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The Role, Position and Agency of Cusp States in International Relations

Edited by Marc Herzog and Philip Robins

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**For my parents who have always stood by me and supported
me.**

Marc Herzog

**For my mentors, Keith Kyle, Sir John Moberly and Prof Tim
Niblock.**

Philip Robins

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6 Straddling the region and the world

Brazil's dual foreign policy comes of age

Andrés Malamud and Júlio César Cossio Rodriguez

As Brazil goes, so will go the rest of that **Latin American** Continent.
(Richard Nixon, American president, December 7, 1971)

During the Lula administration, **South America** will be our priority.
(Celso Amorim, Brazilian foreign minister, January 1, 2003)

Since 2008, the **BRICs** have been the main alliance for Brazil, at least regarding the G-20 and the IMF. I emphasize: much more important than any other Latin American countries.
(Paulo Nogueira Batista, IMF executive director, December 18, 2012)

Introduction

Even before it became an independent country in 1822, what is currently Brazil sat uncomfortably in its region and felt threatened by its neighbors. Hence, it looked first to the UK and then to the US as counterweights. This began to change during the post-World War II period, when Southern Cone cooperation was first attempted. The rapprochement with Argentina in the 1980s made it possible to overcome rivalry and suspicion and replace it with cooperation. In the two decades following the creation of the Common Market of the South (Mercosur, established in 1991), Brazil came increasingly to be seen as a regional leader and intermediate power (Lima and Hirst 2006). Yet, rather unexpectedly, Brazil has ended up achieving less in the region and more in the world than both its foreign policy architects and most independent observers had foreseen. At present, Brazil is a regional power whose international ambitions do not always command the support of its neighbors but which nevertheless has become more visible and commanded a stable presence in key global negotiations. Unlike other states that straddle regional subsystems, Brazil stands astride a (changing) region and the world at large. To manage this duality, its leaders initially designed a sequential foreign policy that conceived region-building as a means to attain global recognition. However, recurring regional setbacks and unexpected global achievements led to a policy reformulation, and actions at both levels have gained autonomy from each other. A dual foreign policy has thus

gained a foothold, as Brazil has begun to act as a stabilizing peer in Latin America and as an assertive power on the global stage (Lechini and Giaccaglia 2010; Malamud 2011; Spektor 2009; see also Pinheiro 2000).

Brazil is among those states that have various identities: it is an emerging market, a continental power (also called a “monster country”), a Latin (or lately South) American country, and a member of the BRIC group (Brazil, Russia, India and China). Yet it stands alone in several significant respects – situated in a predominantly Spanish-speaking region, its language is Portuguese; among both the established and emerging big powers, it is the only one that has neither nuclear arms nor nuclear-armed neighbors; and in a world of growing rivalry and competition, it boasts that it has no foes. Because of these characteristics, it is regarded as the quintessential soft power (Sotero and Armijo 2007). However, its foreign policy changes according to issue and audience; it can be defiant with the United States, accommodating with Iran, and generous with Bolivia. The main contrast concerns Brazil’s position in its region and in the world – in the former it sells itself as a peer or a broker, but not as a leader, and even less a hegemon; in the latter it fights for every leading position that opens up – be it a permanent seat at the UN Security Council or the General Directorship of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

This alternation between humility and ambition is just one of the many manifestations of Brazil’s diplomatic ambiguity. The paramount illustration is its stance towards regionalism; while national leaders vocally support regional integration, in practice they have never provided it with more than token backing. Likewise, Brazil’s definition of its region varies; it is “South America” when it needs to secure a manageable area beyond the US economic and security perimeter, but it may turn to “Latin America” when bidding for a position in an international organization. This Janus-like strategy places Brazil simultaneously on several stages and obliges it to articulate diverse, sometimes even opposing views and interests. This qualifies the country as a Cusp State, i.e., one that lies on the edge of and in an ambivalent relationship with regions that are seen to function as an international relations subsystem. Only in this case, the regions are fuzzy and overlapping, and the global stage adds still another gravitational force.

The fuzziness of the “home region” stems not from any objective nebulosity regarding the contiguous area, but from Brazil’s deliberate decision to redraw boundaries according to its varying interests. By contrast, Brazil’s additional source of international identity does not come from another regional grouping but from its self-identity as a global power in its own right – irrespective of regional opinion. In any case, Brazil’s position on the cusp challenges previous expectations that it would become a regional leader. As it turns out, the region is not its ultimate priority, and its neighbors sometimes resent its ambiguity (Malamud 2011).

This chapter begins by introducing the historical and strategic context to show how Brazil is unique in the region. It then discusses the changing nature and declining relevance of the region for Brazil’s foreign policy goals, and subsequently explains how this middle power transformed itself into an (aspiring)

global power. The final section concludes with some reflections on this non-standard case of cuspness.

Historical and strategic context

Brazil is a global giant. The fifth largest country in the world by area and population, and the seventh in terms of economic size, it is the only one in its class. Unlike the other BRICS, it does not have – nor, according to its constitution, does it aspire to – nuclear weapons.¹ It enjoys internationally agreed and stable borders and has had a largely peaceful historical record since the end of the nineteenth century. And unlike the Spanish American countries that surround it, Brazil never split up territorially, its political transitions have been mostly mild – from slavery to abolition, from empire to republic and from dictatorship to democracy – and its domestic affairs have been traditionally managed through negotiation rather than confrontation.

Although Brazil defines itself as a “peaceful country” (Ministério da Defesa do Brasil 2008), and asserts that the peaceful resolution of conflict is an essential component of its foreign policy, it has not always been reluctant to use force. In the nineteenth century it conquered vast territories and engaged twice in major wars – first against Argentina over what is now Uruguay; and then, jointly with Argentina and Uruguay, against Paraguay. In the twentieth century it made peace within the region, only to become the one Latin American country to take part in both world wars – always alongside the US. By chance or design, this warring path anticipates the argument presented in this chapter – Brazil’s international trajectory is characterized less by the peacefulness of its means and more by the slow walk it has taken away from the region on to the global stage.

As regards Brazilian security traditions, the paramount factor is the absence of strategic enemies. In the early days, the UK shielded Brazil from extra-regional threats following independence from Portugal, a role that has been taken up by the US in the twentieth century. Brazil’s commitment to non-intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries was born out of its security perceptions in this context (Proença Jr. and Diniz 2009). But having no enemies does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict. Indeed, trans-border issues such as drug-trafficking and arms-smuggling are increasingly sensitive. Other non-military troubles have sporadically emerged in the neighborhood, such as the negative spillover of domestic instability in contiguous states, or the hostile nationalization of Brazilian state utilities.

The absence of enemies, together with the absence of regional nuclear powers, has created a relatively secure environment in which transnational crime is a more pressing issue than strategic threats. As a consequence, Brazil’s strategic culture has turned towards the protection of its vast territory and natural resources from intrusion by extra-regional powers (Silva Filho and Moraes 2010). These are never officially named, but off-the-record statements point unequivocally to the US as the greatest source of concern. This applies particularly to Amazonia but also to the so-called Blue Amazonia area – Brazil’s

immense sea shelf and the area of its oil reserves. The White Book on National Defense, issued for the first time in 2012, reflects the country's overlapping defense, security and development concerns (Ministério da Defesa do Brasil 2012). Indeed, development is as high a priority for defense strategists as it is for diplomats and statesmen, to the detriment of other foreign and security goals (Almeida 2010).

The amalgamation of defense, security and development concerns hinders the construction of an agenda with clearly defined priorities. Hence, the White Book lists as key areas the following: the "two" Amazonias, the South Atlantic Ocean and the west shore of Africa. In addition to the assignment of responsibility over geographic areas, functional responsibilities are assigned to the military – the air force is in charge of controlling the airspace over Green Amazonia, and space projects; the army is responsible for border control and localized intervention in the hinterlands, as well as in cyberspace; and the navy remains in command of Blue Amazonia and its pre-salt oil resources, as well as the country's nuclear development and its crown jewel, the planned nuclear-powered submarine.

In spite of its vast territory and extensive borders, and its military's ambition notwithstanding, Brazil is a lightweight in terms of military spending (Figure 6.1). Current foreign minister Antonio Patriota claims that this is a consequence of 'a great advantage' that Brazil enjoys – unlike the other BRICs, or any of the world's traditional major powers, he says, 'we have no real enemies, no battles on our borders, no great historical or contemporary rivals among the ranks of the other important powers ... and long-standing ties with many of the world's emerging and developed nations' (cited in Rothkopf 2012).

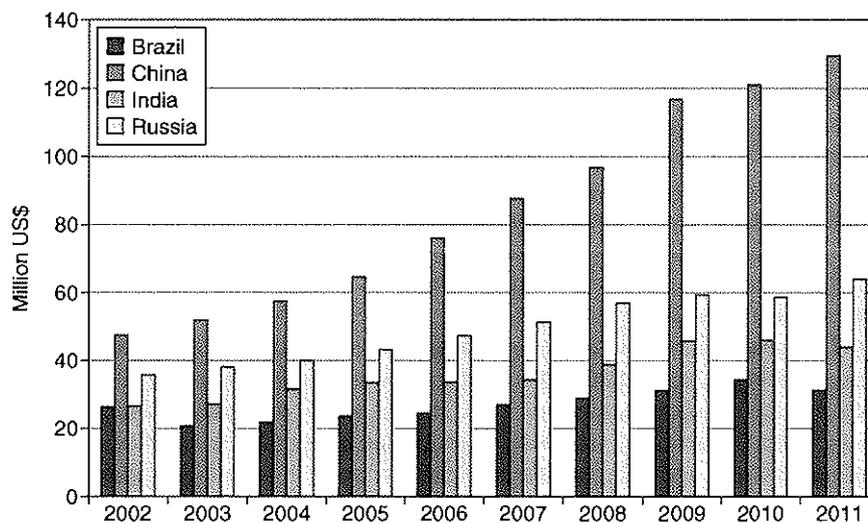


Figure 6.1 Military expenditures (source: SIPRI, IPEA (2012)).

As Sotero and Armijo (2007) have noted, Brazil is one of the few countries to stake, effectively, its future on soft power, based primarily on diplomacy, on the wise use of its cultural charm, and on its growing role as a facilitator and a force of cooperation. Successive administrations have put diplomacy to profitable use, translating scale into influence. They have seated Brazil at every negotiation table to address issues as diverse as climate change, world trade, non-proliferation, and cooperation for development. As is proudly said in Itamaraty, the foreign ministry palace, Brazil has a "diplomatic GDP" that exceeds its economic one; in other words it can punch above its weight because of the high quality of its professional diplomacy.

During the twentieth century, Brazilian diplomacy unwaveringly defended national sovereignty and advocated non-intervention. As such, it based its international action on two premises – the preservation of the country's *autonomy* and the quest for *development*, the latter seen both as a goal in itself and as a precondition for autonomy. While the concept of development – increasing national capabilities through massive industrialization and the effective occupation of the territory – has remained relatively constant, the interpretation of autonomy has varied over time according to contextual changes. These changes were reflected in ideological controversies among the foreign policy elite (Pinheiro 2000; Saraiva 2010).

During the long period in which the region was considered a threat, autonomy was sought through *distance*, and alliances with extra-regional powers were used to balance regional rivals. Once Brazil had gained enough strength and self-confidence and had begun to see the region as an opportunity, autonomy was redefined in terms of *participation* (in multilateral organizations) or *integration* (in regional blocs). Lately, though, increased national power and a growing perception of the region as a burden has led to a search for autonomy through *diversification*, which unofficially means the dilution of the region as a priority and the formation of multiple international coalitions with other large states according to issue and arena (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2007). The relationship with the US has changed, along with the conceptualization of autonomy. It has shifted from straightforward alignment to relative estrangement, interspersed by sporadic skirmishes and rapprochements (Soares de Lima and Hirst 2006; Amorim Neto 2011). In all this, the role of civil society has remained negligible, and the handling of foreign policy as a monopoly of professional diplomats and statesmen has only recently begun to recede (Cason and Power 2009).

Brazil's inclination towards multilateralism is reflected in its participation and high profile in all significant international organizations, be they global, hemispheric, regional or subregional. In the United Nations it has the privilege of proffering the opening speech at the annual meeting of the General Assembly. In the WTO, it is one of the countries that most frequently and successfully uses arbitration mechanisms (Hopewell 2011); in 2013 Brazil finally managed to get one of its senior diplomats appointed as director-general. It is a member of the Organization of American States (OAS) and has promoted other similarly tasked but smaller associations such as the Rio Group. It is a founding member of the

practically oriented Latin American Integration Association (ALADI) and the largely rhetorical Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC). Closer to home, it promoted Mercosur, together with Argentina; was the demiurge behind the creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR); and leads the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization (ACTO). One of the ultimate goals of such intense Brazilian activism is to gain a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, if and when the latter's Charter is reformed.

Today, Brazil's international profile is probably at a historical high point. There is hardly a coalition of emerging powers whose acronym is not headed by the letter B, be it the BRICS, IBSA, or BASIC. However, hard data and several world rankings show that the glittering image has yet to be matched by real achievements. In 2011, the country occupied 18th position on the Elcano Global Presence Index (IEPG), which measures the global positioning of different countries in the fields of economy, defense, migration and tourism, science and culture, and development assistance.² It occupied a slightly higher position (ninth) on the Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC), a statistical measure of national power that uses an average of percentages of world totals in six different areas covering demographic, economic and military strength.³ Although the World Bank ranked it seventh by GDP (at purchasing power parity), Brazil was only 75th in terms of per capita GDP.⁴

The gap between modest achievements and a glamorous global image is indicative of the limited resources that Brazil has at its disposal to pursue development and autonomy. A restricted military capacity, a commodity-based export structure, and an underdeveloped and aging infrastructure, place tough constraints on the use of hard power (Rodriguez 2012). Soft power is also limited by Brazil's relatively low level of technological development, whether measured by the number of patents, the absence of universities at the top of global rankings, or the lack of Nobel Prize winners. But Brazil has made up for these shortcomings by its charming image, the potential of which is unleashed by a competent diplomatic corps, lately assisted by a "winning streak" in terms of world-acclaimed presidents. The tensions between image and achievement, and between regional and global goals have grown steadily over the last two decades, nurturing a foreign policy bifurcation. It is precisely in this that Brazil's growing cuspiness resides.

The changing nature and declining priority of the region

Brazil's home region is not straightforward. To start with, this is the only former colony ever to have hosted a European court – between 1808 and 1822 (with due credit to the Peninsular Napoleonic invasions) the Portuguese empire was ruled from Rio de Janeiro, not Lisbon. But this did not turn Brazil into a global power or confer upon it a cosmopolitan sensibility. Its perceptions of the international order were molded by two other factors: rivalry with its Spanish-American neighbors in the struggle for territory and the establishment of stable borders; and the threat posed by those European powers – mainly Britain – that wanted to

end the slave trade. This situation had changed by the turn of the century, when an "unwritten alliance" was allegedly forged with the US in order to counterbalance Argentina (Burns 1966). This move defined Brazil's international identity as Western Hemispheric.

Brazil's conception of its surroundings suffered consecutive redefinitions over time. Originally, pan-Americanism was seen as an instrument allowing the US to counterbalance the threat from both Europe and the River Plate (Argentina). This was what guided the actions of the Baron of Rio Branco, who led the foreign ministry under four presidents between 1902 and 1912. Later on the "pan" was dropped in favor of "Latin." In 1960 Brazil embraced the developmentalist beliefs of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) and became a founding member of the Latin American Free Trade Association (ALALC). However, for the general population and elites alike, Latin America was seen as the region that surrounded Brazil rather than its home region.

After the democratization process of the 1980s, rapprochement with Argentina led to the creation of Mercosur and the establishment of a security community in the Southern Cone (Hurrell 1998). In the mid-1990s, the government began to use the term "South America" to replace "Latin America" as the site of Brazil's home region – or sphere of influence (Spektor 2010). A decade later, strategic documents issued by the Lula and Rousseff administrations, including the National Defense Strategy (Ministério da Defesa do Brasil 2008) and the White Book (Ministério da Defesa do Brasil 2012), have gone even further. They identify an extended priority area: the South Atlantic. While the *Latin American* label aimed to exclude the US, and the *South American* one served to exclude Mexico, the *South Atlantic* label is about securing control over natural resources and consolidating Brazil's influence over the sea shelf and West Africa. In this way Brazil has redrawn its region in order to fit its rising power and ambitions. This degree of flexibility, which serves to deliberately promote the inclusion and exclusion of other states, signals how little attachment Brazilian elites feel towards a *naturally* or historically defined region.

Although Portugal's rivalry with Spain established a conflictive relation between Brazil and the surrounding colonies from the outset, independence did not improve Brazil's standing among its neighbors. By maintaining the empire as the preferred form of state, and slavery as a mode of production, it parted ways with the abolitionist republics that were popping up all around it. This rivalry was apparent in the war waged against Argentina over modern Uruguay in 1826–27; but it was also more subtly manifested in bilateral and multilateral relations. Take the Congress of Panama, which was organized by Simón Bolívar in 1826 to bring together the new republics of the Americas and promote the development of a unified policy towards Spain. The Congress proposed the creation of a league of American republics with a shared military force, a mutual defense pact, and a supranational parliamentary assembly. It was attended by representatives of Gran Colombia (comprising modern-day Colombia, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela), Peru, the United Provinces of Central America, and Mexico. Chile and Argentina declined to attend because they were suspicious of

Bolívar's influence. The Empire of Brazil did not send delegates as it expected a hostile reception from its Spanish-American neighbors as a result of the ongoing war with Argentina. Isolationist Paraguay was not invited. In the end, the grandly titled "Treaty of Union, League, and Perpetual Confederation" that emerged from the Congress was only ratified by Gran Colombia, and Bolívar's dream soon foundered completely with the outbreak of civil war, the disintegration of the Central American federation, and the emergence of national rather than continental outlooks among the newly independent American republics.

Economic regionalism emerged much later. The ALALC was founded in 1960 and then relaunched as ALADI in 1980 just before the third wave of democratization. Under the ALADI institutional umbrella, Mercosur was established in 1991. An array of regional organizations were born in the 2000s, after the crisis of neoliberalism and the rise of the Latin American left. While some of these blocs have ideological or political motivations, such as the Venezuelan-led Bolivarian Alliance (ALBA) and UNASUR, others such as the Pacific Alliance and the various bilateral or regional agreements with the US, the EU and Asian countries focus on trade and markets.

In order to explain the differences among regional groupings, we used a quantitative measure – the Composite Index of National Capabilities (CINC) – to assign an annual value to structural capabilities. We then analyzed the participation of the countries of the Western Hemisphere in the creation of regional organizations. Our preliminary results show that between the end of World War II and 2008, structural capabilities rather than ideological convergence or political solidarity accounted for the relative success of integration initiatives, but played an even stronger role in explaining their nature. In short, the larger the gap between the major power and the other members of a bloc, the more likely it is that the former opts for non-sovereignty sharing *cooperation* arrangements as exemplified by the US leadership in the foundation of the Organization of American States (OAS) in the 1940s or the Brazilian crafting of UNASUR in the 2000s. In contrast, when the gap is narrower – as between the US and Mexico or between Brazil and Argentina in the 1990s – the costs of ceding national competencies are lower and *integration* treaties become more attractive – or less threatening. Figure 6.2 shows how power gaps shape the nature of regional initiatives.

Across the region, non-complementary interests and changing relative power gaps have generated a patchwork of overlapping projects with fuzzy boundaries (Malamud and Gardini 2012). Indeed, there is no regional organization that brings together all the Latin American countries exclusively: the OAS includes Canada and the United States; the Ibero-American Community includes Andorra, Portugal and Spain; ALADI includes only 13 of the 20 Latin American States; UNASUR unites ten of the latter as well as Guyana and Surinam; and processes of subregional integration such as Mercosur, the Andean Community, and the Central American Integration System are even less encompassing in terms of membership. In addition to bringing together countries as disparate as poverty-stricken Bolivia and wealthy Barbados, CELAC lacks any organizational structure or legal personality. Tacitly acknowledging this diversity, Celso Amorim

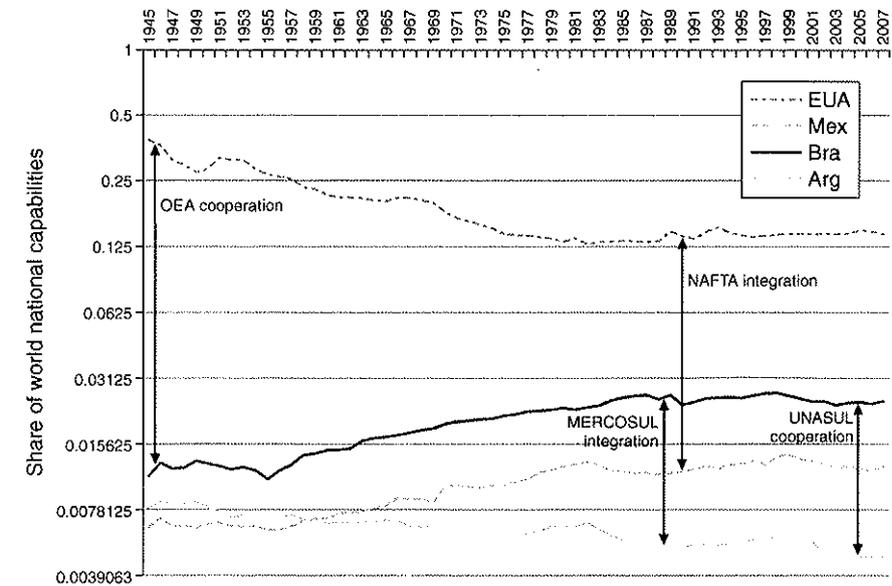


Figure 6.2 Influence of power gaps on regional initiatives (source: Own elaboration based on data from CINC (CoW, www.correlatesofwar.org). The arrows show that higher power gaps are associated with cooperation agreements, while lower gaps are associated with integration initiatives.)

(Lula's foreign minister between 2003 and 2011) defined South America – not Latin America – as Brazil's priority, and deeper integration as its main goal (Amorim 2003). However, Brazil's leading role in the UN-sponsored Haiti stabilizing mission (MINUSTAH) after 2004, and its intervention in the 2009 Honduran constitutional crisis, confused the definition of its home region, taking it beyond South America – again.

Regional initiatives are limited by low levels of trade interdependence and interconnectivity (due to large distances and poor infrastructure), and by the attraction of extra-regional poles. All the South American economies are predominantly commodity-exporting, and their populations and resources – which are spread along the Atlantic, Caribbean and Pacific shorelines but are very sparse in the hinterlands – are oriented outward rather than in a neighborly direction. Cartographic projections tend to fool the untrained eye, but the Brazilian city of Recife, in the north eastern state of Pernambuco, is significantly closer – and better connected – to Dakar in Senegal than to Rio Branco, the capital of the Brazilian state of Acre. Natural physical barriers are not to be underestimated, and the Andes range and the Amazonian rainforest are certainly among the world's largest. All this helps to explain why extra-regional relations are of greater magnitude than political rhetoric can readily admit: China, the US and

the EU are not only more complementary to the Brazilian economy than any of its neighbors, they are also frequently easier and cheaper to reach.

Brazil's rhetoric has not changed much since the end of Lula's term in office. In his swearing-in speech, Rousseff's foreign minister, Patriota (2011), reiterated that South America is Brazil's region of choice. However, Brazil's acts belie his words. While symbolically reaffirming the strategic partnership with Argentina and acknowledging Mercosur as the country's chief international project, the nature of that bloc has been altered, moving away from its original economic character towards a purely political instrumental role.

Twenty years after its foundation, Mercosur has failed to meet its declared goals; however it has achieved other relevant – if tacit – aims. Although it is far from being a common market, it has supported domestic democracy, backed economic reform processes, and helped to consolidate a regional security community. In practice, it is not yet a customs union or even a full-fledged free trade zone. Impervious to the growing gap between treaties and achievements, regional elites have responded to unattained goals by signing additional protocols, building up new inoperative institutions, and engaging in rhetorical flourishes.

Mercosur's underlying formula – preferential access to the Brazilian market in exchange for Argentine support for Brazil's international strategies – has run out of steam and has not been replaced (Bouzas *et al.* 2002). In this context, the bloc has a different meaning for each member state. Nonetheless, unlike the Andean Community, negotiations with the EU are still under way and the possibility of signing a bloc-to-bloc agreement keeps Mercosur going. Enlargement procedures have not been straightforward either: Venezuela was a candidate member for six years, as the accession protocol was blocked by the Paraguayan senate, after which a sudden presidential impeachment in 2012 gave the other members the excuse to suspend Paraguay's membership and consummate Venezuela's accession. Both the suspension and the enlargement have been legally contested; furthermore, Venezuela does not comply with most of the bloc's regulations, which only serves to highlight the growing dysfunctionality of the bloc and the fuzziness of its boundaries and norms.

Mercosur is a case of supply-side integration, the particular dynamics of which have been labeled inter-presidential. Inter-presidentialism refers to the combination of an international strategy: presidential diplomacy – with a domestic institution: presidentialism (Malamud 2005). While presidentialism concentrates decision-making in the chief executive office, presidential diplomacy means resorting to direct negotiations between presidents every time a crucial decision has to be made, or a critical conflict resolved. Another way to put it is that Mercosur has been power-oriented rather than rule-oriented since its birth. Mercosur's top dispute settlement institutions have been called upon to act 16 times in 21 years. Legal institution-building is precarious, as it is not a result of functional needs but of pressure from epistemic communities and transnational networks.

Likewise, even if the development of a parliamentary institution can be understood as a legitimizing resource born out of mimicry and isomorphism

(Rüland and Bechle 2011), Mercosur's parliamentary assembly (PARLASUR) is more accurately described as the outcome of sectoral lobbying by national legislators (Malamud and Dri forthcoming). In fact, it has no legislative competences, no oversight capacities, no popular or demographic representation, and almost no transnational party politics.

The distinctiveness of Mercosur vis-à-vis other regional projects like UNASUR or ALBA used to be its economic heft, but from the 2000s the main function of the bloc for Brazil ceased to be the creation of a larger market and became instead an instrument for the management of relations with Argentina (Valladao 2011). Lately, even this function has lost steam because of Mercosur's enlargement – first by extending membership to Venezuela, and the process is currently under way as regards Bolivia. This expansion process is diluting the importance of the Argentine–Brazilian axis, and Mercosur's new mission is to help stabilize an unruly neighborhood by providing an arena for Brazilian officials to contain and cajole quarreling parties in adjacent countries, preventing domestic or interstate squabbles from escalating and spilling over to the rest of the region.

As Spektor argues (2010: 203), Brasilia now sees regionalism as a foreign policy instrument and not as an end in itself. Brazilian perceptions are still “dominated by the continuing power of a national ideology of autonomy, self-help, and suspicion about neighbours' intentions.” Unlike some European and African cases, regionalism has not contributed to changing Brazil's international identity. The country interacts fluently with its neighbors but has no intention of merging with them. Apart from stabilizing the region, its main goal is to use regionalism to promote investment and manufactured exports. “Strategic patience,” as Lula called it, has been deployed to deal with resistance and dissent. But Brazil is more assertive and self-confident now than it was a decade ago, and it can therefore afford to be a little less patient. This shift is apparent in a 2008 survey of the Brazilian foreign policy elite, which shows the declining relevance of Mercosur when compared to the results of a previous survey carried out in 2001 (Souza 2009). The split between those who considered the region a priority and those who preferred to go global without a regional “stop-over” had begun to emerge the year before, when a taskforce of distinguished scholars and diplomats were split over the issue (CEBRI-CINDES 2007). This cleavage will likely become more accentuated in the coming years.

From regional to global power

Two trends relevant to Brazil's position in the region and the world matured in 2010. First, China replaced the US as Brazil's main trading partner; second, Brazil exported more commodities than manufactured goods for the first time since 1978. Both trends are related. Brazilian growth during the last decade has been the result of growing linkages with the most dynamic emerging markets, especially China, but this has imposed a toll on its productive and export structure. Recommoditization, which is tantamount to relative deindustrialization

(Oreiro and Feijó 2010), has been an undesired but unavoidable consequence of the role that Brazil plays in the new global economy. Although the country's economy depends much less on the US than before, and certainly much less than Mexico does, the outcome is not one that developmentalist elites, be they left- or right-leaning, would have chosen for Brazil.

In spite of its economic quandaries, the country has gained increasing global recognition. Today, Brazil is acknowledged as a global player by the established world powers. One of the factors that boosted its foreign reputation was its promotion as a "BRIC" country. A Goldman Sachs 2001 report predicted that the combined economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China would eclipse those of the currently richest countries by 2050 due to their high growth rates. The report did not advocate the creation of an economic bloc, but a few years later the BRIC countries sought to form a "political club" and to convert their growing economic clout into greater geopolitical stature. By contrast, IBSA is a more limited and "principle-oriented" grouping. This acronym refers to the trilateral developmental alliance between India, Brazil and South Africa to promote South-South cooperation and exchange. This group has been publicized as an initiative that brings together the largest democracies on every continent of the Southern Hemisphere. It therefore more powerfully conveys Brazilian foreign policy banners such as democracy, respect for human rights and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Indeed, its main strategic goal has been aptly defined as "soft balancing" (Flemes 2007).

Brazil has also been skilful in the realm of commercial negotiations. Although the current WTO round has stagnated, a new collective actor, the Group of 20, emerged from it. This bloc of 20 or so developing nations brings together 60 percent of the world's population, 70 percent of its farmers and 26 percent of the world's agricultural exports. It dates back to June 2003, when the IBSA foreign ministers signed the Brasília Declaration stating that the goal of the developing countries was to promote the reversal of the protectionist policies and trade-distorting practices of the developed countries. Their efforts bore fruit in 2008, when the (albeit unsuccessful) Doha Round came to a close with febrile negotiations between the United States, the European Union, plus India and Brazil. The high profile of these and other emerging giants was confirmed at the Copenhagen Summit on Climate Change in December 2009, at which the leaders of China, India, Brazil and South Africa (BASIC) negotiated the final declaration with US president Barack Obama, without the participation the European Union, Russia, Japan and other global powers. Irrespective of the meager results, participation at these pinnacles of power is tantamount to peer recognition – a goal in its own right (Nel 2010; Hurrell *et al.* 2000).

Brazil has also made it into the G-20 (not to be confused with the WTO Group of 20), formally called the Group of Twenty Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors. This supersedes the G-8 and brings together 19 of the world's largest national economies plus the European Union. Brasília has played a high profile role in its constitution and meetings.

Another key sign of international recognition as an emerging power was the European Union's 2007 invitation to establish a "strategic partnership" with

Brazil (Malamud 2012). This is worth noting because the EU had been reluctant to engage with other Latin American countries – especially those already clustered in regional blocs – on an individual basis. The decision had two consequences: on the one hand, it conferred upon Brazil the status given to other emerging world powers with which the EU had already signed strategic partnership agreements (China, India, Russia and South Africa); on the other hand, it differentiated Brazil from the rest of Latin America and went against the proclaimed EU goal of engaging only in bloc-to-bloc negotiations with that region. According to the EU, "[t]his new relationship places Brazil, the Mercosur region and South America high on the EU's political map."⁵ However, some of Brazil's neighbors felt that they had been left out and that this move will further damage the development of regional integration. Studying the formal document issued by the European Commission helps inform the negative reaction from the other countries of the region:

Over the last years, Brazil has become an increasingly significant global player and emerged as a key interlocutor for the EU. However, until recently EU-Brazil dialogue has not been sufficiently exploited and carried out mainly through EU-Mercosur dialogue. Brazil will be the last 'BRICS' to meet the EU in a Summit. The time has come to look at Brazil as a strategic partner as well as a major Latin American economic actor and regional leader... Its emerging economic and political role brings new responsibilities for Brazil as a global leader. The proposed strategic partnership between Brazil and EU should help Brazil in exercising positive leadership globally and regionally... Over the last few years Brazil has emerged as a champion of the developing world in the UN and at the WTO ... Brazil is a vital ally for the EU in addressing these and other challenges in international fora. A quasi-continent in its own right, Brazil's demographic weight and economic development make it a natural leader in South America and a key player in Latin America... Positive leadership of Brazil could move forward Mercosur negotiations.⁶

Although the EU certainly did not intend to damage its relations with Mercosur, its pompous rhetoric had negative repercussions in the region. By calling Brazil a "regional leader," a "global leader," a "champion of the developing world," a "quasi-continent in its own right," and a "natural leader in South America," it provoked jealousies and harmed its own position as well as Brazil's standing among the other countries of South America. Global ambitions, it seems, may come at the detriment to regional achievements.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how Brazil has become an atypical case within an atypical category: as a Cusp State it does not lie on the edge of, or in an ambivalent relationship with, two regions; rather, it straddles a "shifting" region and the

global system. In spite of its regional pre-eminence, Brazil has been unable to translate its structural and instrumental resources into effective leadership. Its potential regional followers have not backed its main foreign policy goals: Argentina, Colombia and Mexico refuse to support Brazil's long-standing bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, and Brazilian candidates for the directorship-general of the WTO, and for the presidency of the Inter-American Development Bank, were outvoted by other South American candidates in 2005. Indeed, some of its neighbors have even challenged its material supremacy by nationalizing Brazilian public enterprises or refusing to pay their debts to Brazil's state-owned development bank. By playing the regional card to achieve global ends, Brazil ended up in an unexpected situation – while its regional leadership has grown on paper, it has been weakened in practice (Malamud 2011). Even so, it has achieved growing global recognition, and Brazil is acknowledged as an emerging global player by the world's established powers.

Over the last decades, successive Brazilian administrations altered their conceptualization of their home region according to shifting geopolitical realities and the transformation of the global political economy. As Brazil's power has grown vis-à-vis its neighbors, it has felt less compelled to balance power relations via extra-regional alliances; and as its economic clout has developed, it has become a global exporter and grown less dependent on surrounding states. While the region was seen as a threat in the early 1900s and was recast as a resource in the 1980s, in the 2000s key members of the foreign policy elite began to see it as a burden. If this view gains ground, it may be concluded that the region was only a temporary "stopover" on the path to global power, gradually shifting from being seen as an enabling tool to a hindrance. The invention of South America (as opposed to Latin America) represented a step back that allowed Brazil to take two steps forward (onto the global stage). But Brazil is still caught in the middle of that path, as fully delinking from the region seems neither possible nor desirable.

The challenge for Brazilian foreign policy is to adapt to a world of declining Western hegemony and fragmenting Latin American interests. The country may face difficult choices, as global multipolarity and regional divergences grow. Should Brazil accept a global order that is beginning to include it, or challenge it for being still too exclusive? Should it invest in regional leadership or build broader alliances irrespective of geography?

Three scenarios loom ahead, which can be labeled reformist, revisionist and regional. In the first, Brazil articulates its positions within existing international institutions (the UN, the IMF, the WTO and the World Bank, among others). In the second, Brazil adopts a flexible strategy of alliances with other emerging powers as embodied by groups such as BRICS and IBSA, with the purpose of mobilizing the Global South against the order established by the developed countries. In the third scenario, Brazil acts as a regional leader that articulates South (or Latin) American interests and represents them in international fora. Although the official rhetoric suggests a combination of the second and third scenarios, the trends outlined here suggest that Brazilian foreign policy will

consist of an amalgam of all of three. The country will most likely oscillate between (reluctant) alignment with the current global leader – the US – and its main putative challenger – China – while working to keep its home region quiet. To use Schweller's metaphor (1994: 103), Brazil will act like a jackal, which is "often found trailing wolves (revisionist leaders), [but it] will also trail lions (status quo leaders) who are on the verge of victory." This riding on another's coat-tails is consistent with Brazilian reluctance to pay the costs of regional integration and its unwillingness to invest in hard power – mainly military – resources. Brazil's balancing act continues, therefore, only this time oscillating between two superpowers rather than between its home region and the world (Rodriguez 2012).

Brazil's century-long journey has taken it from being an overtly Cusp State to becoming a core state (in Latin America) and then a putative leader (in South America) to returning to its status as a Cusp State, only now covertly. What changed over this evolution was its absolute and relative power: once a peripheral producer of desserts (coffee, sugar and cacao), Brazil has slowly become a global economic giant. Today, the country is too big to let the region tie its hands, but still too small to "go global" without caring about the damaging potential of its neighborhood. Thus, instrumentalizing its cuspsness will remain an essential aspect of its dual foreign policy, as it stays torn between the restrictions imposed by geography and its aspiration to global recognition.

Notes

- 1 South Africa, the "S" in the enlarged BRICS, "got the bomb" but dismantled it before the end of the Apartheid regime.
- 2 Elcano Global Presence Index: www.iepg.es/
- 3 Correlates of War: www.correlatesofwar.org/
- 4 World Bank: <http://data.worldbank.org/>
- 5 See: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/brazil/index_en.htm (retrieved December 15, 2009).
- 6 Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Towards an EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership (COM (2007) 281), Brussels, 30 May 2007. See: http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/brazil/docs/com07_281_en.pdf (retrieved December 15, 2009).

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