

Brazil's strategic partnerships: origins, agendas and outcomes

ALCIDES COSTA VAZ



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The Global Partnerships Grid

Partnerships are an important vector of engagement in a polycentric world. Across the globe, many governments have devised a number of 'special relationships' in the framing of their foreign policy, with neighbouring and distant countries, as well as with some multilateral organisations. Whereas the European Union (EU) has established 10 so-called strategic partnerships, India has more than 20 and China close to 50. The proliferation of partnerships over the last two decades exposes both the relevance of this trend and the great heterogeneity, and uneven value, of these relationships.

The European Strategic Partnerships Observatory (ESPO) was set up in 2012 to provide information, analysis and debate on the EU's relations with a selected range of key global and regional partners.

With the Global Partnerships Grid series, ESPO aims to contribute to a better understanding of the practice of partnerships in current international politics. How do partnerships fit the foreign policy of major countries? What are the goals of these partnerships and what is their output? What are the main features of strategic partnerships?

With a view to addressing these questions, we asked senior scholars and analysts to explore the making of strategic partnerships in their respective countries, in what is in most cases the first analysis of this topic. They outline the objectives and functioning of these partnerships, based on official documents, interviews, and existing scholarly work.

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» **Since the 1970s, strategic partnerships have been an important instrument of Brazilian foreign policy.** Despite not being formally called strategic partnerships until recently, Brazil has sought closer relations with specific countries that are considered relevant for the country's top domestic or foreign policy goals. In the post-Cold War era, strategic partnerships have acquired greater importance as Brasilia has attempted to upgrade its profile from a regional power and global trader to a rising power and influential global actor, aiming to foster a multipolar and more equitable world order.

In pursuit of this goal, Brazil has faced a complex array of development and political challenges, which have required stronger international engagement both at regional and global levels. As a result, universalism – avoiding privileged or exclusive alignments to any single greater power but instead exploiting international opportunities globally – has become a central feature of Brazilian foreign policy. Multilateralism, in turn, is seen as the most appropriate approach to shape the international order and one that frames Brazil's development strategies, foreign policy priorities and international strategic partnerships.¹

At first glance, the selective nature of strategic partnerships seems to contradict the principle of universalism. But Brazil has avoided committing itself to rigid, exclusive alliances. According to Lessa, 'the building of strategic partnerships rests on the harmonization of Brazil's historical calling for universalism and the need for selective approximations, which ensures the possibility of adaptation to the niches of opportunity and to international constraints'.² In this sense, universalism, pragmatism and strategic partnerships can be functionally articulated in Brazilian foreign policy under the conceptual umbrella of a 'selective universalism',³ in which strategic partnerships become an operational expression of universalism and not its opposite.⁴ Brazil does not have a major formal document outlining its foreign policy priorities and conceptual basis, thus allowing for a flexible and, eventually, circumstantial approach to strategic partnerships. In order to understand Brazil's strategic partnership diplomacy and their place in helping pursue Brazil's foreign policy goals, it is thus necessary to analyze the most relevant initiatives in this regard.

This paper begins with an overview of the rise and evolution of Brazil's strategic partnerships in the past four decades. It then considers Brazil's current bilateral and multilateral partnerships, with a particular focus on their links to contemporary Brazilian foreign policy priorities and objectives. The aims, instruments, and achievements of Brazilian foreign policy are discussed in the third section, while a concluding section presents a final assessment of the relevance and effectiveness of such strategic partnerships.

¹ A. L. Cervo, *O desafio Internacional* (Brasilia: Universidade de Brasilia, 1994).

² A.C. Lessa, 'A diplomacia universalista do Brasil: a construção do sistema contemporâneo de relações bilaterais', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 41, n.Especial, 29-41, 1998.

³ A. C. Lessa, 'Brazil's strategic partnerships: an assessment of the Lula era (2003-2010)', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 53, 115-131, 2010.

⁴ A. A. Patriota, 'Inauguration Speech as Minister of Foreign Affairs', 2 January 2011, available at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/discursos-artigos-entrevistas-e-outras-comunicacoes/ministro-estado-relacoes-exteriores/discurso-do-ministro-antonio-de-aguiar-patriota-na-cerimonia-de-transmissao-do-cargo-de-ministro-de-estado-das-relacoes-exteriores>

Brazilian strategic partnerships: an overview

The first generation: searching for capital and technologies

During the Cold War years, Brazilian foreign policy was defined by its alignment and commitment to Western values; a pragmatic approach to relations with the great powers, notably the United States; a concern with preserving sovereignty and independence; and a strong commitment to autonomously promoting national development. With limited resources but aiming to become a developed, industrial economy and to enhance its international position, Brazil needed to forge a favorable and cooperative framework for its relations with the great powers, with its neighbours and with other developing nations. Multilateralism thus became a defining trait of Brazilian foreign policy.⁵

However, by the mid-1970s, the failure of the so-called North-South Dialogue, due to competing views between developed and developing countries on the requirements for sustained economic development and to the deepening of international economic and political asymmetries, progressively tamed Brazilian enthusiasm for multilateral engagement. Brazil moved on to embrace a more pragmatic foreign policy approach, with the aim of building bilateral partnerships at its core.⁶ Brazilian development needs required access to financial, material and technological resources, and their pursuit became a major driving force of Brazilian foreign policy.

During this period, Germany and Japan were identified as partners that could help Brazil foster both its economic and technological development by providing capital and access to technologies and market opportunities. In both cases, bilateral partnerships engendered important political, economic and social ties that provided the basis for mutual trust.⁷ However, these two partnerships differed in scope. The strategic partnership with Germany benefited from a broader framework of financial, industrial and technological interests, having its hallmark in the 1975 Agreement on Cooperation on Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy. This agreement was decisive for Brazil's ability to build and operate nuclear power plants and achieve the full domain of the nuclear fuel cycle. The partnership with Japan, in turn, was centered on agriculture technologies, which enabled Brazil to become the world's second-largest producer and exporter of soya, and reduced Japanese reliance on the United States and enhanced its food security significantly.⁸

As such, this first generation of bilateral partnerships (not yet named as 'strategic'), proved relatively successful. Even though they privileged specific countries and sectors, they were decisive to the development of Brazil's technological capabilities and economic and exports growth. They also brought about more independence from the US, and helped the three countries reposition themselves on the international scene.

⁵ Brazil became an active, engaged actor in the UN General Assembly, the Security Council, and the G-77, the Disarmament Commission, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and others. The interest in resorting to multilateralism was also manifest in the realm of regional organisations like the Organisation of the American States, in the support to the creation of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), and its successor, the Latin American Integration Association (LAIA), or in framing initiatives like the Pan American Operation in the early 1960s.

⁶ M. Spektor, 'Origens e direção do Pragmatismo Ecumênico e Responsável (1974-1979)', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 47:2, 191-222, 2004.

⁷ An important flow of immigrants from these two countries started in the late 19th century, and in the first decades of the 20th century their presence had a great impact, especially in the southern and southeastern states of Brazil, precisely the two most important regions in political and economic terms. Germany had become the second investor in Brazil by the end of the 1980s, with a heavy concentration in the industrial sector. It also became the third individual trade partner to Brazil and a strong provider of economic cooperation and development assistance. At the same time, Brazil was Germany's major trade partner outside the OECD.

⁸ The Nippon-Brazilian Cooperation Programme for the Development of the *Cerrados*, conceived in 1974 and implemented in 1978, was an ambitious project aiming at transforming what was regarded as a vast unproductive area into a highly productive region, especially for growing soya.

The second generation: the pursuit of regional integration

Despite their relevant achievements, the first generation of strategic partnerships did not fully equip Brazil to face the economic crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s. As the economies of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) stagnated, Brazil chose to increase its reliance on the regional market. The relationship with Argentina became a priority and in 1985 both partners began a bilateral economic integration project underscored by a strong political motivation for mutual endorsement of democracy and joint action in the face of major external economic challenges.⁹ The 1988 Treaty for Integration, Cooperation and Development was a landmark of Argentine-Brazilian relations that paved the way for the creation of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) three years later. MERCOSUR's positive impact on trade relations and investments was decisive to the reinvigoration of the strategic value of Brazil-Argentina relations during the 1990s, and allowed both countries to keep pace with the rise of regionalism at global level.¹⁰

Even though not yet formally considered a strategic partnership, most analyses of the Brazil-Argentina relationship in the late 1980s and early 1990s acknowledged its strategic relevance.¹¹ However, convergence on liberal reforms and open markets did not easily translate into foreign policy convergence. While Brazil insisted on a universalist approach to its foreign policy, Argentina actively sought a privileged alliance with the US. Their different international strategies prevented both partners from working together on major international affairs in the 1990s, and the partnership was restricted to the trade liberalization agenda within MERCOSUR.

In the late 1990s, under the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Brazil took the initial steps toward establishing closer links with emerging countries such as India, China, Russia, and South Africa. Those tentative initiatives focused particularly on expanding trade relations and were led by the Brazilian Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade. At that time, however, they lacked the broader political framework that would have qualified them as strategic partnerships. In parallel, Cardoso's foreign policy also aimed at reinvigorating Brazil's relations with developed countries. In 1997 and 2002, Brazil launched strategic partnerships with the United Kingdom and Germany, respectively. Both partnerships focused on political dialogue on United Nations (UN) reform, strengthening trade and investment, scientific and technological cooperation, and environmental sustainability.¹²

The third generation: contemporary strategic partnerships

The Government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) expanded and diversified Brazilian strategic partnerships. References to the strategic value and reach of a core set of bilateral relationships became frequent within Brazil's diplomatic discourse.¹³ Both the universalist focus of Brazilian foreign policy and the

⁹ M. Spektor, 'O Brasil e a Argentina entre a cordialidade oficial e o projeto de integração: a política externa do governo de Ernesto Geisel (1974-1979)', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 45:1, 117-145, 2002.

¹⁰ A. C. Vaz, 'Parcerias estratégicas no contexto da política exterior brasileira: implicações para o Mercosul', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 42:2, 52-80, 1999.

¹¹ L. A. Moniz Bandeira, *O Eixo Argentina-Brasil – O Processo de Integração da América Latina* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1987); Cervo 1994, op. cit.; Vaz 1999, op. cit.

¹² See 'Brazil-United Kingdom Joint Action Plan for Strategic Partnership', available at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/2001/07/30/plano-de-acao-conjunta-brasil-reino-unido/?searchterm=United%20Kingdom>

¹³ C. N. Amorim, *A política externa do governo Lula: dois anos. Revista Plenarium*, 2005, available at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/discursos-artigos-entrevistas-e-outras-comunicacoes/ministro-estado-relacoes-exteriores/a-politica=-externa-do-governo-lula-dois-anos/?searchterm=politica%20externa%20ativa>

importance of international partnerships were reaffirmed, as part of a wish to correct what was perceived as an excessively defensive foreign policy posture adopted by Cardoso.¹⁴ Under the Lula presidency, Brazil became more active internationally, resorting simultaneously to bilateral initiatives, regionalism, inter-regionalism, *ad hoc* coalitions, and multilateralism. Strategic partnerships became a valuable diplomatic tool to strengthen and reconcile Brazil's engagement at these different levels. This contrasted with Brazil's previous conception of strategic partnerships as strictly bilateral instruments designed to pursue narrow domestic purposes.

Lula da Silva prioritised South-South relations and, within it, engagement with other emerging countries such as India, South Africa, China and, subsequently, Russia – on the grounds of similarities (large territories and population, growing relevance in the world economy) and shared perspectives on key global issues (the desirability of multipolarity, and the need to reform the UN, strengthen the multilateral trade system, and promote social equity and inclusion, and environmental protection, among others). But this focus on emerging countries did not prevent Brazil from seeking partnerships with developed and developing countries alike. On the contrary, the number of bilateral strategic partnerships grew considerably under Lula's presidency to reach 21 by the time of writing (see Appendix 1), which reaffirms the universalistic trait of Brazilian foreign policy. Ten of these partnerships were concluded with developed countries, five with other emerging countries and five with developing nations, in addition to a strategic partnership with the European Union (EU). Although diplomatic discourse stresses the importance of South-South relations, the greatest share of strategic partnerships is with developed countries.

In contrast with previous bilateral initiatives, the third generation of strategic partnerships is far more encompassing in its policy scope and far more likely to deal with major global issues. This results in highly heterogeneous and ambitious agendas in which bilateralism and multilateralism coexist. This is reflected in groupings such as IBSA (with India and South Africa) and the BRICS (with Russia, India, China, and South Africa).

Strategic partnerships are usually announced through joint declarations and action plans, including follow up mechanisms. The appendix includes the relationships which are formally named strategic partnerships.¹⁵ Even though other relationships were referred to as strategic in diplomatic rhetoric, they have not been formalised as such and therefore do not appear in the table (e.g. Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Canada, Namibia, Morocco, or Congo).¹⁶

The institutional dimension and mechanisms of strategic partnerships

Brazil's strategic partnerships serve five main goals: to sustain a strong commitment to shared purposes and mutual trust; carry out specific in-depth dialogues on major international issues; strengthen bilateral and multilateral communication and coordination; and exchange information and experiences on a regular basis. Most of Brazil's strategic partnerships are underpinned by Joint Action Plans, with concrete goals and steps in priority areas and which provide guidance over a given period of time. Institutionally, regular meetings take place at presidential and ministerial levels, and bodies such as high-level commissions or bilateral committees have been established to oversee implementation by the various sectoral sub-committees, working groups or focal points and to generate policy recommendations (high-level commissions have been set up with Russia, China, and Peru). Joint committees regularly assess the

¹⁴ Lessa 2010, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Even though there is not a formal nomination of current strategic partnerships, the set of countries indicated in the appendix comprise all those relationships that have been so qualified in joint declarations or communiqués.

¹⁶ These are usually and unofficially labeled as 'enhanced partnerships'.

Action Plans. These committees meet on an annual or biennial basis, depending on the scope and pace of implementation of the sectoral bilateral commitments.

The implementation and management of these institutional mechanisms face two major challenges. First, inconsistent political will to carry out mutual commitments due to changing political, economic or strategic conditions domestically or abroad. Second, coordination problems both between the partners and among relevant national institutions, as a result of their different levels of human, economic and technical resources, staff turnover, and information management capabilities. Therefore, effective outcomes require adaptive responses to changing domestic and international circumstances and to institutional shortcomings.

Major goals and issue areas

Contemporary Brazilian strategic partnerships are significantly heterogeneous, reflecting Brazil's multiple foreign policy interests as well as the flexibility that partnerships allow. The partnerships focus on a wide array of different policy fields, whereby economic issues come first (trade, investment and finance), followed by education and culture, science and technology and security and defence issues. The rise of defence issues on the agenda is a relatively new development that reflects Brazilian concerns with improving its military capabilities, which have deteriorated over recent decades. Other issue areas include political dialogue, social policies, agriculture, environment and health. These are some of the most important domains in which Brazil has developed significant expertise, allowing it to engage in trilateral development assistance initiatives as a potential dimension of its strategic partnerships with developed countries.

Brazilian strategic partnerships pursue five main goals:

1. Development and enhancement of technological capabilities. As Brazil's economic needs and strategic ambitions grow, technological development and innovation also move up the list of priorities. This goal is of critical importance in the face of the loss of competitiveness of Brazilian industrial exports, as well as the need to keep pace with current trends in sensitive areas like information technology, air, space and maritime activities, energy efficiency and security, and environmental sustainability, among others. It is also significant to counter increasingly sharp commercial competition in its domestic market and abroad. Developing technological capabilities was the primary goal of the partnerships with Germany and Japan in the 1970s. It is also a major goal in Brazil's current partnership with France, which has a strong accent on technology transfer in the nuclear and defence sectors, with particular reference to the development of nuclear submarines.¹⁷ It is also a key objective of the partnerships with Russia and Ukraine, in which space activities (particularly the development of satellite launching vehicles and geostationary satellites) rank high on the agenda.¹⁸

2. Deepening mutual engagement and expanding the scope of bilateral relations. Strengthening bilateral relations in areas of mutual interest and benefit, departing from low levels of interaction, underscores several important Brazilian strategic partnerships, such as with Venezuela, Turkey, and Australia, although the incentives and areas involved vary from case to case. With Venezuela,¹⁹ interest in broadening the scope of bilateral relations is closely related to the central importance of oil and gas for the Venezuelan economy, leading to a strong concentration in trade and investment and little diversification. The 2005

¹⁷ Brazil-France Joint Communiqué, 25 May 2006, available at: www.itamaraty.gov.br/notas-a-imprensa/2006/0328

¹⁸ Brazil-Russia Joint Communiqué, available at: http://www.defesabr.com/MD/md_russia.htm#2008

¹⁹ Brazil-Venezuela Joint Communiqué Strategic Partnership, available at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/2005/02/18/comunicado-conjunto-alianza-estrategica-brasil/?searchterm=alian%C3%A7a%20estrat%C3%A9gica>

Brazil-Venezuela Declaration on the Implementation of the Strategic Partnership envisaged 12 working groups, to be monitored by a High-Level Bi-national Commission.²⁰ This was also the case with Argentina in the mid-1980s, when 24 sectoral protocols provided the ground for the expansion and diversification of bilateral relations. The partnership with Turkey is another example. Even though Turkey is an increasingly relevant political and economic player in Europe, in North Africa and in the Middle East – areas of high political and economic interest to Brazil – bilateral relations are still relatively modest. In order to boost them, the Brazilian-Turkish strategic partnership 2010 Action Plan envisaged initiatives in nine major areas.²¹ The same reasoning applies to the recent partnership with Australia.²²

3. Fostering regional cooperation and integration. As political and economic regionalism became a forefront dimension of Brazilian foreign policy from the mid-1980s onward, bilateral relations with some key countries in South America were also elevated to the status of strategic partnerships. For obvious reasons, Argentina was the first and most relevant. More recently, as South America has become the primary and immediate referent of Brazil's regional policies, two other countries were targeted as strategic partners: Venezuela and Peru. This can be explained by geostrategic considerations effectively to articulate Brazilian interests and presence in the northern arch of South America. Both countries are also of key importance for the integration of South America's infrastructure, a highly-valued policy objective for Brazil in the realm of regional integration. Venezuela, besides being a major supplier of energy resources, an important economy and a key actor in the Amazon region, is also a gateway for Brazil to strengthen its political and economic presence in the Caribbean, and secondarily, in Central America. For its part, Peru also shares a significant part of the Amazon and is the best route to reach South America's Pacific coast, and from there, the Asian region. In addition, Peru plays a key political and economic role in the Andean Region and has sustained high levels of economic growth throughout the past decade. These two partnerships highlight Brazilian efforts to enhance bilateral initiatives in the pursuit of a politically and economically strengthened South America. Bilateral initiatives, in this sense, are intended to be functionally articulated to foster regional integration.

4. Promoting inter-regionalism. As it consolidates its profile as a global player and the most relevant actor in its region, Brazil is well placed to play a key role in forging political and economic ties between South America and other regions, namely Europe, Africa, and Asia. The EU-Brazil Action Plan, for example, establishes the goal of fostering bi-regional cooperation between Latin America and the EU and enhancing MERCOSUR-EU relations.²³ Indonesia is also envisaged as a key partner to fostering South America-ASEAN relations. This is the main motivation behind Brazil's search for a strategic partnership with Jakarta,²⁴ while the partnerships with India and South Africa intend to do the same in other regions.²⁵ By strengthening bilateral economic ties with these countries and regions, Brazil also seeks to forge an appropriate context for the engagement of its neighbourhood in inter-regional economic arrangements. An enlarged MERCOSUR,²⁶ for example, is currently engaged in trade negotiations with the European

²⁰ The areas of concern were: energy, mining, customs, finances, trade and industry, agriculture, agrarian reform, tourism, technical cooperation, aquaculture, fishing, science and technology and defense. See: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/2005/02/18/comunicado-conjunto-alianca-estrategica-brasil/?searchterm=allian%C3%A7a%20estrat%C3%A9gica>

²¹ Energy, defence, agriculture, science and technology, education, culture, trade and investments, environment and the fight to organized crime and terrorism. See: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/plano-de-acao-da-parceria-estrategica-entre-a-republica-federativa-do-brasil-e-a-republica-da-turquia/?searchterm=action%20plan>

²² Brazil-Australia Joint Communiqué, 21 June 2012, available at: <http://www.pm.gov.au/press-office/brazil-australia-strategic-partnership>

²³ V EU-Brazil Summit. Joint Declaration. Action Plan, Section III', available at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/v-cupula-brasil-uniao-europeia-declaracao-conjunta-bruxelas-4-outubro-de-2011>

²⁴ 'Action Plan for Brazil-Indonesia Strategic Partnership', available at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/2009/10/14/action-plan-for-brazil-indonesia-strategic/?searchterm=indonesia>

²⁵ 'Joint Communiqué. Visit to India of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva', item 18, 5 June 2007, available at: <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/2007/05/comunicado-conjunto-visita-do-presidente-luiz/?searchterm=India>

²⁶ MERCOSUR originally included Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay. More recently, Venezuela became a full member while Bolivia and Ecuador have expressed the same intent.

Union. This logic, however, is being challenged, as important neighbouring countries including Peru and Colombia, along with Chile, have decided to foster economic ties within the Pacific Rim area independently of their participation in MERCOSUR as associated countries.

5. Shaping governance mechanisms and fostering reform of major multilateral institutions and regimes. Brazil sees strategic partnerships as important to shaping governance mechanisms, strengthening multilateralism, and reforming multilateral institutions to adjust them to contemporary political and economic realities. Brazil has been very critical of the frozen institutional and decision-making frameworks of leading multilateral organisations, and thus grants strategic relevance to those countries that share the same political aim of fostering change in the structure of global order. This aim has been a major driving force of Brazilian strategic partnerships with countries that endorse its claim for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) or are expected to play decisive roles in promoting reform, such as Russia, France, the UK, and China, as well as other emerging powers such as India and South Africa.

Assessing outcomes: the interplay of objectives, scope and achievements

While Brazil has actively sought international partnerships, its increasing international presence has also led some developed countries like Norway and major actors such as the European Union to seek closer relations with Brasilia, expanding the list and scope of these partnerships.

Strategic partnerships have been important in fostering Brazil's international profile as a global player *vis-à-vis* developed and developing countries alike. In this sense, it can be argued that there is a limited but effective level of complementarity between the two types of partnerships. Those with developed countries have been useful in providing access to human, material and financial resources and advanced technologies, in expanding recognition of Brazil's new international status, and in providing support to some important political demands, such as a permanent seat in the UNSC. Those with other emerging countries have been effective in shaping a new pattern for South-South and North-South relations and in advancing Brazil's political and economic presence in its own region, in Africa and, to a lesser extent, in Asia.

Yet, convergence between Brazil's agenda and that of developed countries has proven difficult. While Brazil aims to enhance its international profile and promote a redistribution of power internationally, including within multilateral organisations, developed countries seek instead a greater commitment from Brazil and other emerging powers to the tenets and requirements of the existing order, and call on Brazil to assume greater responsibilities in its own region and abroad. This political gap is a source of many of the difficulties that Brazil has experienced in advancing partnerships with developed countries and the EU.

So far, the bilateral partnerships that focus on strong sectoral initiatives are the ones that have best delivered tangible outcomes. The partnerships with Germany and Japan, and those currently being pursued with France in the defence sector, with Germany on renewable energy and more recently with Russia in space cooperation, are good examples of this pattern.

From yet another perspective, a distinction can be drawn between partnerships expected to deliver short- and long-term outputs. Some partnerships, such as those primarily oriented toward deepening and broadening bilateral agendas, aim to advance policy objectives over the relatively short- to medium-term. This is the case, for example, with the partnership with Venezuela, as demonstrated by the significant increase in bilateral trade and investment flows and the recent admission of Venezuela as a full member to MERCOSUR.

Triangular cooperation on development issues is also expected to produce visible outcomes in the short- to medium-term. The partnerships with Norway, Germany, Italy, France, Spain and Switzerland attach great importance to working together with Brazil in Africa, as well as in Latin America in areas such as health and education and professional training. At present, 29 trilateral projects are being carried out in Africa, Latin America, and Asia as part of the implementation of guidelines and action plans with those countries.

In so far as Brazil's strategic partnerships aim to foster a rebalancing of power on the global stage and to reform multilateral structures with a view to making more space for emerging countries, the partnerships' output needs to be assessed over a longer time frame.

In particular, Brazil maintains privileged relations with BRICS and IBSA countries, either bilaterally or in the context of mini-lateral consultations and cooperation, with a view to achieving greater visibility for itself, strengthening the political profile of these formats, and improving convergence among members in areas like global political and economic governance, environmental sustainability, international security, social development initiatives and development assistance. It is important to note, however, that bilateral partnerships with BRICS/IBSA countries were only formalised after the inception of these mini-lateral platforms. In other words, the bilateral partnerships have been a sort of by-product of those groupings rather than factors that have contributed to their emergence.

The partnerships with the BRICS countries have clearly delivered in economic terms. Trade among them increased by 1,000 per cent from 2002 to 2012, reaching \$320 billion. Although China is by far the largest trader among the BRICS, Brazil has benefited greatly from trade with the other BRICS countries. Brazilian exports to BRICS nations rose from \$7.3 billion in 2003 to \$53.9 billion in 2013. As to investment flows, however, Brazil has benefited far less, since these flows among BRICS countries remain relatively low.²⁷ Politically, the BRICS group has played an important role in fostering Brazilian concerns and perspectives on global economic governance, particularly within the G20,²⁸ as well as in fostering South-South political dialogue and cooperation.²⁹ But it has not been an important source of initiatives in other areas such as science, technology and innovation, except for a few ongoing projects with Russia and China, notably in the air and space sector. For example, among other initiatives, Russia takes part in the development of Brazil's Satellite Launching Vehicle (VLS-Alfa), while Brazil is involved in the expansion of the largest programme of the Russian Federal Space Agency, the Global Satellite Navigation System – GLONASS. With China, cooperation on space projects is centred around the joint development and launching (by China) of advanced remote satellites known as China Brazil Earth Resources Satellite – CBERS.³⁰ Technological advancements derived from such space projects are also considered hugely relevant for the Brazilian security and defence sectors.

The IBSA forum, in turn, has been useful in advancing Brazilian interests and initiatives on development assistance and defence cooperation.³¹ In the realm of IBSA, cooperation currently encompasses fifteen areas; for instance cooperation with least-developed countries has been carried out through the IBSA Facility for Hunger and Poverty Alleviation (IBSA Fund). In the defense area, Brazil works with India on

²⁷ M. Pochman, 'Relações comerciais e de investimentos do Brasil com os outros países dos BRICS', in J. V. S. Pimentel (ed.), *O Brasil, os BRICS e a Agenda Internacional* (Brasília: Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão, 2013), 209.

²⁸ Pimentel (ed.) 2013, op. cit., 481.

²⁹ A. Zhebit, 'BRICS, IBSA and the Global South', in A. Zhebit (ed.), *Brasil, Índia, África do Sul: emergência do Sul Global* (Rio de Janeiro: Gramma, 2010), 205-206.

³⁰ H. A. Oliveira, *Brasil e China: Cooperação Sul-Sul e Parceria Estratégica* (Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2012), 114-117.

³¹ A. C. Vaz, *India, Brazil, South Africa: Intermediate States and International Security* (Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2007); J. Onuki and J. A. Oliveira, 'O espaço do IBAS na política externa brasileira', in A.C. Lessa and H.A. Oliveira (eds.), *Parcerias Estratégicas do Brasil: a Dimensão Multilateral e as Parceiras Emergentes* (Belo Horizonte: Fino Traço, 2013), 29.

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the India-Brazil-South Africa Maritime Exercise – IBSAMAR – which has been carried out every two years in the Indian Ocean since 2008.

Looking at Brazil's role in mini-lateral groupings, it can be argued that it has broadly managed to reconcile the objectives of bilateral strategic partnerships with its interests and initiatives at multilateral level.³² Most Brazilian partnerships are ultimately oriented toward achieving systemic change within the international system. This provides an incentive to seek connections between bilateral initiatives and multilateralism in the form of *ad hoc* coalitions, often in the framework of larger international regimes or organizations. The successful coordination with India and South Africa regarding intellectual property rights for anti-HIV drugs was decisive for reaching agreement with the US and for launching the Doha Round in 2001.³³ The same can be said of the coordination with India, South Africa and China before the 2003 WTO Ministerial Conference in Cancun, which led to the creation of the WTO G20, and of the coordination with other BRICS partners in G20 summits in the wake of the 2008 economic crisis.

That said, Brazil's foreign policy reveals a disconnection between the country's global policies and those pursued at regional level. Brazil is a regional leader and the only Latin American country able to pursue broader global ambitions. Yet, it has not brought these two dimensions together into a single international strategy. Rather, the two dimensions have evolved in parallel. Brazil's universalist approach to foreign policy currently expressed in the partnerships with the EU and with the other BRICS members has cast doubt on the priority that Brazilian diplomatic discourse grants to MERCOSUR and to South America.³⁴

The question then is whether strategic partnerships with neighboring countries have been useful in fostering political and economic regionalism. There is sound historical evidence that relations with Argentina were a key factor in the development of regionalism in the Southern Cone and, ultimately, in South America. However, as countries like Venezuela, Peru and Colombia become more proactive politically and economically, challenging the traditional Brazilian-Argentinean regional predominance, the region has begun to experience important political and economic changes. This underscores the potential relevance of strategic partnerships with these countries (taking into account that no such initiative exists with Colombia at this point) for the future of South American regionalism. So far, political and economic cooperation in South America does not rely on any singular bilateral axis. That said, the Action Plans of the partnerships with Peru and Venezuela concentrate on issues and proposals that aim at strengthening bilateral ties. If fully implemented, they could become a *hub and spoke* model. And given the trend of infra-structural integration (one of the most important dimensions of South American regionalism), Brazil would in this way eventually be connected to its entire neighborhood.

Finally, as to the objective of fostering inter-regionalism, strategic partnerships have been rather inefficient, with the possible exception of the partnership with the EU. The relationship with the EU is unique in the sense that it is Brazil's only strategic partnership with a collective entity or bloc. Over the past five decades, relations between Brazil and Europe have grown in scope and complexity. This reflects both an increasing interest within Europe in exploiting economic opportunities in Brazil and increasing recognition of Brazil's growing relevance in its region and globally, as well as Brazil's own interest in exploiting political and economic synergies in support of its development and its international strategy. Despite its acute

³² S. Amaral, 'O Brasil, os BRICS e a Agenda Internacional', in Pimentel (ed.) 2013, op. cit., 427.

³³ H. Ramanzini Jr, 'Parcerias Estratégicas do Brasil no Contexto do Multilateralismo Comercial', in Lessa and Oliveira (eds.) 2013, op. cit., 170-171.

³⁴ L. Couto, 'Relações Brasil-América do Sul: a Construção Inacabada de Parceria com o Entorno Estratégico', in Lessa and Oliveira (eds.) 2013, op. cit., 212. For the first time ever, in July 2014, the Presidents of the South American Community of Nations (UNASUR) were invited to a meeting with the BRICS leaders in the framework of the Sixth BRICS Summit held in Fortaleza, Brazil.

economic crisis and the rise of China as Brazil's leading individual trade partner, the European Union remains Brazil's major trade partner and source of investments.³⁵

The EU-Brazil Joint Action Plan adopted in December 2008 during the second EU-Brazil Summit in Rio de Janeiro was structured around a very comprehensive agenda, encompassing key objectives and related joint actions in five major areas. These included the promotion of peace and comprehensive security; strengthening economic, social and environmental partnerships to promote sustainable development; fostering regional cooperation; fostering science, technology and innovation; and promoting people-to-people exchanges. At the fifth EU-Brazil summit, held in Brussels in October 2011, the first Joint Action Plan was updated and extended to cover the period 2012-2015. The most relevant innovation was the introduction of energy issues into the agenda of the strategic partnership. The implementation of the action plan has been, however, subject to several constraints.

Susanne Gratius argues that the EU-Brazil strategic partnership has under-delivered due to the failure of MERCOSUR-EU trade negotiations, the reorientation of Brazilian foreign policy towards the South and different strategies towards the United States (with Brazil balancing and the EU band-wagoning).³⁶ Besides, Brazil and the EU hold different expectations and political assessments regarding key global issues such as non-proliferation, humanitarian interventions, terrorism and development.

Brazil's relationship with Europe is multilayered, encompassing bilateral partnerships with individual EU member states, a strategic partnership with the EU, and inter-regional relations (EU-MERCOSUR). The overlap and synergies between these layers of partnership represent a potential opportunity to advance mutual interests, as they reflect a high level of political and economic exchanges while also providing flexibility for Brazil to advance initiatives with individual member states as those with the EU as a whole remain stagnant. However, in practice, these different levels of partnership have not proven mutually reinforcing. In particular, there has been little progress at inter-regional level, given a lack of substance and political leverage, as the EU-MERCOSUR summits demonstrate.³⁷ Inter-regional trade negotiations, the cornerstone of EU-MERCOSUR trade relations, are strongly conditioned by domestic political and economic interests on both sides as well as by the pace and outcome of trade negotiations in the WTO.

The partnership with France, in turn, is an example of how relatively effective bilateralism can be. At the same time, it is a very peculiar partnership as it is the only one with a European country that includes neighbourhood and border issues. Brazil shares a 700 km border in the Amazon with French Guyana.³⁸ The partnership includes measures to fight drug trafficking, illegal migration and illegal mining activities, as well as to improve border surveillance and the management of biodiversity resources in the Amazon region. This partnership also embraces a very extensive agenda, encompassing issues including nuclear energy, technological innovation, joint cooperation in African countries, health and the environment.

The 2008 Action Plan marked an important departure from the previous bilateral instruments. It conveyed a strong determination on the part of both Brazil and France to work together on issues with potentially-meaningful impact on the politics of global governance and North-South cooperation in the realm of

³⁵ In 2011, trade flows reached a peak of US\$ 99.3 billion, a 20 per cent increase in relation to the previous year. In 2013 trade flows stood at US\$ 98.4 billion; EU investment in Brazil amounted to US\$ 180 billion, or nearly half of the whole stock of direct investments in the country. Brazil, in turn, is the sixth largest investor in the European Union.

³⁶ S. Gratius, 'Brazil and the European Union: Between Balancing and Bandwagoning', *ESPO working paper 2*, Madrid: FRIDE, 2012.

³⁷ See, for example: 'IV EU-MERCOSUR Summit, Joint Communiqué', Madrid, 17 May 2010.

³⁸ The political decision to forge a Brazilian-French strategic partnership was taken at first in 2006 by former Presidents Jacques Chirac and Lula da Silva when a first Action Plan was adopted. In December 2008, during the visit of the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy to Brasilia a more encompassing agenda was set and a new action plan, The 2008 Action Plan for the Implementation of a Strategic Partnership, was announced. See: 'Brazil and France Joint Declaration. Action Plan for the Implementation of a Strategic Partnership', 24 December 2008.

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the G20, the UNSC, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and in the Conferences of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol. The positions of the partners on the reform of the UN Security Council and major financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank have grown closer, and France has endorsed Brazil's bid for a permanent seat in the UNSC.

It has been in the defence sector, however, that the French-Brazilian strategic partnership has achieved immediate and visible results. Right after the announcement of the Action Plan, Brazil purchased military helicopters and a submarine package that will allow it to build and operate a fleet of nuclear submarines.³⁹ Brazil was also expected to purchase Rafale jet fighters, but the Brazilian government finally opted, in December 2013, to purchase Swedish equipment instead. Further cooperation in defence will include the development of unmanned aerial vehicles and better communication and territorial surveillance networks along maritime and terrestrial borders, notably the border between French Guyana and Brazil.

The French-Brazilian strategic partnership encompasses a relatively balanced trade-off. For one, France provides Brazil with political support and access to military means and technology that underscore its ambitions as a global actor. For another, France itself benefits politically and economically from partnering with an influential emerging country, including in initiatives of development assistance and technical triangular cooperation, particularly in Africa.

Concluding remarks

Strategic partnerships have been an important tool for Brazil's foreign policy. They have expanded the range of diplomatic options available to a country aiming to change the international status quo, consolidate its profile as an important global actor and enhance its regional presence to foster development and stability in its neighbourhood.

Strategic partnerships have been useful in granting Brazil access to resources and technologies, as well as in legitimising and underscoring its broader political ambitions and in enhancing its international profile. Brazil has managed to connect its strategic partnerships with engagement in mini-lateral groupings such as the BRICS and IBSA and in coalitions within broader international regimes, such as those addressing trade issues. Nevertheless, overall these initiatives have not delivered incentives and outputs strong enough to bring about much progress towards strengthening multipolarity and multilateralism, or making inter-regionalism more effective – all of which are important dimensions of Brazil's international strategy. On the other hand, strategic partnerships have proved more effective at the regional level, owing to the greater availability of political and economic resources that Brazil is able to mobilise in developing relations with its neighbours.

Strategic partnerships will continue to be a valuable political and diplomatic tool for Brazil in its attempts to manage the multiple intersections of bilateral and multilateral engagement and its efforts to exploit the opportunities brought about by its own international rise.

³⁹ The purchase involved four conventional submarines and the conventional part of a future nuclear submarine, the construction of a submarine base, and 50 Eurocopter EC-725 *Super Cougar* helicopters. SM39 *Exocet* missiles and MU90 heavy torpedoes were also purchased later on.

Appendix. A list of Brazil's strategic partners

REGION	PARTNER	BASIC DOCUMENTS	MAJOR ISSUE AREAS
Europe	European Union	2007 Action Plan	Political dialogue, trade, investments, environment sustainability, renewable energies, security, defense, science and technology, health, education, culture, development assistance, space activities, information society.
	France	2005 Bilateral agreements and Action Plan	Borders, security, water resources ,health, education, family agriculture, defense, education, science and technology, nuclear energy, environment.
	Germany	2002 Action Plan	Political dialogue, UN reform, trade, investments, environment, science and technology, Information technology, space, transport.
	Italy	2010 Joint Statement. Bilateral agreements and Action Plan	Political dialogue, judicial cooperation, defense and military cooperation, space, trade, finance, small and medium enterprises, energy, tourism, health, decentralized cooperation, sports, trilateral cooperation.
	Spain	2003 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Political dialogue, UN reform, economic development, social development.
	Norway	2011 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Energy, environment, human rights.
	United Kingdom	1997 Joint Communiqué, Bilateral agreements Action Plan	Political dialogue, UN reform, Trade, investment, finances, science and technology, health, education, environment, human rights, poverty eradication, defense, public management.
	Russia	2008 Joint Declaration, Action Plan	Political dialogue, science and technology, space, military, energy, trade, agriculture, health, education, culture and sports.
	Finland	2008 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Political dialogue, UN reform, trade, environment, science and technology, education, innovation, defense, tourism.
	Sweden	2008 Action Plan	Trade, science and technology, human rights, education, renewable energy, environment, defense, UN reform, nuclear disarmament.
	Switzerland	2008 Memorandum of Understanding	Human rights, security, environment, energy security, poverty alleviation.
	Ukraine	2009 Joint Communiqué, Bilateral agreements	Space activities, education, energy, health, agriculture.
	Turkey	2010 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Energy, defense, agriculture, science and technology, culture, defense, trade, investment, environment, fight of organized crime and terrorism.
Asia	Indonesia	2009 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Biogenetics, biofuels, science and technology, technical cooperation, renewable energy, defense, mining, social inclusion.
	India	2004 Bilateral agreements	Political dialogue, development assistance, trade, investments, security, defense, science and technology. innovation, culture, education, energy, poverty alleviation, agriculture, environment.
	China	2009 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Political dialogue, multilateral affairs, inter-regional cooperation, consular affairs, trade, energy, mining, finances, agriculture, space cooperation, science and technology, innovation, culture and education.
Oceania	Australia	2012 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Trade and investment, climate change and the environment, agriculture, mining and energy (including bio fuels), education, culture and other people-to people links.

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Africa	South Africa	2007 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Political dialogue, human rights, governance ,education, security, defense, trade, tourism, transports, agriculture, food security, social responsibility, technical cooperation, health, information technology, energy, labor and social policies.
	Angola	2010 Joint Communiqué	Energy, health, education, agriculture, defense, public security, trade, investment, finances, food security, naval industry, mining, education and sports
South America	Argentina	1988 Treaty of Integration, Cooperation and Development. Bilateral Agreements	Political dialogue, trade, investments, education, labor, energy, transports, health, education, culture, tourism, security, defense, technical cooperation, environment, science and technology, justice, social policies, nuclear energy, space, regional integration.
	Venezuela	2005 Joint Communiqué	Energy, mining, customs, industry, trade, family agriculture, land reform, tourism, aquiculture, fishing, science and technology, military cooperation.
	Peru	2003 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan, Bilateral Agreements	Trade, investment, environment, energy, science and technology, education, social policies, defense, infra-structure integration, culture, fight of drug traffic and organized crime.

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