

A new world map and Brazil's foreign policy

NEW COALITIONS: HELPING BRING ABOUT CHANGE

Seven years ago, when talk emerged about the need to make changes in the world economic geography, and it was said that Brazil and other countries were ready to play a more significant role in the World Trade Organization (WTO) or to become permanent members of the UN Security Council, many reacted with skepticism. Both the world and Brazil have changed quite rapidly. What was considered to be “truths” in the past have yielded to factual evidence. Greater economic growth rates in relation to those of the developed world have made the developing countries central actors in the world economy.

Greater south-south coordination—at the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the UN—and new coalitions, such as BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China)—have raised the voices of countries that were once relegated to a secondary position. The more the developing countries discuss and cooperate among themselves, the more their voices will be heard by the rich countries. The recent financial crisis has made it even more clear that the world can no longer be governed by a club made up of just a few.

Brazil has decisively sought to play its role in this new framework. Seven-and-a-half years into President Lula's administration, the perception of Brazil abroad is quite different. It is undeniable that today, Brazil—as well as a new group of countries—has increasingly earned influence in the discussions about some of the main topics on the international agenda, from climate change to trade, from finance to peace and security.

These countries bring new perspectives to world problems and have contributed toward a new international balance.

In the case of Brazil, this change in

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perception was due primarily to transformations that took place in our economic, social, and political realities. Progress achieved on many fronts—from macroeconomic stability to redeeming our social debt—has made Brazil more stable and less unfair. President Lula's personal traits, as well as his direct involvement in international issues, have helped take Brazil's contributions to major debates on the international agenda.

It was in this context that Brazil developed its comprehensive and proactive foreign policy. We sought to build coalitions that have gone beyond traditional alliances and relations—which we strove to maintain and enhance, such as in the establishment of a Strategic Partnership with the European Union and a Global Partnership Dialogue with the United States.

Significant growth in our exports to other developing countries and the creation of mechanisms for dialogue and coordination, such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUL), the G20 within the WTO, the IBSA Dialogue

Forum (India, Brazil, and South Africa), and BRIC, reflect this trend toward a global foreign policy that excludes narrow notions of what the international role of countries with the characteristics of Brazil could and should be.

The basis for this new foreign policy was the increased integration of South America. One of the great assets Brazil has on the international arena is its harmonious relations with its neighbours, starting with our intense relationship with Argentina. From day one, President Lula's administration has undertaken efforts toward integrating the South American continent, through trade, infrastructure, and political dialogue.

In practice, the Mercosul-Andean Community agreement created a free trade zone encompassing all of South America. The physical integration of the continent has seen remarkable progress, linking the Atlantic and the Pacific. Our efforts to create a South American community resulted in the establishment of a new entity, UNASUL.

Building on a more integrated South America, Brazil engaged in creating mechanisms for dialogue and cooperation with countries in other regions, based on the perception that international realities could no longer afford the alienation of the developing world. The creation of the G20 within the WTO, at the Cancun Ministerial Meeting in 2003, marked the coming of age of countries from the South, transforming, once and for all, the decision-making process in trade negotiations.

THE IBSA DIALOGUE FORUM

The IBSA forum, in its turn, met the aspirations for coordination among three major multiethnic and multicultural democracies, which have much to say to the world about upholding tolerance and reconciling development with dem-

ocracy. In addition to political coordination and cooperation among the three countries, the IBSA forum has become a model for projects benefiting poorer nations, thus demonstrating in practice that solidarity is not an attribute solely of the rich.

We have also held summits between South American and African countries (ASA), as well as with Arab countries (ASPA). Taking into account their specific complementary natures, we have designed policies and built bridges connecting regions that were far apart. This political move resulted in remarkable progress in economic relations. Brazilian trade with Arab countries grew fourfold in seven years. Trade with Africa increased fivefold, to more than US\$26 billion, surpassing trade with traditional partners such as Germany and Japan.

These new coalitions are helping to change the world. In the economic arena, the replacement of the G7 with the G20 as the main international body has reset the course of production and international finance and constitutes evidence that in the absence of emerging countries, decisions regarding the world economy lack legitimacy and effectiveness.

Moreover, in the field of international peace and security, Brazil and Turkey were able to persuade Iran to take on the commitments provided for in the Tehran Declaration. This agreement makes clear that new perspectives and approaches

New barriers

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national security stand in contrast to the pressure on developing countries to liberalize their capital markets. Despite the fact that Costa Rica, Peru, and Colombia have signed agreements with Canada and the United States, the amount of investment in these countries is low. Brazil has not ratified an agreement with Canada or the United States, yet it receives by far the largest amount of investment from global investors who see little need for legal safeguards. 🍁

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are necessary to tackle issues previously dealt with exclusively by the permanent members of the UN Security Council. Despite initial resistance to an initiative nurtured outside the closed circle of nuclear powers, we are certain that the resulting dialogue will serve as the basis for future negotiations and a final solution for that issue.

Good foreign policy requires prudence. But it also requires boldness. It should not be timid or based on an inferiority complex. It is usual to hear that countries should act in accordance with their means, a time-worn phrase that is almost too obvious, but the greatest mistake a nation could make is to underestimate its means.

For almost eight years now, Brazil has acted with boldness and, like other developing countries, has changed its place in the world. Today, such countries are regarded, even by occasional critics, as actors bearing increasing responsibilities, entitled to play a role that is ever more central to the decisions that affect the destiny of the planet. 🍁

NOTE

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