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## From Tegucigalpa to Teheran: Brazil's diplomacy as an emerging Western country

*De Tegucigalpa a Teerã:  
a diplomacia do Brasil como um país ocidental emergente*

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### Introduction

For almost two decades—not only due to its economic growth but also because of increasing social and political developments—, Brazil has undeniably arisen as a full-fledged actor in the international scenario. Such a change has certainly been felt by global regimes and by other international actors.

For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Brazil's foreign policy has been characterized by a quest for autonomy (Fonseca Júnior 1998; Magnoli et al. 2000; Lafer 2009), which has been undertaken, according to Vigevani and Cepaluni (2007), through three main approaches: distance, participation and diversification.

The search for and cooperation with new partners in the international arena seems to strengthen both the country's adaptation to new political and economic conditions and an attempt to reorganize the scenario to fit its own interests and ambitions. There are two indications that support this viewpoint: (1) the creation of new discussion fora (as well as demands to reform such fora) and (2) growing participation in the management of certain types of international crises.

In this context, this paper aims to discuss Brazil's diplomatic posture as an emerging Western country. For this purpose, we first present a brief review of the country's pursuit for international insertion through the search for new partners; an overview of the historical, cultural and political features that render Brazil the most Western of the emerging nations; and an analysis of Brazil's participation in

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the management of two major international crises: the Honduran constitutional crisis and the Iranian nuclear crisis. We conclude with considerations on how Brazil's Western identity benefits its strategy to rise as a global player.

### **Brazil's international insertion, its Western identity and the search for new partners**

Brazil's foreign policy has been marked by an intense search for autonomy for most of its modern history. According to Lafer (2009), this goal became more pronounced from the 1930s on, leading the country to be cautious about its political ties with other nations, so as not to restrain its available foreign policy options. This was particularly salient in periods of greater economic dynamism, which afforded Brasília more confidence and resources for pursuing its own external agenda (Fonseca Júnior 1998). The road to autonomy had its peaks and valleys of approximation with hegemonic countries, due to external (World War II and the Cold War) and internal causes (military overthrow of the democratic regime in the 1960s, financial crisis and neoliberal reforms in the 1990s). Nonetheless, in the past seventy years Brazil has displayed a pattern of moving away from automatic alignments, *pari passu* with its economic prosperity (Amorim Neto 2011). Thus, economic development and autonomy would be two sides of the same coin, which best translate Brazil's aspirations as a nation-state (Magnoli et al. 2000).

Though this goal has remained the same, it has been sought through different paths over the years. Vigevani and Cepaluni (2007) suggest that such a search can be divided roughly into three approaches: the search for autonomy through distance (which lasted until the end of the Sarney government), the search for autonomy through participation (pursued during the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso) and the search for autonomy through diversification (attempted by president Lula da Silva):

- (1) Autonomy through distance—a policy of not automatically accepting prevailing international regimes; belief in partial autarchy; development focused on the domestic market. Consequently, a diplomacy that goes against certain aspects of the agenda of the great powers so as to preserve the nation-state's sovereignty.
- (2) Autonomy through participation—the adherence to international regimes, especially more liberal ones, but without the loss of foreign policy management. The objective would be to influence the formulation of principles and rules that dictate the international system.
- (3) Autonomy through diversification—an adherence to international norms and principles by means of South-South alliances, including regional alliances, and through agreements with non-traditional partners (China, Asia-Pacific, Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East, etc.), trying to reduce asymmetries in external relations with powerful countries. (p. 283).

Regarding Brazil's regional integration processes, Saraiva (1995) describes three contextualizing phases: the first (1823–early 20<sup>th</sup> century) was dominated by the idea that Brazil had turned its back on Latin America; the second (which lasted most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century) was based on the country's intense industrial and economic growth, as well as close ties to the United States up to the 1950s; and the third (post-1980s) was characterized by the strengthening of ties between Brazil and Argentina, which eventually led to the creation of the Mercosur.

It is within this context that Brazil became more and more interested in strategic partnerships through cooperation fora such as the IBSA Dialogue Forum (India, Brazil and South Africa), BRICS (Brazil, India, Russia and South Africa) and the G-20 (a group that includes the 20 major economies of the world and is interested in greater access to North American and European markets). Regional integration processes in general (and Mercosur in particular, which used to be at the center of Brazilian foreign policy during the 1990s) started to be seen simply as an additional strategy for the country's global insertion through South-South cooperation (i.e. beyond integration).

Hurrell (2006) argues that emerging economies such as Brazil, India, Russia and China have attempted to consolidate their regional preeminence as a means to project their international influence. These regional powers can thus present themselves as the natural representatives of their region—or even of a broader group of states with a given commonality. The author believes that the latter has been the case for Brazil (and also India) because the country has identified itself more clearly with Southern economies worldwide and has framed its foreign policy options under the prism of North-South relations (p. 19). This willingness to become the banner carrier for the “Global South” has been declared explicitly by former president Lula da Silva and his Foreign Affairs minister, Celso Amorim<sup>1</sup>.

Itamaraty's foreign policy is traditionally viewed as neutral—one that tends to define power-related issues in civil and normative terms. After the Cold War, this trend returned as an attempt at relatively deep regional integration, modeled especially on Latin American regionalism patterns and based on supranational principles. Within this scenario Mercosur has obviously acquired a special role, whose educational vocation and legitimizing character are undeniable. However, the abysmal economic gap between Brazil and its Southern partners promotes increasing institutional barriers and a growing awareness that being an emerging country is a quality that must not be restricted by other nations' interests. As a possible result comes a detachment from the integrationist ideal and a shift to the virtues of simple interstate cooperation—including the so-called “diplomacy for development” (as put forth by Dauvergne and Farias 2012).

1 “We are in a privileged position to make the voice of the emerging countries be heard and to contribute so that they may find concrete answers to the contemporary challenges” (Lula da Silva 2010). “We have sought and managed to make the views of developing countries converge, in favor of an outcome that would not violate the interests of the poorer” (Amorim 2010a).

Notwithstanding, Brazil can be considered the most Western of emerging countries. “The West” is a concept very hard to define, as it has multiple and malleable meanings, not determined solely by geography or even by “Western” countries alone. Nonetheless, it is possible to point out three core dimensions from which the term derives most of its meaning: (1) a historic and cultural legacy, (2) a set of philosophical and political values, and (3) a political and ideological aspect (Ifversen 2007; Stuenkel 2011; Badie 2012). Historically, the West refers to a civilization and a culture centered, at first, on Christianity (particularly Roman, as opposed to Eastern Orthodox), followed by a process of modernization, science, and material progress. Its second dimension relates to the so-called Western values (such as individualism, democracy, liberalism, rationalism, and so forth), which have been irradiated worldwide and promoted as universal principles. This process has been accelerated by globalization, through which many countries have incorporated such values, though not necessarily treading the same road as the nations where these institutions first came to be. In other words, “modernization” is not always a synonym for “Westernization”: the development paths are varied and such external, globalizing pressures interact in complex ways with domestic institutions (Hurrell 2007). Lastly, the bipolar order of the Cold War gave “the West” its political and best known connotation. The term henceforth differentiated the capitalist, USA-led bloc from its communist counterpart on the East. This narrowed the definition of the Western civilization to matters of geopolitics and to the free world ideology, centered in the USA-Europe dyad and contemporarily embodied by institutions such as NATO.

In light of that, Brazil can be seen as the most Western of the emerging economies due to its cultural and historic legacy, manifested in its language, religion and other defining traits inherited from its European colonization. Historically, it experienced closer contact with the European world, compared to other Latin American colonies, due to events such as the transfer of the Portuguese Royal Family to the nation in 1808, which brought with them European institutions, the Court, and its mores (Lafer 2009). Contemporarily, considering the Christian religion, for instance, Brazil is the country with most Catholics in the world—and the fourth in number of Protestants (Pew Research Center 2011). Likewise, it upholds values such as democracy, human rights and capitalism.

However, its foreign policy has not always converged with that of the political West. This realm is where Brazil has been the most ambiguous, due to its desire for autonomy and its societal singularities. Stuenkel (2011) has argued that the country has an “ideological predisposition” to criticize and refrain from integrating the institutions of the liberal world order, but a “pragmatic necessity” to reap the benefits of joining them (p. 193). Brazil’s approximation with the Non-Aligned Movement during the Cold War would be a sign of its counter-hegemonic tendencies.

On the other hand, it can be argued that Brazil's ties with the West go beyond mere pragmatism. All along the Cold War era, Brazil classified itself as a Western nation, though adding its own shades to the term, going from a "pure Western" stance to a "qualified Western" and, lastly, an "autonomous Western" label (Fonseca Júnior 1998). This is indicative that even while pursuing autonomy from established powers, the country has never seen itself as "non-Western."

Brazil's capacity to communicate with both developed and developing worlds is not a product of ideology alone. It stems mainly from the fact that Brazil's insertion in world affairs is structurally heterogeneous, containing affinities with both poles, and also because the contrasts of international reality can be found within Brazilian society itself. Put more simply, in an unequal world order, the consensus-building nation should be one acquainted with inequalities<sup>2</sup>. As summarized by Lafer (2009):

Brazil is a country of contrasts, with multiple dimensions. Therefore it naturally participates in several spheres of international life. It is a Western country in the field of values, because of its historic formation, a reality that did not exclude its insertion among Third World countries, with which it had common positions regarding specific actions aimed towards development, which addressed the national interest. (p. 41–42).

The country's legacy and cultural affinities with American and European values make it an important ally for developed nations, which must cope more and more with such emerging countries. Thus, due to Brazil's Western characteristics, it may also serve as an intermediary between developed nations and other emerging countries such as China, India, and Russia—civilizations that encompass cultural idiosyncrasies that may have significant political consequences for the international system. In this context Brazil might acquire increasing status as a global leader that can help negotiate interstate interests<sup>3</sup>. As stated by Amorim (2010d), Brazil has the "moral authority" to be heard by the rich, the poor and the rogue.

As a symptom both of a detachment from Mercosur and of a recognition of the country's special status, one can point out the Brazil-European Union (EU) strategic partnership, launched at Lisbon on July 2007, in which Brazil seeks to overcome the difficulties of the Mercosur-EU negotiations supported on the EU perception that<sup>4</sup>:

2 According to Arbilla (2000), this conceptual conjugation of the roles of "mediator" and "a nation of contrasts" addressed Brazil's "strategic need to approach developed countries, without compromising its political and economic interests with developing nations" (p. 359).

3 Brazil's role as a mediator and representative for the developing nations has been acknowledged by important Western media outlets, which have recognized the country as "bridging the mistrust between the west [...] and the developing world generally" (Financial Times 2010), and Lula as "the banner carrier of emerging countries, but also of the developing world" (Fottorino 2009).

4 José Manuel Barroso, President of European Commission. Available at <[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-07-725\\_en.htm?locale=en#PR\\_metaPressRelease\\_bottom](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-07-725_en.htm?locale=en#PR_metaPressRelease_bottom)>, accessed on April 4, 2013.

Brazil is an important partner for the EU. We not only share close historic and cultural ties, values and a strong commitment to multilateral institutions, we also share a capacity to make a difference in addressing many global challenges such as climate change, poverty, multilateralism, human rights and others. By proposing stronger ties, we are acknowledging Brazil's qualification as a "key player" to join the restricted club of our strategic partners.

As a matter of fact, even though this partnership does not mention explicitly trade issues, it indicates a vast array of themes for cooperation<sup>5</sup>:

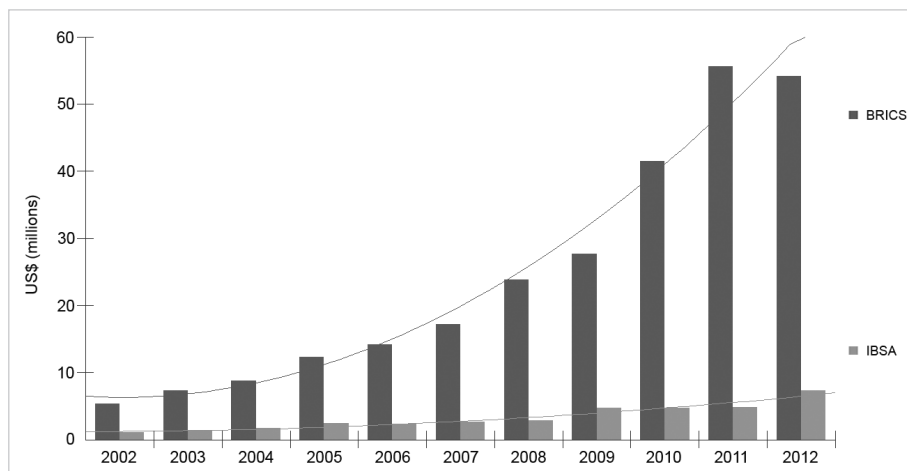
- Promoting encompassing peace and security through an effective multilateral system;
- Promoting economic, social and environmental partnerships directed at sustainable development;
- Promoting regional cooperation and alliances;
- Promoting the sciences, technology, and innovation;
- Promoting exchange between peoples.

Cooperation on these themes can progressively stimulate future bilateral trade relations and can have a positive indirect impact on the Mercosur integration process (i.e. if Brazil grows, Mercosur grows). On the other hand, it can directly reinforce the Brazilian trend to act as a lone runner at the international arena.

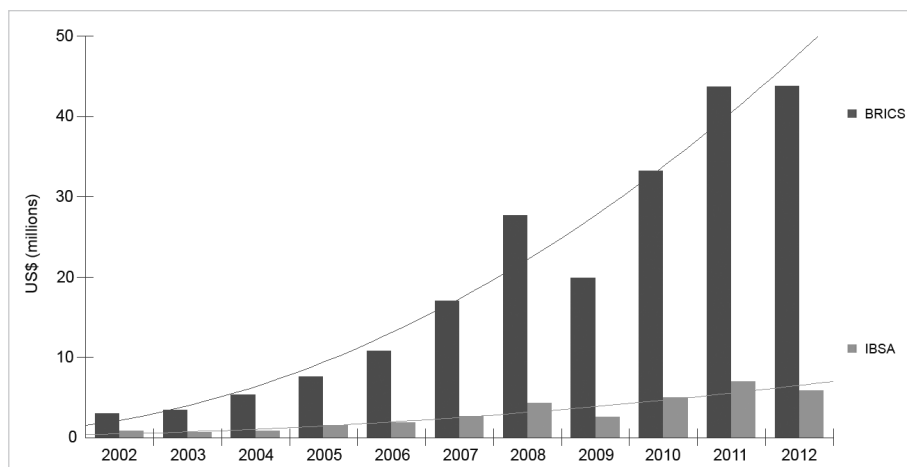
Vigevani and Cepaluni (2007) highlight that Brazil's growing interest in South-South cooperation cannot be viewed as a simple return to third-worldism, but as proof for the existence of true common interests among such countries.

Participation in the IBSA Dialogue Forum is a good example. As put by Dauvergne and Farias (2012): "What is significant here is how these three countries without a history of strategic partnering—with benign but thin relations—came together in a process of mutual identification." And although the emphasis is on technical cooperation, commerce has also benefitted from this arrangement as seen in data from the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations: imports from the other members of this group increased 681.3% between 2002 and 2012, while exports grew 549.2%; overall commercial exchange increased 601.4% for the period stated. It is important to note that such numbers were almost twice as high as the total increases in imports and exports recorded for the period (301.6% and 372.4%, respectively) (Figures 1 and 2) (MRE/DPR/DIC 2013).

5 Cf. *Parceria Estratégica Brasil-União Europeia – Plano de Ação Conjunto – 2008*. Available at <[https://infoeuropa.eurocid.pt/files/web/documentos/ue/2008/2008\\_uebrasil\\_plano.pdf](https://infoeuropa.eurocid.pt/files/web/documentos/ue/2008/2008_uebrasil_plano.pdf)>, accessed on April 4, 2013.



**Figure 1.** Evolution of Brazilian exports to other BRICS and IBSA countries between 2002 and 2012<sup>6</sup>.



**Figure 2.** Evolution of Brazilian imports from other BRICS and IBSA countries between 2002 and 2012<sup>7</sup>.

BRICS is another example. Brazil has used this forum to promote progressive ideas regarding renewable energy, for instance (i.e. biofuels<sup>8</sup>) (Dauvergne and Farias 2012). In fact, a recent BRICS advance that is worthy of mention is the

<sup>6</sup> Data compiled from MDIC (2013).

<sup>7</sup> Data compiled from MDIC (2013).

<sup>8</sup> According to Dauvergne and Farias (2012), Brazil also has technical cooperation agreements on biofuels with two multilateral institutions (the Economic Community of West African States and the European Union) and 70 countries, most of them developing economies.



BRICS Development Bank, proposed by the five states at a summit in early 2013. Even if it is not put effectively in practice, it signals towards this group's effort to promote cooperation and quality growth among developing countries, as discussed ahead with the idea of "diplomacy for development" put forth by Dauvergne and Farias (2012).

Regarding commerce, Brazilian imports from other BRICS countries rose from US\$ 3 billion in 2002 to US\$ 43.8 billion in 2012. Similarly, exports increased from US\$ 5.4 billion in 2002 to US\$ 54.2 billion in 2012. Overall commercial exchange grew from US\$ 8.2 billion in 2002 to US\$ 98 billion in 2012 (Figures 1 and 2). Considering 2013 data (January–April), this forum is presently responsible for 20.5% of Brazilian commercial exchange, and is only behind Asia<sup>9,10</sup> (MRE/DPR/DIC 2013).

As a matter of fact, with respect to Brazilian foreign policy efforts to increase the number of international partners, one can identify: (i) convergence between discourse and action; and (ii) state-centric bias. The trade data concerning IBSA and BRICS cooperation initiatives clearly show their consistency and corroborates the idea that Brazil has been favoring individual actions over those anchored on Mercosur.

### Brazil's growing participation in the management of international crises

In addition to augmenting South-South cooperation, it should be noted that Brasília has increasingly sought to participate in the management of certain international crises, perhaps as part of its strategy to obtain a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) (see, for instance, Bertazzo 2012). Two situations can illustrate this idea: (1) the services offered to Honduras in relation to problems with President Zelaya, and (2) the proposed mediation, along with Turkey, regarding Iran's nuclear program. Management of regional crises with Bolivia and Venezuela are other examples.

The so-called Honduras constitutional crisis was initiated due to an attempt by the then President Manuel Zelaya to hold a referendum to reform the country's constitution in 2009. Accused of wanting to change the constitution for his own benefit, he was detained by the military in June of that same year, as ordered by the Supreme Court, in what most of the international community called a coup d'état. Roberto Micheletti, which was then president of the Honduran Congress, became the Honduras president in Zelaya's place. After being forced to leave the country, in September Zelaya returned through the Brazilian Embassy. This caused strong reactions from the de facto government, such as orders to suspend several

9 Obviously both Asia and BRICS numbers include great participation from China (including Hong Kong and Macau), which is currently responsible for 17% of Brazilian overall commercial exchange.

10 Numbers for Asia do not include Middle Eastern countries, which are considered separately and are currently responsible for 4% of overall Brazilian commercial exchange (January–April 2013).

human rights for 45 days (IACRH 2009; OAS 2009). In parallel, the Brazilian government suspended previous visa agreements with Honduras.

In a note released by Itamaraty to the press, Brazil's view of the crisis as a coup d'état is made clear:

In view of the current internal situation of Honduras arising from the coup d'état carried out on June 28, 2009, the Brazilian Government has decided to suspend, on a temporary basis, beginning on September 5, the validity of the "Agreement on Visa Exemption for Diplomatic, Official or Service Passports" and of the "Agreement on Partial Visa Exemption for Common Passports", signed by the Governments of Brazil and Honduras on August 12, 2004. (Itamaraty, 2009).

Additional data from Itamaraty show amicable relations with Zelaya during President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's mandate (2003–2010) in the years before the crisis, with frequent visits from high rank officials and the presidents themselves between both countries—President Lula was, in fact, the first Brazilian Head of State to visit that country. Other activities between the two countries during the Lula mandate included Brazilian support to cancel Honduras foreign debt with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB); visits by Brazilian business missions; humanitarian aid (rice, powdered milk, fruit, and vegetable and legume seeds) to Honduras after a series of hurricanes devastated the country in 2008; and scientific and technical cooperation related to HIV-AIDS treatment and other health issues, agriculture, energy (ethanol), defense, and education (with the signature of related agreements) (MRE 2013).

Such information can also be complemented by Lopes (2007), whose analysis of data from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) highlights the convergence between Brazilian and Honduran international economic relations in the 1990s<sup>11</sup>.

Even though the United States condemned the Honduran coup d'état, their attitude was less firm than the one adopted by Brasília. According to Garcia (2009, 128):

...it is evident that a certain ambiguity in relation to the recognition of the elections [...] and the fact that the United States did not put more pressure on Micheletti allowed for those responsible for the coup to feel backed to proceed with their strategy.

In fact, as the Honduras affair attracted the world attention, it was an opportunity for Brazil to be at the front of the international scenario defending democratic principles while at the same time looking after its own interests.

<sup>11</sup> This convergence, according to Lopes' (2007), also includes Uruguay.

On a different note, according to Brun (2012), the Joint Declaration by Iran, Turkey, and Brazil, signed May 17, 2010 (also known as the Teheran Nuclear Declaration), gave Brazilian diplomacy unprecedented salience and reinforced its status as an emerging power. In the episode, Brasília and Ankara presented the Iranian regime with a nuclear fuel swap agreement, based on a similar deal that the P5+1 had unsuccessfully offered six months earlier. The gesture attracted much attention, as it was unclear why would Brazil get involved with a controversial regime, on a matter over which it had little influence.

Brazil's relationship with the Middle East, however, must not be seen out of context. Brun (2012) highlights the fact that the country's ties with the Middle East became increasingly important due to its growing energy needs, starting from the 1970s. Consequently, Brazil was also forced to take certain diplomatic positions that it might not have under other circumstances, and its votes in the UN were aligned with those of the Arab world in 1974 and 1975 (Sharif 1977). Nevertheless, Silva and Pilla (2012) show that—due to changes in the international scenario—the relationship between Brazil and the Middle East once again shifted in the 1990s, when Brazil's diplomacy became more aligned with that of the USA and other developed countries.

It was during the mandates of President Lula—the first Brazilian president to visit the region since the 19<sup>th</sup> century—that Brazil reaffirmed its ties with the Middle East. According to Brun (2012), four factors explain the country's renewed interest in the region: (1) the historical commitment of Lula's political party (the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* or Workers' Party) to developing countries and their causes; (2) the evolution of Brazil's international commerce, which led the government to seek nontraditional partners (here the author highlights the strategic role of certain food products exported, which put the country in a situation of near monopoly); (3) the activism of Arab communities in Brazil, with several repercussions; and (4) the country's interest in mediating negotiations related to the historical Israeli-Palestinian conflict, possibly as part of its strategy to obtain a permanent seat in the UNSC.

Deciphering Brazil's motivations also requires understanding its position towards the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which was at the center of the controversy. According to Patti (2010), Brazil's solidarity with Iran's nuclear program can be related to the fact that both countries suffered "analogue pressures from the international community to give up their nuclear ambitions" (p. 190). Brazil was the last large country to adhere to the NPT, previously opting for regional and bilateral disarmament initiatives, as the country accused the treaty of freezing the asymmetries between states with access to nuclear technology and states without it. Brasília's discourse eventually changed to increase international credibility. In 1998 Brazil signed the NPT, but it still opposes the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement, which expands the inspection competences

of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Itamaraty fears that this could compromise the country's industrial secrets.

Even so, it is clear that Brazil chose to harness more soft than hard power out of the nuclear issue. Disarmament was part of its strategy to rise in the system as a responsible player (Pelopidas 2012). Today, Itamaraty takes pride in the fact that the Brazilian Constitution is one of the few that foresees nuclear research strictly for peaceful purposes, and that its non-nuclearized status grants it greater legitimacy to negotiate with Iran than the nuclear-weapon states (Amorim 2010d).

In a conference delivered at the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna in 2010, the then Minister of Foreign Relations, diplomat Celso Amorim, gave two more immediate reasons for Brazil's effort regarding the Iranian nuclear crises:

Since the middle of 2009 onwards, we tried to follow the issue more closely for several reasons. Firstly, because Brazil was about to become once again a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council. So it would be our responsibility to deal with the subject. Secondly, because we had already a scheduled visit by President Ahmadinejad to Brazil in November. Of course we discussed many aspects of our bilateral relations on that occasion, including economic issues, and also the role of Iran in the Middle East. But the discussion of the nuclear file was an obvious necessity in that context. (Amorim 2010b, unpagged).

The minister also made clear Brazil's position regarding sanctions against Iran:

Brazil also has strong skepticism about the power of sanctions. In some extreme cases, sanctions may work. [...] In most cases sanctions affect the most vulnerable people, they do not change the course of action of leaders and, if anything, they reinforce the more radical sectors in the countries concerned. That's what we saw very clearly in the case of Iraq—we saw in other cases as well, but Iraq was probably the best example of how the logic of sanctions works: sanctions precipitate reactions, which tend to toughen sanctions, in a kind of vicious circle that may have—as it had in the case of Iraq—very tragic consequences. (Amorim 2010b, unpagged).

Accordingly, several passages of the Teheran Nuclear Declaration exemplify Brazil's effort to promote cooperation and imply its desire as a mediator regarding the issue in question:

1. We reaffirm our commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and in accordance with the related articles of the NPT, recall the right of all State Parties, including the Islamic Republic of Iran, to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy (as well as nuclear fuel cycle including enrichment activities) for peaceful purposes without discrimination.

2. We express our strong conviction that we have the opportunity now to begin a forward looking process that will create a positive, constructive, non-confrontational atmosphere leading to an era of interaction and cooperation.
3. We believe that the nuclear fuel exchange is instrumental in initiating cooperation in different areas, especially with regard to peaceful nuclear cooperation including nuclear power plant and research reactors construction.  
[...]
9. Turkey and Brazil welcomed the continued readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue its talks with the 5+1 countries in any place, including Turkey and Brazil, on the common concerns based on collective commitments according to the common points of their proposals.
10. Turkey and Brazil appreciated Iran's commitment to the NPT and its constructive role in pursuing the realization of nuclear rights of its Member States. The Islamic Republic of Iran likewise appreciated the constructive efforts of the friendly countries Turkey and Brazil in creating the conducive environment for the realization of Iran's rights. (Itamaraty 2010, unpagged).

The fact that the Declaration was not deemed sufficient in the eyes of the UNSC (which presented a draft for a new round of sanctions the day after the deal was signed) puzzled Brazilian diplomacy. In retrospect, minister Celso Amorim (2010c) listed three possible reasons for their disregard: (i) an expectation that this negotiation would also fail, which would prove right their suspicions about Iran; (ii) a change in the priorities of the P5, which quickly abandoned the diplomatic path to apply sanctions before their consensus disappeared; and (iii) a certain displeasure in seeing two emerging nations successfully play a role concerning security in the Middle East, “especially in one where they themselves had failed” (p. 224). The second point seems to be more accurate, as Itamaraty stressed that the Declaration met the goals of the original P5+1 offer, and therefore deeming their success irrelevant would be contradictory. Likewise, the agreement was not an attempt to solve, once and for all, the Iranian crisis, but rather “a gateway for a broader negotiation regarding Iran’s nuclear program” (p. 223).

Prominent Iranian researcher and Middle East Program’s senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Karim Sadjadpour illustrates well the diplomatic niche Brazil seeks when trying to mediate conflict between the Western world and less-westernized countries like Iran:

The challenges of diplomacy with Tehran are undeniable. But the potential ramifications of a military attack on Iran are so dire that President Obama must give engagement another chance. With Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei still a formidable obstacle to any binding nuclear deal, the realistic aim of diplomacy should not be forging a comprehensive, long-term agreement. The administration should instead focus on motivating Iran to cap its nuclear development. (Sadjadpour 2012, unpagged).

Some points in common can be found between the Honduras and the Iran crises. Firstly, they are both countries with which Brazil was seeking to strengthen its ties, as exemplified by the fact that one had never been visited by a Brazilian president (Honduras), while the other had not been visited by a Brazilian president since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Iran). Additionally, they were both controversial situations for which Brazil tried an alternative solution that emphasized peace, cooperation and a valuing of international norms.

Former minister Celso Amorim often quoted a passage by Austrian writer and intellectual Stefan Zweig to illustrate the nature of Brazilian diplomacy during his mandate. Although published in 1941, this passage is a good example of the country's approach towards the two international crises discussed in this section:

Generals are neither the pride of Brazil nor her heroes; but rather statesmen like Rio Branco, who knew how to prevent war by reasoning and conciliation. [...] Never has the peace of the world been threatened by her politics; and even in an unpredictable time such as ours [that was the Second World War] one cannot imagine that this basic principle of its national conception, this wish for understanding and good will, could ever change—because this desire for peace, this humanitarian behavior has not been an accidental attitude of a single ruler or leader. It is the natural product of a people's character, the innate tolerance of the Brazilian, which again and again has proved itself in the course of history. (Zweig 1941, unpagged).

Within such a context, an important idea is that of “civilian power” (or soft power) that was present in both situations and in Brazilian foreign policy in general. Dauvergne and Farias (2012)—who call Brazil “an atypical global power” (p. 904) and “the soft power great power” (p. 913)—highlight that although it is a rising influence in the international scenario, it is different from other emerging countries because it relies strongly on non-military power. Also, Brazil's geopolitical situation is certainly more comfortable than that of Russia, India, China or even South Africa, in which cases certain neighbors could be a threat for their security<sup>12</sup>. In the days before the BRICS group was established, when these large nations were called “monster countries,” Brazil was “not a scary monster country, like its peers,” as it was never close to the frontlines of international tension and strife (Lafer 2009, 117).

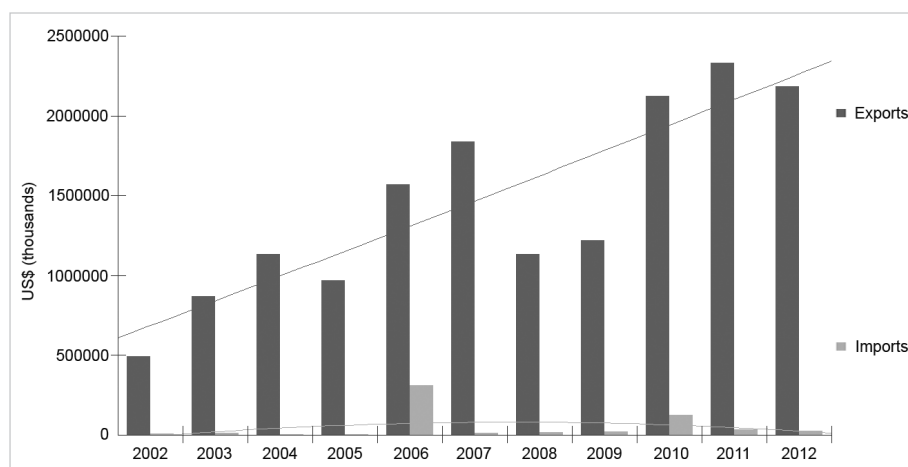
Additionally, the country has focused on development, especially of the global South. Dauvergne and Farias (2012) exemplify this idea by discussing Brazil's role in South-South cooperation and alliances, how Brazil has been active in global health issues by leading programs to prevent and treat AIDS (also in the global South), and Brazilian advocacy regarding renewable energy issues.

12 Brazilian diplomacy takes pride in the fact that currently there are not many countries “that can boast that they have 10 neighbors and haven't had a war in the last 140 years” (Amorim 2010d).

These authors call this kind of posture the “diplomacy of development.” There is an effort to promote so-called “technical cooperation agreements,” which according to these authors are different from developmental assistance or foreign aid in the sense that they emphasize the exchange of knowledge and practices. Monetary transfers are not the norm and there are no conditionalities for the receiver.

Accordingly, when considering a commercial viewpoint, it is clear that foreign trade interests are minimal in financial terms. Brazilian commercial exchange both with Iran and Honduras is low and has not varied much over the past few years in absolute terms or in terms of percentage (Figures 3 and 4). In both cases participation in Brazilian foreign trade does not surpass 1.5%<sup>13</sup>.

Nevertheless, as pointed out by Brun (2012), foreign trade with the Middle East is strategic for Brazil as in the past few years the country has been in a situation of near monopoly regarding certain food items as well as its interest in the region's petroleum<sup>14</sup>. On the other hand, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been characterized by a new scenario for Brazil, of reduced dependency on foreign petroleum. It has been self-sufficient since the discovery of new sources of oil in the pre-salt layer of its continental shelf in 2006 and is also known for its investments in sugarcane alcohol and other biofuels over the past decades.



**Figure 3.** Evolution of Brazilian trade with Iran between 2002 and 2012<sup>15</sup>.

13 Exports to Iran have made up approximately 1% of Brazilian annual exports between 2002–2012, while annual imports from Iran and Honduras and exports to Honduras are close to 0% of Brazilian annual foreign trade when considering this period. Products commercialized between Brazil and Honduras consist mainly of manufactured items.

14 According to Brun (2012) based on UN data, Brazil exports mostly chicken, iron, sugar and airplanes to the region, while importing mostly petroleum and its derivatives.

15 Data compiled from MDIC (2013).

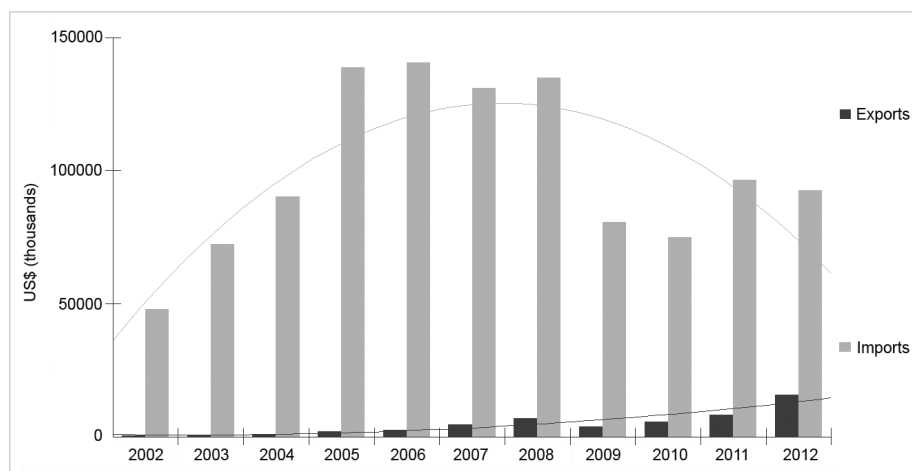


Figure 4. Evolution of Brazilian trade with Honduras between 2002 and 2012<sup>16</sup>.

### Final considerations: Brazil as the most Western of emerging countries

The successful and long-term economic reforms initiated by Itamar Franco and achieved by Fernando Henrique Cardoso allowed for Brazil's shift in diplomatic approach during the Lula mandates and might signal the beginning of major alterations in the international scenario, as proposed by Keohane and Nye (1977). When presenting the idea of complex interdependence, these authors suggested that four conditions were necessary to promote changes in international regimes: changes in the economic realm, changes in the world's overall power structure, changes in the power structure related to specific issues, and changes in power capabilities related to international organization.

Accordingly, it seems like emerging powers are playing a capital role in these international regime changes. If China has become the most significant actor, its cultural idiosyncrasies—as well as those of Russia or India—may in some way scare Western developed countries. In this context, Brazil seems to be a confident point of reference among other emerging powers. Its European heritage (language, religion and other cultural traits) binds it closely to the Western world, as do the liberal values it modernly upholds. Though the desire for autonomy has caused moments of political divergence, Brazil consistently claimed a Western identity. Also, its pacific tradition sets it apart from most of its BRICS peers: nuclearized countries, with past clashes with Western nations, and rooted on long-standing and deep civilizations with their own set of values. As stated by Malamud and Rodriguez (2013), Brazil "...is a cusp state but, unlike Turkey or Japan, it does

<sup>16</sup> Data compiled from MDIC (2013).



not lie on the edge of, or in an ambivalent relationship with, two regions, but rather straddles a shifting region and the global system” (p. 167).

As a matter of fact, Brasília has increasingly been seeking to shape the international landscape in accordance with its own interests, and has been doing this according to liberal and democratic Western principles.

Therefore, Brasília opts to: (i) favor state-centric actions over regional ones (in other words, regionalism should be based henceforth on cooperation and Mercosul is no longer a priority as it used to be); (ii) promote South-South cooperation through IBSA and BRICS, for instance, even though conventional, Western partners still continue to play an important role (such cooperation is based on real conditions—the huge increase of commercial exchange between these countries is unquestionable); (iii) intensify its action among global institutions, such as seeking out a permanent seat at the UNSC or aiming to preside the WTO<sup>17</sup>; (iv) deal more actively with global political crisis—as was the case of Honduras and Iran—as a way to show that world issues do matter for foreign policy elaboration.

The road from Tegucigalpa to Teheran illustrates the Brazilian attempt to mature its new position within the international realm. A rank marked by employing civilian power anchored on a solid economical basis and, *pari passu*, by testing new political devices to improve and increase its influence on global institutions.

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## Abstract

This paper reviews Brazil's pursuit for international insertion by: discussing its search for new partners; presenting an overview of the historical, cultural, and political features that render it the most Western of the emerging nations; and analyzing its participation in the management of two major international crises, the Honduran constitutional crisis and the Iranian nuclear crisis.

**Keywords:** Brazilian diplomacy; foreign policy; international crises.

## Resumo

Este artigo revisa a busca do Brasil pela inserção internacional ao: discutir a procura do País por novos parceiros; expor, brevemente, características históricas, culturais e políticas que o tornam o mais ocidental das nações emergentes; e analisar sua participação no manejo de duas grandes crises internacionais, a crise constitucional hondurenha e a crise nuclear iraniana.

**Palavras-chave:** diplomacia brasileira; política externa; crises internacionais.