on the one hand the European countries were identified as important allies in the review of international institutions, on the other hand approach the difficulties were visible on important issues, since the signing of the Strategic Partnership, Rapidly it became clear to Brazilian diplomacy that both sides' conceptions would not meet many convergences. The fact that EU seek to build bridges among US and countries of the South in a fragmented political order, obstructed the built of a Brazilian approach towards EU to a revision of the global order. Therefore the EU has been occupying since then an ambiguous part in Brazilian foreign policy.

More broadly, the Lula government adopted an autonomous and proactive foreign policy in the global arena in order to carry out a reform of international institutions prioritizing the formation of coalitions with other emerging countries from the South opening new spaces for South-South Cooperation. The Rousseff administration followed the same strategic regarding the priorities and kept the autonomous foreign policy profile, although reducing initiatives, compromising its proactivity.

At this context, divergences in the multilateral forums were felt. At the beginning there were different votes at the United Nations both on the nuclear agreement with the Iranian government in 2010, and in regard of the expansion of the Security Council, as well as distinct positions were defended on the International Monetary Fund. Regarding issues of Human Rights, the issue was sidelined on behalf of other strategic partnership with emerging partners during the Lula administration. As an aggravating, the Lula government sought to articulate human rights with development, while EU countries showed preference for condemning specific countries on behalf of their disregards to civil and political rights. In practice the Brazilian positions converged with the one from other emerging countries.

The rise of Dilma Rousseff has not approached the two partners in the multilateral level. Regarding their action in multilateral global forums, although there were expectations on the issues of human rights, a tension was settled between Brazilian principles for human rights and its respect for the States' sovereignty in the country's approach to crisis situations. Despite



the Brazilian support on a few resolutions of the United Nations Human Rights Council against Iran and North Korea a gap between Brazil and EU positions on the topic was created.

In the intersections field of human rights with security there was no coincidence with the prevailing position among the EU member states on the international issues in Libya (in this case Germany's position was the only exception) and in Syria, while the Brazilian position kept defending the principles of non-intervention and the peaceful settlement of disputes, strongly consolidated at Itamaraty. The distancing of the principles traditionally supported by the EU can also be seen in the case of the "responsibility to protect". Without underestimating the importance of the principle, Dilma Rousseff's Brazilian diplomacy suggested a related idea, but different – the "responsibility while protecting" - as the most appropriate strategy to ensure the protection of individuals in cases of crisis. This idea suggests that coercive measures should be implemented only as a last option and in case of military intervention, the Security Council should monitor its implementation. EU resisted to this proposal defending that in some crisis situations it is important to have flexibility in order to mobilize different instruments both of assistance or coercion. With regard to the formation of the Palestine State, perceptions, and hence the choices were either coincident.

The defense of multilateralism itself is another topic for concern, since there has been no intersection between the preferences of the two sides on how that multilateralism should take shape. While the EU advocates a liberal and normative global order with institutions in which member states hold important positions, Brazilian diplomacy has shown preference for a non-hegemonic scenario with few rules and a pluralist international society of sovereign states.

Europe's financial crisis also impacted on the potential for common actions in international economic forums. The EU normative role as economic model questioned, and the European capacity to manage a world economic order began to be threatened by alternative initiatives suggested by emerging countries, including Brazil. The proposal to create a development bank by BRICS countries, which must be consolidated soon, is a first example. In the bilateral relations between Brazil and member states of the EU, the crisis has limited expectations of a growth of European investment in the country (suggested in the Joint Action Plan), which was one of the main goals of diplomatic negotiations with these countries.



These differences can be understood from a background of substantive differences. First, Brazil showed preference for a pluralist order of sovereign states, multipolar and having different world views, while the EU would defend an international society of liberal and normative states. Although Brazil is a Western country in their views and internal customs, unlike in the EU foreign policy that projects successes of his political and liberal economic model, Brazil does not project these values in its foreign policy and maintains an international approach to respect for the sovereignty of states, and accepts different alternative ideology and political system. Second, the priority of Brazilian diplomacy to build coalitions in international institutions and to develop links with other emerging countries, and some who do not adopt liberal models, it is important and acts as a lever for Brazilian positions in international politics and cannot be put at risk. Finally, although Brazil share values with the European Union and follow Western standards internally, its diplomacy does not recognize the EU as a normative power of the international order.

Brazil and the European Union in the regional scenario

The interaction between Brazil and the European Union in regional dimension can be seen from two different angles. The first concerns the role that regional issues occupy the strategic partnership. Among the common goals highlighted in the joint statement of the partnership are the strengthening of EU-Mercosur relations and the EU-Latin American and Caribbean states dialogue in consonance with the strengthening of regionalism. In this case, the maintenance of regional stability and the structuring of a regional governance to come forward with the process of integration were seen by the EU as important elements. On the other hand, there is a strategic partnership between the EU and currently the CELAC, of which Brazil is a member.

The Brazil-EU partnership was signed at a time of construction of a Brazilian leadership in South America, a time of growth of regional asymmetries in favor of Brazil, the Lula government's achievements and rise of leftist governments in the region. From a European view, there would be common values between the views of the EU and Brazil on topics such as the defense of multilateralism in the region, interest in political stability and the maintenance of democratic regimes and the fight against poverty and asymmetries. From the European perspective, Brazil was seen as a possible leader of the South American countries able to curb Hugo Chavez initiatives



and serve as a contrast to the Bolivarian socialism through a balance between economic growth and social inclusion.

The signature of the strategic partnership brought Brazil to a different place in the European view, compared to other countries in the region (except Mexico, with which the EU also has a partnership strategy). From the European side, there was an initial expectation that joint positions could be built across the region.

However, the context has evolved from unfavorable form an articulation between Brazil and the EU in regional issues. On the European side, the change in the type of regionalism followed in South America increased the distance of the European Union towards the region. Also the loss of priority of the inter-regionalism in European foreign policy on behalf of bilateral relations with a special selection of countries has caused damage to the interaction emptying the interest of both sides and pointing to a lack of cohesion between regions. More recently, the start of negotiations of the EU Transatlantic Agreement with the United States brought a black cloud for the future of inter-regionalism.

Latin America, due to internal differences, does not constitute as an international actor able to dialogue with the EU or to seek common positions facing international issues. In addition to the formation of UNASUR, which weakened the Rio Group and the idea of Latin America, there was no coincidence of positions in multilateral forums among the countries in the region (except for the countries of ALBA, which often have overlapping positions). In regional landmarks, there was disagreement over policy preferences and national development strategies. The formation of CELAC was not enough to overcome these differences.

On the Brazilian side, the construction of a regional governance came articulated with the Brazilian initiatives to consolidate itself as a leader, and a gradual increase in Brazil as *paymaster* of the South American regionalism (though still with many limitations and obstacles). The Brazilian government has invested in regionalism through UNASUR with the profile of post-liberal regionalism, which gives priority to politics, distanced from the European understanding of regional integration based on a commercial integration. The focus of the Brazilian attention was South America, while the EU followed treating Latin America as the main actor. The views on democracy also distanced themselves, since many leaders of the Brazilian government combined elements of a traditional model of representative democracy with



elements of participatory democracy and the government approached governments that have reshaped their respective constitutions. With the absence of a North American policy towards the region and the failure of neoliberalism, Brazil has enjoyed the autonomy of its politics towards South America. As an aggravating to the issue the president's party leaders identified the European countries such as extra-regional powers. In addition, the strategic partnership between the EU and the CELAC, which is an important instrument for the European inter-regionalism, is not seen as a priority by Brazil: besides the CELAC have received less attention than UNASUR in Brazilian diplomatic circles. Finally, the Brazil-EU strategic partnership is considered by Brazilians as the best mechanism of interaction with the EU and the best foreign policy instrument to strengthen its global projection and bilateral gains.

The strategic partnership, added to the expectations of building the joint positions, and to the vision of Brazil as a potential regional leader, and aggravated by the situation of autonomy that Brazilian policy to its neighboring countries experienced in the period, brought to the EU-Latin America relations a balance different, as a triangular relationship EU-Brazil-CELAC (Brazil included). In this case, each vertex of the triangle, individually, have direct relationships with the other two, providing to Brazil a unique position most likely to influence the progress of the EU's relations with all Latin American countries. And the joint actions did not happen. Once the interaction between Brazil and its neighbors would rest in the Brazilian autonomy from the Brazilian government's vision, a tacit alliance with the EU could arouse suspicion and hinder the construction of its leadership in the region.

If during the Lula government expectations of joint actions were not confirmed, the rise of Dilma Rousseff did not favor the scenario of interaction among Brazil-EU-CELAC on issues of the global agenda. EU Initial expectations' that the new government would give less support for leftist governments in the region was overcome by the Brazilian tradition of the traditional principles of nonintervention; by the difficulties of the country to build a lead on a theme where there are many differences, such as the preferences of the forms of government; and by the fact that before crisis situations in the region, the leaders of the PT have followed are important actors in the government.

Thereby, in a crisis of democratic regimes the idea that Brazil and the EU could support common values within the framework of the strategic EU-



CELAC-Brazil partnership was not confirmed. In the case of *impeachment* of Paraguayan President in 2012, Brazil's reaction was to interpret it as a coup and channel the position of South American rejection through the institutions of MERCOSUR and UNASUR, of which Paraguay was temporarily suspended. The CELAC did not have a relevant role in the topic and the EU followed the more conciliatory stance adopted by the Organization of American States, which interpreted the situation as within the frameworks of legality. The crisis that is taking place in Venezuela has also been treated in the framework of UNASUR and after statements of condemnation, the EU was limited to support the fragile dialogue initiative implemented by UNASUR.

Still on the political field, the negative by some of the member states of the overflight of Evo Morales' presidential plane risking the Bolivian president was collectively considered by UNASUR as disrespectful to the region. More broadly, on the situation regarding the spying by the US security agency the EU did not showed a strong rejection position for different internal views on the subject although Brazil is implementing an important partnership with Germany and the EU has been showing some concerns. Finally, it was approved at the United Nations a document below the expectations of the Brazilian government.

Finally, in relation to MERCOSUR: In this case, there is no strategic partnership, but a capstone cooperation agreement signed in 1995 that established a political dialogue, cooperation and negotiations in order to form a free trade area negotiated by a bi-regional committee.

But the admission of Venezuela as a full member of MERCOSUR contributed to erode the EU's political relations with the bloc. Political dialogue lost strength from 2006 and the partnership signed with Brazil contributed to leave in limbo the dialogue, besides emptying joint cooperation initiatives. Regarding the trade negotiations of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement, although they were resumed in 2010, the protectionist measures recently adopted by the Argentinean government and the presence of Venezuela in the bloc reduced the European interest and engagement in the subject. The crisis of the euro area also contributed to create more difficulties for progress in negotiations.

These difficulties favored the formation of expectations among Brazilian economic actors that an agreement could be negotiated between Brazil and EU. However, this type of agreement could jeopardize some short-term Brazilian goals which would go against the bloc's terms of the common



external tariff that, despite its limitations, serves as an element of cohesion. Also the EU continues to reject the main Brazilian demand for the opening of the European agricultural market, while European claims for opening in certain industrial and services sectors and public bids continue to be denied by the Brazilian government. However advances in terms of the formation of large free trade blocs, such as the case of negotiations on the Transatlantic Agreement are influencing to change Brazil's position that progressively comes relying more heavily upon the trade agreement with the EU, although without giving up of the customs union of MERCOSUR.

Conclusions with few perspectives

The findings do not point many perspectives of joint action between Brazil and the EU and other Latin American states towards the new issues on the global agenda. Disagreements and differences can be seen in positions taken at regional level and the global multilateral level. Latin America coexists with many internal differences and can not be identified as a global collective actor. Brazil's relations with the EU and Latin America have settled during the vertices of a triangle, because Brazil maintain different relationships with both of the region (South America through UNASUR) and with the EU (through partnership strategic).

However, it is possible to identify a coincidence values in both global and regional agenda, such as the defense of democracy and human rights (although from a minimalist definition); defense of peace; focus on both global and regional multilateralism; support for training initiatives for regional governance; regional stability, fight against poverty and asymmetries both global and regional; although the coincidences, visions, goals, and above all the instruments to achieve them are different and mark the differences. Shared values is an important first step and opens the way for goals and instruments to approach or are linked in specific cases to produce favorable results for both sides.