Brazilian Strategic Culture
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FINDINGS REPORT

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The FIU-SOUTHCOM Academic Partnership
Strategic Cultures Assessments

Florida International University’s Applied Research Center (FIU ARC), in collaboration with the United States Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) and FIU’s Latin American and Caribbean Center (LACC), has recently formed the FIU-SOUTHCOM Academic Partnership. The partnership entails FIU providing the highest quality research-based knowledge to further explicative understanding of the political, strategic, and cultural dimensions of state behavior and foreign policy. This goal will be accomplished by employing a strategic culture approach. The initial phase of strategic culture assessments consists of a year-long research program that focuses on developing a standard analytical framework to identify and assess the strategic culture of ten Latin American countries. FIU will facilitate professional presentations of the following ten countries over the course of one year: Venezuela, Cuba, Haiti, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina. In addition, a findings report on the impact of Islam and Muslims within Latin America will be produced.

The overarching purpose of the project is two-fold: to generate a rich and dynamic base of knowledge pertaining to the political, social, and strategic factors that influence state behavior; and to contribute to SOUTHCOM’s Socio-Cultural Dynamics (SCD) Program. Utilizing the notion of strategic culture, SOUTHCOM has commissioned FIU ARC to conduct country studies in order to explain how states comprehend, interpret, and implement national security policy vis-à-vis the international system.

SOUTHCOM defines strategic culture as follows: “the combination of internal and external influences and experiences – geographic, historical, cultural, economic, political, and military – that shape and influence the way a country understands its relationship to the rest of the world, and how a state will behave in the international community.” FIU will identify and expound upon the strategic and cultural factors that inform the rationale behind the perceptions and behavior of select states in the present political and security climate by analyzing demography, history, regional customs, traditions, belief systems, and other cultural and historical influences that have contributed to the development of a particular country’s current security rationale and interpretation of national security.

To meet the stated goals, FIU ARC will host a series of professional workshops in Miami. These workshops bring subject matter experts from all over the US and Latin America together to explore and discuss a country’s specific history, geography, culture, economic, political, and military climates vis-à-vis strategic culture. At the conclusion of each workshop, FIU publishes a findings report, which is presented at SOUTHCOM.
The following Brazil Findings Report, authored by Dr. Luis Bitencourt and Dr. Alcides Costa Vaz, is the product of a working group which was held in Miami on October 1, 2009. This group included prominent academic and private sector experts in Brazilian history, culture, geography, politics, and military affairs.

The views expressed in this findings report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the US Government, US Department of Defense, US Southern Command, FIU ARC, or Florida International University.

On behalf of FIU-ARC, we wish to acknowledge and thank all of the participants for their contributions, which made the Brazil Strategic Culture workshop a tremendous success.
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Executive Summary

- Elements of Brazilian Strategic Culture have been consistently present in Brazil’s history, from colonial times through modernity, and are crucial to understanding and explaining Brazil’s positions towards security and defense.

- If one defines peace only as an absence of war, then Brazilian Strategic Culture is too narrow a window with which to evaluate Brazil’s history. In Brazil, peace is a more comprehensive state of affairs that goes beyond the absence of war. During the last century in the Americas, hardly a decade passed without a war. For Brazilians, however, war explicitly refers to two specific and remote episodes in the country’s history—the Paraguayan War that took place at the end of the nineteenth century, and Brazil’s participation in World War II (1944-1945). Peace is thus the strategic and cultural norm; it involves active engagement by the State via alliances, diplomacy, economic developments, and trade partnerships.

- The Brazilian National Defense Strategy underscores and builds perceptions of security upon peace and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. It is remarkable that the first word in the Brazilian National Defense Strategy (December 2008) is “peace.” This key document states that “peace is the main goal of this strategy.” In general, Brazilians believe that they are a peaceful people, and that peace is an ingrained cultural value.

- Nevertheless, this does not mean that Brazilians have been completely averse to utilizing violence or becoming embroiled in conflict. Yet, mass and fervent belief in peace as a constitutive, cultural element provides a cornerstone for a Strategic Culture that prizes negotiation and accommodation over war and conflict. Most official pronouncements underscore the peaceful nature of Brazilian political and Strategic Culture. Itamaraty, the Brazilian Foreign Service, usually depicts Brazil as a “satisfied” or “status quo” country, meaning that Brazil has no ambitions for
territorial expansion and considers all its borders clearly delineated, secure, and stable.

- Concern with underscoring sovereignty over Amazonia has been increasingly present in official and non-official statements. Both the 2005 National Defense Policy and the 2009 National Defense Strategy consider Amazonia sovereignty a national defense objective.

- As declared in the Brazilian Defense Policy, Brazil strives to be considered more and to have a stronger voice “within the concert of nations” and in international decision making.

- Since the establishment of the Brazilian Republic, the Brazilian military has become one of the most important and enduring keepers of Brazilian Strategic Culture. Since its inception, the Brazilian Foreign Service (Ministério de Relações Exteriores, also known as Itamaraty) has been the other most visible keeper of Brazilian Strategic Culture. As Eakim observes: “Itamaraty forged a cultural ethos over the twentieth century priding itself on recruiting some of the ‘best and brightest’ young Brazilians into its ranks, and projecting an image of a meritocratic intellectual and cultural elite.”

- The Brazilian approach toward security and defense also reflects profound ambiguities and controversies among Brazil’s competing political, social, and cultural references. This sometimes turns the interpretation of Brazilian positions into a difficult task. Nevertheless, what prevails is usually a very nationalistic approach, especially due to influential factors at the regional and global levels.

- Brazil has also revealed a consistent interest in increasing its international profile in multilateral organizations. Thus, it has been actively pursuing reform of the United Nations Security Council structure, has emphatically pledged support for a seat on the reformed Council, has won the Presidency of the Inter-American
Defense Board, and has accepted military command of the UN mission to Haiti (MINUSTAH).

- The new condition of Brazil as a BRIC country, as well as the recent mapping of oil reserves, both are putting new stress on Brazil’s regional and global presence. This will certainly reflect on its approach toward security and defense, and will work as a changing variable to press Brazil’s Strategic Culture.
Introduction

With the purpose of identifying and qualifying the elements of Brazilian Strategic Culture, as well as establishing the relationship between these elements and Brazilian security policy decisions, Florida International University gathered a group of experts in Miami, Florida on October 1, 2009. This document summarizes the findings of this event. It draws upon papers prepared by the participants and positions discussed during that meeting. It follows roughly the roadmap offered by the Strategic Culture case study guidelines, and compares historical events, geographical elements, elites, policy decisions, and peculiar themes and aspects of Brazilian culture and society that function either as keepers, shapers, or perpetuators of Brazilian perceptions towards security and defense.

Of course, the findings summarized in this document offer a partial perspective—as it will be with any analysis that deals with such a vast and complex subject—on Brazilian Strategic Culture. The report does not offer a precise guide to predict Brazil’s policy decisions in the face of particular situations. Rather, this study is part of a broad and comprehensive approach to understanding how Brazil perceives and implements security policy decisions, and attempts to place security and policy making into context, thereby enabling one to gain insight into the structural context and dimension of Brazilian Strategic Culture.

In the Latin American “collective consciousness”—that is, the set of collective beliefs and values that shape a society and its political culture—“war” has had a bold and inescapable presence since the formation of the region. For Brazilians, however, “war” refers to either specific conflict in the distant past or conflict taking place in some other part of the world. This is perhaps the most important and evident trait of Brazilian Strategic Culture which goes beyond the perception that Brazilians are “peace lovers.” Although “peace” is employed in official State rhetoric and in security policy documents, it is important to note that, for Brazilians, “peace” does not convey the same meaning that

1 Dr. Luis Bitencourt; Dr. Thomas Costa; Mr. Paulo Sotero Marques, Dr. Maria Velez de Berliner, Dr. Kenneth P. Serbin; Dr. Alcides Costa Vaz; Dr. Terry McCoy; Dr. Marshall C. Eakin; Dr. Clovis Brigagão; Dr. Peter M. Beattie; Dr. Marcos Guedes de Oliveira.
2 “Strategic Culture” is defined according to Harold Trikunas as “the culturally and historically derived predispositions that exist in particular states and their elites concerning the use and effectiveness of the employment of force as an instrument of national policy,” Understanding Venezuelan Strategic Culture, Research Paper #11, Applied Research Center and Western Hemisphere Security Analysis Center (December 2008). (Quoted in Jeffrey S. Lantis “Strategic Culture: A Multifaceted Cultural Approach to the Study of Latin America – Case Study Guidelines” 2009).
it carries for societies that are more familiar with the notion that peace implies the mere absence of war. In such societies, “peace”—often explicitly defined as the “absence of war”—carries specific value-meanings and is defined apropos with a more natural state of conflict and “war.” Therefore, the issue is not that “peace” is a given in Brazilian Strategic Culture; rather, the issue is that “war” as the natural, or rational, opposite of “peace” is not considered to be the case—war as an operative and functional option is a very distant and almost fictional possibility.³

Indeed, the recently-issued National Strategy Policy underscores this characteristic quite limpidly: “Brazil is a peaceful country, by tradition and conviction. It lives in peace with its neighbors. It runs its international affairs, among other things, adopting the constitutional principles of non-intervention, defense of peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts. This pacifist trait is part of the national identity, and a value that should be preserved by the Brazilian people.”⁴ The Brazilian First National Defense Policy, issued by Fernando Henrique Cardoso in 1998, goes even further: “…the National Defense Policy is built around an active diplomacy devoted to peace, as well as a deterrent strategic posture, defensive in nature, based on the following principles:

- borders and boundaries that are precisely defined and internationally recognized;
- close relationships, based on mutual respect and trust, with neighboring countries and with the international community in general;
- rejection of war of conquest; and
- peaceful resolution of disputes, with resort to the use of force only for self-defense.”⁵

Other significant documents also state unequivocally Brazil’s reliance on negotiated solutions for conflicts. For example, the Brazilian Federal Constitution stresses the “peaceful resolution of conflicts” as one of Brazil’s principles for conducting

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³ Brazil had 25,300 troops as an Expeditionary Force fighting in Italy, from July 1944 to the end to the war.
⁴ Estratégia Nacional de Defesa, EM Interministerial no. 00437/MD/SAE-PR, December 17, 2008.
This issue is even more critical because it is clear that Brazilians developed a self-perception that they are particularly equipped to resolve conflicts in a negotiated way; even anecdotal evidence based on the notion of Brazilian “jeito,” or a way to resolve issues usually through unorthodox methods, supports the notion that Brazilians have the capacity to resolve disputes in an effective and peaceful manner.

Brazil’s approach to the issue of WMD proliferation is an important indicator of its distinct Strategic Culture. It is remarkable that the Brazilian Constitution only admits nuclear activity within the national territory if it has peaceful purposes, and that such purposes must be approved by Congress. Brazil, which had been on the brink of acquiring offensive nuclear weapons capacity, clearly communicated its decision not to pursue them in the interests of fostering regional and global peace. Moreover, on December 13, 1991, Brazil agreed with Argentina to sign the Guadalajara Agreement for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy and the subsequent creation of the Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). These steps allowed for the establishment of a model-regime of mutual assurances that was crucial to maintaining a Latin America free of nuclear weapons.

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6 Brazilian Federal Constitution, Article 4. “The international relations of the Federative Republic of Brazil are governed by the following principles:
   (. . .) I - national independence;
   II - prevalence of human rights;
   III - self-determination of the peoples;
   IV - non-intervention;
   V - equality among the States;
   VI - defense of peace;
   VII - peaceful settlement of conflicts;
   VIII - repudiation of terrorism and racism;
   IX - cooperation among peoples for the progress of mankind;
   X - granting of political asylum.

Sole paragraph - The Federative Republic of Brazil shall seek the economic, political, social and cultural integration of the peoples of Latin America, viewing the formation of a Latin-American community of nations.

7 For example, Clovis Brigagão (A Cultura Estratégica Brasileira: Experiência nas Missões de Paz da ONU, Miami, October 1, 2009) argues that Brazilian “peace culture” as well as Brazilian “solidarity spirit” was the distinguishing characteristic of Brazilian participation in peacekeeping forces. He underscores the “flexibility” versatility, adaptability of officers and soldiers led to the resolution of “complex cases” with minimal use of force. He also believes that Brazilian ability to adjust to different conditions, particularly when confronting conflicts of ethnic or religious nature, gave Brazil special leverage in peacekeeping. For him the Brazilian “jeito” (way) “may not resolve all conflicts, but it offers concrete alternatives to strengthen a new strategic culture for the international peace and security.”

A critical observer could perhaps dispute Brigagão’s analysis as excessively benevolent towards Brazilians. But the critical could not deny that Brigagão’s optimistic self-perception of Brazilians is also a peculiar trait of Brazilian Strategic culture beliefs.

8 Regardless this benevolent self-perception though, we must notice that this mindset did not entirely preclude Brazil from engaging in bloody conflicts, participating in major wars, and having engaged in a long rivalry with Argentina, which led both countries to the brink of acquiring nuclear weapons by the late 1980s.

9 Brazilian Federal Constitution, 1988, article 21, paragraph XXIII.

10 http://www.abacc.org/engl/abacc/abacc_history.htm
Another defining element of Brazilian Strategic Culture arises from the consideration of economic development as a national security objective. This consideration has a long history. The first flag of Brazil as a Republic, inaugurated on November 15, 1889, exhibits an explicitly positivist influence on the formation of the State; that is, the flag enshrines the motto “Order and Progress” as representative of Brazilians’ identity, purpose, meaning, and worldview. Order and progress have remained entrenched in Brazilian political culture. It was during the 21 years of military dictatorship, however, following the coup d’état in 1964, that the motto became the ultimo ratio of the State.\(^{11}\) In addition to being a positive force, the imbrication of economic development and security has also had negative effects. For instance, the fusion of economic development with security as a national goal has given rise to all sorts of conspiracy visions. Among these is the perception that the “developed world” tries to block legitimate Brazilian interests in becoming part of the First World or the “developed world club.” Convinced that this is the case, many Brazilians believe that the “developed world” has consistently hampered Brazilian efforts to acquire modern technology; many also believe that this is the motivation behind international pressure for the conservation of Amazonia.

Indeed, in response to this perceived interest, Brazil takes all opportunities to underscore its sovereignty over Amazonia. Both the 2005 National Defense Policy and the National Defense Strategy consider Amazonia sovereignty to be a national defense objective. As Maria Velez de Berliner\(^{12}\) observes, Brazilian National Defense Strategy stresses the right to defend Amazonia from “external imposition on [Brazil’s] decisions regarding [its] preservation, development, and defense.”\(^{13}\) Berliner also quotes a CNT/Census poll that found that 82.6% of the Brazilian military consider Amazonia at risk of being occupied by foreigners, a feeling that is also shared by 72.7% of civilians.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{11}\) Brazil was under military dictatorship from March 1964, when a coup d’état ejected President Joao Goulart from power, to January 1985, when an indirect process elected Tancredo Neves president. Tancredo Neves ended up dying before taking seat and his Deputy, Jose Sarney, became the President of Brazil. While controlling the political power, the military relied strongly upon the National Security Doctrine, conceived at the Escola Superior de Guerra (War Superior School) that provided them a rationale to stay in power and develop a considerably sophisticated bureaucratic model to manage the state upon two pillars: Security and Development.


\(^{14}\) “*Com os Olhos na Amazônia*,” Veja, Edição 2 036, p142
Finally, among the objectives of the Brazilian Defense Policy is the projection of Brazil “within the concert of nations and its participation in the international decision making.”

Consistent with this objective, Brazil has declared and has been actively pursuing reform of the United Nations Security Council structure, has emphatically pledged support for a seat on the reformed Council, has won the Presidency of a renewed Inter-American Defense Board, has accepted military command of the U.N. mission to Haiti (MINUSTAH), has deployed 1,282 troops, and has launched a regional initiative for a South America Defense Council. All of these projects serve to illuminate the degree to which Brazil seeks to become an active power player within the region and globally but through diplomacy and economic development as opposed to expansionist aims based on the threat or use of force.

Origins of Brazilian Strategic Culture

In the case of Brazil, it is interesting to note how geo-physical, political, economic, and socio-cultural variables have coalesced to form the basis of Brazilian Strategic Culture. Indeed, since the land mass today known as Brazil was “discovered” in 1500 by the Portuguese navigator Pedro Alvarez Cabral—reportedly by chance because he was actually interested in reaching India—many serendipitous events have played a key role in defining the contours and content of Brazilian Strategic Culture.

Brazil’s massive geography could have been roughly a fifth the size it is today if the Tordesillas Treaty, signed between Portugal and Spain in 1498, had gone into full effect. Modern Brazil’s geo-physical territory would be even less if Pope Alexander VI’s Bull, decreed on May 4, 1493, had been followed. This Bull made the Portuguese

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16 The area of Brazil is 8,514,877 sq km, which makes it the 5th largest country in the world.

17 The treaty was originally intended to settle the dispute that followed disagreements related to some papal Bulls related to the newly discovered lands and particularly the discovery by Christopher Columbus. A 1481 papal Bull had favored Portugal by granting it all land south of the Canary Islands. But on 4 May 1493 another Bull (Inter caetera) gave possession to Spain of all lands west and south of a pole-to-pole line100 leagues west and south of any of the islands of the Azores or the Cape Verde Islands. The bull Dudum siquidem (Extension of the Apostolic Grant and Donation of the Indies, 25 September 1493) would also give to Spain all mainlands and islands then belonging to India. The Tordesillas treaty was signed in June 7, 1494 and was sanctioned by Pope Julius II (bull Ea quae) on 24 January 1506.
Monarch, John II, apprehensive because it marginalized Portugal in favor of Spain, and had been decreed by a Spanish-born pope. To add injury to the offense, in September of that same year another Bull was announced that gave Spain all the mainland and islands then belonging to India. As a consequence, King John II pressured King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain to review these definitions, and was able to convince them to sign the Tordesillas Treaty.\(^\text{18}\)

Notwithstanding the Tordesillas Treaty, Portuguese rights over the lands discovered by Cabral would be a tiny portion of what Brazil is today. Serendipity, fed by the Portuguese adventurous spirit, strong missionary presence, and close proximity to rivers (to facilitate access to the interior), worked in tandem to exponentially expand the territory well beyond the limits determined by the treaty.\(^\text{19}\) Brazilian territory assumed a triangular geo-physical shape, with the northern borders clearly defined by the Amazon River basin and the southern borders by the Parana River, which inspired a vision of grandiosity, one in which Brazil was destined to become great. This geopolitical perspective was initiated by Baron of Rio Branco\(^\text{20}\) at the outset of the Brazilian Republic, and reached its climax with Carlos Meira Mattos’ *Brasil, Geopolítica e Destino* in mid-1970s.\(^\text{21}\)

For Thomaz Costa,\(^\text{22}\) Brazilians drew these ideas—to the point of a “grand strategy”—from the Portuguese tradition of projecting national power over geographic dimensions.\(^\text{23}\) This tradition, combined with a penchant for negotiation and diplomacy in order to resolve border disputes with its neighbors following Brazil’s independence in 1822, reinforced the grandiosity of Brazil’s destiny within the region. Despite an emphasis on diplomacy and negotiation, Brazil fought two regional wars before the
establishment of the Republic in 1889, that is, the Cisplatine War (1825-28) and the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-1870),\textsuperscript{24} which Marshall Eakim\textsuperscript{25} characterizes as early exceptions in Brazil’s evolution of peaceful relations\textsuperscript{26} with its neighbors. Despite taking part in these conflicts, Brazil’s participation did not facilitate the instauration of a bellicose ethos. As Peter M. Beattie observes, to turn Brazilian citizens into soldiers to fight the “Paraguayan War,” the State had to resort to conscription, and had to actively seek out and force males of military age to serve in the armed forces.

As to the existence of regional rivalries, Brazil and Argentina were considered “rivals” for most of the twentieth century—with the rivalry culminating in attempts by both countries to develop offensive nuclear weapons capability. It is important to note that this intense and hostile rivalry occurred, for the most part, during the era of military dictatorship in both countries. However, by the mid-1980s, a combination of political exhaustion and economic realism brought about an effective end to the hostile rivalry, the establishment of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), and the termination of programs to acquire nuclear weapons. Thus, both countries not only terminated their “parallel” nuclear programs but also designed—in conjunction with the International Atomic Energy Agency—an extraordinarily efficient and effective oversight regime that allowed them both to continue the constructive, peaceful pursuit of developing nuclear energy while abandoning the project of acquiring WMD capacity.

In general, it is quite extraordinary to contemplate the fact that historically, Brazil has for the most part been able to avoid the rampant violence that has plagued its neighbors, and that it has been able to expand its territory non-violently despite the formal limits placed upon it from external sources of authority. Brazil was also able to experience a sense of geographic and cultural unity as far as identification with an ethnically and racially diverse populace with the grander notion of a unified Brazil.

\textsuperscript{24} Paraguayan War (December 1864-March 1870): it was the largest and the bloodiest conflict occurred in the American continent. It is also called the War of the Triple Entente. Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay defeated Paraguay. Brazil dispatched over 160,000 troops and had about 50,000 casualties. Brazilian Army became an expressive political force and developed strong corporatist spirit, which would influence many political movements during the XX century.
Indeed, territorial and cultural homogenization under the banner of being Brazilian has had a formative impact on the evolution of Brazilian Strategic Culture. Brazilians take for granted not only the territorial dimension but also the sense of belonging to the geopolitical entity known as Brazil. This directly explains why Brazilians do not have territorial ambitions and why they consider Brazil to be a “satisfied and status quo country.”\(^{27}\) Regardless of the possibility of excessive passion stirred by the geopolitical arguments, the fact is that Brazil emerged as a nation quite different from its continental neighbors, and can hardly fit into the strategic and cultural framework of Latin America as a whole.

Along with this notion, Marshall Eakim\(^{28}\) explains that Brazil’s singularities derive from five main circumstances: (1) Brazil is not—and also Brazilians do not see themselves as such—an integral part of Latin America; (2) Brazil’s size, insularity, and location have shaped its relationship with the Great Powers and its neighbors; (3) in contrast to its neighbors, Brazil developed major cultural institutions very late in its development; (4) a strong sense of nationalism has shaped Brazil’s sociopolitical and economic development in the twentieth century; and (5) a remarkable internal homogeneity has shaped Brazilians’ perception of themselves.

Indeed, such a distinct Brazilian cultural and strategic self-perception began to develop while Brazil was still a Portuguese colony. The themes and variables that would become the basis of Brazilian Strategic Culture were institutionalized when Brazil gained its independence and statehood. Moreover, during the first centuries of its existence as a colony, Brazil had its population and cities established along the Atlantic coastline and developed an economic infrastructure and market system that engaged Africa and Europe in extensive trade relations. Under these conditions, Brazil took little note of Spanish America because of geographic reasons and a lack of economic engagement. Having the majority of the population residing on the coast in virtual isolation from the rest of Latin America, in conjunction with having economic activity directed outward across the Atlantic Ocean rather than inward toward the region, Brazil’s orientation, as a colony and later as a State, was across the Atlantic. Being geographically distant from the rest of

\(^{27}\) Costa, op. cit.
\(^{28}\) See Peter M. Beattie’s presentation
America due to the Andes as well as immense tracts of Amazon forest, Brazilians had no major incentive to look towards the West. Consequently, the notion of being a part of Latin America did not resonate with Brazilian political culture.  

These aspects contribute to generating a perception of extraordinary continental insularity that would not be affected by trade relations. After the 1570s, either as an exporter of “pau Brazil” for dye or sugar from sugar cane increasingly based upon plantations and slave work, Brazil was closely linked to the Portuguese markets and to the Atlantic trading system in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Consequently, as Eakim observes, from the very beginning, the Portuguese colonists and the early Brazilians soon developed a self-perception of isolation vis-à-vis Spanish America. And this was only broken by the negotiations and demarcations established by the Treaty of Madrid (1750). Therefore, historically, Brazilians do not consider themselves “Latin American,” and take all possible opportunities to underscore their cultural, historical, and language differences vis-à-vis the “Hispanic” countries in the region.

Another influential event for the formation of Brazilian Strategic Culture was the peaceful and practically serendipitous circumstance by which Brazil obtained its independence from Portugal. The process for Brazil’s independence was ignited by the move of the Portuguese royal family into exile in Brazil in 1807 to escape from Napoleon’s army. Escorted by British warships, the Portuguese Prince-Regent João arrived in Brazil in early 1808, and as soon as he arrived, he ordered the opening of Brazilian ports to international trade and authorized several important changes in the colony that would facilitate the establishment of Brazil as an independent State; among other things, the Prince-Regent authorized the establishment of industries in Brazil, created the Bank of Brazil, and, in 1815, elevated Brazil to the category of United Kingdom to Portugal and Algarves. When he returned to Portugal in April 1821, he left

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30 “Although the fifth largest country in the world today, with more than 3.2 million square miles, Brazil has always been a “coastal civilization”. In the words of one noted historian of colonial Brazil, the Portuguese were “clinging to the coast like crabs”. With the exception of the captaincy/province/state of Minas Gerais (after 1700) all major Brazilian population centers were along the Atlantic Coast until the late 19th century.” Eakim, opus cit.
his son, Pedro, as Regent of the Vice-Kingdom of Brazil. But in September 1821, the Portuguese Assembly decided to return Brazil to the condition of a colony and ordered Pedro to return to Portugal. Pedro decided to stay in Brazil, and on September 7, 1822, he declared the independence of Brazil. Although some tension followed his decision, and limited hostile reactions to his decree occurred in Recife and Bahia, no significant amount of violence transpired. Unlike its regional neighbors, Brazil’s independence was relatively peaceful and uneventful. In 1825, Portugal recognized Brazilian independence in a treaty with Brazil and the United Kingdom.

But in what would perhaps become another, yet less apparent, formative factor in the evolution of Brazilian Strategic Culture, secret codicils to that treaty were agreed upon. According to these codicils, Brazil assumed the payment of 1.4 million pounds sterling that Portugal owed to Britain and agreed to pay 600,000 pounds sterling to Dom João VI and other Portuguese elites as reparation for losses. Under these codicils, Brazil also agreed not to pursue any future annexation of Portuguese African colonies, and committed to Britain to end the slave trade. 33

33 “Portugal sent troops to Brazil and placed all Brazilian units under Portuguese command. In January 1822, tension between Portuguese troops and the Luso-Brazilians (Brazilians born in Portugal) turned violent when Pedro accepted petitions from Brazilian towns begging him to refuse the Côrtes's order to return to Lisbon. Responding to their pressure and to the argument that his departure and the dismantling of the central government would trigger separatist movements, he vowed to stay. The Portuguese “lead feet,” as the Brazilians called the troops, rioted before concentrating their forces on Cerro Castello, which was soon surrounded by thousands of armed Brazilians. Dom Pedro “dismissed” the Portuguese commanding general and ordered him to remove his soldiers across the bay to Niteroi, where they awaited transport to Portugal. Pedro formed a new government headed by José Bonifácio de Andrade e Silva of São Paulo. This former royal official and professor of science at Coimbra was crucial to the subsequent direction of events and is regarded as one of the formative figures of Brazilian nationalism, indeed, as the patriarch of independence. The atmosphere was so charged that Dom Pedro sought assurances of asylum on a British ship in case he lost the looming confrontation; he also sent his family to safety out of the city. In the following days, the Portuguese commander delayed embarkation, hoping that expected reinforcements would arrive. However, the reinforcements that arrived off Rio de Janeiro on March 5, 1822, were not allowed to land. Instead, they were given supplies for the voyage back to Portugal. This round had been won without bloodshed.

Blood had been shed in Recife in the Province of Pernambuco, when the Portuguese garrison there had been forced to depart in November 1821. In mid-February 1822, Bahians revolted against the Portuguese forces there but were driven into the countryside, where they began guerrilla operations, signaling that the struggle in the north would not be without loss of life and property. To secure Minas Gerais and São Paulo, where there were no Portuguese troops but where there were doubts about independence(…)" Mongabay books: Brazil: http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/brazil/all.html
Shapers and Keepers of Brazilian Strategic Culture

Transformation of Brazil from a monarchy into a republic happened in 1889, and affected Brazilian Strategic Culture in that Strategic Culture became tinctured with positivist notions of order and progress. According to Bradford Burns,\(^\text{34}\) a Brazilian intellectual minority—a young “bourgeoisie,” formed mostly by the sons of sugar cane “industrialists” that had studied in France—“dutifully mirroring the intellectual modes of Europe . . . welcomed Positivism as a convincing formula for progress. . .” Prompted by the ideas of Auguste Comte\(^\text{35}\) and his simplifying notion that human knowledge could be reduced to laws, Brazilians were particularly motivated by the hopes that Positivism would help them to reconstruct society. Incidentally, this rather schematic and optimistic approach would also motivate and instill intellectual scaffolding for Republican ideas.\(^\text{36}\)

It is worth citing at length Burns’ masterful synthesis of the Positivist influence on Brazil:

\[\ldots\] In general, Brazilian Positivism advocated governmental planning for progress and industrialization, restricting foreign economic influence and penetration, modernizing agriculture, expanding the communications and transportation infrastructures, encouraging education, controlling immigration, and enacting social legislation. Positivism hoped to insure social stability by incorporating the proletariat into society by means of education, higher wages, and regulation of wages, hours, and working conditions. The Positivists held conservative economic and monetary policies based on the defense of private property and yet they challenged some prevailing notions of *laissez-faire* policies. They felt the government should intervene in the economy to provide those essential services that the private sectors could not or would not provide. They denounced foreign economic domination, colonialism, and imperialism . . . [Positivism] profoundly influenced the ideas, actions, events, and changes characteristic of the dynamic

\(^{35}\) Auguste Comte (1798-1856): French philosopher who proposed a political philosophy designed to simultaneously promote order and progress and a new Religion of Humanity to provide an emotional and spiritual foundation for his philosophy.
\(^{36}\) Nevertheless, as Burns observes, Brazilian followers of Positivism were motivated only by Positivism’s scientific approach but not the religious component of the philosophy: “…they drew from only part of Comte’s philosophy and were often better republicans than Positivists.” Op.cit. p. 207.
ten-year period from 1888 through 1897. It also left an unmistakable imprint of the twentieth century.\(^3\)!

The most influential of the early positivists was Major Benjamin Constant de Magalhães who, as a professor of Mathematics at the military academy, became a source of positivist ideas and an early advocate among the Brazilian military for the instauration of a Republic. Positivism inspired the pro-Republican movement and influenced the initial moments of Brazil as a Republic in the years following 1889.

Moreover, it is evident that those ideas not only influenced the military ethos and the fledgling Brazilian Republic, but were also sustained and kept influential during the entire twentieth century. For example, positivist ideas of empirical progress and order can be clearly observed as inspiration for the governmental doctrine imposed by the military during the dictatorship (1964-1985). The quote above is almost a blueprint for the “National Security Doctrine” that was forged in the Escola Superior de Guerra (War Superior School), and gave the Brazilian military the intellectual and ideological basis both for the coup and for their permanence in power for 21 years. This doctrine was founded upon two pillars, that is, “security” and “development,” and was based on a positivist ideal and credo.

Undeniably, this also made the Brazilian military one of the most important and enduring keepers of Brazilian Strategic Culture since the establishment of the Brazilian Republic. Finally, in 1964, the Brazilian military came to \textit{de facto} take political control of the country. The military attempted to implement policies and strategies fully consistent with its vision of the world and its interpretation of Brazil’s role in that world. Because it had been in power for 21 years and was able to secure a transition to democracy, the Brazilian military managed to maintain considerable influence in strategic definitions of security, even after it surrendered power to the civilian authority in 1985. Finally, although somewhat reluctantly, it accepted the inevitability of civilian control over the military, which was formalized during the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration.

through the launching of a Policy of Defense and the establishment of the Ministry of Defense.

The military did not, however, fully retreat from public life or surrender power and influence over government policies, especially when it sought to influence the Brazilian elite as to what should be perceived as security threats—threats mostly related to sovereignty over the Amazon and to the actions of domestic groups such as the Landless Movement—when the actions of such groups clearly threatened stability and order as embodied in the status quo. A more complex issue was raised when citizens sought to employ the armed forces to curb the rampant domestic crime in urban centers. In this case, the military has been rightly aware of the risks entailed in this prospect, and has remained cautiously distant from direct involvement with domestic law enforcement.

Another critical keeper of Brazilian Strategic Culture has been the Brazilian Foreign Service (Ministério de Relações Exteriores, also known as Itamaraty), since the inception of this service and the strong influence from Baron of Rio Branco in the early twentieth century. Rio Branco created Itamaraty as a professional diplomatic service while he was actively negotiating the settlement of the northern and western boundaries of Brazil. Eakim correctly observes that, “Itamaraty forged a cultural ethos over the twentieth century priding itself on recruiting some of the ‘best and brightest’ young Brazilians into its ranks, and projecting an image of a meritocratic intellectual and cultural elite.”

Moreover, Itamaraty has been very capable, since its inception, of positioning itself strategically within the State bureaucracy as a way to exercise influence over the policy-making process—even when it did not appear prominently during frequent “turf” battles with other government agencies.

A remarkable factor to consider when analyzing the shapers and keepers of Brazilian Strategic Culture is the absence of a key political actor, that is, Congress. Indeed, the Brazilian Congress and civil politicians have historically demonstrated a profound lack of interest towards security and defense issues—towards international relations. Congress’

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39 For example, Itamaraty has diplomats assigned to practically all government agencies, understandably because it has the best cadres to occupy the offices of international relations in each ministry or agency. Unequivocally though, this renders considerable political leverage to the Foreign Service.
role has been mostly perfunctory and functional; it rarely engages in serious questioning of security and defense issues.

**Constitutive Political and Social Values**

Therefore, Brazilian political culture, when placed in a broader national perspective, has evolved from a positivist value framework and an array of political, social, and cultural practices, some dating from the colonial period and extending into the present context. It thus reflects some traditional traits inherited from colonial rule, while other traits were developed during the first stages when Brazil was becoming a full-fledged sovereign State during the Empire Period (1822-1889). Still, others came to be forged during the process of industrial development initiated in the early 1930s and culminating in the present, a time when the country has significantly increased the scope of its international interests and has attempted to affirm its international profile, both as a global trader and a global player.

To a large extent, the political dynamics of this period, from a structural and long-term perspective, can be attributed to the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of the Brazilian processes of nation and State building. Brazil, as a nation, was largely forged by and through the State, in a mutual reinforcing relationship that ultimately led to the strong prominence of the national State in all aspects of Brazilian political life.

However, State and nation building in the case of Brazil did not incorporate or rather revolve around war as a major historical defining force. Even though Portugal engaged in successive militarized disputes with Spain over competing strategic interests in the “La Plata River Basin” for over two centuries, having also fought France, England, and Holland at different moments in their respective attempts to dominate parts of Brazilian territory during colonial rule, it is widely accepted that the consolidation of Brazilian territory was, ultimately, a long but peaceful process that culminated in the negotiations carried out by the Baron of Rio Branco in the early twentieth century. These negotiations set up definitive geo-political borders. Nation and State building were, therefore, processes not rooted in nor heavily influenced by significant degrees of violence. Brazil did not experience wars associated with territorial disputes, and even
though a number of domestic rebellions did take place, they were rather limited as to their geographic reach and magnitude; none acquired a national dimension and even less a regional impact. Different from most of its neighbors where independence movements were carried out by war, Brazil’s independence from Portugal had, as a central component, an arrangement with the Royal Family that allowed Don Pedro I to become the King of Portugal as Pedro IV after he abdicated the Brazilian throne in favor of his son. The Paraguayan War, the most significant and enduring war Brazil has ever fought, did not create an enduring basis for bellicosity as a common attribute of State behavior.

Although Strategic Culture did not become premised on war, it did assume that the State was the cynosure of authority within society. Throughout Brazil’s formative political processes and the various stages of economic development, the State emerged as the undisputed referent for domestic politics, foreign policy, and management of the economy. Because this was the case, clashes between parochial and regional elites over control of the State became a determinant and traditional feature of Brazilian political culture, giving Strategic Culture a very strong conservative basis. Actually, throughout most of its trajectory as an independent country, even in more recent times, Brazil has exhibited the profile of a patriarchic society whose culture and political system are marked by embedded conservative social, political, and economic values. Such conservative values are expressed in three core assumptions regarding political and social life: (1) the belief that order derives from authority and hierarchy; (2) predictability and stability are expressions of order; and (3) authority should be exercised within the scope of a hierarchic power framework, with subservience and clientelism becoming the dominant patterns of political and social relationships.

Even though this conservative-value framework is associated with a predominantly rural/agrarian society, it remained valid during and after the waves of industrialization and urbanization that dramatically changed the economic and social landscape from the 1930s through the 1980s. The framework emerging from these new realities successfully reproduced itself in the urban environment, and continues to permeate social and political institutions. While conservatism has been challenged by emergent liberal values and social patterns that began in the late 1960s, the political culture and the political system have proven to be more resilient to the wave of liberal
values that has resulted from globalization processes. This helps to explain why large portions of Brazilian society fell clearly uneasy with the resilience of some of its forefront political institutions to modernize.

The corresponding expression to complement national identity and foreign affairs within such a predominantly conservative value framework, which is centered on the prominence of the State, has been on nationalism as a key defining aspect of political identity, on self reliance as an expression of independence, and on independence as a corollary of sovereignty. These elements, that is, nationalism, self-reliance, and independence, remain core defining values of Brazilian Strategic Culture, being strongly reaffirmed either when sovereignty happens to be challenged—especially when considering the basic constitutive features of the State (that is, territory, population, and political authority)—or in the domestic realm as a means to resist liberal trends and forces that emphasize cosmopolitanism, interdependence, and the acceptance of restraints upon sovereignty in favor of international governance as more suitable approaches to contemporary political, economic, and social challenges at the national and global levels.

Contemporary Brazilian political culture has been marked by a prevailing conservative bias that has, in turn, faced a mounting challenge posed by the emergence of liberal trends within civil society (notably in large urban spaces), and within political classes and the State bureaucracy since the early 1990s. The impact of such a phenomenon, and the political divide that has followed, has been felt both in domestic politics and foreign policy for the past ten years. However, it is important to stress that some traits associated with liberal values had already been present in Brazilian political and social life since the late nineteenth century, and were associated with early attempts to implement economic modernization. After abolishing slavery at a very late time, and becoming the destination of thousands of migrants coming from different parts of Western and Central Europe as well as Japan in the first decades of the twentieth century, Brazilian society accentuated its already diversified racial, cultural, and religious profile while the acceptance of tolerance and diversity consolidated itself as a central value and a trait of national identity. The rejection of political violence as a means to mitigate or to manage political, economic, and social conflict had also been introduced and consolidated as a societal and political value. Given the difficulties of maintaining a
strong State presence throughout the expansive Brazilian territory, some social institutions such as the Church and local political elites became key instruments to mediate and mitigate political and social conflicts, especially in rural areas and in the northern and northeastern regions. This helped to prevent political and ideological radicalization to take root within domestic politics, thus favoring the emergence of a gradual and reformist approach to change as opposed to a revolutionary one, signaling that ideology had been tempered by pragmatic assessments of interests, preferences, and possibilities by political and social actors. In the urban areas and in those few rural spaces where State institutions were present, a normative and juridical basis for conflict resolution was being developed.

Prevailing World Views

The diversified value framework presented in the previous section was gradually incorporated into foreign policy, especially from the 1950s on, when diplomacy was effectively professionalized. The normative and principle-oriented foreign policy approach, which is still present in contemporary Brazilian foreign policy, and the sense of continuity brought about by professional diplomacy plus the pragmatic stance towards defining security and strategies to promote and protect national interests, have become explicit traits of Brazilian Strategic Culture. Foreign policy thus represents a key component of Strategic Culture, and, at the same time, draws on both a cultural and political background, as well as a prevailing sense of national identity and national interests.

An interesting aspect of Brazilian Strategic Culture that stems from its foreign policy traditions has to do with the perspective from which Brazil assesses the international scenario, and the strategies and prescriptions it conceives to induce transformations that eventually favor the promotion of its own strategic interests. Brazil’s assessments of the international system are primarily informed by realist and neorealist perspectives: it recognizes power structures comprised primarily by competing national entities at the international level as a determinant of a country’s status, and recognizes its asymmetric character as a challenge for the realization of its own national interests at the
global level. Therefore, the uneven distribution of power and its concentration in only one or two actors is regarded as a source of instability. National development and the intent to change its international status quo require the development of capabilities and the exercise of active multilateral diplomacy aiming at influencing rule making and decision making at the international level. Fundamentally deprived of hard power capabilities, Brazil emphasizes the manipulation of soft power resources multilaterally as a proper strategy to foster international changes that might shape a more favorable international environment into realizing its political and economic interests.

But when it comes to dealing with political changes at the international level, Brazil resorts to a neoliberal institutionalism stance as it advocates the strengthening of international institutions (that is, multilateralism, international law, and diplomacy) as a means to achieve a more balanced and equitable world order. A vigorous multilateralism is regarded as the corollary to multi-polarity and, in turn, is highly valued as a condition that is more favorable for a developing country to challenge its own status quo and find its place among the great powers. The concentration of power is, on the other hand, associated with dominance and instability, and is therefore rejected. Actually, the preference for multi-polarity and multilateralism as sources of stability and as drivers of international change has been a defining trait of Brazilian foreign policy since the Cold War—one that has been reasserted in the post-Cold War period when uni-polarity and unilateralism emerged. Promotion of multi-polarity and multilateralism can be envisaged as a genuine Brazilian strategic interest, but it must be noted that the prevalence of a liberal institutionalism stance towards the desired world order does not preclude Brazil from being concerned with strengthening its own military and security capabilities, as self-reliance remains a key guiding principle and objective of its defense policy.

Identity: Defining Features

It is widely recognized that Brazilian national identity conveys a set of cultural and political elements associated with its multi-diversified ethnic, cultural, and social structures. As a political actor on the global stage, Brazil has emerged as a peaceful country deprived of major ambitions that could lead it to conflict with its neighbors or
with any other country. From the perspective of its international behavior, Brazil can be regarded as a principle-oriented actor striving for changes in the international scenario and challenging its own status within. Defining itself as a global trader, Brazil aspires to accede to the status of a recognized global actor, even though such a condition is to be achieved without necessarily resorting to the development of power capabilities that would enable it to become a great power. It therefore relies on its ability to present itself and to act as a predictable, reliable, and responsive partner to developed and emerging countries such as Russia, India and China, and to the developing world in general, either bilaterally or multilaterally. Brazil views itself as a moderate proponent and facilitator for change in the international system, an actor who is willing to act collectively and bound to face the interests of those actors who might be negatively impacted by the same changes it endorses. In this sense, Brazilians do not see any direct or explicit enemies, but see several adversaries in the larger context or game of international politics and economics. They consider that this game is played according to internationally accepted and enforceable rules, and not solely on the grounds of the harsh realities defined by uneven distribution of hard power. Brazil’s profile as a principle-oriented actor is derived from an approach inspired by Wilsonian ideals. However, this idealistic profile also meets its own limitations in the pragmatic stance Brazil sustains in promoting and protecting State interests internationally. Then, as predicted by the realist tradition, the value of multilateral norms and institutions becomes predominantly instrumental to the attainment of national interest.

Paradoxically, this inherently ambiguous profile is yet less evident in global affairs than in the regional scenario where Brazil meets no contender to its power status. Actually, Brazil’s differentiated status within its own region does not automatically translate into a clearly defined political status and profile as to its regional role and the influence it exerts. Its identity as a regional power ranges: at one extreme, Brazil can be portrayed as a self-interested regional hegemon, given its sundry power assets vis-à-vis its neighbors, but still unable to realize its political, strategic, and economic interests or to counter other states—especially the regional influence of the US, relying primarily on its own capabilities and resources; at the other extreme, Brazil can be envisaged as a benevolent regional leader that deals with collective concerns and responses to national
and global challenges. Alternatively, Brazil can also be portrayed as a broker whose main interests lie fundamentally in the preservation of a stable environment that allows it to accomplish its political and economic goals associated ultimately with national development. Neither extreme portrays the actual regional status of Brazil or its willingness to act regionally, as each one represents an absolute expression of a condition or status that Brazil meets only partially. It can be said that Brazil´s Strategic Culture rests upon the self-recognition of the differentiated status Brazil has in the region. An underlying political assumption of differentiated status therefore implies the need and the choice for Brazil to be able to act simultaneously as a regional hegemon and as a benevolent leader when opportunities allow it to be so, especially as a broker whenever necessary. Such ambiguity is apprehended by neighboring countries and translates into a cautious mood regarding Brazil’s relations with their giant neighbor. Therefore, Brazil’s regional political outlook must be envisaged according to changing patterns that respond ultimately to a core value of its international behavior; it must be able to act independently in pursuing variegated interests identified and promoted by the State.

**Main Drivers of Change**

Although Brazilian Strategic Culture rests upon and reflects some very traditional political, social, and cultural values, it has been challenged by the rise of a set of transformations that affect both its society and its political system. Domestically, the rise of cosmopolitan liberal views and concerns not only reflects the growing influence of international and transnational forces operating internally, it also brings about important cultural and political changes as new issues derived from the international sphere receive importance and visibility in the domestic agenda. As international issues become more visible and their practical effects more tangible, a growing awareness of the country’s own vulnerabilities in an increasingly interdependent and asymmetric world is fostered. The internationalization of Brazilian society is, therefore, the most powerful driver of change that Brazilian Strategic Culture has been facing, and with it the clash between a traditional conservative approach that elects independence and its central core value to be
preserved and promoted internationally, on the one hand, and cosmopolitanism and its wide array of expressions and concerns, on the other.

Externally, three mutually-reinforcing elements exert a direct impact on Brazilian Strategic Culture and its expressions in the security realm: (1) the growing instability existing among some of the Brazilian neighbors; (2) the preoccupation with the growing presence (economically and militarily) of extra-regional powers; and (3) the spectrum of interventionism. While the domestic drivers of change imply a clash between traditional national values and cosmopolitan, liberal ones, external drivers spur the sense of vulnerability. This explains Brazil’s urgent need to strengthen national capabilities as a way to narrow the currently existing huge gap between actual material and intangible resources available to foster national defense and security interests.

Has Brazil Finally Arrived in the Future?

For decades, Brazilians have mocked the phrase coined by the military dictatorship, “Brazil: The Country of the Future!” by adding to it “…And it will ever be.” Nowadays, however, as recognized by The Economist (November 11, 2009), it seems that Brazil is finally living up to the expectations raised by its potential. This new condition, linked to the fortuitous discovery of newly-mapped oil reserves, promises to profoundly affect the Brazilian profile, both in the regional and the global strategic realms, thus its strategic relevance.

Brazil’s new prominence in the economy was first aired in November 2001 by Jim O’Neill and a group of economists working for Goldman Sachs. These economists (Goldman Sachs Economic Research Group) coined the term “BRIC” in a Global Economics Paper “Building Better Global Economic BRICs,” and henceforth captured the imagination of the world.40

In December 2006, the group published another paper, The ‘B’ in BRICs: “Unlocking Brazil’s Growth Potential,” in which they revealed disappointment and

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40 Indeed, in the years following the publication of that paper, the equity markets of Brazil, Russia, India, and China had showed remarkable performance whereas the combined GDP of these countries responded for 15% of the global economy. In another Global Economics Paper (“Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050”), published on October 1, 2003, the group analyzed the GDP growth, the income per capita and the currency movements and concluded that by 2050 the BRICs economies together could be much larger than the G6 (U.S., Britain, Germany, France, Japan, and Italy) in US dollar terms.
concern with the low 2.7% average growth that Brazil had posted for the period. This paper questioned: “Were we wrong about our initial assessment of the growth prospects for Brazil? . . . Should Brazil be part of the BRICs? . . . Can Brazil boost and sustain higher growth rates in the long term, say at or above a secular average of 5.0% a year?”

But then, economic results for 2007 and the first months of 2008, when most of the world was shaken by what promised to be a global economic crisis, endorsed boldly the BRICs thesis. Indeed, the Brazilian economy showed extraordinary and never-before-seen resilience to the US subprime crisis and the tsunami waves it sent through the world economy. In the past, any minor movement in the US economy would have had an immediate devastating effect in Brazilian economy, but at that time it proved to be much more robust and resistant to external influences. If anyone had doubts about the robustness of the Brazilian economy, 2008 was an emblematic chapter for Brazil.

Indeed, for decades, the Brazilian economy had inspired all but confidence from the international market and investors. Actually, the lack of confidence was rather justified by persistent and disappointing economic results, a 1987 debt default, and a 2003 financial crisis. But in February 2008, Brazil announced an important milestone in its economic history. For the first time in its history, Brazil became a net creditor instead of a chronic debtor to the world economy, accumulated reserves of US $195.8bn, and signaled with a tremendous improvement in its solvency ratio. On April 30, 2008, also for the first time ever, the Brazilian economy was considered to be at “investment grade” status, which was particularly remarkable in the face of global economic turbulence.41

To complete the wave of good news, in November 2007, Petróleo Brasileiro S.A. announced the discovery of as much as 8 billion barrels of recoverable light oil in the “pre-salt” ocean platform, which consolidated the very recent condition of Brazil as a net oil exporter country. This announcement had a symbolic impact on the energy sector at a time in which the United States was struggling with skyrocketing oil prices and was being forced to review its energy matrix.

41 In May 2008, Standard & Poor upgraded Brazil’s investment classification to BBB– from BB+. Thanks to this upgrading assessment, Brazil was then considered at same status of India, but still at two steps below Russia and far more from China. For Standard & Poor, it was also important that Brazil had reduced its foreign debt to 41.2% of GDP, and underscored that Brazil had been following “a fairly predictable track record of pragmatic fiscal and debt management policies.”
It is clear that these two news items put Brazil within a distinctive strategic context. Although these feats are still fresh news that reverberates throughout the international arena, it is easy to anticipate that they will create considerable demands and thus pressures for bolder definitions towards security and defense. Because of its economic robustness and energy supply, Brazil will be an even more active player in the international arena, and, consistent with Brazilian Strategic Culture, a more pressuring actor in the multilateral arena. The oil discoveries will raise pressures for “defense capabilities” proportional to the vulnerability of the new strategic spaces.

Concluding Remarks

Brazil’s Strategic Culture is still strongly influenced and comprised by traditional political and social values historically rooted in Brazilian society, but it is increasingly exposed to cosmopolitan influences coming from domestic liberal forces and from global transnational actors and processes. Such a clash pervades not only the structural process of identity formation, but is also at the heart of the main domestic political struggles, and the ones regarding foreign policy orientation as well.

Concerns with stability and the country’s own vulnerabilities lead to greater voluntary activism in defense, both domestically and regionally. Privileging multilateralism through partnerships and coalitions as the proper way of balancing national security concerns, and the interest in fostering multi-polarity and strengthening multilateralism at the global stage, are desirable conditions for the intended change of status quo that Brazil pursues.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that this particular moment carries the promise of profound changes for Brazil. Indeed, the recent good news with regard to Brazil’s economic performance, and the new and important discoveries in the energy sector have the power to change the strategic equation under which Brazil has been traditionally considered. Henceforth, the Brazilian strategic calculations of its role and position in the world will certainly be profoundly affected. By the same token, the paradigms by which Brazil has been analyzed must also be redefined. The very Brazilian Strategic Culture will be now under considerable stress.
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