

# Brazil as a bridge between old and new powers?

SEAN W. BURGES

One of the lines routinely taken by Brazilian officials engaged in international affairs is that their country is uniquely positioned to bridge chasms and build consensus in international affairs. Prosaic reasons for this abound. Culturally the country is diverse, claiming to have more people of Japanese descent than any country other than Japan, and more citizens of African ancestry than any country but Nigeria. Socio-economic realities in Brazil also capture the economic chasm of the North–South divide: the country exports advanced passenger aircraft and high fashion design while simultaneously grappling with tens of millions struggling to survive in poverty. Historical tradition and the exigencies of political and legal processes psychologically predispose Brazil to discussion and conciliation in search of an avenue to any particular desired outcome. This translates on a formal level into a highly juridical culture with strong contending regional and political factions that have to spend enormous amounts of time negotiating lest paralysis take hold. Brazilian diplomats have this in mind when they quip that they arrive at international discussions with the consensus position already outlined because the competing interests found in global talks have been reconciled during the formulation of their own national position.

Such a benign, conciliatory, consensus-creating persona for Brazilian diplomacy is only amplified by the country's economic and military insertion into South America and the global system. Brazil lacks a history of conquest or imperial domination. The country manifestly does not present a security threat to its neighbours, possessing little more armed might than the scant minimum necessary to vouchsafe its own basic territorial integrity. It would thus seem that Brazil is ideally positioned to be the prototypical bridge-builder, working diligently to ensure stability and predictability in the face of rising tensions between major powers as well as the North and the global South. This article contends that while such an understanding has some merit, a simple view of Brazil as honest broker in global affairs overlooks the self-interested streak that lies at the core of Brazilian foreign policy and drives its attitudes to the development of international regimes and the conduct of global governance. In the theoretical terms set out in the introduction to this special issue of *International Affairs*, Brazil casts itself as something of an integrative, value-creating negotiator in the international arena. But when examined on a deeper level, the country bears more resemblance to a distributive,

value-claiming actor. The ability of Brazilian diplomats to carry off this double identity rests in the country's carefully constructed position as the intermediate or bridging ground between the South and the North. In this context the role of bridge-builder offers Brazil three advantages that have only coincidental alignment with what existing powers would label good international citizenship: (a) controlling the flow of political and ideational interaction back and forth between the North and South; (b) exacting a 'toll' for traffic in each direction; (c) being indispensable to the international system because it is seen as the link between old and emerging powers.

The integrative fascia masking Brazil's core distributive negotiating strategy stems from an appreciation within the Brazilian foreign ministry, known as Itamaraty, that a foreign policy outwardly predicated on amassing gain for oneself will meet stiff resistance as others question what they will be encouraged to surrender. More to the point, whereas in the established order a northern country might be accepted, at least unconsciously, as legitimately following a distributive strategy, such an approach from a rising power like Brazil tends to be viewed by major powers as inherently ideological and to result in active exclusion from global decision-making forums. As will be set out below, Brazil circumvents this challenge in the multilateral context by engaging in oblique approaches to issues that it finds disquieting, forming coalitions to provide a collective base for its challenges to the status quo and reframing its position as a case of North–South equalization to establish a new anchor point for its negotiating coalition partners.<sup>1</sup> Expressed in terms of ideas and foreign policy,<sup>2</sup> the larger ambition is to change the commonly accepted world-view of foreign policy decision-makers, using ideas to redirect decision-making pathways and coordinate action across the South. In respect of the North, the goal is to manage the evolution of existing institutions and norms for Brazil's benefit. The result is an attempted placing of Brazil in pre-eminence, with the pursuit of its own interests as the top priority and the potential for gain among coalition 'partners' a secondary consideration.

To be completely clear, Brazil is simply doing too well economically and is too secure politically within the existing system to want any real change to the structure of the international system. The challenge that confronts Brazilian foreign policy architects is thus how to improve their country's relative position within the international arena without engaging in behaviour that will fundamentally damage the system. Its key instrument in meeting this challenge is reframing debates and influencing others with ideas and allusions to future prospects, not hard power resources. While at times this means that there might appear to be a language of rebellion and substantive revision in Brazil's foreign policy statements, even ostensibly isolationist ideas such as Lula's new international economic geography are fundamentally predicated on maintenance of the existing global governance structures. The Brazilian aim is not to overturn these decision-making

<sup>1</sup> John S. Odell, *Negotiating the world economy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 90–91.

<sup>2</sup> Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, 'Ideas and foreign policy: an analytical framework', in Judith Goldstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds, *Ideas and foreign policy: beliefs, institutions, and political change* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).

tables, but rather to gain an important seat with decision-influencing power that will allow the advancement of its own interests while retarding initiatives it sees as inimical. In part, this fits with Brazil's long-standing ambition to be viewed and accepted as a major world power, captured in its perennial ambitions for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council and the fervent belief within Itamaraty that Brazil is the country of the future. On a more operational level, it fits with Brazil's actual power projection capabilities, which are distinctly limited in economic, military and political terms. Maintenance of the existing international system is thus critical because Brazil has found a very cost-effective way of vouchsafing its sovereignty and autonomy through the strategic use and interpretation of international institutions, norms and regimes.

This leaves the question of how Brazil choreographs the complicated diplomatic dance that allows it to gain a meaningful voice in global affairs without having recourse to the sort of hard power resources attributed to Great or once-Great Powers such as the United States, China, Russia, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Brazil must remain important to the United States and Europe if it is to be seriously included in global governance discussions, which implies that it must have something to offer. The tactic most frequently used by Brazil is to position itself as a North–South balancer by trumpeting its 'southernness': either as representative of the global South, a position that is far from universally accepted, or by working to organize coalitions in the South around particular policy positions. Equally significant is the near-naked pursuit of Brazilian self-interest through the articulation of a South–South agenda that clearly creates opportunities for its internationalizing businesses. The twist here relates to framing and how the arrival of a Brazilian business is viewed in comparison to its European, American or Chinese counterparts. Common to these different strategies is the low level of concrete resources required of Brazil to act as the bridge-builder.<sup>3</sup> Although Brazilian diplomats are far from cheap to train and deploy, the overall budget of the foreign ministry remains a tiny proportion of Brazil's federal budget, let alone its national GDP.

This article will work through three sections to set out how Brazil is seeking to recast its relative power position in the global system. Attention is first turned to the foundations of the Brazilian bridge between the North and the South, focusing on Itamaraty efforts to reframe global and southern understandings to position Brazil as a leader and the South as an area of opportunity, not crisis. A particularly important element of this reframing project is Brazil's engagement with Africa, both to shift domestic thinking about global engagement and to build a larger political coalition behind Brazil's international leadership ambitions. The second section focuses on Brazilian efforts to manage the flow of traffic across the North–South bridge. Here the emphasis is on coalition formation and maintenance to create new 'rules of the road' for global governance, notably through the Brazilian-led G20 negotiating coalition in the World

<sup>3</sup> Sean W. Burges, 'Strategies and tactics for global change: democratic Brazil in comparative perspective', *Global Society* 26: 3, July 2012, pp. 351–68.

Trade Organization (WTO). With the bridge constructed and in operation, the third section focuses on the maintenance of Brazil's attempted leadership of the North–South linkage and the deflection of South American challenges through the creation of bloc-type coalitions that transcend specific issues. On an inter-American level, the creation of hemispheric management bodies that exclude the United States and Canada emerges as a critical bloc-forming strategy. Globally, the effort is towards a weakening of northern prerogatives for intervention in the South, as demonstrated by the advancement of a 'responsibility while protecting' (RWP) coda to the 'responsibility to protect' (R2P) doctrine recently used to legitimate international intervention in Libya. The article concludes with a brief discussion of the implications for northern policy-makers and a specific call for a wider view that extends beyond the prevalent approach to international relations theorizing centred on North America.

### Setting the foundations

The idea of Brazil as a bridge between the North and the South was firmly entrenched in Brazilian foreign policy during the Lula years.<sup>4</sup> Signs that developing Brazil's position between the two worlds would be a priority were immediately clear when Lula's foreign policy team was announced shortly before his inauguration in January 2003. Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães's appointment as the bureaucratic head of the foreign ministry placed the author of books with titles such as 'Five hundred years of the periphery' and 'Brazilian challenges in the era of the giants' in a key policy post.<sup>5</sup> The staunchly anti-imperialist, Third Worldist ideology of Samuel Pinheiro was replicated in Lula's main foreign policy political adviser, Marco Aurelio Garcia, who brought a dense network of Latin American and pan-southern leftist connections to his office in the Planalto presidential palace. Celso Amorim, who was appointed foreign minister, came with a less provocative CV but enormous skills as a negotiator and strong leftist street credibility for having used his post as head of the Brazilian film funding agency Embrafilme in the late 1970s to approve state funding of films critical of Brazil's military government. Overlaying these appointments was a political reality that saw Lula pushing Brazilian foreign policy far to the left along idealized humanist grounds in order to satisfy the ambitions of his political base in the Workers' Party and to distract supporters from his decision to stick with the liberal economic policies of the centre-right government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso that had preceded his.<sup>6</sup>

The reframing project began in earnest in 2004. Brazil's benchmark foreign policy statement, the annual opening address to the UN General Assembly, was

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. the contributions to Denis Rolland and Antônio Carlos Lessa, eds, *Relations internationales du Brésil: les chemins de la puissance*, 2 vols (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, *Quinhentos anos de periferia* (Porto Alegre: Editora UFRGS, 1999); Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, *Desafios Brasileiros na era dos gigantes* (Rio de Janeiro: Contrapunto, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Paulo Roberto de Almeida, 'A política internacional do Partido dos Trabalhadores: da fundação à diplomacia do governo Lula', *Revista Sociológica e Política*, no. 20, June 2003, pp. 87–102; Paulo Roberto de Almeida, 'Uma política externa engajada: a diplomacia do governo Lula', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* 47: 1, 2004, pp. 162–84.

specifically targeted at recruiting African support when Lula explicitly quoted Frantz Fanon, a key intellectual architect of African independence. Lula directly called on the global South to change its frame of reference by taking charge of its own affairs to pursue southern, not northern, priorities: 'I have a life-long commitment to those silenced by inequality, hunger and hopelessness. To them, in the powerful words of Frantz Fanon, the colonial past has bestowed a common legacy: "If you so desire, take it: the freedom to starve to death."' <sup>7</sup> This publicly expressed sense that southern countries should and could make their own decisions and take charge of their own fate led to some curious contradictions in Brazil's own foreign relations. While Lula adopted a remarkably subdued outward reaction to the 2006 Bolivian nationalization of Petrobras gas interests, treating it as an internal Bolivian issue with bilateral implications in need of discussion, <sup>8</sup> the Brazilian president was not shy about directly intervening in the domestic politics of neighbouring countries by publicly stating his preference for particular leftist candidates. Brazilian firms fed this quiet abeyance of Brazil's traditional maximalist approach to sovereignty in foreign affairs by engaging in a deep process of internationalization throughout South America through an extensive programme of foreign direct investment (FDI) and market penetration.

This shift to the South struck many in Brazil's extremely hierarchical diplomatic establishment as an affront, in part because it was being driven by an outsider, Marco Aurelio, and a diplomat yet to achieve ambassadorial rank, Samuel Pinheiro. More troubling for the Itamaraty establishment was that it appeared to represent the abandonment of over a decade of work rebuilding strong relations with the United States and Europe, a traditional priority for Brazilian foreign policy. Discontent with the *Lulista* position mounted to the point at which former ambassador to the US Roberto Abdenur gave a very critical retirement interview to the weekly magazine *Veja*, which he followed with more sombre testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee raising concerns that Brazil was now devoting too much attention to Africa and Latin America at the expense of its established northern partners. <sup>9</sup> Viewed in historical context, Abdenur's critique of Brazil's pan-southern turn held considerable merit. Prior attempts at driving national development forward through expanded links with Africa or even Latin America had left little in the way of concrete results. <sup>10</sup> Such reservations appear to be reflected in the internal Itamaraty response to the new direction. Staffing

<sup>7</sup> Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Statement opening the general debate of the 59th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 21 Sept. 2004, <http://www.un.int/brazil/speech/04d-lils-59agnu-opening-2109.html>, accessed 18 April 2013.

<sup>8</sup> Sarah-Lea John de Sousa, 'Brazil and Bolivia: the hydrocarbon "conflict"', *FRIDE Comment*, Nov. 2006, Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior, [http://www.fride.org/descarga/COM\\_Hidrocarb\\_ENG\\_novo6.pdf](http://www.fride.org/descarga/COM_Hidrocarb_ENG_novo6.pdf), accessed 11 April 2013.

<sup>9</sup> Otávio Cabral, 'Nem na ditadura—entrevista: Roberto Abdenur', *Veja*, 7 Feb. 2007; CRE, Senado Federal Comissão de Relações Exteriores e Defesa Nacional, 4ª Reunião extraordinária da Comissão de Relações Exteriores e Defesa Nacional, da 1ª sessão legislativa ordinária da 53ª legislatura, 27 Feb. 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Jerry Dávila, *Hotel Trópico: Brazil and the challenge of African decolonization, 1950–1980* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Pía Riggirozzi, 'Reconstructing regionalism: what does development have to do with it?', in Pía Riggirozzi and Diana Tussie, eds, *The rise of post-hegemonic regionalism: the case of Latin America* (London: Springer, 2012).

the plethora of new embassies opened in Africa and the Caribbean during the Lula years remains a significant challenge for the ministry, with 35 of the new missions remaining understaffed owing to the reluctance of diplomats to take up the postings.<sup>11</sup>

Yet the reality is that the turn to Africa has provided results on a number of fronts for Brazil's larger political and economic foreign policy. In essence, Lula's foreign policy innovation represented little more than an extension of some of the global positioning, reframing and coalition-building strategies used during the Cardoso administration. During the Cardoso years, stabilizing Mercosur and South America as a whole became critical elements of Brazil's reinsertion into the international community, with leadership of the bloc and continent winning the Brazilian president invitations to key global talking shops such as the 'Third Way' forums and positioning the country as a gateway to South America.<sup>12</sup> Lula's launch of pan-southern and Africa-specific foreign policy programmes fitted within this mould, particularly in the concomitant efforts to use ideas to extend the foreign policy decision-making matrix across the global South and weight it towards Brazil and away from the United States and other northern countries.

As was the case with Brazilian initiatives in South America, Lula's attempts to position Brazil as a pan-southern leader have not been totally successful.<sup>13</sup> At a basic level, Brazil has been unwilling or unable to meet the demands it has created, most particularly in the constant petitioning for development assistance and FDI from African partners. Yet it is in the very failure to satisfy what amount to demands for Brazilian leadership that we also find the signs of success in Lula's ideational leadership. Attitudes across the global South shifted to see Brasília as a potential source of political support, developmental assistance and commercial opportunity. This in turn shifted decision-making matrices, generating important elements of political support for key Brazilian initiatives, most notably formation of the G20 WTO trade negotiating coalition and at least a renewal of discussions about reforming the United Nations Security Council, all of which helped entrench Brazil's position in what became the G20 global governance framework. Continued work by Lula and his foreign policy team to mobilize and coordinate pan-southern voices added force to Brazil's calls to be included as a major player at global decision-making tables even if the price of admission was fundamentally acceptance of a role as interlocutor to an increasingly vocal global southern coalition.

The pan-southern turn in Lula's foreign policy achieved progress in part because it played on ideas dear to the heart of his domestic support base as well as long-standing concerns about inequities in the operation of the global political economy. On a domestic level, Lula's plans were driven by an analysis grounded in Brazil's older traditions of trade and political diversification as tools

<sup>11</sup> Flávia Foreque, 'Novos postos diplomáticos viram "mico" no Itamaraty', *Folha de São Paulo*, 18 Aug. 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Fernando Henrique Cardoso with Brian Winter, *The accidental president of Brazil: a memoir* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2006), chs 10, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Andrés Malamud, 'A leader without followers? The growing divergence between the regional and global performance of Brazilian foreign policy', *Latin American Politics and Society* 53: 3, 2011, pp. 1–24.



for the maintenance of national autonomy.<sup>14</sup> Building on the strong *dependen-tista* understandings that pervade Brazilian public policy and adding an energy security dynamic, trade policy-makers in the late 1980s embarked on a conscious policy of diversifying Brazil's trade linkages, using the South American trade bloc Mercosur as a platform for reducing dependence on North American and European markets.<sup>15</sup> By the start of the Lula years this had resulted in a roughly four-way split in trade flows, with Europe, the United States, South America and the rest of the world accounting for about a quarter each.

The economic justification for Lula's ideological push into Africa was that it further diversified Brazil's international economic insertion, which was of particular interest to the big Brazilian construction, mining and oil companies that were engaging in large FDI and market expansion projects in the early 2000s.<sup>16</sup> When seen in the light of the actual percentage of total trade, this argument appears thin. Africa's share of total Brazilian trade hardly moved between 2003 and 2011, going from 5.1 per cent to 5.7 per cent. The more significant figure is the change in nominal flows, which rose 445 per cent from US\$6.2 billion in 2003 to US\$27.6 billion in 2011.<sup>17</sup> Brazilian government officials point to the nature of Brazil–Africa economic exchange, which is often driven by small and medium-sized firms that are outpacing official governmental exchange. Trade is being backed by Brazilian FDI in the continent, some of which is funded through Brazil's National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES). On a people-to-people basis, Brazil is emerging as a shopping and medical tourism destination for Africans, not only because of cost competitiveness, but also because of the use of Portuguese, which is welcomed by countries such as Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe. More importantly for the overarching national development prerogatives underpinning Brazilian foreign policy is the high proportion of value-added products in exports to African markets.<sup>18</sup>

The desire to diversify Brazilian trade linkages was a critical element of the underlying rationale for Lula's talk of a new international economic geography. From the Brazilian point of view, the challenge was the tremendous difficulty of gaining entry to either European or North American markets for value-added products such as capital goods, consumer durables or simple manufactured goods. Africa and the rest of Latin America were the obvious alternative markets. What the strategic planners in Brazil appear to have insufficiently considered was the depth of competition from China for these markets. On a cost basis, Brazil has a hard time competing with China. Where the field evens out is in the manner of

<sup>14</sup> Rubens Antônio Barbosa and Luís Fernando Panelli César, 'O Brasil como "global trader"', in Gélson Fonseca Júnior and Sérgio Henrique Nabuco de Castro, eds, *Temas de política externa Brasileira II*, vol. 1 (São Paulo: Editoria Paz e Terra, 1994).

<sup>15</sup> Luigi Manzetti, 'Argentine–Brazilian economic integration: an early appraisal', *Latin American Research Review* 25: 3, 1990, pp. 109–40.

<sup>16</sup> José Flávio Sobra Saraiva, *África parceira do Brasil atlântico* (Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2012), ch. 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ministério de Desenvolvimento, Indústria e Comércio Exterior, Governo do Brasil, 'AliceWeb2—trade balance query', <http://aliceweb2.mdic.gov.br>, accessed 18 April 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Christina Stolte, 'Brazil in Africa: just another BRICS country seeking resources?', Chatham House Briefing Paper AFP/AMP BP 2012/01, Nov. 2012.

conducting business. Chinese firms are criticized for engaging in a predatory form of investment and trade that often involves mass temporary labour migration from China. Brazilian firms are taking a more locally oriented approach. In part this is driven by the relatively higher cost of Brazilian labour, which prompts Brazilian firms to transfer management and technical expertise to projects in Africa and train new staff on the spot for future endeavours rather than importing the entire workforce. This builds upon an inherent cultural affinity that finds roots in Brazil's large population of African descent as well as the Community of Portuguese Speaking Nations, which Cardoso pushed forward with former Portuguese president Mário Soares.<sup>19</sup>

## North–South traffic management

Beyond trade and investment considerations in Lula's call for a new international economic geography lie matters to do with the formation and support of coalitions. His fundamental point was that the South need not look to the North for economic opportunity. Instead, the frame could be shifted and attention turned to South–South linkages, ideally channelled through a supportive actor such as Brazil. For Brazil, the political gains from this were nearly immediate, establishing the country as a *de facto* spokesperson for the South before the full impact of the commodity boom became apparent. An explicit aspect of the search for southern trade and investment opportunities was that the South did not need simply to accept what was on offer from the North, but could build its own reality. The goal was to bring about a subtle but substantive shift in self-perceptions that would move attention away from the North towards a rising country in the South such as Brazil.<sup>20</sup> This in turn would open up new avenues for the coordination, collaboration and co-option that Itamaraty would use to position Brazil as North–South interlocutor and 'leader' of sorts for the South.

One of the first areas where this nascent diplomatic push became evident was in discussions leading to the 2003 WTO Cancún ministerial. The calculation in Brazil was that the deal on offer from the US and EU was not particularly attractive to the major agricultural export interests in Brazil that had gained a strong voice in policy formation with Lula's appointment of Roberto Rodrigues and Luiz Fernando Furlan to the agriculture and trade and development ministries. The assessment provided by Rodrigues and Furlan, with technocratic support from the new São Paulo think-tank Icone, was that the proffered Cancún deal would retard rather than advance Brazilian access to the lucrative US and EU markets. Itamaraty showed considerable skill in pushing this domestic position into the international arena. Rather than simply objecting to the proposed text,

<sup>19</sup> Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Mário Soares, *O mundo em Português: um diálogo* (São Paulo: Editora Paz e Terra, 1998); World Bank/Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada, *Bridging the Atlantic. Brazil and sub-Saharan Africa: South–South partnering for growth* (Washington DC, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> This idea was highlighted by Carlos Lopes, UNDP representative to Brazil, in 'Uma nova configuração ao Sul', in João Paulo dos Reis Velloso, ed., *O desafio da China e da Índia: a resposta do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora José Olympio, 2005).



Amorim led an Itamaraty diplomatic offensive through the global South to form an issue-specific coalition opposed to the deal.

In a marked departure from the overtly obstructionist 'flat no' position that southern actors used to squash trade talks at the 1998 Seattle ministerial,<sup>21</sup> Amorim took a more sophisticated approach than that of a simple blocking strategy. The nascent 'southern' identity Lula was carefully constructing for Brazil was used to bring a group of Latin American and other southern agricultural exporters together in a series of technical talks to write a concrete alternative proposal to the US–EU text.<sup>22</sup> Significantly, this process was organized outside the Australia-led Cairns Group of agricultural-exporting countries. It also used an explicitly integrative negotiating strategy to approach an issue with strong distributive policy assumptions. Cooperation with technical institutes such as Icone was used to construct a pan-southern agricultural exporting position that in some ways actually took a more orthodox approach to trade liberalization than that advanced by the EU and US. Emphasis was placed on addressing not just tariffs, but also the developed-country production subsidies that effectively priced Brazilian products out of northern markets. The outward face that Brazil sought to present was that its approach to trade liberalization would create greater overall benefits for all parties, albeit at the immediate expense of northern domestic agricultural interests. However, by 2007 some members of the G20 were complaining that Brazil was playing its own game and that India was proving little help in finding out what was actually happening in the meetings of the 'Quad' group at the heart of the WTO talks.<sup>23</sup>

The clever part of the strategy was that its insistent constructiveness and commitment to advancing the negotiations forced a recomposition of the Quad, putting Brazil in the room along with India, the EU and US, and pushing out Japan and Canada. Brazil thus became a key bridge to the South for the US and EU, organizing and restraining dissenting voices in the South and using an extended process of consultations and policy discussions to discipline dissenting voices that could have created a Seattle-style rupture.<sup>24</sup> A focus on the prioritization of Brazilian interests began to appear by 2007 when rising global commodity prices effectively negated the impact of northern producer subsidies. At this point Brazil began to drift from the coalition script and quietly started suggesting to the G20 trade grouping that more concessions should be made on non-agricultural market access

<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey J. Schott, ed., *The WTO after Seattle* (Washington DC: Institute for International Economics, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> Amrita Narlikar and Diana Tussie, 'The G20 at the Cancún ministerial: developing countries and their evolving coalitions in the WTO', *The World Economy* 27: 7, July 2004, pp. 947–66; Pedro da Motta Veiga, 'Brazil and the G20 group of developing countries', in Peter Gallagher, Patrick Low and Andrew L. Stoler, eds, *Managing the challenges of WTO participation: 45 case studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> This was made explicit in confidential interviews with diplomats from G20 members in Geneva during the first half of 2007. Clearer public signs of this discontent began to appear later in the year. See e.g. 'Amorim cobra países emergentes', *O Estado de São Paulo*, 28 June 2007; Jamil Chade, 'Brasil não consegue apoio do G-20', *O Estado de São Paulo*, 3 July 2007; Jamil Chade, 'Para França, Brasil não representa pobres na OMC', *O Estado de São Paulo*, 6 July 2007; Jamil Chade, 'Brasil faz reunião para tentar manter unidos os países pobres e emergentes', *O Estado de São Paulo*, 7 July 2007.

<sup>24</sup> 'EUA querem que Brasil convença Índia a negociar', *O Estado de São Paulo*, 10 Jan. 2007; Missy Ryan, 'U.S. blames Brazil, India for failure of G4 talks', Reuters, 22 June 2007.

issues as well as developing-country micro-producer agricultural supports in order to advance the trade agenda. This created disquiet among Brazil's G20 partners, but not enough to break the negotiating coalition.<sup>25</sup> For Brazil, the magic in its leadership of the coalition was that it was able to retard the progress of initiatives by both the North and South that it found unfavourable by occupying the middle ground as interlocutor between the two.

This strategy of aggregating, channelling and then diverting or advancing proposals depending on Brazil's appraisal of its own particular advantage should not have come as a surprise to Brazil's negotiating partners. Indeed, for Argentine diplomats involved in the WTO talks it was simply business as usual for their neighbour. A similar process was seen in Brazil's handling of the failed negotiations towards a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) from their commencement at the 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas through to their eventual de facto abandonment at Mar del Plata in 2005.<sup>26</sup> Through a series of preparatory consultations prior to the 1994 meeting Brazil positioned itself as a consensus-creating coordinator looking for a more sustainable approach to the issue that could be taken forward, not as the organizer of outright opposition to the US FTAA proposal. From that point on Brazil under the Cardoso administration did not so much create explicit deadlocks as take an intermediate position between the US–Canada and the rest of Latin America, leaving blatant opposition to countries like Venezuela. Brazil's negotiating strategy was to consistently mobilize the collective position of Mercosur and other regional interests around policy stances such as the elimination of agricultural subsidies that were entirely consistent with the logic of the FTAA, but directly opposed to the domestic political imperatives at play in the US and thus likely to jam the hemispheric trade talks. This tactic stiffened, moving from calls for extended discussion to outright contradiction of the two North American countries, as Brazil's own economic situation solidified and new emerging markets such as China began to appear in the early 2000s.

In this context Lula's first term stands out as an important moment of transition in Brazil's attempts to position itself as the critical interlocutor and gatekeeper between first the United States and Latin America and then the North and the South. Although Brazilian diplomats studiously eschewed the language of leadership during the Cardoso years, there was never any doubt in either the Planalto Palace or Itamaraty that this was Brazil's proper role.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the idea that Brazil, as a country of continental dimensions, should at the very least be a sub-regional leader has a long and lasting place in the conceptual superstructure of Brazilian foreign policy.<sup>28</sup> In the view of Brazilian diplomats, this regional leadership status

<sup>25</sup> Chade, 'Brasil não consegue apoio do G-20'; Chade, 'Brasil faz reunião para tentar manter unidos os países pobres e emergentes'.

<sup>26</sup> Fernando Simas Magalhães, *Cúpula das Américas de 1994: papel negociador do Brasil, em busca de uma agenda hemisférica* (Brasília: FUNAG, 1999); Luiz Felipe Lampreia, *O Brasil e os ventos do mundo* (Rio de Janeiro: Objetiva, 2009), pp. 181–92; Zuleika Arashiro, *Negotiating the Free Trade Area of the Americas* (New York: Palgrave, 2011), ch. 6; Richard Feinberg, *Summitry in the Americas: a progress report* (Washington DC: Institute for International Economics, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> Sean W. Burges, *Brazilian foreign policy after the Cold War* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> E. Bradford Burns, *The unwritten alliance: Rio Branco and Brazilian–American relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

was a fundamental part of the justification for Brazil's inclusion as a major voice at global councils such as the UN Security Council and GATT/WTO and for the eventual rejection by Brazil of the G8's Heiligendamm outreach process. The perennial challenge for Brazil had been how to achieve and exercise this leadership without incurring real costs or invoking the rebellious ire of important neighbours such as Argentina, Colombia and Venezuela. Fiscal consolidation and rising commodity prices during the early Lula years changed the context for Brazil, enabling it to take a more expansive, activist approach to asserting its position as bridge and gatekeeper, hemispherically and globally.

## **Maintaining the bridge**

Brazil began to coordinate a series of summits designed to build its links with other developing areas, most notably between South America on the one side and Africa, the Arab world and Asia on the other. On a pan-southern level, two initiatives stand out as key to Brazil establishing itself at the core of a network of powerful emerging market countries in what are effectively global governance balancing coalitions. Formation of the India–Brazil–South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA) in June 2003 resulted in a series of regular summits at ministerial and head of government level to discuss issues of mutual interest. While these were not particularly exciting in terms of high-profile policy outcomes, the strength of IBSA proved to lie in the near-banalities of its continuous consultations between the member government bureaucracies and the slow development of increased linkages between business and civil society groups. Discussions about technical cooperation on specific projects and the alignment of positions on issues across the gamut of foreign policy questions formed the substance of the grouping, allowing Brazil to arrive at international meetings with a credible claim to be playing a leading role in the coordination of pan-southern approaches to global governance issues.<sup>29</sup> Inclusion within the BRIC acronym launched by Goldman Sachs and gradually adopted as a byword for critical emerging power countries simply entrenched Brazil's position as a country of note, even if it was largely as the purveyor of ideas to push events forward rather than as provider of significant volumes of tangible resources.

On a global level, Brazil simply lacked both the political will and the hard power resources to do more than use its ideational focus to nudge, push and suggest at global governance conference tables. Within the Americas, where Brazil carried more regional weight, embedded influence and political will, the situation was different.<sup>30</sup> The ideas of the Cardoso presidency for frame-shifting integration of South American infrastructure were politically amplified through a series

<sup>29</sup> Marco Antonio Vieira and Chris Alden, 'India, Brazil and South Africa: South–South cooperation and the paradox of regional leadership', *Global Governance* 17: 3, 2011, pp. 507–528; Marco Antonio Vieira and Chris Alden, 'The new diplomacy of the South: South Africa, Brazil, India and trilateralism', *Third World Quarterly* 26: 7, 2005, pp. 1077–1095; Maria Regina Soares de Lima and Monica Hirst, eds, *Brasil, Índia e África do Sul: desafios e oportunidades para novas parcerias* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Burges, *Brazilian foreign policy after the Cold War*.

of continental meetings that first created the Community of South American nations (CASA) and then reformed the framework into what is known today as the Union of South American Nations (Unasur).<sup>31</sup> Nothing in Brazil's South American agenda was particularly revolutionary. The shift came in who would manage regional issues and how.

Ideas of expanded trade, enhanced mutual cooperation for development, and increased sharing of information for regional security and crime control were the key practical proposals underpinning a political agenda focused on the attempt to manage regional issues locally under Brazilian direction without US or European intervention and to coordinate common South American approaches to regional and global issues. For Brazil, these latter aspects were critical because they publicly established the country's credibility as an actor able to defuse tension and maintain stability. While this was a role Brazil had undertaken in the past, notably in its 1998 settling of the Ecuador–Peru border conflict, the maintenance of democracy in Paraguay, the calming of tensions after the 2001 presidential election in Peru, and the mobilization of anti-putschist pressure when Venezuela's Hugo Chávez was briefly deposed in 2002, in those cases action had been undertaken quietly and in a manner that deflected direct attention away from Brazil so as not to create expectations for greater proactive leadership.

While there was some regional acceptance of this growing Brazilian leadership role, it was accompanied by questions about whether or not Brazil would actually offer sustained and concrete goods that would make acceptance of its leadership worthwhile. Brazil was able to deflect some of these demands through a range of programmes offering, for example, enhanced technical cooperation, financing for infrastructure projects and expanded political consultation, but doubt remained that Brazil was doing much for the region beyond advancing its own value-claiming agenda.<sup>32</sup> Matters were further complicated for Itamaraty by the rising oil prices that allowed Hugo Chávez's Venezuela to challenge Brazilian leadership in the region. By the mid-2000s Chávez was using booming oil export income to underwrite a revisionist leadership strategy for the region that would focus on a new, 'socialist' political economy of exchange and a hard-core statist approach to economic management that ran counter to liberal economic principles that had created stability in Brazil and allowed the country to experience a new economic boom. Moreover, the attention that Chávez's ideas were gaining pulled the focus away from Brazil as an interlocutor with the United States and the North and started to suggest that Venezuela might be an alternative.

Rather than taking a directly oppositional stance to Chávez, Brazil adopted a more co-optive negotiating attitude in order to slowly suffocate unwanted Venezuelan initiatives and proposals. Chávez was left free to talk and dream with little in the way of commentary from Brazil. The Brazilian approach was to let the weight of technical details rein in Chávez and quietly maintain Brazil's

<sup>31</sup> Ricardo Carciofi, 'Cooperation for the provision of regional public goods: the IIRSA case', in Pía Riggirozzi and Diana Tussie, eds, *The rise of post-hegemonic regionalism: the case of Latin America* (London: Springer, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Malamud, 'A leader without followers?'

pre-eminence. Three examples stand as classic demonstrations of this strategy. The first instance was the proposal that Brazil and Venezuela cooperate to create a so-called 'energy ring', which would involve a natural gas pipeline linking all of the South American countries. While energy analysts were dubious and the major Brazilian partner Petrobras more than a little sceptical, Lula gave an outwardly positive impression by embracing the idea and compelling state-controlled Petrobras to engage in technical discussions with Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA). Despite the public enthusiasm of the two presidents, it soon became clear that Petrobras saw the project as uneconomic, which allowed Lula to sideline it by reminding his Venezuelan colleague that he could not reasonably be expected to force action by a publicly listed company that anchored the pension funds of many workers in Brazil. The same logic was apparent in the second instance: plans to build a jointly owned oil refinery in Pernambuco, Brazil, to refine heavy Venezuelan crude for the north-east of Brazil and create a new petrochemical employment hub. Unlike the energy ring, this project was judged to make economic sense by Petrobras. The catch was that, despite commitments to a joint venture, financing from PDVSA remained a vague promise. Petrobras went ahead anyway, and by 2011 was telling PDVSA that it was in danger of losing its equity stake in the project.

The final instance was the Banco do Sul that Chávez proposed creating as a regional alternative to the IMF. For Brazil, the issue was not the logic behind the proposal—that regional resources be mobilized to advance continental priorities free from the conditionality of the Washington-based institutions—but the extent to which Chávez would try to use the institution as a way of externally funding his own foreign policy priorities.<sup>33</sup> By the time the bank was seriously proposed in 2007 it had become very clear that Chávez had a somewhat looser approach to fiscal management and discipline than Brazil, preferring to rely on increasing oil revenues rather than careful monetary policy to maintain economic growth and stability. Again, rather than taking a position in direct opposition to the project, Brazil turned to the technocratic details, unleashing its central bank and finance ministry experts on the proposals. Additional pressure was added through clear statements that Brazil did not see a need to replace the Inter-American Development Bank, wanted the new bank to be a technical and not a political entity, was uninterested in diverting national reserves to the institution, and would only join the project if it was one of the founding countries.<sup>34</sup> All of these conditions had to be seriously considered by Chávez's Bolivarian group because the bank needed Brazil's capital and expertise if it was to be effective and credible on a regional and an international level.

The larger common theme running through these three instances relates to the negotiating strategy behind 'consensual' leadership and the reality that if a country

<sup>33</sup> 'Brasil busca alternativa ao banco proposto por Chávez', *Valor Econômico*, 6 March 2007; 'Brasil diverge sobre criação do Banco do Sul', *Valor Econômico*, 16 April 2007.

<sup>34</sup> Jose Mereilles Passos, 'Banco do Sul: Brasil aceita ser sócio, mas exige perfil técnico e não político', *O Globo*, 15 April 2007; "'Não vamos comer um prato feito'", *O Globo*, 17 April 2007; Claudia Dianni, 'Mantega impõe condição para entrar no Banco do Sul', *Folha de São Paulo*, 20 April 2007.

really is a leader it need not say much about being one. There was a conscious and deliberate attempt by Chávez to bring Brazil onside as a proponent of his schemes and, when the Brazilians were unwilling to join, to supplant them. This was never seen as a terribly serious threat in Brazil. Itamaraty read the signs throughout the region that although one or two countries might overtly subscribe to Venezuela's Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) and Chavez's Bolivarian model and take his cut-price assistance, a pragmatic view of regional and global economic realities would keep Brazil in the lead. Indeed, the centrality of Brazil as a leading actor in anything that might be successful within South America had become amply apparent to Chávez in the wake of the 2006 Bolivian gas industry nationalization. While Brazil was decidedly displeased by this development and miffed by Venezuela's role as its instigator, the reaction from Brasília was measured. Technical discussions were initiated with La Paz, which gained greater saliency after the discovery of gas reserves off the coast of Santos in November 2007.<sup>35</sup> If anything, the May Day nationalization served as a wake-up call for Brazilian strategic planners, resulting in a renewed focus on the region and a strengthening of the South American identity ideas under development since the mid-1990s. Key presidential advisers such as Marco Aurelio Garcia and José Dirceu began a busy schedule of shuttle diplomacy to keep the Andean countries onside. A series of quarterly presidential meetings between Lula and Chávez—conducted man to man in Portuñol—were initiated, with the two leaders addressing issues of mutual concern without the presence of aides. Anecdotaly, the impact of these initiatives was profound. Whereas in 2007 a certain degree of quiet panic about Chávez was evident during interviews in Itamaraty, by 2010 this concern had been replaced by the quiet confidence of a skipper smoothly guiding the South American ship along a well-planned course.

While Chávez and other Latin American voices could be managed through subtle reminders of Brazil's continental preponderance and prospects of gain from the idea of South America, approaches to the United States were somewhat more complicated. Indeed, it was Latin America's relationship with the United States that Lula was targeting in framing his ideas of a new economic geography and pan-southern solidarity at the start of his presidency. As the FTAA and WTO processes as well as a series of Organization of American States (OAS) general assemblies made clear, there was a tendency in the region to look first to the United States, which in turn gave the US enormous, implicit influence in South America. The Brazilian ambition was to shift this attitude to put itself in the place of natural leader of the region.

By the end of Lula's presidency the national, regional and global conditions had changed to the point where Brazil might concretely attempt a marginalization of the United States. On the domestic front it appeared that Brazil's economic troubles were now a thing of the past, although China was looming as a near-term potential problem. Indeed, the same phenomenon seemed to be occurring throughout much

<sup>35</sup> Carlos D. Mesa Gisbert, 'Bolívia e Brasil: os meandros do caminho', *Política Externa* 20: 2, Sept./Oct./Nov., 2011, pp. 23–42.



of the region, reducing the need for policy benediction from Washington.<sup>36</sup> Rather than being home-grown, these changed circumstances stemmed from the sustained period of growth driven by Asian demand for commodities, which many South American countries had used to invest in human and physical infrastructure.<sup>37</sup> Previous attempts at Brazilian marginalization of US influence in the region had largely been taken through the ambit of the OAS, notably through the squashing of the US-proposed final declaration at the 2005 Fort Lauderdale General Assembly and the sidelining of Canadian attempts to adjudicate democratic qualities at the 2000 Windsor General Assembly. Within the new national, regional and global scenario, Brazil could begin a process of emasculating the major inter-American meetings of the OAS and the Summit of the Americas.

Clear attempts to push the United States (and Canada) out of the management of South American and wider inter-American affairs began with a series of simultaneous presidential summits at Costa do Sauípe in Bahia, Brazil, on 16–17 December 2008.<sup>38</sup> All countries from the Americas *except* Canada and the United States were invited to attend what was effectively an OAS minus two plus one (Cuba) meeting. Repeated requests from Canada and the US for at least observer status at the meeting were politely, but firmly, rebuffed. There was a palpable sense in the North American capitals that this might be a key summit, building upon the regional issue management success from earlier in the year when a mix of Unasur and South American Defense Council frameworks prevented the Colombian bombing of a FARC rebel base in Ecuador from escalating into a fully fledged regional conflagration. Suggestions along these lines gained strength as the Bahia meetings co-opted some of Venezuela's anti-US ALBA momentum to coalesce around the idea of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) at the Rio Group–Caribbean meeting in Mexico on 23 February 2010; the following April at a meeting in Caracas CELAC was formally accepted as an entity.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of CELAC is that despite its undoubted political weight as a talking shop and venue for corralling hemispheric states into a common position, it lacks clear institutional structure and has no real substance other than the pan-southernist idea that Latin American and Caribbean issues can be addressed internally without tutelage from the US and Canada. Both Unasur and CELAC are clear attempts to reduce US and external influence in the region, placing Brazil in the leading position of what is effectively a coalition unimpeded by the kind of supranational framework that would allow smaller regional states to

<sup>36</sup> Adrian H. Hearn and José Luis León-Manriquez, eds, *China engages Latin America: tracing the trajectory* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2011); R. Evan Ellis, *China in Latin America: the whats and wherefores* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009); Kevin Gallagher and Roberto Porzecanski, *The dragon in the room: China and the future of Latin American industrialization* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Hal Weitzman, *Latin lessons: how South America stopped listening to the United States and started prospering* (London: Wiley, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Andrés Malamud, 'Four Latin American summits and Brazil's leadership', Real Instituto Elcano, 17 March 2009, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/a005e7804f018b9dbac8fe3170baead1/WP3-2009-Malamud\\_Latin\\_American\\_Summits\\_Brazil\\_Leadership.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=a005e7804f018b9dbac8fe3170baead1](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/a005e7804f018b9dbac8fe3170baead1/WP3-2009-Malamud_Latin_American_Summits_Brazil_Leadership.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=a005e7804f018b9dbac8fe3170baead1), accessed 12 Dec. 2012.

actively constrain the Portuguese-speaking giant. Brazilian distaste for restrictive frameworks was made abundantly clear by the Itamaraty response to an Inter-American Human Rights Commission (IAHRC) report critical of approval procedures for the Belo Monte dam on the Xingu River in the state of Pará. Although Brazilian government officials said they had already completed the consultations and investigations suggested by the IAHRC, rather than simply forwarding the necessary documentation to the Commission's Washington headquarters Itamaraty reacted with the extremely aggressive response of slashing its diplomatic staff at the OAS and loudly condemning the impingement on Brazil's sovereignty. This was followed up at the 2012 OAS General Assembly in Cochabamba, Bolivia, where Brazil quietly went along with a joint Bolivian–Ecuadorian initiative to censure the OAS's democracy and human rights monitoring mechanisms.<sup>39</sup> These efforts to weaken existing inter-American governance frameworks centred on Washington helped to entrench Brazil as a central bridging point for the Americas, but with little in terms of any mechanism that can be used by other countries to keep Brazil in check.

One telling extra-regional example of clever Brazilian diplomatic entrepreneurship is Itamaraty's response to the interventions that were organized to support the Arab Spring. For Brazil, the idea of intervening directly in the internal affairs of another country as was seen in the Libyan case is anathema.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, the Brazilian resistance to international efforts to exert pressure for regime change in Libya, and then Syria, caused Brazil's construction and natural resource exploration firms some difficulty after the fall of Gaddafi.<sup>41</sup> The challenge for Brazil was the need to reconcile its own approach to global affairs, centred on a strict observance of national sovereignty, with the increasingly vocal calls from civil society groups around the world to implement policies based on the R2P concept. Again, the world of ideas and technocratic fluency provided Brazil with a vehicle for pursuing its preferred course. Rather than taking a forceful stance, placing sovereignty ahead of a moral call for intervention to protect civilians from atrocities, Brazil sought to push the world-view in a new direction by focusing on the importance of preventing civilian casualties. The result was the proposal of a slight twist to the R2P doctrine in the call for a codicil labelled by Brazilian diplomats 'responsibility while protecting'.<sup>42</sup> Under the RWP addendum, intervening powers could be held accountable for collateral damage that they caused while protecting civilians.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Manuela Picq, 'The Inter-American Court of Human Rights: too progressive for its own good?', Aljazeera.com, 7 June 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/06/2012658344220937.html>, accessed 10 Jan. 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, 'Tempos de mudança no mundo árabe', *Política Externa* 20: 1, June–Aug. 2011, p. 15.

<sup>41</sup> Lourival Santanna, 'Itamaraty se aproxima de líderes líbios', *O Estado de São Paulo*, 2 Oct. 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Kai Michael Kenkel, 'Brazil and R2P: does taking responsibility mean using force?', *Global Responsibility to Protect* 4, 2012, pp. 5–32.

<sup>43</sup> Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, 'Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas—debate aberto sobre proteção de civis em conflito armado', Media Release no. 436, New York, 9 Nov. 2011, <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/conselho-de-seguranca-das-nacoes-unidas-debate-aberto-sobre-protecao-de-civis-em-conflito-armado-nova-york-9-de-novembro-de-2011>, accessed 10 Jan. 2013.

While the debate on whether or not the RWP addendum should be adopted continues, it has gained sufficient traction to be placed on the UN priority discussion list.<sup>44</sup> On a surface level there is little to argue with. Of course it makes sense to ensure that civilian collateral damage is limited, if not prevented, when engaging in an R2P intervention. What is left unsaid is how this can be done. Environments in which intervention is necessary are generally chaotic and fluid, and the 'enemy' exceptionally unclear for the intervening force. The RWP addendum would create a legal responsibility to navigate these major uncertainties and ensure that the intervention did not contribute to additional civilian damage. In practical terms the RWP addendum quietly undermines external intervention in a sovereign state under the R2P doctrine by creating an unmanageable liability for the intervening countries, further reducing the chances that the international community will actually take steps to settle otherwise contained unstable and violent situations. When the proposal is seen as a clever deployment of an ideas-focused approach to a power politics question, Itamaraty's strategy comes into focus as a subtle one of deadlocking debates on R2P by making the risks and costs of intervention prohibitive.

## Conclusion

For the last 20 years Itamaraty has been working to position Brazil as a leader of first South America and then the global South. The sort of institutional machinations seen in the inter-American system and the UN form an important part of the foreign policy strategy of making Brazil the conduit for regional coordination and wider pan-southern interaction. Brazil's approach is essentially one of coalition formation, aimed at compensating for its deficiencies in respect of hard power military and economic credentials with its ample ability to generate ideas that are operationalized through diplomatic flair and a capacity to mobilize or derail initiatives requiring a larger southern voice. On the applied front, this earns Brazil an invitation to major international decision-making tables such as the G20 and the UN. This in turn becomes important to the wider foreign policy priority of maintaining the pre-eminence of the international norm of sovereignty as a device for protecting national autonomy. What is different about the Brazilian sequencing is that its diplomats avoid tactics of simple opposition and blatant deadlocking, preferring instead to find technical routes that may deliver the same end by reworking accepted world-views or established causal patterns to create a new frame of reference for international negotiations and the participating actors.

Within this context, the project of constructing a role for Brazil as bridge between the North and the South is critical. It offers a way of positioning Brazil as an interlocutor that allows it effectively to exact a 'toll' on the bridge. Brazil's consequent response to international negotiations is to advance its own interests behind a pan-southern value-creating, integrative fascia. While this approach is not unique in world affairs, it is also not entirely synonymous with the solidarity

<sup>44</sup> Matias Spektor, 'A melhor barganha', op-ed., *Folha de São Paulo*, 22 Aug. 2012.

rhetoric often heard in Brazil. More particularly, the sorts of positions that Brazil is advancing, such as the RWP, appear consonant with the existing structures and norms of the international system, but turned slightly to reflect a set of priorities and interests that do not fit neatly into the implicit agreements and understandings that the US, Europe and Japan have used to run the world for the last 50 years. The remaining question is the extent to which these subtle turns and speed bumps will result in real changes in global governance frameworks and the international distribution of meaningful power and influence. Brazil's preference is that they cause little alteration in the core rules and regimes, but perhaps a slight shift in norms that puts Brazil in a central position.

Although over-used, Brazilian musician Tom Jobim's line that 'Brazil is not for beginners' aptly applies to understanding how it addresses international issues, presenting a significant challenge for policy-makers in northern capitals used to a system focused on northern Atlantic issues. Assumptions about how Brazil will react to invitations to participate or approaches to consult on policy issues need to be rethought. The considerable diplomatic capacity found in Itamaraty is matched by an impressive ability to develop and communicate new ideas through a process of patient discussion and civil debate to create a consensus around something remarkably close to Brazil's view. This approach to international issues differs markedly from that found in traditional powers in the North, which have a reputation for often using a blunt stick and a very small carrot to gain consent. The interesting point is that this may present more of an opportunity than a threat for the policy agendas of the traditional powers. Brazil's core interests and ambitions align remarkably well with those of other major powers; and, moreover, pursuit of these interests has been undertaken in a manner that has yet to raise hackles throughout the South. This makes Brazil a potentially valuable partner for the continued management of regional and global issues, but only if northern capitals are able to shift how they view Brazil and learn a new variation on their existing themes of global governance.