

Brazil Foreign Policy: Between Tradition and Innovation

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Abstract

The present article aims to analyze Brazilian foreign policy since the 1990s, which has oscillated between tradition and innovation, and how it articulates with the presidential coalition formed to achieve governance.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Brazil, Tradition, Innovation.

“Reminiscing is looking at the past with gratitude, living the present with passion, and building the future with a profound sense of truth and justice”.

Anonymous

Conceptual Framework. Appreciation of Foreign Policy

Brazil is one of the countries in the world with the strongest engagement in the international arena. There are a series of principles that have guided it to achieve a more coherent and solid international integration. These principles have been adapted or updated over time, especially in the 1990s, when they remained unchanged but were adjusted to a changing international order. Over time, they gained great relevance due to Brazil's re-democratization process. Both during the governments of Collor de Mello and Cardoso, as well as later during the PT governments,

a more contemporary approach was given to international affairs. In the cases of Lula and President Dilma Rousseff, a more socially oriented vision of democracy was emphasized. This vision shifted during the Bolsonaro government and is now being revisited in the new Lula administration.

Changes and shifts in foreign policy have phases and oscillations, which in turn maintain a common thread. It involves a close relationship between the formulation and implementation of foreign policy, marked by its universality. Brazil maintains diplomatic relations with 192 UN member countries, including Palestine. With over 220 units comprising embassies, diplomatic missions, and consulates, Brazil's extensive support network has been institutionalized despite the varying governing coalitions that have emerged from Fernando Henrique Cardoso to the present.

The following are the guiding principles that have historically governed Brazil's foreign policy, serving as the axes in formulation and implementation and functioning as the common thread:

Pacifism: It is based on non-confrontation, the pursuit of peacefully negotiated solutions to disputes, and the condemnation of using force to achieve external outcomes.

Universalism: It is understood as the entire array of bilateral contacts constituting Brazil's heritage, serving, among other things, to realize national interests. This universal vocation finds its roots in the fact that Brazilians have managed to establish peaceful and instrumentalized relationships with countries all over the world.

Juridicism: It is the respect for treaties and conventions, understood as sacred manifestations of International Law, undertaken by national will. Treaties and agreements are seen as legal instruments seeking agreements that are feasible to fulfill and mutually favorable.

Realism and Pragmatism: Actions tied to national interests. The idea of constructing and using the country's role as a power for international gains is abandoned; international action is depoliticized and de-ideologized.

Self-determination and non-intervention: these are nurtured by the pacifist nature of foreign policy and especially by the realism that illuminates its international execution.

Therefore, there is a tradition of diplomatic practice that is radically opposed to intervention due to the rejection that could arise from legitimizing potential interventions or corrective actions outside the system or international power environment. The principles of self-determination and non-intervention of peoples are vigorously defended.

If we look at the foreign policies during the 1990s during the governments of Collor, Itamar Franco, and Fernando Henrique Cardoso –so as not to take too much space, we will not analyze their foreign policies; nevertheless, we see in them a common thread both in the international agenda and trends, which was accentuated during the governments of Lula and Dilma Rousseff– we can observe a break in the government of Jair Bolsonaro, with a right-wing coalition that rejected some of these principles. Today, there is a context of greater hyper-globalization represented by the exponential rise of interconnections between countries, in which Brazil has sought, among other things:

First, to integrate into a highly interconnected and competitive international economy.

Secondly, to maintain the margins of maneuver to avoid rendering its historical national project unviable, based on the principles mentioned above. It seeks to build an appropriate political and economic profile in accordance with the new configuration of global power, shifting from bipolarity to multipolarity.

However, the foreign policy of this country revolves around three inquiries, the answers to which provide the guidelines for diplomatic action in recent years within the context of greater globalization represented by the exponential rise of interconnections between countries:

- Firstly, what does Brazil aim to gain from its relationship with the international arena? The evident and clearly defined objective is to secure external exchange for the advancement of development, both in its economic and social dimensions, in order to further human rights and environmental protection. These elements should serve as a foundation and can be complemented with agreements and systems that support domestic policies.
- Secondly, how does Brazil wish to engage with the international community? Here lie the principles that have traditionally guided its foreign policy, such as non-intervention, respect for self-determination, non-interference in internal affairs, and peaceful resolution of disputes.

- The third question is, what kind of world do they desire? It can be summarized in a few ideas: peace, development, and broad participation. This is why Brazil is collaborating with other countries to reform multilateral organizations, aiming to actualize the values of democracy, human rights, and environmental preservation.

In this sense, Brazil's foreign policy in recent years pursues autonomy through integration rather than isolationist autonomy, as seen during Bolsonaro's administration. With the new government under Lula, the focus is on coordinated autonomy within the international arena, which can be observed through specific examples that provide evidence of this approach.

Within the context of MERCOSUR (Southern Common Market), which serves as both an economic development factor and a source of positive political and diplomatic momentum, Brazil has engaged in the construction of a broader integration framework for South America. This is evident in agreements signed with Chile and Bolivia, as well as the closer alignment between MERCOSUR and the Andean community.

Another example is Brazil's adherence to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This step aimed to embody one of the constitutional objectives outlined in the new 1988 Constitution and to settle an old debt and commitment. By doing so, Brazil sought to fulfill various regional and multilateral commitments, particularly with Argentina, its "rival" in the Southern Cone.

In essence, President Cardoso's commitment to principles of democracy, peace, human rights, social justice, and environmental preservation, combined with domestic policies aligned with these

objectives, enhances Brazil's credibility and its ability to influence specific international issues. This is further strengthened by the Brazilian government's decision to reassert certain diplomatic commitments in areas such as the environment, nuclear non-proliferation, and human rights, demonstrated through the signing of the NPT and recognition of the compulsory jurisdiction of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. These are concrete manifestations of Brazil's commitment and the type of foreign policy it pursues.

This demonstrates a consistent approach in these times, adapting to new international issues while remaining guided by its established principles and the role of the Itamaraty as the executor of Brazil's foreign policy.

All of this brings new positive assets to Brazil's international projection, which we enumerate below:

On the one hand, the trade and economic openness policy that underpins the real plan's success has led to Brazil's access to international financial markets and an increase in the country's significance as a destination or resource market for any economic activity. This has been particularly evident in the privatization processes in the telecommunications sector.

Furthermore, the leadership of a robust presidential diplomacy, guided by clear objectives, has served to enhance the country's credibility and confidently support measures taken to defend and further the reform program. This was evident during the administrations of Lula and currently with Dilma Rousseff, who placed even greater emphasis on social aspects at the domestic level.

It should be highlighted that the achievements made during the first two terms of President Lula da Silva's administration will continue to be pursued in his third term, emphasizing the defense of public liberties, increased inclusion in the political process, income distribution, and economic growth.

There are also traces of Brazil's foreign policy objectives through the years, which include the defense of democratic values, the pursuit of peace among nations, equality under the law, and, ultimately, the protection of its economic interests.

Indeed, it is worth highlighting at the bilateral level that Brazil's fundamental strategic relationship is with Argentina, which has been strengthened since the time of President Sarney, and with Mercosur, which has transcended into other areas, such as the Andean Community and is evident today in UNASUR. In the near future, Brazil aims to elevate UNASUR to a greater role in cooperation and policy coordination on this side of the world. Additionally, Patriota affirmed that they will deepen what they call the "global dialogue" with the United States and strengthen strategic ties with the European Union and China. This is within a clear stance on the importance of multilateral diplomacy as part of global governance, as well as trade negotiations, services, agricultural subsidies, and the Doha Round.

In summary, rationalizing or seeking to enhance international presence is one of the challenges President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva will face. This will require greater investments in goods and physical infrastructure, i.e., productive capital, and further strengthening the stable environment for business investment that exists today, to enhance productive capacity. This will likely determine Brazil's ability to assume a greater strategic position (global trader or global player) on the international stage, not

only within the bilateral sphere but also multilaterally (UN, OAS, UNASUR, CELAC, as well as the G-20). This is particularly important as the South American giant will host the next G-20 meeting.

On the multilateral stage, the G-20 is a forum for cooperation related to the international financial system. Brazil, one of the most active participants in forming the G-20 since the G-8 meetings, has a critical stance regarding the forum's actions. Aligned with its international tradition of defending multilateral institutions and the effective use of multilateral diplomacy, Brazilian proposals extend beyond crisis anticipation and economic revival. They also aim to promote sustainable and inclusive long-term development.

Likewise, Brazil maintains a perspective of advocating for an alliance of civilizations in its international outlook, as it rejects colonial or neocolonial policies. It believes in diplomacy through dialogue and cooperation as an option. Within the framework of multilateral policy, Brazil reiterates a historical aspiration: the reform of the UN Security Council.

In fact, Brazil's foreign policy under the Lula government faces a more globalized international context in its latest developmental phase, still marked by the uncertainties of the ongoing global economic crisis, which the South American giant has managed. This includes navigating the Russia-Ukraine conflict's evolution and the uncertainties of the banking crisis.

As a result, scholars and commentators on Brazil's foreign policy have identified historical vectors in its international relations. Indeed, historically Brazil has pursued objectives such as a clearly peaceful orientation linked to the principles of non-intervention and negotiated dispute resolution, deep respect for

the international legal framework, emphasis on the defense of democratic values, pursuit of peace among nations, legal equality, and ultimately the defense of its economic interests.

Finally, in the political realm, there is a commitment to democracy, human rights, social inclusion (an area where Brazil has made significant strides in recent years), and racial equality. This reaffirms the dedication to these values and the importance of enhancing democracy. In summary, the achievements resulting from this visit reaffirm an autonomous, independent, and pragmatic foreign policy approach, reflecting the international actions of the South American giant.

Ultimately, it aims to enhance its position in science, technology, and knowledge, and therefore, its foreign action is closely related to this triad.

In summary, Brazil has sought to deepen its integration and interrelation with the international economic-political stage, working towards a more inclusive and modernizing trend of globalization. It aims, in the end, to move towards a more integrative globalization, with a higher level of global governance and greater social mobility for the excluded to be included, within a less asymmetrical social system, ultimately creating a more democratic global governance.

On the other hand, the success of Brazil's international policy over the past three years is based on various factors. Firstly, it involves the redistribution and pursuit of a virtuous sociopolitical alliance since the 1990s, involving modern and globalist organizations and individuals from different party institutions, intellectuals, businesses, and modernizing sectors of civilian politicians and parties. These groups were once in opposition and

are now in government, such as the PT, along with the support of the PMDB and other political parties, playing a crucial role. Parties like the PSDB, which may be in government in the future, contribute to a coalition that maintains a positive structural configuration towards globalization.

Secondly, the deepening of economic internationalization and the reduction of the fiscal deficit and inflation were elements that prompted Brazil's leadership elites to address these structural issues of the Brazilian economy. This involved, for example, adapting the active role of the State as a strategic agent in temporarily supporting certain economic sectors in which Brazil holds competitive advantages in the globalized economy. As demonstrated in recent years, the State has also played a strategic role in social policies, fostering a more equitable society.

Furthermore, its globalist-progressive foreign defense policies entail an active and leadership role for Brazil in constructing global governance regimes and institutions, including the reform of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods system: the transition from an international organization to a transnational one. All of this is manifested in some of Brazil's proposals within the G-20, such as the imposition of a tax on capital circulation by an international authority; successfully concluding the Doha negotiations as part of the realignment of international trade; and, finally, its role in international environmental policy, aiming to control greenhouse gas emissions and climate change impacts, as well as promoting sustainable development in the Amazon region, all of which are integral to its recently formulated public policies.

Finally, it is worth noting that Brazil is increasingly seeking to expand its international trade in goods and services, with flagship companies like Embraer, Vale, Odebrecht, Petrobras,

among others, having established their products and services internationally, especially in its most important allies, such as China, the United States, and the European Union. Brazil's aim is not to remain merely an exporter of commodities like soybeans, iron, cellulose, and oil. Therefore, Brazil is projected to continue its transition towards a more globalized information society, maintaining the pace of progress from an agriculturally based industrial society with high asymmetries akin to the 19th century, to a more inclusive and multilateral one. This transition reflects a foreign policy anchored in robust traditional principles, yet adapted to the contemporary era of foreign relations and international affairs.

What is the impact of structural changes on the country's international integration, on the conceptual basis of foreign policy? As previously mentioned, foreign policy responded to these changes by becoming more proactive and pragmatic. Its conceptual basis has expanded, combining themes and agendas from the period before the change with new ones. From the past, foreign policy retained the defense of universal multilateralism and external autonomy, reinterpreted in the current administration by the ambition to implement an independent international program in international politics, independent of the preferences of the powers.

Among the "new" concepts, which are actually a reconfiguration of previous concepts, the identity of a mediator can be mentioned. The defense of universal multilateralism reflects the classic Brazilian international identity of exercising a mediating role in multilateral diplomacy. During the Cold War period, this mediation was primarily conducted between the North and the South, or between developed and underdeveloped countries.

Another concept, which is also a result of the reconfiguration of previous concepts, is the defense of multipolarity, currently identified with the democratization of decision-making processes in global forums, as well as the emergence of new powers that create opportunities for international alignment for countries like Brazil. The idea of Brazil as an example/model is also reiterated today based on certain national attributes, such as the absence of conflicts of ethnic, religious, or cultural nature, the emphasis on the peaceful dimension of Brazil's international emergence, and the renunciation of geopolitical objectives that may require the use of military capabilities on the international stage, as well as its conciliatory nature. These attributes constitute assets of Brazilian soft power, which can be employed in South-South relations, where Brazil is beginning to emerge as an important donor (Haiti, Guinea-Bissau), or as a mediator in critical international issues (such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict).

Conclusion

In conclusion, as observed, Brazil's foreign policy is proactive and forward-looking in a sober and realistic manner; it seeks to combine the ideals of building a more just and balanced international structure, while viewing it from a realistic perspective that seeks to have a sense of proportion in objectives to be achieved.

Therefore, in summary, rationalizing or seeking to increase international presence will be one of the challenges faced by President Lula, Foreign Minister Mauro Viera, and international advisor Ambassador Celso Amorín, former Foreign Minister of Brazil on two occasions. That's why I have outlined some features of where they should aim to go in the coming years. They have, in

this regard, a rich historical legacy to draw upon to achieve this in the near future.

Finally, I anticipate that there will be a greater Brazilian presidential diplomacy, but with a sense of proportion, as has been the trend over the last 25 years. This refers to the personal handling of foreign policy matters by the president, where the personalized power of the leader is expressed in an articulate manner. President Lula will continue to use this approach in a sober and realistic way in the first three months. The government coalition does not hinder the implementation of foreign policy in the coming months.