PENSAMIENTO PROPIO

PUBLICACION TRILINGÜE DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES DE AMERICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE

Los desafíos del multilateralismo en América Latina

Escriben en este número:

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Moving In, Carving Out, Proliferating: The Many Faces of Brazil’s Multilateralism Since 1989

Jean Daudelin and Sean Burges

This paper has modest aims. It identifies the dominant patterns in Brazil’s involvement in multilateral arrangements since its return to full democratic domestic rule in 1989 and asks a single question: How supportive has Brazil been of the maintenance and consolidation of institutional mechanisms of collective governance, in the Americas, and beyond?

Substantial changes have taken place both in the domestic Brazilian situation and in the configuration of relative power across the global system. Brazil has gone from being a country of great potential, but little effective weight, to one that has international influence and impact (Rohter 2010, Roett 2010, Brainard & Martinez-Diaz 2009, Rothkopf 2010, Hurrell 2010). The economic and political rise of Brazil on the
global scene has been paralleled by the rise of a number of new players, particularly in Asia, and by an absolute decline of Russia’s economic and—to a lesser extent—military clout, and in the relative economic power of the previous bulwarks of global capital in the US and Europe. Most significantly for Brazil and its Latin American neighbours, while the US remains unchallengeable militarily, the Global Financial Crisis has gutted its ability and capacity to impose economic direction on others. In the confused environment that results, most bets are off and nobody knows which of the “old” arrangements will survive and under what form, or which new ones will emerge to displace them. With a healthy democracy, a sound economy, a relatively secure and certainly unthreatening immediate regional environment, an effective diplomacy, a rising global profile and a favourable image in most quarters, Brazil finds itself in an excellent position to forcefully enter the field.

The way in which Brazil is likely to move in, however, remains unclear. While multilateralism broadly understood certainly appears to be central to its foreign policy (Hurrell 2010, 61), Brazilian diplomacy has joined the new game by hedging its bets and, for now at least, by playing what we would call a weak institutionalist game that involves three patterns of behaviour: pushing for reform and seeking more space for itself in those circles and organizations that are likely to remain influential (the UN, World Bank, IMF, WTO), fighting or constraining the arrangements that put it at a disadvantage or threaten to do so, trying in particular to carve South America out of the reach of global or hemispheric multilateral mechanisms (from the UN to the OAS and the FTAA), and promoting the emergence of plethora of weak alternative arrangements in which it has more say, but without investing too much in them, minimizing its costs and maximizing its own flexibility. As we document below, this strategy has until now been quite successful. Brazil has become a fixture of institutional reform and innovation in global and hemispheric governance, South America is increasingly self-governing as a regional area, and Brazil is at the centre of a huge range of “variable-geometry” multilateral arrangements.

The paper is divided into three sections. In the first one, we briefly lay out the interpretive parameters of our analysis. The second and third parts examine Brazil’s multilateral policy in the areas of, respectively, trade and finance, and security and defense.
1. Elements of an Analytical Framework

In spite of remarkable recent progress, Brazil today has neither the economic nor the military clout to gain the political influence necessary to impose its vision or priorities globally or even regionally. It is by no means a “great” power and while a sought-after ally and an active coalition-builder in global affairs, Brazil remains a side-player, though an increasingly significant one. At the same time, its position in global hierarchies and its behaviour in global affairs do not fit at all the standard portrait of middle-powers, whose peculiar use of multilateralism involved leveraging international institutions to manage their relationship with major powers (Cooper, Higgott & Nossal 1993) while at the same time “servicing” the West through effective diplomacy and mediation in exchange for a degree of access that was not proportional to these countries’ military capabilities or economic heft. Contrary to “classic” middle powers Australia and Canada, Brazil and the other Southern-based emerging powers are not part of the North-Atlantic core of the Western alliance (Huelsz, 2009:27), they do not readily accept that the US’s continuing prominence in the world order is either beneficial or even durable, nor do they perceive existing multilateral arrangements as effective tools to manage larger powers, or see much to be gained by “servicing” any of them in exchange for a voice and an influence that, anyway, was not forthcoming until the Global Financial Crisis in 2008 on economic issues, and continues to be largely denied on security questions.

While not very bold at first, Brazil’s somewhat rebellious attitude towards existing multilateral arrangements has progressively solidified as the country has gained increased international recognition and internal economic stability. In the face of an increasingly fluid global political realities, Brazil’s challenge to multilateralism followed three broad patterns. One involved a direct challenge to the governance of existing arrangements, denounced as inequitable, undemocratic and consequently illegitimate and ineffective. The second one entailed increasingly forceful attempts to carve-out whole areas, from the reach of those arrangements, reserving them for regional mechanisms in which Brazil’s weight was overwhelming. Finally, Brazilian diplomacy has been frantically joining and creating weak, poorly-institutionalized and —financed multilateral arrangements, both to coordinate ad-hoc
collective action to substitute the existing mechanisms that are being challenged or kept out, and to promote the reform of the latter.

In trade policy this has implied an ever more assertive approach to international discussions, with a focused and ultimately successful effort at preventing the establishment of a free trade area in the Americas and at paralyzing a WTO process in which wealthy nations were simply not ready to deliver much to their poorer partners. Security questions have been marked by increased efforts for Brazil to gain a seat at the UN Security Council and to pull regional thinking, decision-making and actions squarely into the Brazilian orbit and away from the US, the UN, and the OAS. In both fields, moreover, a plethora of Groups, Foras, Communities, and Coalitions (Rio Group, BRICS, G-3, G-4, G-20 trade, G-20 finance) have been established, and negotiation processes launched (Fagundes Visentini and Reis da Silva, 2010), in a frenzy of diplomatic activity whose main effect has been to make Brazil astonishingly visible in global governance circles.

It must be noted that this rebellious multilateralism remains largely confined to the mechanics of global and hemispheric governance, not to the ordering purposes of these institutions. Indeed, Brazilian rebellion is quite conservative in that the changes sought are ultimately meant to enhance the legitimacy and efficacy of existing global and regional governance. Albeit clearly self-serving in the case of Brazil, this argument is credible and largely consistent with the country's behaviour in the global arena. As a growing power whose economy and interests are increasingly internationalized, Brazil clearly has a vested interest in the stability that only effective multilateral arrangements can provide.

Changes in the political structure of global governance have massive implications for the emerging powers who stand to gain, but also for those who stand to lose influence under the new arrangements, which includes states that will remain at its core, like the United States, but also some—such as Canada and soon, the UK and France too—that will likely see their place in it shrink substantially. While these changes are sometimes tackled directly, they are also implied in the day to day—or Summit to Summit—discussions of particular issues. In other words, the battleground is thus the whole multilateral arena. In the next two sections, we examine two important components of that field and try to see how one of its most influential new player has been doing.
Please note that the analysis proposed here frames Brazil as a unified actor and its strategy as consistent and essentially unchanging since 1989. Both assumptions clearly oversimplify a situation and a dynamic that remains complex and to some degree conflictual within Brazil's political and foreign policy and defense establishments. We consider however, that the patterns we identify are typical of the whole period and that the basic rationale of Brazil's multilateral engagement reflects a broadly shared understanding of global dynamics, of the country's growing influence in it, and of the strategies that are open to it. We do not feel, in particular that the much discussed transition from the quest of autonomy through participation, which is said to characterize the country's foreign policy under Cardoso, and through diversification, under Lula (Vigevari, Cepaluni, 2007), really implies fundamental disagreements about the nature of the country's interests or the way in which they are to be defended and advanced.

2. Trade and Financial Governance

On trade and economics files Brazil has noisily and forcefully advocated the establishment and consolidation of regional economic groupings such as Mercosul and Unasul as stepping stones towards global trade liberalization. Real action, however, has been more subdued. Although Mercosur has added a few associates and may admit Venezuela as a full-fledged partner, it remains woefully underinstitutionalized. The bloc has a still-tiny and ineffective administrative secretariat with an ineffectual and barely used dispute resolution mechanisms. The result is that periodic crises—of which there have been plenty—invariably have been resolved through presidential diplomacy, not the strong mechanisms expected of effective multilateralism. UNASUL, meanwhile, is still a work in progress and is certainly not developing into a significant vehicle for freer trade in the region.

2.1 Regional Trade

On the hemispheric and global "fronts," Brazilian diplomats have studiously worked to derail, delay or reframe every significant initiative to foster trade liberalization, arguing—not without reason—that none
of these adequately protected their country’s interests. Perhaps the most telling example of this behaviour was the Free Trade Area of the Americas process launched by the Clinton administration at the 1994 Miami Summit of the Americas. As one Brazilian diplomat involved in the preparations for that meeting explains (Magalhães 1999), there was a sense that the US wanted to quickly close the deal out in Miami with a text that was effectively an extension of NAFTA to the rest of the hemisphere. For many countries in the Americas such a proposition was, at first blush, more than acceptable because it would have brought in one fell swoop the long-sought open access to the massive US market. The interpretation within those quarters of Itamaraty that would dominate the Lula years was quite different, however, not least because they felt that such an approach to a hemispheric trade bloc would entrench Brazilian subordinate integration into a US dominated block and thus effectively deal a crippling blow to the country’s long-term economic and political ambitions. Even the “moderates” who were in charge under Cardoso, such as then-foreign minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia (2010, 255-256), felt that the FTAA could potentially harm Brazil’s interests if accepted as offered.

Significantly, Brazil’s agreement to any deal was critical because it was access to the large Brazilian and Mercosul markets that were the prize for the US, not the prospect of greater sales to insignificant Ecuador and Honduras or already quite liberalized Colombia or Peru. Itamaraty negotiators were well aware of the bargaining power this created for Brazil during the negotiation process. Cardoso’s foreign policy team was also very conscious that at the outset of the talks Brazil lacked sufficient economic strength and credibility to oppose the deal with the bluntness that was to become typical of the Lula administration’s later engagements in global governance discussions. Efforts consequently focused on building a Latin American coalition around the idea that while the proposed FTAA offered many opportunities, it behoved all governments to proceed with caution. Rather than directly opposing US propositions, Brazil countered with alternate language that had already been sold to the other Latin American countries. Attention was also given to the question of what exactly was meant by ‘free trade’, especially with respect to trade in the agricultural commodities and textiles that were the core regional exports to North America (Feinberg 1997). A hard-line approach to the substance of the talks was taken,
and supported by other regional governments, when US negotiators were told that ‘social’ clauses would not be accepted and that any potential agreement would have to be pursued as a single undertaking, not implemented piecemeal (Lampreia 2009: 183-187).

Lampreia (2009, 186-192) is clear in his memoirs that Brazil increasingly became less enthusiastic about the idea of an FTAA during Cardoso’s first term and by the 1998 ministerial negotiating sessions was successfully building a Latin American coalition behind its attempts to either block the version of the trade deal favoured by Washington, or to slow down its discussion. The challenge was to stop the deal from going forward without damaging US-Brazil relations, not least because at the time the US retained the economic strength to strangle a Brazil still struggling to fully stabilize its economy and gain credibility in global trade and financial circles. The rhetoric surrounding the discussions was consequently prudent and framed as a kind of constructive engagement. As Itamaraty Secretary General Osmar Chohfi (2002) observed in the dying days of the FTAA process, “sometimes you see the idea of Brazilian leadership as uniting South America to confront the Northern part of the hemisphere. That is not the idea. The idea is to strengthen our own positions and to have a better possibility of negotiating something that is favourable for everybody, but good for us too. We don’t want a simple accession to NAFTA. It will be something different.”

As in the case of Mercosul, launched in part to create a platform for enhanced international insertion and improved bargaining power in a global setting, Brazil started to float a series of ideas for strengthening the South American economic space, using it as a basis for either an alternative to a NAFTA-like FTAA, or as a subregional lever to push the US to a more amenable negotiating position. Efforts to expand Mercosul to include Bolivia and Chile that were already running by the time FTAA talks hit full stride quickly grew to include the idea of interregional deals, most notably with the Andean Community, but also with the European Union as a counter-balance to the US. With respect to forming a larger South American bloc, the central challenge was Argentina, which in the mid-1990s feared a loss of influence within Mercosul and competition from Chile for access to the Brazilian market (Lampreia 2008, 228). Brazil also found itself in a very awkward
position, with enough industrial might to swamp its neighbours, but as yet not enough economic strength to credibly present itself as the anchor of an integrated regional market. The result was a successful stalling of the FTAA, but a failure to create the South American ‘building block’ needed to pursue larger hemispheric and global projects from a position of strength.

Fed up with stumbling on the varying degrees of economic nationalism that tended to cripple Latin American integration attempts, Cardoso elected for an element of subterfuge, eschewing the idea of economic integration in favour of the process of physical infrastructure integration that he launched at the 2001 Brasília Summit of South American Presidents. The idea here was to set up a technocratic multilateral institution – La Iniciativa para la Integración de la Infraestructura Regional Suramericana (IIRSA) – focused on building the transportation, energy, and communication linkages between the countries of South America necessary to support a surge in intra-continental trade (Araujo 2009/2010). Implicit in this proposition was the strong suggestion that South Americans should look to Brazil for new opportunities, not to the US. Zest was added to this proposition by getting IADB support for the project as well as opening up cheap Brazilian government financing for projects through the export financing arm of the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES).

The critical point for our larger discussion on multilateralism is that the IIRSA infrastructure integration process was not publicly presented as an alternative to the FTAA, but as a necessary building block to make a possible FTAA work. Implicit in this language was the proposition that the current state of affairs in the hemisphere would only support an FTAA beneficial to the US and possibly Canada. It also laid the groundwork for the parallel Latin American multilateral arrangements that would be created during the Lula years. Cardoso’s IIRSA was quickly subsumed by Lula into the short-lived Comunidad Sudamericana de Naciones (CASA), which in turn rapidly morphed into the current Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR) that is now providing the framework for purported regional infrastructure integration and moves towards expanded South American political and security coordination. This Brazil-centred, Southern-based multilateralist movement was replicated on a region-wide political basis with the 2010 launch
of Comunidade dos Estados Latino-Americanos e Caribenhos (CELAC), which built upon the framework of the Rio Group to create a hemispheric grouping that retained many of the commitments and ambitions of the OAS, but left out Canada and the US.

2.2 Global Trade

The Brazilian approach to multilateral economic institution building seen during the FTAA was replicated at the global level. Within the ambit of the World Trade Organization two tracks of action were adopted to advance Brazilian interests. On one side, Brazil made extensive use of WTO procedural mechanisms such as the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU) to constrain and modify the behaviour of major powers such as the US and EU. In a succession of complaints, Brazil used the DSU to attack US cotton subsidies (DS267), patent codes (DS224), anti-dumping laws (DS217), steel protection measures (DS218, 259), and agriculture supports (DS365). European Union policy targets revolved around agricultural supports and barriers, with sugar (DS266), chicken (DS69, 269), and coffee (DS 154, 209) being amongst the most important cases. Brazilian success operating within the confines of the WTO’s institutional mechanisms to achieve important and enforceable trade victories against the US and EU helped establish the global trade body as something other than a simple instrument for perpetuating the existing global order. While Brazilian action in the DSU certainly supported the maintenance and strengthening of this critical global governance institution, it did so in a way that directly assaulted the core interests of powerful political constituencies within the US and EU.

The assertive turn in Brazilian trade diplomacy, and its implications for traditional middle powers, became clearest in the run-up to the 2003 Cancun WTO Ministerial meeting. As Pedro da Motta Veiga (2005) explains, Brazil’s initial inclination was to use the Cairns Group to conduct discussions and reactions to the ‘Harbison paper’ on agricultural trade that the US and EU had agreed prior to Cancun. The problem was that the Cairns Group was strongly influenced by traditional middle power Australia, who saw the paper, in spite of its limitations, as a satisfactory step forward. Brazil, along with other countries such as IBSA partners India and South Africa as well as Egypt and a larger
group of developing countries, found the Australian unwillingness to position the Cairns group as a counter-balance to the US and EU disappointing. In response to Australia’s timid reluctance to directly cross the US, Brazilian diplomats began to organize a coalition of developing countries to support an alternate approach. Significantly, the position that Brazil eventually put on the table in Cancun was significantly weaker than that proposed by Brazilian agribusiness interests. This implied sacrificing some self-interest to advance the multilateral institution, but the slight step backward was taken to bind together a coalition seeking to strengthen the multilateral framework in a way that diverged quite significantly from the expressed desires of the dominant powers.

Brazil was duly blasted by the USTR Robert Zoellick (2003) after the 2003 Cancun ministerial for being a negative blocking power determined to pursue partisan national interest ahead of the global good, although US negotiators later acknowledged that Brazil’s creation and leadership of the G20 coalition of developing countries actually served to keep a large group of dissatisfied and increasingly radical countries positively engaged with the process (Hurrell and Narlikar 2006; Narlikar and Tussie 2004; Taylor 2007). As Marcelo Fernandes de Oliveira (2005) points out, however, the Brazilian focus was on pushing the WTO in a direction consistent with the interests of developing countries, not simply on delivering their assent to the plans concocted by the US and EU. This sense of dissatisfaction with existing structures of global economic governance was further emphasized by Lula’s continuous reference to the need for new and more balanced mechanisms and practical efforts to achieve them through the creation of increasingly impressive South-South groupings such as the IBSA India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (Alden and Vieira, 2005; Genésio 2009).

2.3 Scope, Limits, Tensions

The nature of IBSA highlights the limits to Brazilian engagement with multilateral institutions that it may not be able to control. Rather than setting up a permanent secretariat and positioning the grouping as the centre of a new South-South multilateralist policy, IBSA emerges as a loosely organized talk-shop designed to help the countries to get to know each other. It commits the participants to nothing more than
talking and seeking new opportunities, incurring almost nothing in terms of substantial costs and obligations for the members. This is the same logic which has marked Brazilian participation in regional and global trade multilateralism. On both a Latin American and global level Brazil has been reluctant to allow the emergence of institutions that constrain its potential for self-advancement. Indeed, when a given body appears set to introduce undue constraints on what Brazil wishes to achieve, a quiet sort of diplomatic jeitinho can almost be seen, with Itamaraty diplomats subtly shifting their position in an attempt to bring others around to their new outlook without actually accommodating the dissenting voices.

It is exactly this sort of ‘flexibility’ that has created problems for Brazil’s leadership of the trade G20 in the WTO from as early as 2007. Brazil decided that, on balance, the deal hammered out with the US, EU and India in 2007-2008 was acceptable. Even though this position was far from shared by its G20 partners or other members of Southern WTO negotiating coalitions, Brazilian diplomats proceeded to try and redirect the logic behind the common G20 position and to pull other developing countries on board. The result was a loss of support within the WTO and a quiet backpeddling from the talks by Brazil that placed the process on hold. It also raised serious questions about Brazil’s attitude to multilateral processes and the country’s willingness to accept the need to give other, dissenting positions expression in the final stance of a collective group.

This reluctance to assume costs and look beyond Brazil’s immediate interests creates a central tension and contradiction in the country’s approach to multilateral trade arrangements. The pointed comment that US Secretary of Commerce Gary Locke delivered to his Brazilian counterparts in March 2011 was that they needed to take a slightly larger view of global trade figures, focusing on their total trade balance, not surpluses and deficits with individual countries (Landim 2011). While Locke’s castigatory comment was directed at persistent Brazilian complaints about their trade deficit with the US, officials from countries such as Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay have also offered similar remarks. This points to an underlying tension in the Brazilian approach to multilateral trade arrangements, namely the proclivity to avoid providing the anchor-market services necessary to build substan-
tive trade arrangements that form a viable alternative to the South's existing focus on accessing Northern markets.

The at-times mercantilistic attitude to trade agreements evidenced by the Brazilian government is in part a reflection of domestic political pressures. Media outlets and business lobbies provide a constant stream of pressure on the government to ensure that Brazil benefits first before other considerations come into play. Even in instances where this rhetoric is explicitly disavowed by Itamaraty, most notably in the expansion of economic links with Sub-Saharan Africa, there is a clear indications that some ground is being given on the trade in goods front in order to facilitate a greater gain on the Brazilian export of services or access to natural resource exploitation contracts. More significantly, there is no inclination by Brazil to dismantle and substantially reform the global or regional economic governance institutions and norms which make this possible. Although the face is friendly and the language more conciliatory, many of the same elements of commercial penetration and the creation of dependency linkages that formed the core of Brazil-based critiques of the global political economy in the 1950s and 1960s—including those by leading Brazilian foreign policy makers such as Cardoso, Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, Celso Amorim and Marco Aurelio Garcia—are being consciously reproduced by Itamaraty today. The difference is that the Brazilian approach holds out the prospect to the South of a more equitable engagement that is not widely seen as possible with the US, EU or, increasingly, China.

A central barrier to Brazil leading the creation of a more equitable Southern trading system is the country's very reluctance to engage in and anchor the substantive trade agreement institutionalization outlined in this section. The problem, from a Brazilian perspective, is that its Southern or regional trade partners would use a substantive dispute resolution and arbitration mechanism to resolve trade spats in much the same manner that Brazil has deployed the WTO DSU against the US and EU. In other words, due to its size, Brazil would inevitably by the defendant, not the complainant. This is precisely the sort of institutionalization that Brazil has assiduously avoided. It is also a stance that is in keeping with the constant foreign policy theme of seeking autonomy. Indeed, in some ways it is this desire to constantly maintain autonomy in the face of a need for some degree
of collectivization that contributes to the tensions in Brazil’s approach to economic multilateralism.

3. Multilateralism and Security in Brazilian Foreign Policy, 1989-2010

For more than a century, active involvement in multilateral security arrangements has been a constant for Brazil, both at the global and regional level. It was a founding member of the League of Nations and of the UN, as well as of the Pan-American Union and its successor the OAS. Since WWII, and along with Japan, it is the country of the world that has been elected the most frequently to a non-permanent seat at the UN Security Council—sitting on it for over eighteen years (Gratius, 2007: 15), in spite of its complete absence from it during the two decades of its military regime (1964-1985). Brazil has joined numerous UN peace-keeping missions, sometimes contributing a large number of soldiers to their contingent, most recently in Haiti, which is also the first mission that it formally led. In addition, and while largely neglectful of formal hemispheric arrangements, Brazil has played a prominent role in sub-regional conflict-management processes, especially through the Rio Group and, more recently, the South American Union (UNASUR).

This section tries to make sense of Brazil’s involvement in multilateral security governance since its full return to democracy in 1989. Our analysis emphasizes two main points: 1) Brazil has had quite distinct policies towards global and regional multilateral arrangements, pushing for the reform of existing ones at the international level without questioning their basic institutional make-up, while at the regional level it worked instead at weakening established or emerging hemispheric arrangements, while trying to replace them by sub-regional ones that were focused on South America but essentially devoid of institutional heft; 2) these two policy strands overlap, essentially in their common emphasis on imposing quite strict limits to international involvement in domestic political affairs, but growing tensions are developing between them as a result of Brazil’s ambitions at the international level, of the limits of its influence at the regional level, and of changing understandings of security at both the regional and global level.
3.1 Global Multilateralism

The direct election of Fernando Collor de Mello, which completed Brazil’s slow road back to democracy, took place in 1989, the year the Berlin Wall fell, inaugurating a period of hyper-activity at the UN Security Council. In the years that followed, important decisions were taken by the Council regarding, among many other issues, the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the invasion of Kuwait and the Gulf War, followed by the embargo imposed on Iraq, the civil war in Somalia, the genocide in Rwanda and the subsequent Great Lakes war in Africa, the breakdown of Yugoslavia, and then, following September 11, 2001, the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and then of Iraq, both of which continue to this day. Peacekeeping missions also multiplied, including thousand-soldier plus contingents in the Balkans, Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, East-Timor and, most recently, Haiti. In addition, particularly after the disastrous way in which the United States “played” the Security Council on Iraq, pressure mounted to reform the Council to bolster its legitimacy and thereby—it was hoped—its efficacy.

During that period, Brazil was as close to the heart of those discussions and decisions as any country, being present as an elected non-permanent member for four two-year mandates, contributing significant contingents to various peacekeeping missions and being at the forefront of the push to reform the Council. Throughout, its policy has been remarkably consistent.

Brazil has never joined or supported so-called Chapter VII missions, launched in response to a “threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or an act of aggression” and opening the way to any action, including military ones, to “restore international peace and stability” with or without the permission of the local government (UN Charter). In 1994, it even abstained from supporting such an intervention in the case of the Rwandan genocide (Kenkel, 2010: 654). This position can be traced directly to Brazil’s clearly stated and long-standing opposition to breaches of national sovereignty. Moreover, it is also consistent with its strong qualms over the prominence of the permanent members of the Security Council, whose military representatives, as part of a “Military Staff Committee,” are charged with UN forces coordination in Chapter VII missions. Brazil has also been extremely reticent to join
sanctions regimes, not only in 1990 against Iraq, when it stood to lose $1.6bn dollars in lost exports and higher-priced imports (PIEE, nd), but more recently against Iran, where the potential economic impact on Brazil’s economy was similar (OESP 2010 06 23).

By contrast, Brazil has enthusiastically supported “first-generation” — i.e. Chapter Chapter VI—peace missions, joining more than half of all the UN operations of this type. Since 1989, however, and aside from its involvement in Haiti beginning in 2004, Brazil’s strong contributions have been strictly limited to the missions sent to “Western lusophone African countries or (...) former Portuguese colonies,” i.e. to Angola, Mozambique and East Timor (Kenkel, 210: 656), in keeping with Brazil’s explicit prioritization of those countries (Sardenberg, 2005: 349).

Brazil’s critical stance towards Chapter VII operations and economic sanctions is consistent with its increasingly vocal critique of the UN political structure, in particular regarding the composition of the Security Council. Current arrangements, inherited almost exclusively from the foundation of the UN in 1948, are said to be mis-adapted to the challenges confronting the organization: the primacy of the Permanent Five in the workings of the Council damages its legitimacy, weakens its authority and consequently limits its relevance and efficacy (Sardenberg, 2005: 363-40, ). In particular, it does not reflect the emergence on the world scene of a number of powers whose cooperation is critical to effective and legitimate action. Implicitly for a while, and in the last eight years, very explicitly, Brazil has posited its own accession to a permanent seat as a “natural” component of any meaningful reform, a claim that has been increasingly accepted (Hurrell, 2010: 3).

Brazil’s vocal critique of the political structure of the UN security regime is paralleled by its attitude towards the nuclear proliferation regime. Brazil was a late adherent to the treaty, which it ratified only in 1997. That turning point, moreover, proved to be far from radical, Brazil refusing ever since to sign the “Additional Protocol” — which enables the International Atomic Energy to realize much more intrusive monitoring of the signatories’ nuclear program — broadly seen as the ultimate proof of a country’s commitment to nuclear disarmament. In addition, the Brazilian government got into a series of rows with Western powers and the International Atomic Energy regar-
ding, among others, inspections of its Resende nuclear facility in 2004, where a project of enrichment was contemplated, and more recently the imposition of international sanctions against Iran to force it to suspend what looks to most analysts like a clear attempt to develop nuclear weapons.

Brazil’s challenge to the regime articulates a number of overlapping arguments. The first one, paralleling Brazil’s critique of the Security Council, sees it as inherently asymmetric and thus bolstering an illegitimate governance structure, from whose leadership deserving states are unjustly excluded. A second critique points to the fact that even so asymmetric an arrangement is not respected by the nuclear powers themselves, especially the United States and Russia, whose disarmament efforts have been timid and certainly not consistent with their treaty engagement to move towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons. A third one presents the regime and especially pressures to impose more intrusive oversight mechanisms, as an attempt to prevent the development by non-Western powers such as Brazil, of their domestic technological capabilities in a field dominated by Western companies. Finally, Brazil’s own domestic mechanisms—Article 21 of the 1988 Constitution—along with the bilateral instrument it has established with Argentina—the “Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials” (ABACC)—as well as the regional commitment to the banning of nuclear weapons—the Tlatelolco Treaty—are presented as robust-enough guarantees of compliance with the spirit of the NPT regime (Goldemberg, 2010 06 21; Guimarães, 2010; Ramalho, 2010).

3.2 Regional Multilateralism

For much of Latin America, the end of the 1980s meant the end of twenty years of the military regimes and civil wars that had dominated the region’s political landscape during this latter stage of the Cold War. Regional security arrangements, largely organized around the United States, were profoundly tainted by the bloody repression that they had helped organize or that they had silently covered. Hemispheric security cooperation evoked the School of the Americas and Operation Condor while the Inter-American Defense Board and College were seen as remnants of an authoritarian age that nobody wanted back. In 1997,
the Inter-American Treaty of Mutual Cooperation (the “Rio Treaty”) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in deafening silence, without ever having been invoked since its signature in 1948. The OAS was seen by all major countries of the region as a powerless diplomatic backwater with little credibility, legitimacy or influence. It was not a surprise that when the Clinton administration appended a security side to its attempt to revive inter-American cooperation through the Summit of the Americas process it chose not to focus on existing arrangements, proposing instead a parallel summit process termed “Defense Ministerials” and focused on democratic consolidation, civilian control of the military and confidence-building measures between countries. Quickly falling into irrelevance, the latest (9th) Defense Ministerial, held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra between November 22 and 25, was the occasion of an acrimonious exchange of accusations and counter-accusations between US Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Bolivia’s President, Evo Morales, who accused the United States of fomenting coups in the region (Cabrera Lemuz et al. 2010).

This broad regional pattern fits democratic Brazil’s behaviour better than most of its neighbours: while Argentina under Menem toyed—however improbably—with the idea of joining NATO, Ecuador until recently let the US run an air base at Manta, and Colombia worked very closely with the United States in its confrontation with its left-wing guerrilla, Brazil instead worked at carving out Latin America as a security complex. The Brazilian vision was that it would operate separate not only from the US, but also from the UN and from existing Inter-American security cooperation mechanisms, pushing instead, beginning in the mid-1990s, to replace them with arrangements centred on South-America and in which Brazil enjoyed a prominent position.

The recent row over the use of Colombian military bases by US personnel in the wake of the closing of the Manta base by Ecuador President Rafael Correa provided an opportunity for a forceful affirmation by Brazil of its resentment towards any US military presence in the region. Although the US presence in Colombia cannot be usefully opposed and, by force, American guarantees that the bases would strictly be used for missions on Colombian territory were accepted, the exceptional and ultimately abnormal character of that presence was sharply emphasized.
UN operations in South America’s political crises, and even in Central America and the Caribbean are also systematically resisted: Brazil opposed UN intervention in Haiti in 1994 and the imposition of sanctions against its military regime (Burges and Daudelin, 2007). The sole exception to this rule is MINUSTAH, the UN mission sent to Haiti following the forced resignation of Jean-Bertrand Aristide and still there today. That case, however, does not quite violate the rule, as South American countries, with Brazil in the lead, literally captured the mission, making it very much a Latin American affair and an important indicator that Brazil was willing to take on the security responsibilities commensurate with a permanent UNSC seat.

OAS involvement in security crises is also systematically resisted, again most forcefully in South America. A case in point is the 2000 crisis in Peru, when Brazil opposed Canadian and American attempts at pushing the OAS to denounce the election results. Beyond the sub-region, namely in Central America and the Caribbean, Brazil has less leeway but still resists the idea of an OAS “monopoly” over security crises management: in the recent Honduras crisis, for instance, Brazil got involved along with the OAS instead of working through it.

In parallel, Brazil has been extremely active at building alternative institutional arrangements that would enable the region to effectively take over its own security governance. The Tlatelolco Treaty and the Brazil-Argentina nuclear agreement, already mentioned, were path-breaking from that perspective. But the period covered here saw quite an aggressive policy on the part of Brazil to build-up Latin America’s capacity to deal with security challenges without external intervention. The Rio Group, set up in 1986, was another early attempt to carve out a role for the region in security crisis management, in this case supporting the Contadora Group’s efforts at finding a regional solution to the Central American conflict, thus in some way re- appropriating a crisis which the US clearly intended to deal with alone.

The new linchpin of Brazil regional strategy, however, is the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and its military cooperation component, the South American Defense Council (CDS). UNASUR was formally established by the Declaration of Brasilia in May 2008, signed by every government of the region. Announced at the same time, the CDS was inaugurated in 2009 at the Quito Summit of UNASUR.
Composed of the Defense ministers of UNASUR countries, the CDS has been conceived as a forum of exchange and cooperation around security issues. It intends to foster confidence-building measures, the sharing of information on defense policies, procurement and capacity-building, closer collaboration on military industries and humanitarian action, as well as the development of common positions on global security issues.

With talks of a regional parliament—the Parlasur—and development bank—Banco del Sur—the choice of Quito as the seat of an administrative secretariat, and in May 2009, the unanimous election of a secretary-general—Nestor Kirchner—UNASUR certainly looked ambitious and some have even noted a symmetry between it, along with its Defense Council, and the OAS and the Inter-American Defense Board (Sanchez 2008 10 01). However, with a roving pro-tempore presidency moving from one member country to the other every year—and thus giving two formal heads to the organization—without a clear funding formula, still devoid of any real administrative or policy development capability, with a statute that involves no devolution of power, and with the untimely death of Kirchner—who has still not been replaced at the time of this writing—it appears unlikely to develop into a significant and autonomous player.

As a forum and a particular “space” of multilateral cooperation (Serbin, 2010), however, UNASUR has joined the Rio Group as a major vector of diplomatic pressure, and has already proven it worth, particularly during the tensions that followed Colombia’s incursion into Ecuador, in March 2008, the Pando crisis in Bolivia, also in 2008, the tension following Colombia’s announcement that US troops would have access to some of its military bases, in 2009, and the more recent diplomatic confrontation between Colombia and Venezuela, following Colombian denunciation of Venezuela support for the FARC guerrilla.

While Brazil was central to the emergence of both the Rio Group and UNASUR, the two entities, particularly UNASUR, have clearly acquired a life of their own. Special summits of UNASUR have been called by Bolivia, in March 2008 (Colombia Reports, 2008 03 05), and by Chile in September 2008 (Sanchez, 2008). Similarly, it is Juan Gabriel Valdes, a Chilean diplomat, who was named special UNASUR representative in the 2008 Pando crisis in Bolivia, and Argentina’s
Nestor Kircher, as newly-minted Secretary General of the organization, that mediated the August 2010 resolution to the Colombia-Venezuela standoff (TELAM 2010 08 11). From that standpoint, these initiatives have clearly contributed to the carving out of the region that appears to be so central to Brazilian multilateral strategy. Indeed, OAS Secretary General Insulza’s complaints about UNASUR’s role in Bolivia’s Pando crisis (Sanchez, 2008) should be read as testimonies to Brazil’s success in this endeavour.

It would be easy to exaggerate the importance of multilateral mechanisms in Brazil’s security and defense framework. Indeed, and in spite of the hectic pace of regional summity over the last ten years, they occupy but a marginal place in Brazil’s 2008 defense strategy. Admittedly, the UN is barely mentioned and the OAS not at all, but regional cooperation is clearly not meant to play much of a role in the country’s defense. While South American integration figures among the general objectives of the strategy (#18), UNASUR is mentioned explicitly once, and only as a potential way to overcome the problem of economies of scale in defense production. Strikingly, multilateral or regional instruments or initiative are nowhere mentioned in relation to the security of the Amazon, which is central to the defense strategy. Similarly, maritime security is also framed strictly as a national issue to which regional cooperation appears to be irrelevant. This gap is especially striking in the case of the Amazon, as all Amazonian countries—aside from French Guyana—are also members of UNASUR, and that eight of Brazil’s 11 partners in UNASUR have also signed the Amazonian Cooperation Treaty.

3.3 Scope, limits, tensions

In the security and defense field, Brazil’s influence in global multilateral circles, its growing success at carving South America out of US and UN reach, and at creating competing arrangements to the OAS in the rest of the hemisphere cannot all be attributed to its own efforts. Moreover, the alternative multilateral arrangements currently emerging in the region lack institutional heft or authority and are pervaded by tensions and contradictions that quite severely constrain their potential impact and relevance. Finally, domestic factors also impose quite strict limits to the investment that the Brazilian government could make
to build up truly effective multilateral arrangements. This may not matter much if all that is called for is clever diplomacy and intelligent coalition-building. Were domestic security crises to become more severe, border conflicts more violent, or transnational drug or crime challenges particularly formidable, what multilateral capability could be mustered may be found wanting, opening the way for the dreaded involvement of outsiders in South America’s security complex.

Brazil’s push forward at the global level is taking place when the legitimacy and the efficacy of multilateral security institutions are crumbling. NATO’s unilateral involvement in the Balkans and especially the United States’ invasion of Iraq in the face of broad opposition at the United Nations has mangled the global forum’s authority. The Security Council’s anachronistic Eurocentrism, and the dismissive attitude of nuclear powers towards their disarmament obligations under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, as well as the successful challenges of the norm by North Korea, India, and soon Iran have devastated the regime. At the hemispheric level, the OAS’s inability to quickly deal with Honduras’ oligarchic squabble and the growing indifference of the United States towards the region have similarly left the field wide open to policy entrepreneurs. As a result and unsurprisingly, Brazil’s challenging outlook and its push for alternative arrangements are broadly shared echoed in South America, where dissatisfaction with the OAS and a common though not universal diffidence towards the United States are strong. The Brazilian government, in sum, was at least in part forcing and open door on the one hand, and preaching to the converted on the other.

The arrangements that have been put in place, however, are remarkable for their weakness. As mentioned, UNASUR has no set budget, its first general secretary-Nestor Kircher was not replaced in the wake of its death—and its secretariat is still a work in progress. Moreover, its moving pro tempore presidency and the two-headed arrangement and double bureaucracy (in the country that occupies the Presidency and in Quito) that result, are a recipe for ineffectiveness. The South American Defense Council provides an interesting space for exchange of information and confidence-building, but little else in terms of institutionalized collaboration. Above all, these arrangements exist in a context of summit hyperinflation: more than 240 regional and
sub-regional summits have taken place since 1987 in the region, i.e. more than ten per year and 1800 agreements have been signed by leaders (Rojas Aravena, 2010), most of which were not followed-up in any significant way.

Probably more damaging still to the consolidation of a Brazil-centered and coherent multilateral security regime, a number of other multi-
lateral organizations compete for relevance with Brazil’s preferred arrangements. Hugo Chavez’ Bolivarian Alliance of the Peoples of the Americas (ALBA) is the most obvious one. Established jointly by Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez, in 2004, it has, at the writing of this paper, eight full members¹ and a few “observer states.”⁴ While not openly devoted to security and defense issues, ALBA nonetheless competes with both the OAS and UNASUR as an axis for multilateral cooperation in the Caribbean, Central America and South America. Quite militantly “anti-imperialist,” and disciplined or lubricated—depending on one’s perspective—in part by Venezuela’s subsidized oil, it has become a pole of convergence that affects coalition-building in UNASUR, at the OAS, and in almost any other formal or informal hemispheric coalition. While never explicitly directed at Brazil, Chá-
vez leadership claim in the region opens up an additional option for states, small—like Bolivia or associate member Paraguay—or relatively large—like Argentina—looking for leverage against Brazil while fear-
ful of too clear an alignment with the United States. As Brazil found out when tiny, poor and weak Bolivia sent the military to claim back Petrobras gas installations, with Chavez clear support, Venezuela and ALBA can represent a real strategic challenge.

The other main competitor is the OAS itself which, albeit weakened, remains a significant player, with an institutional capability that, however feeble, looks impressive compared to UNASUR’s. Moreover, devoid—unlike the UN—of an “executive,” it is largely at the mercy of a General Assembly dominated by small Caribbean and Central American countries. The latter remain dependent on, or vulnerable to, the United States and, to a lesser extent, Canada and are thus unlikely to fully buy into alternative arrangements in which they would likely have less influence and from which they would get little economic benefits. Moreover, smaller South American countries may still find there, as in ALBA, a counterweight to balance Brazil’s influence.
A fuller institutionalization of UNASUR, in which Brazil would by necessity be prominent, would meet with significant resistance from Venezuela, Argentina and, perhaps less openly, from Colombia too. Mexico moreover, while busy with the United States, keeps an eye towards the South and the world at large, and does not agree either with Brazil’s claim to prominence in the region, or to be a natural representative of the region in global fora. To the very extent that the institutionalization of existing multilateral mechanisms in South America or in Latin America and the Caribbean could represent a springboard to Brazil’s regional or global political aspirations, it is likely to be resisted by the region’s other major players too.

Finally, as discussed in our brief review of Brazil’s National Defense Strategy, regional multilateralism does not have much political salience in Brazil itself, which makes it unlikely consent to the effort and resources that would make regional arrangements truly effective. The idea that Amazon security, long a prominent obsession of the military and nationalist sectors, could be in any way multilateralized, for instance, is completely taboo. More generally, it is difficult to make a strong case for regional threats to Brazil and thus for significant investments in the development of multilateral tools to contain them: the political case for extensive regional cooperation is simply too weak. In addition, from the standpoint of Brazil’s quest for military respectability through the development of a relatively autonomous military industry, the region has little to offer: it is no wonder that Brazil’s major “strategic partnership” for military technology—submarines, and soon possibly, fighter aircraft—involves France, which has leading-edge technology and is willing to share it. With the US government tied up by an unpredictable Congress, there is little doubt that, were France uninterested, the Brazilian government would be open to collaboration with Russia, China, or any other power willing to export military technology. Nobody among Brazil’s regional partner can play that game.

To sum up, Brazil’s success at penetrating international security regimes and at setting up regional ones that are relatively free from external influence is undeniable. At the same time, the limitations of Brazil’s gains and of the mechanisms it has been able to set up are just as obvious. Moreover, there are few indications that what currently exists is likely to develop into an effective alternative security
regime, even in South America. If recent experience is a guide, this may not matter much: the new informal arrangements have proven to be flexible, adaptable and quite effective at containing recent crises and threats. None of the latter, however, have been particularly severe and perhaps none will emerge that can overwhelm what capacity is available. Still, were serious crises to develop, for instance, in Venezuela as the regime closes down, between Colombia and one of its neighbours, as it strives to destroy the FARC, or between Chile and its Peruvian and Bolivian neighbours, all that the current arrangements could really offer are diplomatic intervention and intermediation. No mechanisms are currently in place to quickly and autonomously set up a military force, even strictly for peace-keeping purposes and from that standpoint, existing arrangements still compare poorly with the “weak” OAS or especially the illegitimate and ineffective UN, who would likely be better suited to deal with a serious crisis in the region. There is a limit, in sum, to what poorly financed and institutionalized arrangements however flexible they may be, can deliver.

Conclusion

Since 1989, Brazil supports multilateralism in principle, but clearly does not value it in itself and engages actively only when it is clearly consistent with narrowly-defined national interests. On trade files, multilateralism is encouraged, but only to the extent that Brazil can either control the direction of discussions, gain immediate benefit from the arrangement, or exercise a veto over new directions that an existing institution might take. None of this is done directly. Coalitions and negotiations are used to mask and collectivize Brazil’s ambitions. Similar phenomena are found on the security file, only with Brazil taking a more explicit stand with respect to opposing outside interference in a South America that it sees as its sphere of influence. Fortunately for Brazil, the prospect of inter-state conflict and regional conflagration in South America is very low, making a hard line on security questions relatively low-cost in resource terms, but high-gain in symbolic expressions of independence.

Our analysis leaves one with a puzzle: how is Brazil able to get away with its rebellious multilateralism in a hemisphere that remains
overwhelmingly dominated by the US? The answer lies in part in the US’ investment of much of its diminished influence elsewhere on the globe. More significant is the underlying reality that at least on a regional and South-wide basis Brazil is looking for much the same thing as the dominant powers in the global system, the US in particular: stability underpinned by a relatively open trading system. All the noise about the fundamentally “multilateral” outlook of its foreign policy notwithstanding, however, it is only in the cases where Brazil sees a real prospect of controlling and directing the institution for its own ends that one can expect sustained and concentrated attempts to create functioning multilateral structures. At this point in time, however, those prospects are unclear as both Brazil’s position relative to other states and the identity, nature and shape of those arrangements that will invest much in any given existing arrangement, or to surrender significant sovereignty to multilateral institutions, be they global or regional. Behind rhetorical support for multilateralism and hyperactive summity, one should expect more “rebelliousness” in large existing fora, more resistance to “intrusions” by extra-regional institutions and countries, and limited investments in the ever more numerous alternative ones.

NOTES

1. Our thanks to the editors and to the two external reviewers for kind and remarkably perceptive comments and suggestions.

2. The Treaty was finally invoked, in a purely symbolic way, after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States. Nothing concrete ever followed.

3. Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Venezuela (February 2, 2011).

4. Grenada, Haiti, Paraguay, Uruguay and... Syria.
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**ABSTRACT**

Moving In, Carving Out, Proliferating: The Many Faces of Brazil's Multilateralism Since 1989

This paper identifies the dominant patterns in Brazil's involvement in multilateral arrangements since its return to full democratic domestic rule in 1989. While multilateralism remains in sum central to Brazil's foreign policy, it has joined the new game by hedging its bets and playing what we would call a weak institutionalist game: pushing for reform and seeking more space for itself where it is likely to remain
influential, fighting or constraining the arrangements that put it at a disadvantage or threaten to do so, and promoting the emergence of plethora of alternative arrangements in which it has more say, but without investing too much in them, minimizing its costs and maximizing its own flexibility.

**Resumen**

Avanzar, abrirse paso, hacerse un lugar: Las distintas facetas del multilateralismo de Brasil desde 1989

En este artículo se identifican los patrones dominantes de la participación de Brasil en acuerdos multilaterales desde la restauración de la democracia local en 1989. Aunque el multilateralismo sigue desempeñando un papel central en la política exterior de Brasil, se ha sumado al nuevo juego cubriendo sus apuestas y haciendo lo que podríamos llamar una jugada institucionalista débil: presionar por una reforma y buscar más espacio en el que mantener su influencia, restringir u oponerse a los acuerdos que lo desfavorecen o amenazan hacerlo y promover una pléyada de acuerdos alternativos en los que su voz tiene mayor peso, pero sin invertir demasiado en ellos, minimizando sus costos y aprovechando al máximo su propia flexibilidad.

**Sumario**

Avançar, abrir caminho, conquistar um lugar: As diversas facetas do multilateralismo do Brasil a partir de 1989

Este artigo identifica os padrões dominantes da participação do Brasil em acordos multilaterais a partir da restauração de sua democracia, em 1989. Embora o multilateralismo continue desempenhando um papel central na política exterior do Brasil, o país se somou ao novo jogo cobrindo suas apostas e fazendo o que poderíamos chamar de uma jogada institucionalista frágil: pressionar por uma reforma e buscar um espaço maior no qual possa manter sua influência, restringir ou se opor aos acordos que lhe são, ou ameacem sê-lo, desfavoráveis e promover uma infinidade de acordos alternativos em que sua voz tem maior peso, mas sem investir muito neles, minimizando seus custos e aproveitando ao máximo sua própria flexibilidade.