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The Brazil-European Union strategic partnership, from Lula to Dilma Rousseff: a shift of focus

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Abstract

The article concentrates on the role which the strategic partnership with the European Union played in Brazilian foreign policy from 2007 to 2015, and the shift of focus that took place during the Lula and Dilma Rousseff administrations. It analyses the progress of such strategic partnership and the exchanges per sector carried out within related frameworks. It also discusses and segregates the so-called sector dialogues into two types and argues that, since the beginning of the Rousseff administration, multilateral exchanges encountered growing obstacles to becoming successful, whereas bilateral dialogues found increasingly favorable ground.

Keywords: Brazilian Foreign Policy; Strategic Partnership; European Union; Sector Dialogues.

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Introduction

Diplomatic relations between Brazil and the European Community date back to 1960. Throughout the 1980s, these relations were strengthened politically and in terms of cooperation, and in 1992 a framework cooperation agreement was signed, classified as a third-generation agreement. This agreement encompassed a variety of areas and gave rise to some sector dialogues between Brazil and the European Union. In 2007, a strategic partnership was established between Brazil and the EU. This formally included a reinforcement of multilateralism and a quest for joint actions in several fields, including human rights, poverty, environmental

issues, energy, MERCOSUR and stability in Latin America. The drivers behind this initiative on the European side included: Brazil's active role in international affairs; the EU's willingness to partner with emerging nations; the perception of Brazil as a potential partner in multilateral forums and the so-far stagnated political dialogue between the EU and MERCOSUR. For their part, Brazil's policymakers saw a partnership with the EU as an opportunity to strengthen Brazil's international acknowledgement and prestige, and harboured hopes that such collaboration would entail a boost in investments and technology transfers in areas of innovation.

Since the strategic partnership was signed, two Joint Action Plans have been introduced and a third one has already been negotiated and drafted. Under the framework of the partnership, 33 sector dialogues have been set up in different areas involving a diversity of players¹. Some of these dialogues involve international political issues; they are held by diplomats and their interactions and impacts are exerted by means of Brazilian and/or European actions in multilateral forums – hereby called multilateral sphere dialogues. However, most of them focus on bilateral cooperation issues, often of technical nature, mostly related to Brazilian domestic affairs – hereby called bilateral sphere dialogues². Such dialogues are held by diplomats from the European External Action Service (EEAS) and Brazilian agencies. As a result, European resources were invested in projects resulting from the various sector dialogues. The destination of such resources was decided upon by the EEAS and Brazilian agencies, mainly by the Brazilian Ministry of Planning.

Besides these sector dialogues, in 2013 a high-level multilateral dialogue – carried out by diplomats within the framework of international institutions – was established to discuss international peace and security. Despite these developments, the results of this partnership, eight years after it was established, had fallen short of the initial expectations.

The strategic partnership is in itself rather complex, as it institutionalizes cooperation among two different players. Brazil is a nation state, whereas the European Union is something in between an international organization and a supranational body, made up of 28 states, whose foreign policy is meant to disseminate ideas and policies. Besides the relation between Brazil and the European Union established through the strategic partnership, there are other channels through which Brazil maintains exchanges with parties in the EU, these are the bilateral relationships between Brazil and the EU member states, plus rather complex interregional relations: the bi-regional negotiations between EU-MERCOSUL and the dialogue between the EU and the CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States). Following the realistic tradition of Brazilian diplomacy, the EU is regarded as a collective entity and as a rather complex player, who comes to negotiations with a closed agenda. On the other hand, Brazilian diplomacy did not organize the most efficient gateway to interact with the EEAS, despite such interaction being favored by the strategic partnership.

Notwithstanding the complex Brazil-EU relationships, this article focuses on the theoretical analysis of Brazilian foreign policy. Hence, we have taken into consideration the perception of

1 The dialogues began with the 1992 framework cooperation agreement. However, only with the signing of the strategic partnership such dialogues expanded to new sectors and gained new impetus. <http://sectordialogues.org/en>, Accessed December 25, 2015.

2 The use of the term “bilateral” is valid in this article because the European Union would only consider a single player, other than the EU itself, when establishing a strategic partnership.

the players involved in the process of formulating the foreign policy and the results obtained thereof. Regarding the EU perspective, the normative drive of its foreign policy, as well as their goal of promoting policy transfers through their practices are considered a starting point, once consolidated literature on this issue is available³.

Then, this article concentrates on the Brazilian perspective, examining how the dialogue with the EU has progressed from Lula to Dilma Rousseff and what were the reasons underpinning the shift of focus that took place within the strategic partnership. The argument is that, despite belonging to the same political party and implementing foreign policies along the same general lines, internal problems and changes in Brazilian foreign policy taking place while the Lula da Silva administration was followed by the Dilma Rousseff administration have exerted a negative impact on the strategic partnership with the EU, particularly regarding dialogues about multilateral topics. On the other hand, bilateral dialogues through technical channels have received more attention since 2011 and funds have been granted to projects addressing specific initiatives within the areas covered by the respective sector dialogues, which promoted greater exchange of ideas and cooperation between the two sides. Support for these initiatives seems to have increased since President Rousseff took office.

To begin with, the article introduces the achievements fulfilled during the Lula administration: the signing of the strategic partnership and its first results. Next, we examine Dilma Rousseff's foreign policy and its impacts on the strategic partnership. Firstly, we examine the factors behind the changes and different features observed in Brazilian foreign policy under the new administration. Secondly, we identify and analyse the dialogues maintained on multilateral issues, followed by sector dialogues on bilateral issues. In both cases, we pay special attention to the dimension of interactions taken under South American frameworks.

The Lula administration, the strategic partnership and its first results

With the election of Lula da Silva, Brazil's foreign policy took on a new profile. Brazil reoriented its external actions to assure greater autonomy by reinforcing its universalism through south-south cooperation and multilateral institutional forums, while playing a stronger, more proactive role in global politics. At a time of fragmentation of the world order, Brazil was keen to support anti-hegemonic, multipolar positions (Gratius 2011) and to play a leading role in South America. In order to achieve these goals, the strategy implemented was to defend the reorganisation of international institutions on the basis of more inclusive criteria. With a view to implementing these plans, Brazilian diplomats took action in multiple fields and with different kinds of partners. Lula assumed a strong presidential diplomatic stance so as to project the image of Brazil in new scenarios.

3 Regarding the *normative power* of the European Union, see Manners (2002), who formulated this concept. Regarding the definition of *policy transfer*, see Stone (1999).

In this new context, Brazil's foreign policy was based on a consolidated assumption on the part of the Brazilian diplomatic corps that some stances would be shared by Brazil and the EU, particularly with regard to common values in areas such as development, democracy and international peace, and also when it came to the defence of multilateralism in global politics. Accordingly, in order to become a global player, coming closer to Europe made sense, as closer ties with the United States were out of the question⁴.

As for direct interactions between Brazil and the EU, a framework cooperation agreement for science and technology was signed during Lula's first term in office and the Civil Society Round Table was set up. However, at the same time, the Doha Round was blocked by the G20 under the leadership of Brazil, and the EU's negotiations with MERCOSUR for an association agreement were called off. In the European Commission, these actions kindled fears that Brazil could take greater distance from the EU and put paid to the talks with MERCOSUR (Lazarou and Fonseca 2013). In 2005 the EU began internal discussions about the possibility of forging a bilateral partnership with Brazil (Meissner 2015).

In 2006, Durão Barroso made a trip to Brazil; in 2007 the strategic document for Brazil (2007-2013) came into effect⁵; and in May 2007 the European Commission sent other EU institutions a communiqué, "Towards an EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership", in which a strategic alliance was proposed and Brazil was described as a protagonist and regional leader⁶. In 2007, Brazil was involved in some European initiatives, like the participation of Brazilian representatives in meetings with Europeans about international economic negotiations⁷. Talks about climate change (with a multilateral focus under the framework of international negotiations) also started, as well as discussions about the environmental dimension of sustainable development (regarding Brazilian domestic technical issues through a bilateral dialogue) and regional integration policies.

The stage was set for a strategic partnership. Finally, in late 2007, this process culminated in the signing of an agreement between the EU and Brazil, external to MERCOSUR. The partnership formally included the reinforcement of multilateralism and the pursuit of joint actions on human rights, poverty, environmental issues, energy, MERCOSUR and Latin American stability. According to Telò (2014), the partnership paved the way for the construction of a shared view on multilateralism on a regional, inter-regional and international level.

The first Joint Action Plan was signed in 2008 and annual summits were initiated with a view to improving interactions between the diplomatic corps on both sides. According to the plan, a number of sector dialogues were established and the dialogues that had been set up during President Lula's first term were also reinstated. The initial focus was on multilateral issues: promoting

4 According to the understanding of Brazilian diplomacy, the United States were the main world leader who would have to share the management of world order with other consolidated powers and minor allies, incorporating demands from such allies along this process within the framework of global politics. In regional terms, a close alliance with the United States would have set limits to Brazilian autonomy regarded as necessary in order to build a regional leadership project.

5 BRAZIL Country Strategy Paper/National Indicative Programme 2007-2013. http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/docs/brazil_csp_mid-term_review_en.pdf, Accessed March 01, 2016.

6 <https://eulacfoundation.org/en/system/files/TOWARDS%20AN%20EU-BRAZIL%20STRATEGIC%20PARTNERSHIP.pdf>. Accessed March 01, 2016.

7 Brazil, China, India, South Africa and Mexico were all invited to the G8 summit in 2007.

peace and security, human rights (setting a schedule for regular consultations on this topic among multilateral institutions and negotiation networks), disarmament, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and security. Covering technical issues and involving Brazilian domestic players, the existing dialogues about climate change and sustainable development were supplemented by others covering macroeconomic issues, investment, trade, IT, intellectual property, industrial output, social cohesion, social development and employment, nuclear energy and others. These sector dialogues basically addressed domestic issues through bilateral conversations.

With regard to sustainable development, the Joint Action Plan included triangular cooperation geared towards lower income countries. Although strictly speaking these initiatives were not included in the realm of multilateral institutions, their results exerted impacts in other countries. During the Lula administration, south-south cooperation grew considerably in Brazil, mostly with lower income African and Latin American countries. Brazil's triangular cooperation with some western donors and Japan "expanded quickly thanks to the combination of its comparative advantages, especially its economic and cultural affinities with countries from the south, the adaptability of its policies and development experiences, and lower execution costs" (Ayllón Pino 2014, 131). The key areas of action set forth in the plan were bioenergy, health and agriculture.

Another point mentioned in the Joint Action Plan regarded inter-regional cooperation, indicating the importance of resuming and reinvigorating EU-MERCOSUR talks and the bi-regional strategic partnership between the EU and the Latin America and the Caribbean⁸. Science, technology and innovation – all sensitive areas for Brazil – were included, which consolidated the dialogue on this area established through the Agreement signed in 2004. Finally, one novel initiative was the establishment of a dialogue on cultural policies.

By the end of the Lula administration, the concrete results of the strategic partnership were limited. The joint statements at the 2008, 2009 and 2010 summits stressed topics focusing on issues of multilateral institutions and negotiations connected with the defence such principles as democracy, the rule of law and human rights, and the importance of joint work to resolve global issues, especially climate change, sustainable development and energy security (Lazarou and Fonseca 2013). Due to Brazil's insistence, the effort to push for a reform of the United Nations and the global financial system were also items included in these statements.

The content of the statements implies that these two global players, although very different, with their global reach, had supposedly the "same objectives in terms of their vision of the international order" (ibid., 109)⁹, but in practice their interactions did not bear much fruit. Despite the EU's initial expectations of joint action and Brazil's hopes to see its interests and preferences being advocated for in the global arena (Ferreira-Pereira 2015), to align the two parties' interests proved to be rather difficult. While Brazilian policymakers may initially have seen some European countries as important allies in the strive to get international institutions

8 When the strategic partnership was signed, the negotiations were already under way, although at that particular time they were suspended and the initial goals were far from being attained. The negotiations had been halted in 2004 and only resumed in 2010.

9 The alignment of objectives and visions does not only show in the statements, but is regarded as something obvious by several observers, such as Telò (2014) and Ferreira-Pereira (2015).

reviewed, a closer alignment over some key topics was clearly hard to be brought about. Basically, it became clear to the Brazilian diplomats that the two sides' conceptions did not coincide a great deal (Saraiva 2014). The fact that, in a fragmented political world order, the EU was keen to build bridges with the USA, and countries from the global south prevented Europeans from working more closely with Brazil in order to review the world order. Meanwhile, Brazil's interest in partnering with other countries from the global south and participating in dialogue forums like IBAS, BASIC, the G20 and the BRICS meant that the EU was pushed down in Brazil's list of foreign policy priorities (Ferreira-Pereira 2015).

Gratius (2011, 4) draws attention to the different votes in the United Nations regarding the nuclear agreement with Iran in 2010 and the project to expand the Security Council. There were also divergences in the talks held at the International Monetary Fund, where Brazil was keen to boost its membership quota, in alliance with the other BRICS. As for nuclear disarmament, Brazil took a different position from France and the UK (the two nuclear powers in the EU). When it came to human rights, during the Lula administration, this question was sidelined for the sake of other priority partnerships with emerging countries. To make matters worse, the Lula administration attempted to associate human rights with development, while EU countries showed a preference for speaking out against specific countries for their political and civil right violations. Basically, Brazil's hopes for a reform of the UN Security Council got no practical support from any countries in Europe¹⁰.

Brazil's projection on the international scenario was based on beliefs in autonomy and on advocating for the inclusion of more players in international decision making organizations, Brazilian diplomatic efforts being geared towards greater projection of the country on the international scenario as a leader of southern nations. While some alignment may have been possible with their vague defence of multilateralism, the countries of the EU ultimately defended the *status quo* of existing international institutions. According to Gratius (2012, 12), the global aspirations of the EU and Brazil were essentially different: while the European nations made every effort to maintain their traditional pre-eminence in multilateral organizations, Brazil wanted to boost its global presence and influence so as to challenge the positions defended by the USA. The defence of multilateralism *per se* was another topic of concern, as the preferences of both sides as to what shape such defence should take did not actually overlap. While the EU called for a normative global order, Brazil envisaged a non-hegemonic scenario with limited rules and a pluralistic international system of sovereign states. As the gap between the two parties widened, their positions at international forums tended to diverge. In its efforts to have international institutions reviewed, Brazil found that its most natural bedfellows were not Europeans, but other emerging countries.

However, as regards climate change and sustainable development, despite the different scenarios faced by both players, the strategic partnership paved the way for greater understanding

10 It is worth noting that the major hindrance to European support for an effective reform of the United Nations is the lack of internal cohesion as to how the reformed UN would look like. Germany has claimed permanent membership in the Security Council, but this has been countered by Italy and France. A group of states believe that the EU should be represented as a block, but this would undermine France's and the UK's special status.

and cooperation. The multilateral dimension was characterized by divergences and by Brazil's alignment with positions taken by other southern countries in the BASIC group. The Brazilian government's position stating that both the United States and the EU should undertake greater carbon emission reductions resulted in divergent positions taken by Brazil and the EU at the meeting in Copenhagen. Meanwhile, in the bilateral sphere, despite the obstacles faced on the home front, some progress was made as the sector of cooperation attracted the lion's share of European resources¹¹. Regarding the domestic technical bilateral sphere, four other sector dialogues were set up between 2009 and 2010 to discuss nuclear energy, sanitary and phytosanitary issues, competition and statistics with a view to measuring the country's indicators.

As for triangular cooperation, the first initiative agreed by Brazil and the EU for the production of bioenergy was launched in Mozambique in 2010, towards the end of Lula's second term. The Brazilian Cooperation Agency also pursued other triangular cooperation agreements with European countries, however external to the sphere of the strategic partnership.

With regard to inter-regional cooperation, the results were sparse. Despite being one of the items mentioned in the strategic partnership, trade has always triggered friction and disagreements. Talks for the EU-MERCOSUR agreement were resumed in 2010, partly thanks to the favourable environment provided by the strategic partnership. However, this partnership ended up drawing attention away from the political dialogue and cooperation in the field of inter-regional relations.

Meanwhile, when it came to regional multilateralism in Latin America, there seems to have been some common values shared by Brazil and the EU. The strategic partnership was signed at a time when Brazil was building up its leadership in South America, regional asymmetries were growing in favour of Brazil, the Lula administration was undergoing a period of success, and left-leaning governments were gaining power in the region. Europe felt it shared some common values with Brazil when it came to the defence of multilateralism in global politics, political stability, the maintenance of democratic regimes and the fight against poverty in the region. The EU started to regard Brazil as a possible leader in South America capable to curb Chávez's excesses and offset Bolivarian socialism by striking a balance between economic growth and social inclusion.

Unfortunately, the potential areas of common ground failed to yield results. Although expectations from both sides converged when it came to South America, "for the Brazilian government taking joint action with the EU in the region was neither necessary nor desirable" (Saraiva 2014, 411). Brazil's dealings with its neighbours depended on its autonomy, so even a tacit alliance with the EU could kindle mistrust and hamper Brazil's aspirations to become the regional leader. The Brazilian government did not agree with the EU on what model of regionalism would be the best. Brazil focused its regional policy on a post-neoliberal sort of regionalism which would take shape in the UNASUR, but this failed to coincide with Europe's understanding that regional integration should be developed through trade. Besides that, Brazil focused on South America, while the EU continued to deal with the whole of Latin America. The EU and Brazil also started to diverge regarding their stances on democracy, since various Brazilian government leaders held

11 In the EU's *Brazil country strategy paper for 2007-2013*, 30% of the resources were assigned to the promotion of environmental sustainability (Gratius and González 2012, p.17).

views that combined traditional representative democracy with participatory democracy, while the Brazilian government formed closer alliances with regional governments that had reformulated their respective constitutions. In the absence of a USA policy for the region, Brazil enjoyed considerable autonomy to conduct its South American policy. Finally, some leaders from the ruling party regarded the countries of Europe as extra-regional powers.

Progress started to be made in the area of science and technology when new cooperation arrangements between Brazil and European scientific institutions were set in motion (Whitman and Rodt 2012, 39). In 2010, the creation of the Institute of European Studies by a pool of Brazilian universities was announced.

As far as support for projects in the bilateral sphere are concerned, during three years of the Lula administration 37 projects related to 11 sector dialogues received support¹² after calls for project funding were published.

The financial crisis that started in 2008 put some strain on the partnership and revealed some fault lines in the structure of the EU, particularly in their plans to strengthen the Euro Zone. Europe's capacity to manage the global economic order started to be challenged by alternatives put forward by emerging countries, Brazil included. In 2009, President Lula stated that the financial crisis had been caused by "white, blue-eyed folk"¹³. Lazarou and Fonseca (2013, 111) argue that the crisis hampered the partnership because it affected the two sides disproportionately: the EU was severely shaken while Brazil came off relatively unharmed. According to Ayllón Pino and Saraiva (2011, 59), the power imbalance that had historically characterized relations between the two parties was gradually supplanted by a stronger international position on the part of Brazil. The winds of change, so it seemed to Brazilian policymakers, were finally blowing (Lazarou and Fonseca 2013, 112)

Foreign policy under Dilma Rousseff

The foreign policy adopted by Lula was not continued by his successor. Although President Rousseff's discourse initially seemed to indicate that the strategies inherited from her predecessor would be maintained, the Rousseff administration introduced progressive changes and retractions in Brazil's foreign affairs.

In multilateral terms, Brazil's calls for reforms were kept in place, resulting in some misalignments with certain western powers. Support for multilateralism based on the idea of reviewing international institutions remained in place. Likewise, a preference for a non-hegemonic scenario with few rules and a pluralistic international system of sovereign states prevailed. As for international security, Brazil's diplomatic corps first made efforts to keep in place the strategy for playing a leading role, but these efforts were not sustained for much longer.

12 <http://sectordialogues.org/pt-br/pagina-estatica/acoes-apoiadas/apresentacao>. Accessed December 25, 2015.

13 "Lula diz que a crise é causada por 'gente branca de olhos azuis'", *O Globo*, 26/March/2009. <http://oglobo.globo.com/economia/lula-diz-que-crise-causada-por-gente-branca-de-olhos-azuis-3132357>. Accessed December 25, 2015.

In 2011, after the Libya crisis, Dilma Rousseff proposed a variant on the “responsibility to protect”, called “responsibility when protecting”¹⁴, which was regarded as a better strategy for assuring the protection of individuals in situations of crisis. However, Brazil’s diplomats did not pursue such a stance in the debates on the subject, and the proposal gradually fell by the wayside. As for the international agenda, there were moves to coordinate Brazil’s position with those of other emerging nations in the UN, which resulted in aligned voting in the Security Council about issues such as the internal conflicts in Libya and Syria. The quest for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council ceased to be a priority. Although the strategies have not officially changed, they gradually lost impetus.

Brazil’s interaction with the other BRICS was a major goal in Rousseff’s foreign policy. Summits were held and a variety of agreements were signed. However, it was in the realm of finance that the BRICS made headway. China, a member of this group, assured its role as a major economic partner; indeed, in 2010 it even became Brazil’s number one investor. As for relations with the United States, the first move of the Rousseff administration was to establish closer ties. However, in 2013 matters turned sour when the USA National Security Agency’s espionage activities, including prying into the affairs of the president herself and some Brazilian companies, came to light.

In South America, Brazil’s attempts to define the regional agenda increasingly lost political influence under the Rousseff administration. Nonetheless, UNASUR was still the first port of call when tackling situations of crisis, while CLACS, created during the last year of Lula’s presidency, received no attention neither from diplomatic circles nor from the president herself. The EU’s early expectation that the new government would give less support to left-wing governments in the region proved unfounded. When crises sprung up in the region, the leaders of the Workers’ Party proved they still wielded significant influence within the government. As the Brazilian economy gradually deteriorated, the capacity of the country to cover the costs of regional cooperation increasingly diminished. Likewise, infrastructure investments in the region gradually dwindled.

A few factors made it harder to maintain previous patterns of behaviour. The Rousseff government certainly faced harsher national and international scenarios than did the Lula administration. Since the beginning of the first term, the economic crisis suffered by the established powers gave way to economic recovery in the USA, while the Euro Zone crisis was gradually reined in. Such changes put the G7 firmly back in centre stage and reduced the emerging countries’ room for manoeuvre. The Doha Round made no progress and talks started for the formation of large free-trade blocks, which has made it harder for Brazil to find its place in the international economy. The rise of the Chinese economy has again tipped the economic balance, and the country now enjoys a north-south style of relationship with Brazil. The high price boom for Brazil’s export commodities is over. Politically speaking, although traditional western multilateralism was challenged, the emerging countries failed to set a new global politics agenda.

14 <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/pt-BR/discursos-artigos-e-entrevistas-categoria/presidente-da-republica-federativa-do-brasil-discursos/4675-discurso-na-abertura-do-debate-geral-da-66-assembleia-geral-das-nacoes-unidas-nova-york-eua-21-09-2011>. Accessed December 16, 2015.

The Brazilian economy was shaken by the international financial crisis and some mistaken economic decisions made after 2008. The average GDP growth steadily slowed down until it was in the red in 2015. Brazil's plans to support the development of infrastructure (funded by the Brazilian Development Bank) suffered the impact exerted by the economic difficulties, hence a number of projects were left incomplete. The state of the economy had a knock-on effect on politics. In a nutshell, the second term began in the midst of an economic crisis, a political crisis and an institutional crisis as members of the government coalition in congress defected to the opposition.

When it comes to foreign policymaking, presidential diplomacy was abandoned. President Rousseff clearly demonstrated little interest in foreign affairs, particularly those only yielding sporadic and symbolic gains, intangible in the short term. Decision-making became less centralised, and different government agencies gradually took responsibility for the technical aspects of foreign economic policy while the president's advisory has invested their energy into tackling political crises in South America.

Accordingly, the relationship between President Rousseff and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs deteriorated as time went by. The Ministry's budget was cut back, so were the number of openings for new diplomats, which seems to indicate that Brazil would henceforth be less involved in discussions on international affairs. As Veiga and Rios (2011) see it, short-term economics became the government's primary foreign policy concern, to the detriment of strategic policies with international repercussion. The waning influence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the delegation of foreign-policy decisions to multiple agencies and the president's own disinterest meant that the decision-making processes and the responsibility for setting the agenda, which could lie with either the president or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, fell between two stools.

At the beginning of Rousseff's second term of office, due to the political crisis and the clashes between her and congress, only a few foreign policy topics were part of the political debate. Then, the inward-looking view of some domestic political players gradually gained ground triggering criticism against the country's foreign policy and investments abroad.

Brazil and the European Union since 2011

The strategic partnership with the EU did not bear any significant fruit in the international multilateral arena during the Rousseff years. It is clear in Brazilian diplomatic circles that conceptions held by the two sides no longer coincide in many areas. Meanwhile, Brazil's previous plans to boost its global projection, which firstly inspired Europe to propose the partnership, waned. Its participation in international politics visibly lost any proactive drive. Rather than spearheading actions in global politics, the country merely started taking reactive stances when required.

Dilma Rousseff's first Brazil-EU summit as president was held in October 2011. At the summit, the 2nd Joint Action Plan, to be rolled out between 2012 and 2014, was signed. Very little was new in the joint statement elaborated at the meeting; it focused on fostering joint actions to respond to multilateral topics such as the environment, peacekeeping operations and

international security, the reform of the United Nations and human rights issues. It also emphasized and repeatedly mentioned exchanges in the fields of academia, technology and innovation, which was a distinctive policy of Rousseff's administration.¹⁵

The 2nd Joint Action Plan followed much the same lines as the first, introducing few new aspects. It did introduce a high-level dialogue about UN issues and also highlighted the struggle against terrorism and organised crime. Finally, it established new sector dialogues about disaster risk reduction and tourism.

The shift away from the strategies to boost Brazil's global projection under the Rousseff administration exerted an impact on the strategic partnership. No summit was held in 2012; then, the sixth and seventh summits were held in 2013 and 2014. The statements from the last two summits focused primarily on economic issues – short-term gains – and sustainable development. Multilateral security issues like the Syrian war and security problems in Africa were no longer remarked in the statements. In 2014, IT was highlighted and mention was made of the 3rd Joint Action Plan, to be executed between 2015 and 2017. The political and institutional crisis in 2015 took up much of the government's time and energy, so whatever was not a priority in foreign policy terms was put on hold. There was no 2015 summit and the 3rd Joint Action Plan has not yet been confirmed.

The strategic partnership and global multilateral interactions

Besides foreign policy becoming increasingly less central, under Dilma Rousseff and Lula administrations there have been divergences between Brazil's and Europe's positions in multilateral forums. Regarding their participation in global multilateral forums, although many items were listed in the joint statements and in the 2nd Joint Action Plan, under the Rousseff administration results were even poorer than under the Lula administration. Concerning human rights, there has been a degree of tension due to disparities between Brazil's defence of certain human right principles and its respect for the sovereignty of foreign states when multilaterally addressing crises overseas. Although Brazil has supported some of the resolutions taken by the UN Human Rights Council, there has been a gap between Brazil's position and that of the EU. Votes of EU member states and Brazil have diverged on how to address human right issues¹⁶.

Brazil's autonomous positions in foreign policy often did not coincide with Europe's prevailing stances on international security, particularly regarding domestic conflicts in Libya and Syria. Brazil continues to stand by the principles of non-intervention and peaceful resolution of controversies, which are so deeply rooted in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs¹⁷. Despite common action was repeatedly mentioned in the joint statement produced in the 2013 summit, Dilma Rousseff

¹⁵ This declaration refers directly to the program "Science with no Borders" created by the Rousseff administration.

¹⁶ While Europe prefers country-specific resolutions, Brazil is in favour of regulating major issues, especially second- and third-generation human rights.

¹⁷ In the case of Libya, Germany took a similar stance to Brazil.

expressed reservations concerning France's actions in Mali (Ferreira-Pereira 2015, 1). As regards the formation and defence of the Palestinian state, the positions of the two parties also diverged. The distance taken by Brazil from principles traditionally defended by the EU is evident in the case of the principle "responsibility while protecting" as proposed by the Brazilian government¹⁸.

When it comes to international economic institutions, wrangles at the WTO persisted and the EU started talks about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. Although in 2010 an agreement was reached to change Brazil's IMF quota, it was not implemented because of resistance on the part of the United States and inertia on the part of Europe. The European states therefore maintained the quotas that the Brazilian government was questioning¹⁹. The crisis in the Euro Zone put some strain on the EU's spirit of "solidarity" (Ferreira-Pereira 2015). Partly in response to this, the creation of a development bank by the BRICS was approved in 2014. At the G20, the Brazilian government was particularly keen to align its position with its BRICS partners, even if this meant no alignment with countries from the global north. According to Otero-Iglesias (2012, 14), the Brazilian government was averse to financial and banking systems that might curtail its freedom of action and showed a preference for a "profitable multilateralism" geared towards meeting the country's economic interests.

In terms of information technology and control, although the disclosure of spying activities by the US National Security Agency prompted a partnership between Brazil and Germany, and the fact that this issue was raised repeatedly in the last two summits, the EU as a whole did not repudiate the action strongly enough because member states held different views on the subject. Ultimately, the document approved by the United Nations fell short of what the Brazilian government had hoped for.

Meanwhile, the multilateral discussions about climate change became increasingly important. At the Durban meeting in 2011, Brazil took a position that was closer to the EU's, placing itself as a mediator between the EU's position on legal international commitments and China and India, as both only defended voluntary reductions (Gratius and González 2012, 14). At the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, shared ideas between Brazil and the EU backtracked somewhat, as the two sides diverged on a number of topics: firstly, they disagreed on the concept of a green economy; secondly, they differed on the dynamics of the policy for mitigating the impacts of deforestation-related emissions and the degradation of forests on climate change; and thirdly, they diverged on the instruments for building an international regime with sustainable development (ibid, 12). Indeed, the Rousseff administration defended the idea of shared but differentiated responsibility among the countries of the global north and the global south when it comes to environmental damage.

The environmental question is a delicate ongoing issue for the Brazilian government. There has been tension in the country between the idea of environmental protection in a green powered economy and economic development at any cost, which curbs Brazil's scope for action. While showing

18 The 'responsibility when protecting' was no mentioned in any of the joint statements since 2011.

19 In late 2015, the USA congress finally approved the change.

willingness to commit to reducing its carbon emissions and deforestation levels, the government challenged the International Court of Human Rights in order to build the Belo Monte hydroelectric power plant²⁰. The Brazilian way to conciliate energy security and economic development is rather different from what Europeans believe (Ferreira-Pereira 2015). Nevertheless, at the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015, Brazil and the EU launched a joint proposal for the regulation of the carbon market, which served as a basis for the agreement signed subsequently.

The bilateral sphere: sustainable development, investments, science and technology

Both the financial crisis in the Euro Zone and the Brazilian economic crisis exerted an impact on bilateral talks. Nonetheless, bilateral sector dialogues between Brazil and the EU prospered since a set of interaction channels were established after the creation of the European External Action Service (subsequently a European delegation was implemented in Brazil), enabling progress in diplomatic, technical and academic dialogues.

In the first three years of the Rousseff administration, four calls for projects were published under different sector dialogues, which resulted in funding available for 123 proposals related to 22 sector dialogues. These four calls²¹ covered dialogues about environmental dimension of sustainable development, human rights, governance in the public sector, cultural policies and regional integration.

With regard to the environmental issue, dialogues covering bilateral topics were more successful than the discussions held in multilateral forums. Despite the difficulties posed by Brazilian legislation, this is an area that received significant cooperative funding from the EU. There has also been a strong exchange in the field of academia involving think tanks, and between city governments and civil society, thus opening up interesting prospects.

European investments in Brazil – one of the main goals of the strategic partnership – were hampered by the Euro Zone crisis, as the levels of growth expected in the Joint Action Plans were not reached. Nevertheless, around 50% of all the FDI flows which Brazil received between 2008 and 2012 came from the European Union (Otero-Iglesias 2014, 164).

In the realm of science, technology and innovation, the exchange of students and scholars expanded significantly and President Rousseff paid special attention to such programs. Despite the fact that European support for Brazilian projects in which the Brazilian government invested heavily fell short of initial expectations²², technology transfers failed to materialise in the volume expected – more was achieved through agreements with individual European countries than with the EU as such – and the Institute of European Studies, created in 2011, was interrupted, this

20 With significant environmental impacts.

21 For more on the projects funded through the calls for projects, see <http://sectordialogues.org/pt-br/pagina-estatica/acoes-apoiadas/apresentacao>. Accessed December 28, 2015.

22 Ferreira-Pereira (2013, p.17) mentions a lack of support by the EU for the Science with no Borders programme.

area was extremely relevant, and a significant number of Brazilian students and researchers have worked, researched and studied for some time at European institutions.²³

The regional dimension

Brazil conducted a two-pronged interaction with the EU when it came to the regional dimension. When the partnership was launched, the common goals mentioned in the joint statement included strengthening the relation between the EU and MERCOSUR, and the dialogue between the EU and Latin American and Caribbean states (EU-CLACS, as of 2014), as well as reinforcing regionalism. In both cases, maintaining regional stability and structuring regional governance were regarded as two important factors by the EU so that the integration process would make significant progress.

Although the inter-regional dialogue between the EU and CLACS, of which Brazil is a member, had been under way for some time, from a European perspective²⁴ the strategic partnership put Brazil on a different footing compared to the other countries in the region.

Overall, circumstances developed in such a way that greater coordination between Brazil and the EU on regional affairs was made possible. Because of its internal differences, Latin America is neither a fitting international player to maintain a fruitful dialogue with the EU, nor is it a player holding common positions with regard to international affairs. Besides the formation of UNASUR, which weakened both CLACS and the idea of Latin America *per se*, the Latin American countries have not reached any general agreement with regard to their national political preferences and development strategies. CLACS itself has not been able to overcome these differences. The strategic partnership between the EU and CLACS, which is important for European inter-regionalism, is not regarded as a priority by the Brazilian government, which has invested more energy into UNASUR. Finally, Brazil regards its strategic partnership with the EU as the best mechanism for interacting with Europe, and the best foreign policy tool to fuel Brazil's global projection and obtain bilateral gains.

The EU's expectations that they might formulate common positions with Brazil and that Brazil could become a potential leader in the region – fueled by Brazil's autonomous policies towards its neighbours – brought about a different balance for the UE-Brazil-Latin America relations. This enabled Brazil to stand in a more favourable position in order to exert an influence on the relations between the EU and the other Latin American countries. However, joint actions were never taken. The fact that Dilma Rouseff took office did not favour the scenario of interactions among Brazil-UE-CLACS with regard to issues in the global agenda.

In fact, because the global crisis hit democratic regimes everywhere, the idea that Brazil and the EU could stand for common values within a three-sided strategic partnership with CLACS has proved unfounded. When the Paraguayan president was impeached in 2012, Brazil chaired a South American repudiation to such ousting through MERCOSUR and UNASUR, from which

²³ The Dialogue on Science and Technology was included in three of the four calls for projects made between 2011 and 2013.

²⁴ With the exception of Mexico, with which the EU also has a strategic partnership.

Paraguay was temporarily suspended. CLACS, for its part, played no key role in this event, and the EU took a more conciliatory stance, following the lead of the Organization of American States, which regarded the impeachment as legal and constitutional. The crisis that unraveled in Venezuela was also being dealt with via UNASUR; the EU, after making some strongly worded statements, restricted itself to supporting the tentative dialogue implemented by UNASUR. Politically speaking, the decision taken by some EU member states denying an aeroplane carrying Evo Morales access to their air space during the USA spying scandal, thus putting the Bolivian president at risk, was collectively regarded by UNASUR as an act of disrespect for the region.

The second forum for regional interaction is the EU-MERCOSUR talks, which has been positively regarded in every joint statement issued by Brazil and the EU. The political dialogue, which lost its impetus after the signing of the Brazil-EU strategic partnership, got stuck in limbo, and trade talks for the agreement between the EU and MERCOSUR have also failed to make progress since they were resumed in 2010. The protectionist measures then taken by Argentina, plus the inclusion of Venezuela as a member of the block, dampened Europe's enthusiasm for this topic. Moreover, the Euro Zone crisis also prevented the talks from making further progress. Meanwhile, the TTIP talks exerted an impact on Brazil's position, as Brazil gradually showed greater interest in a trade agreement with the EU, but without giving up MERCOSUR customs union²⁵.

Conclusion

The year 2007 was the outcome of a slow process that brought Brazil and the EU closer together, stemming from Brazil's new proactive stance in the international arena. The strategic partnership spawned a number of sector dialogues, the main focus being maintaining coordinated positions in international multilateral forums. Nevertheless, since the partnership was signed, what has prevailed is a number of conflicting positions over political topics involving multilateral values as well as institutions with little alignment of the respective strategies and preferences.

These divergences could be understood as deriving from some fundamental underlying differences. Firstly, Brazil has shown preference for a pluralistic multipolar world order of sovereign states that tolerates different world views, while the EU stands for an international society of states that is liberal and normative. Although Brazil belongs to the western world as regards domestic customs and visions, its foreign policy sustains an international approach based on respect for the sovereignty of foreign states, accepting different ideologies and political regimes. Secondly, Brazil's diplomatic policy to build coalitions within international institutions and to forge ties with other emerging countries, some of which have non-liberal models in place, is relevant and leverages Brazil's positions in international politics. Finally, while Brazil does share values with the EU and does follow western patterns domestically, diplomatically speaking it does not recognise the EU as a normative power in the international order.

25 The election of Mauricio Macri as the president of Argentina could herald new progress in the talks.

Since 2008, the EU has been dealing with a financial crisis, which has had multiple repercussions internally and in its external affairs²⁶. Meanwhile, since Dilma Rousseff became president, Brazil has faced economic difficulties and its foreign policy has changed, reducing the emphasis on proactive stances designed to build the country's long-term international standing. The aforementioned plus divergences in Brazil's and the EU's positions in multilateral forums, which was previously observed during Lula's years in office, exchanges between Brazil and the EU have contracted, except as regards the environment and climate change, where seemingly interactions are still alive.

Nonetheless, while there may have been limitations, some positive changes have taken place in the relation between the two parties and progress has been made in bilateral terms. Two Joint Action Plans have been rolled out and a whole range of sector dialogues have been pursued in the bilateral sphere. Areas of cooperation between the EU and Brazil which used to take place outside regular institutional frameworks have now been institutionalized and given a new scope for implementation. The interaction channels constructed since the creation of the EEAS, technical and scientific exchanges and better mutual understanding should not to be disregarded. Since the multilateral dimension has been put on the back burner under Dilma Rousseff, this kind of interactions have become even more important. In the first three years of the Rousseff government, four calls for projects were published covering 22 sector dialogues.

In 2015, the partnership was put on hold when the 3rd Joint Action Plan was shelved and the annual summit was cancelled, and nothing much has happened in 2016.

The long impeachment process against Dilma Rousseff and the rise of a new president, who has shown disposition to alter the direction of Brazil's foreign policy, open up a new chapter full of challenges for the strategic partnership between Brazil and the EU.

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²⁶ Internally, in some European states the economic crisis reduced the GDP growth – or shrunk it –, Germany started playing an increasingly central role and the decision making process found greater obstacles. Nationalistic political parties grew in importance. Externally, the vision of the EU as a normative power has been shaken, as well as the vision of the EU as a benchmark in economics. The crises in Iraq and Syria have excreted great migration pressure because of refugees coming into Europe from those countries.

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