

Notes and Reflections

BRIC COUNTRIES: BRAZIL, AN EMERGING POWER

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The International Symposium "**The BRIC countries: Brazil, an emerging power**" took place on 7 and 8 April 2011 and attracted over 150 participants from Europe and Latin America. The event was held at the Centre for Brazilian Studies in Salamanca, Spain, and was co-organised by the Ibero-American Institute (*Instituto Ibero-Americano*) of the University of Salamanca and by the Latin-American Institute (Instituto de Latino-América) of the Academy of Sciences in Russia, as part of the network of the European Council for Social Research on Latin America (CEISAL), which includes 50 European institutions involved in Latin-American studies.

The role of Brazil in the international political and economic context was debated at the meeting from distinct perspectives and with regard to a wide range of topics. Some of the conclusions and additional notes are mentioned below:

- 1. Brazilian economy grew 7.5% in 2010, and according to the latest projections, the country will grow at a rate close to 5% annually over the next five years. However, the economic indicators do not necessarily match the social indicators for development. Despite having reduced its poverty percentage from 38% to 25% in the last 10 years, according to statistics advanced by ECLAC, Brazil continues to suffer from serious problems, such as social inequality.*

In a report on Human Development for Latin America and the Caribbean (2010), Brazil is in 73rd place out of the 169 countries for which there is data available on health,



education and income and that enabled the making of the comparative table presented by UNDP¹. Brazil also has to face the serious challenge posed by internal violence: The Institute for Economics and Peace, which publishes an annual Global Peace Index (GPI) that measures security and violence indicators in the world, placed Brazil at number 74 in a ranking of 153 countries (2011), with the first in the ranking deemed to be the most peaceful in the world².

2. Brazil appears today in the international arena increasingly aware of its potential power and interests. The objectives of its foreign policy include: change the structure of Global Governance (mainly in political and economic terms) and be involved in world decision-making centres.

The south Atlantic, where the vast oil reserves of the pre-salt are located, and the Amazonia region, with its borders permeable to drug trafficking, emerge as key priorities in the security agenda of Brazil. Thus, the consolidation of the South Atlantic as a Peace Zone (Resolution 41/11 of the UN GA of 27-10-1986) away from the conflicts that occur elsewhere in the world and out of the collective defence schemes that currently exist, such as NATO, are among the objectives of Brazil's foreign policy. Due to the need to monitor the Amazonia and its borders with 10 neighbouring states, exchanges in terms of security and military issues as part of the South American Defence Council assume increasing importance. Other equally major issues in the agenda of Brazil's foreign policy are: South-South Cooperation and new Partnerships, such as with several countries in Africa³. Indeed, according to the latest report on South-South Cooperation (2010) produced by the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB)⁴, in 2009 Ibero-American countries participated in 881 Bilateral Horizontal South-South Cooperation projects. The participation of Brazil, along with Mexico and Argentina, exceeded 10%. Brazil's large investment in Africa is also evident, as attested by the rise in the number of ambassadors in several countries of the continent and the allocation of funds for *development cooperation*. "Nowadays, Brazil can be considered as a new donor country"⁵. Other topics, such as Migration and Regional Integration, also stand out.

3. As for regional integration, UNASUL – perceived as a political extension of MERCOSUR – has been gaining prominence among the objectives of Brazil's foreign policy. Accordingly, Brazil has been promoting what appears to be a form of Integration with low or no institutional framework that will enable it to act flexibly and autonomously. The big novelty in this type of action

¹ UNPD. [Accessed on 10-07-2011]. Available at: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/es/paises/perfiles/BRA.html>

² IEP. [Accessed on 10-07-2011]. Available at : <http://www.economicsandpeace.org/WhatWeDo/GPI>

³ Mário Vilalva, Ambassador of Brazil to Portugal, during the first meeting of the Working Group on Brazil, which was held at the headquarters of the Institute for National Defence (IDN) in Lisbon on 26-04-2011.

⁴ SEGIB. [Accessed on 6-06-2011]. Available at: <http://segib.org/actividades/files/2010/12/Inf-coop-sul-sul-2010.pdf>

⁵ ABC. [Accessed on 10-07-2011]. Available at: http://www.abc.gov.br/lerNoticia.asp?id_Noticia=606



is the investment that has been made in favour of physical integration.

Market integration following the European model seems unlikely in a region formed by states whose major partners are out (US or China). From a political stance, the continuance of certain *nationalisms* also limits this type of projects, since "integration also implies the dilution of state sovereignties"⁶. But it is within the region, particularly in South America, that Brazilian manufactured goods gain relative competitiveness, which meets the objectives of promoting national industries. Accordingly, there is consensus among some sectors in Brazil about the importance of first revitalizing their relationship with neighbouring countries and then embark on a global platform. To this effect, several physical infrastructural projects are in progress, with over 80 Brazilian funded projects and infrastructural works in South America, totalling about US\$ 10 billion in projects already approved⁷.

4. Far beyond the publicly expressed friendship relations between Hugo Chávez and Lula da Silva, and now Dilma Rousseff, there is a clear convergence or "convenient" reconciliation between what appears to be the economic and trade interests of Brazil (which are also geo-strategic) and Venezuela's political and ideological interests, reflected in the foreign political support that is necessary to ensure the non-isolation of its regime.

The challenge for Brazil in relation to Venezuela surely is not to avoid contamination by the "Bolivarian ideology", because, as countries in the region show positive signs in issues such as the strengthening of democratic institutions, legal reassurance for foreign investment, freedom of the media, etc., the political and ideological project of Hugo Chávez meets with serious resistance⁸. In a prospective scenario proposed by Venezuelan Professor Elsa Cardozo, the government of Hugo Chávez may become more extreme as internal pressure for change increases (In Venezuela in 2010, inflation rates surpassed 29%, and there was shortage of products such as meat, sugar and coffee, and a high degree of internal violence), and this may lead to a radicalization in the design and implementation of its security agenda. This means that issues such as the political conflict with the U.S. – and, by extension, with countries in the region that are clear allies of the U.S. – and asymmetric warfare will go higher in the list of priorities of Venezuela's security agenda. As a result, we may see a fragmentation and weakening of the security cooperation agreements and, ultimately, regional integration⁹. Thus, the challenge facing Brazil appears to be of a different nature, like: until when will Brazil be

⁶ Andrés Malamud, researcher at the Institute for Social Sciences (ICS) and a guest expert at the round table titled "Latin America: facing the mirror of its integration", held at the headquarters of UAL on 27-05-2011.

⁷ Further information available at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/temas/balanco-de-politica-externa-2003-2010/1.1.6-america-do-sul-infraestrutura>

⁸ Sérgio Augusto de Abreu and Lima Florêncio Sobrinho analysed the political expansion potential of the Participatory Democracy model in the book coordinated by Arturo Oropeza Garcia "Latinoamerica frente al espejo de su Integración 1810-2010", pp. 179-195.

⁹ Elsa Cardozo, *Brasil y Colombia en la Agenda de Seguridad de Venezuela*. Ildis. 2006 [Accessed on 11-07-2011]. Available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/caracas/50461.pdf>



able to play the “moderator” role against a backdrop of conflict and polarization such as this one?

5. Most experts alert to the challenge facing a revisionist power with a universal vocation like Brazil to reduce its dependence on China and sustain economic growth.

Between 2000 and 2010, Brazil’s exports to China went up from \$ 1.1 billion – 2% of Brazil’s total exports – to \$ 30.8 billion – 15% of the total. With regard to Brazil’s imports from China, they grew from \$ 1.2 billion – 2% of the total – to \$ 25.6 billion – 14% of the total¹⁰. China has thus become Brazil’s main partner and a major element for the maintenance of Brazil’s surplus¹¹. However, the bulk of Brazil’s exports to China consist mainly of commodities¹², which makes this type of primary partnership unsustainable in the long term. However, some people argue that this relationship of dependency is equally recent and relative if we consider that China’s position as the largest destination of Brazilian exports was only achieved in 2009, when it overtook the United States, and that trade with China currently accounts for 1/5 of Brazilian foreign trade relations. They insist that the main challenge lies in not getting carried away by the enthusiasm of the current economic climate.

6. As Brazil’s foreign policy becomes global, its relations with the US and Europe are no longer a priority. This makes many analysts think there is the need to review the relationship pattern between these countries.

This takes us to a comment made by Alfredo Valladão, where he stated that “... The relations between Brazil and Europe can no longer be anchored simply on celebrating old cultural ties, reiterating *common values* and facilitating business, and even less on maintaining the paternalistic approach of *development aid*. It is time to start establishing a more mature dialogue among equals, based on the promotion of interests and shared objectives”¹³. Accordingly, topics like Education, Trade, Air Traffic, Piracy, the South Atlantic, Energy, Naval Cooperation, and Cooperation with Africa, Peace Missions, and Human Rights may be included in the agenda of the current relationship.

7. Brazil cannot assert itself as a global power if it does not invest in military power.

¹⁰ IPEA, *As Relações Bilaterais Brasil – China: A Ascensão da China no sistema mundial e os desafios para o Brasil*. [Accessed on 28-06-2011]. Available at: http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/comunicado/110408_estudochinaipeamre.pdf.

¹¹ Trade with China represented a surplus of US\$4.600 million for Brazil in 2009 (20% of the total surplus).

¹² The exports pattern from Brazil to China focuses basically on two basic products: non-agglomerated iron ore and its concentrates, and soy beans.

¹³ Alfredo Valladão, professor at the Sciences Po-Paris University and a guest speaker at the 17th International Summer Courses of Cascais (topic: “Brazil and International Politics), organized by IPRI, and which was held at the Cascais Cultural Centre on 24-06-2010.



Indeed, according to data presented by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the amount spent by Brazil on defence (2010) accounted for 1.6% of the GDP, which is less than the investment the USA (4.8%), India (2.7%) and China (2.1%) made in this area¹⁴. Comparative studies in this field highlight that Brazil not only invests little, but is also ill equipped and has a ratio between manpower and equipment that renders the military power of the country ineffective¹⁵. In his closing remarks presented at the conference, Júlio César Rodríguez said that "Brazil's lack of material and military capacities to be able to be a regional leader and a global power affect the medium and long-term objectives of the country, the alternatives to military development being just a few, of which the main ones are: the alliance with the U.S., giving up its leading role and the awareness that digitalization can be a form of *horizontalization* of capacities with the aim of generating deterrent forces"¹⁶.

8. It is essential that countries harmonize their positions with regard to the values that should be core in a multipolar or pluripolar society like ours¹⁷. In this sense, the promotion and defence of certain values, such as respect for Human Rights, inexorably require agreement among major democratic countries. It is here that Brazil can play an important role as an "emerging power".

Brazil's vote supporting the appointment of a special rapporteur to investigate the human rights situation in Iran during the session of the UN Human Rights Council on 24 March last could mean not only a change of tactics on the part of the "emerging power"¹⁸ but also be a positive sign in favour of the maintenance of an international order that embraces those same values.

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¹⁴ SIPRI. [online]. [caccessed on 06-06-2011]. Available at: <http://www.sipri.org/research/armaments/milex/factsheet2010>

¹⁵ Eugénio Diniz, quoted by Júlio César Cossio Rodríguez during his presentation titled "Brazil, Regional Integration and Strategic Factors: a few considerations", at the Symposium "BRIC: Brazil, an emerging power".

¹⁶ Júlio César Cossio Rodriguez, a researcher at ICS/UL, and a speaker at the Symposium "BRIC: Brazil, an emerging power". Title of his presentation: "Brazil, Regional Integration and Strategic Factors: a few considerations".

¹⁷ Spanish professor Rafael Calduch Cervera defines the polarity of an international society as "the effective capacity of one or several international players to adopt decisions, behaviours or international standards accepted by other players, and through which they reach or guarantee an hegemonic position in the international hierarchy".

¹⁸ It should be noted that during his administration, Lula da Silva always defended Iran's nuclear programme and opposed international sanctions against that country.



GARCIA, Arturo Oropeza (2010). *Latinoamerica frente al espejo de su integración*. Mexico City: MNE and UNAM Editors. ISBN 9786070036507, 386 p: il. [online]. [Accessed on 11-07-2011]. Available at: <http://biblio.juridicas.unam.mx/libros/6/2923/15.pdf>

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