

Thematic Section 49
“Emerging Powers, Global Institutions and Crisis-Management”

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**From Tegucigalpa to Teheran:
Brazil’s diplomacy as an emerging Western country**

ABSTRACT

Brazil’s foreign policy is marked by a relentless pursuit for autonomy, which was first practiced by a posture of distance, then by participation, and – since the beginning of the 21st century – by a position of diversification that has favored more heterodox behaviors. The search for new partners and the obvious desire to become more involved in international issues seem to stimulate both an adaptation to new economic contexts and a political ambition to redesign the global scenario according to the country’s own interests. However, the abysmal economic gap between Brazil and its southern partners causes an augment in institutional barriers and an increasing awareness that being an emerging country is a quality that must not be restricted by other nations’ interests. The result is an attitude of detachment from the integrationist ideal and a shift to the simple virtues of cooperation between nation states, including the so-called “diplomacy for development”. Moreover, it should be noted that Brasilia – although not abandoning its past of almost absolute neutrality – seeks to participate more and more in managing certain crises of international significance. Notwithstanding, Brazil can be considered the most Western of emerging countries and is thus becoming an important ally for developed nations. These nations must in turn cope with such emerging countries, including the cultural idiosyncrasies that may have significant political consequences for the international system.

Introduction

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

Vigevani & Cepaluni (2007) have suggested that Brazil’s foreign policy during the 20th century and early 21st century has been characterized by a quest for autonomy, and that autonomy can be classified into three types of approaches: distance, participation and diversification.

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

In this context, this paper aims to discuss Brazil’s diplomatic posture as an emerging Western country. For this purpose, we will first present a brief review of the country’s pursuit for international insertion through the search for new partners,

followed by an analysis of Brazil's participation in the management of two major international crises: the Honduran constitutional crisis and the Iranian nuclear crisis. We will conclude the paper with considerations on the idea of Brazil as the most Western of emerging countries.

Brazil's international insertion and the search for new partners

According to Vigevani & Cepaluni (2007), Brazil's foreign policy has been historically marked by an intense search for autonomy. These authors suggest that such a search can be divided roughly into three approaches: the search for autonomy through distance, the search for autonomy through participation and the search for autonomy through diversification:

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

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

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

Itamaraty's foreign policy is traditionally viewed as neutral – one that tends to define power related issues in civil and normative terms. After the Cold War, this trend returned as an attempt at relatively deep regional integration, modeled especially on Latin American regionalism patterns and based on supranational principles. Within this scenario Mercosur has obviously acquired a special role, which educational vocation

and legitimizing character are undeniable. However, the abysmal economic gap between Brazil and its southern partners promotes increasing institutional barriers and a growing awareness that being an emerging country is a quality that must not be restricted by other nations' interests. As a possible result comes a detachment from the integrationist ideal and a shift to the virtues of simple interstate cooperation – including the so-called “diplomacy for development” (as put forth by Dauvergne & Farias, 2012).

Notwithstanding, Brazil can be considered the most Western of emerging countries. The country's legacy and cultural affinities with American and European values makes it an important ally for developed nations, which must cope more and more with such emerging countries. Thus, due to Brazil's Western characteristics, it may also serve as an intermediary between developed nations and other emerging countries such as China, India and Russia, which civilizations encompass cultural idiosyncrasies that may have significant political consequences for the international system. In this context Brazil might acquire increasing status as a global leader that can help negotiate interstate interests.

As a symptom both of a detachment from Mercosur and of a recognition of the country's special status, one can point out the Brazil-European Union (EU) strategic partnership, launched at Lisbon on July 2007, in which Brazil seeks to overcome the difficulties of the Mercosur-EU negotiations supported on the EU perception that¹:

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

As a matter of fact, even though this partnership does not mention explicitly trade issues, it indicates a vast array of themes for cooperation²:

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

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

¹ José Manuel Barroso, President of European Commission: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-07-725_en.htm?locale=en#PR_metaPressRelease_bottom (April 04, 2013).

² Cf. Parceria Estratégica Brasil-União Européia – Plano de Ação Conjunto – 2008: https://infoeuropa.eu/ocid.pt/files/web/documentos/ue/2008/2008_uebrasil_plano.pdf (April 04, 2013).

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

Participation in the IBSA Dialogue Forum is a good example. As put by Dauvergne & Farias (2012): "What is significant here is how these three countries without a history of strategic partnering – with benign but thin relations – came together in a process of mutual identification". And although the emphasis is on technical cooperation, commerce has also benefitted from this arrangement as seen in data from the Brazilian Ministry of External relations: imports from the other members of this group increased 681.3% between 2002 and 2012, while exports grew 549,2%; overall commercial exchange increased 601.4% for the period stated. It is important to note that such numbers were almost twice as high as the total increases in imports and exports recorded for the period (301% and 372%, respectively) (Figures 01-02) MRE/DPR/DIC, 2013).

BRICS is another example. Brazil has used this forum to promote progressive ideas regarding renewable energy, for instance (i.e., biofuels³) (Dauvergne & Farias, 2012).

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

Regarding commerce, Brazilian imports from other BRICS countries rose from US\$3 billion in 2002 to US\$43.8 billion in 2012. Similarly, exports increased from US\$5.4 billion in 2002 to US\$54.2 billion in 2012. Overall commercial exchange grew from US\$8.2 billion in 2002 to US\$98 billion in 2012 (Figures 01-02). Considering 2013 data (January-April), this forum is presently responsible for 20.5% of Brazilian commercial exchange, and is only behind Asia^{4,5} (MRE/DPR/DIC, 2013).

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

³ According to Dauvergne & Farias (2012), Brazil also has technical cooperation agreements on biofuels with two multilateral institutions (the Economic Community of West African States and the European Union) and 70 countries, most of them developing countries.

⁴ Obviously both Asia and BRICS numbers include great participation from China (including Hong Kong and Macau), which is currently responsible for 17% of Brazilian overall commercial exchange.

⁵ Numbers for Asia do not include Middle Eastern countries, which are considered separately and are currently responsible for 4% of overall Brazilian commercial exchange (January-April 2013).

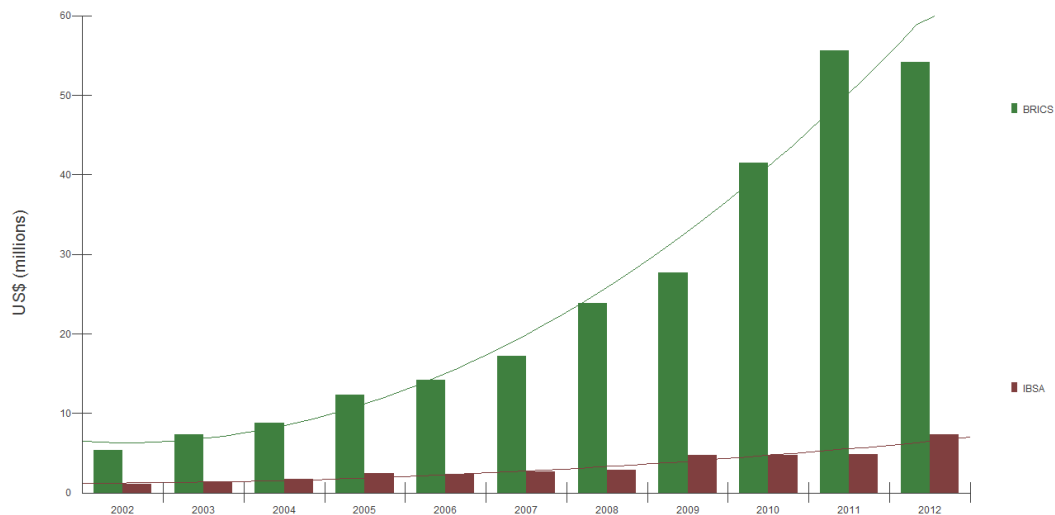


Figure 01. Evolution of Brazilian exports to other BRICS and IBSA countries between 2002 and 2012⁶.

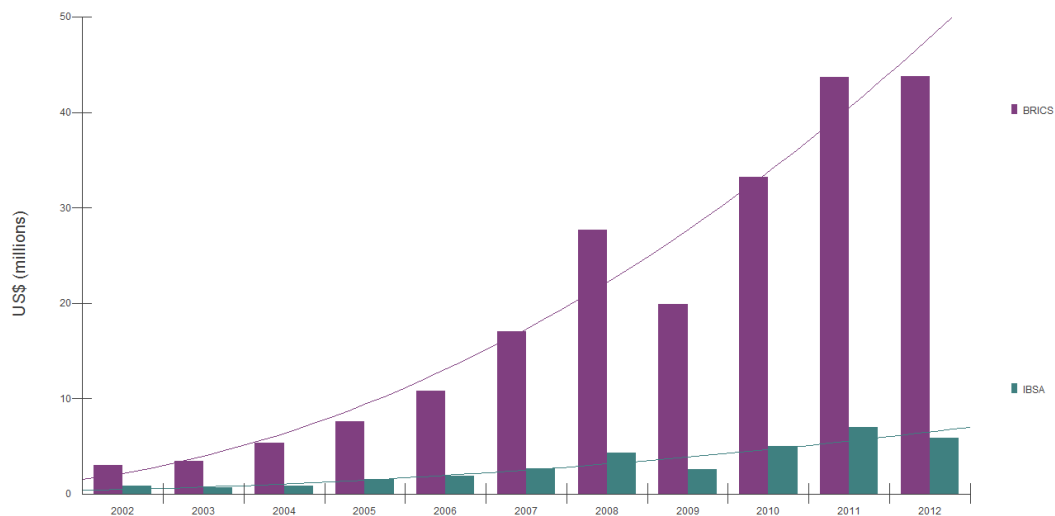


Figure 02. Evolution of Brazilian imports from other BRICS and IBSA countries between 2002 and 2012⁷.

⁶ Data compiled from MDIC (2013).

⁷ Data compiled from MDIC (2013).

Brazil's growing participation in the management of international crises

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

The so-called Honduras constitutional crisis was initiated due to an attempt by the then President Manuel Zelaya to hold a referendum to reform the country's constitution in 2009. Accused of wanting to change the constitution for his own benefit, he was detained by the military in June of the same year, as ordered by the Supreme Court, in what most of the international community called a coup d'état. Roberto Micheletti, which was then president of the Honduran Congress, became the Honduras president in Zelaya's place. After being forced to leave the country, in September Zelaya returned through the Brazilian Embassy. This caused strong reactions from the de facto government, such as orders to suspend several human rights for 45 days (IACRH, 2009; OAS, 2009). In parallel, the Brazilian government suspended previous visa agreements with Honduras.

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

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

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

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

“...it is evident that a certain ambiguity in relation to the recognition of the elections (...) and the fact that the United States did not put more pressure on Micheletti

allowed for those responsible for the coup to feel backed to proceed with their strategy”.

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

On a different note, according to Brun (2012), the Joint Declaration by Iran, Turkey and Brazil, signed May 17th, 2010 (also known as the Teheran Nuclear Declaration), gave Brazilian diplomacy unprecedented salience and reinforced its status as an emerging power.

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

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

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

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

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

“Brazil also has strong skepticism about the power of sanctions. In some extreme cases, sanctions may work. (...) In most cases sanctions affect the most vulnerable

people, they do not change the course of action of leaders and, if anything, they reinforce the more radical sectors in the countries concerned. That's what we saw very clearly in the case of Iraq – we saw in other cases as well, but Iraq was probably the best example of how the logic of sanctions works: sanctions precipitate reactions, which tend to toughen sanctions, in a kind of vicious circle that may have – as it had in the case of Iraq – very tragic consequences” (Amorim, 2010: unpagged).

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

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

2. We express our strong conviction that we have the opportunity now to begin a forward looking process that will create a positive, constructive, non-confrontational atmosphere leading to an era of interaction and cooperation.

3. We believe that the nuclear fuel exchange is instrumental in initiating cooperation in different areas, especially with regard to peaceful nuclear cooperation including nuclear power plant and research reactors construction.

(...)

9. Turkey and Brazil welcomed the continued readiness of the Islamic Republic of Iran to pursue its talks with the 5+1 countries in any place, including Turkey and Brazil, on the common concerns based on collective commitments according to the common points of their proposals.

10. Turkey and Brazil appreciated Iran's commitment to the NPT and its constructive role in pursuing the realization of nuclear rights of its Member States. The Islamic Republic of Iran likewise appreciated the constructive efforts of the friendly countries Turkey and Brazil in creating the conducive environment for the realization of Iran's rights” (Itamaraty, 2010: unpagged)”.

In the same abovementioned conference, Minister Celso Amorim criticized the international community's negative reactions to the declaration, especially that the

declaration was “not analyzed in full” before the sanctions to Iran were put to vote (Amorim, 2010).

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

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

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

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

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

Within such a context, an important idea is that of “civilian power” (or soft power) that was present in both situations and in Brazilian foreign policy in general. Dauvergne & Farias (2012) – which call Brazil “an atypical global power” (p. 904) and “the soft power great power” (p. 913) – highlight that although it is a rising influence in the international scenario, it is different from other emerging countries because it relies strongly on non-military power. Also, Brazil’s geopolitical situation is certainly more comfortable than that of Russia, India, China or even South Africa, in which cases certain neighbors could be a threat for their security. Additionally, the country has

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

Dauvergne & Farias (2012) call this kind of posture the “diplomacy of development”. There is an effort to promote so-called “technical cooperation agreements”, which according to these authors are different from developmental assistance or foreign aid in the sense that they emphasize the exchange of knowledge and practices. Monetary transfers are not the norm and there are no conditionalities for the receiver.

Accordingly, when considering a commercial viewpoint, it is clear that foreign trade interests are minimal in financial terms. Brazilian commercial exchange both with Iran and Honduras is low and has not varied much over the past few years in absolute terms or in terms of percentage (Figures 03-04). In both cases participation in Brazilian foreign trade does not surpass 1.5%⁸.

Nevertheless, as pointed out by Brun (2012), foreign trade with the Middle East is strategic for Brazil as in the past few years the country has been in a situation of near monopoly regarding certain food items as well as its interest in the region's petroleum⁹. On the other hand, the 21st century has been characterized by a new scenario for Brazil, of reduced dependency on foreign petroleum. It has been self-sufficient since the discovery of new sources of oil in the pre-salt layer of its continental shelf in 2006 and is also known for its investments in sugarcane alcohol and other biofuels over the past decades.

⁸ Exports to Iran have made up approximately 1% of Brazilian annual exports between 2002-2012, while annual imports from Iran and Honduras and exports to Honduras are close to 0% of Brazilian annual foreign trade when considering this period. Products commercialized between Brazil and Honduras consist mainly of manufactured items.

⁹ According to Brun (2012) based on UN data, Brazil exports mostly chicken, iron, sugar and airplanes to the region, while importing mostly petroleum and its derivatives.

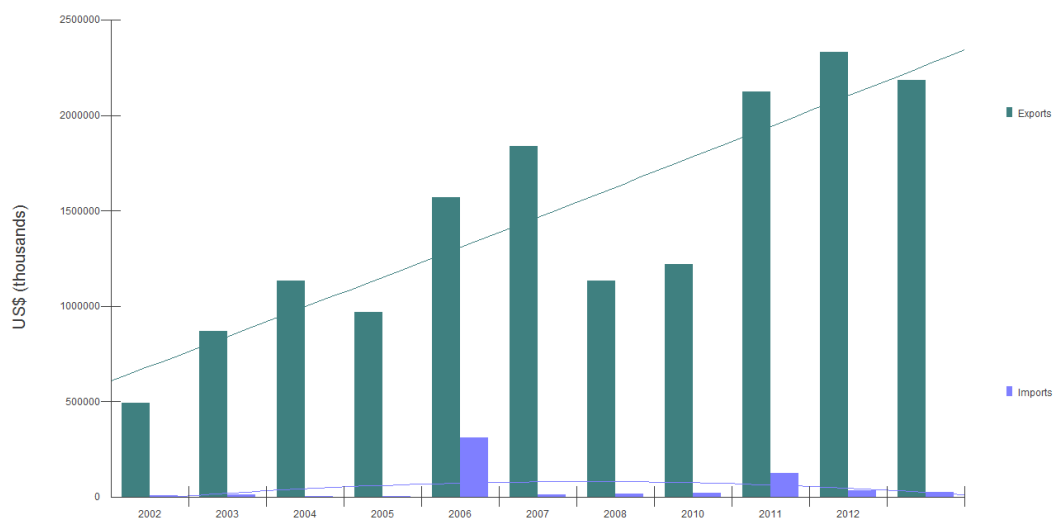


Figure 03. Evolution of Brazilian trade with Iran between 2002 and 2012¹⁰.

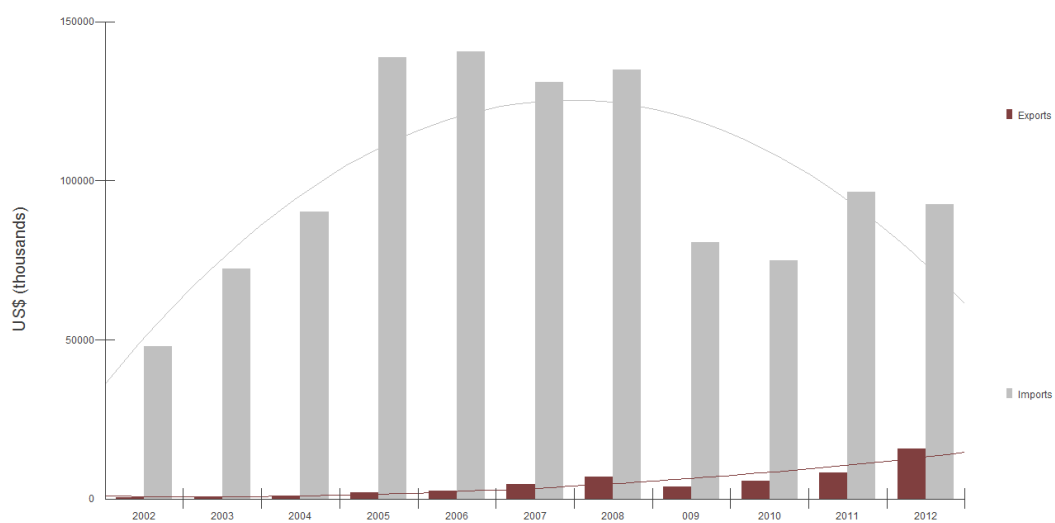


Figure 04. Evolution of Brazilian trade with Honduras between 2002 and 2012¹¹.

¹⁰ Data compiled from MDIC (2013).

¹¹ Data compiled from MDIC (2013).

Final considerations: Brazil as the most occidental of emerging countries

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

Accordingly, it seems like emerging powers are playing a capital role in these international regime changes. If China has become the most significant actor, its cultural idiosyncrasies – as well as those of Russia or India – may in some way scare western developed countries. In this context, European heritage and liberal and pacific traditions seem to make Brazil a confident point of reference among other emerging powers. As a matter of fact, Brasilia has increasingly been seeking to shape the international landscape in accordance with its own interests, and has been doing this according to liberal and democratic Western principles.

Therefore, Brasilia opts to: (i) favor state-centric actions over regional ones (in other words, regionalism should be based henceforth on cooperation and Mercosul is no longer a priority as it used to be); (ii) promote South-South cooperation through IBAS and BRICS, for instance, even though conventional and Western partners still continue to play an important role (such cooperation is based on real conditions – the huge increase of commercial exchange between these countries is unquestionable); (iii) intensify its action among global institutions, such as seeking out a permanent seat at the UN Security Council or aiming to preside the WTO¹²; (iii) deal more actively with global political crisis – as was the case of Honduras and Iran – as a way to show that world issues do matter for foreign policy elaboration.

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

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¹² Roberto Azevedo, a Brazilian diplomat, has been chosen on May 2013 to succeed Pascal Lami as Director of the WTO.

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