

## FORMING COALITIONS: THE CASE OF BRAZIL IN THE BRICS

**Gisela Pereyra Doval**

[gpdoval@gmail.com](mailto:gpdoval@gmail.com)

Holder of a PhD in International Relations (UNR). Associate Professor of Issues in International Relations at the Faculty of Political Science and International Relations of the same university.

General Coordinator of the Argentina-Brazil Studies Programme (PEAB), Faculty of Political Science and International Relations at the National University of Rosario (Argentina). Researcher at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET).

### Abstract

This article examines the importance of belonging to a group that puts pressure internationally through a coalition pursuing similar goals. The process of coalition building has been central in Brazil's multilateral negotiations to balance the centre-periphery forces, but also with regard to the possibilities that this country has of belonging to the club of the powerful. We hold that the BRICS group is a step in Brazilian ambitions towards that end. We also emphasize the common views and differences of these five countries at multilateral level. The aim of this article is to analyse Brazil's strategy of coalition building to understand what kind of coalition the so-called BRICS countries form and ascertain the advantages and disadvantages of Brazil's participation in it.

### Keywords

Brazil, coalitions, BRICS, multilateralism, South-South cooperation

### How to cite this article

Doval, Gisela Pereyra (2015). *"Forming coalitions: the case of Brazil in the BRICS"*. *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations*, Vol. 6, N.º 2, November 2015-April 2016. Consulted [online] on date of last visit, [observare.ual.pt/janus.net/en\\_vol6\\_n2\\_art01](http://observare.ual.pt/janus.net/en_vol6_n2_art01)

**Article received on 11 June 2015 and accepted for publication on 30 September 2015**



## FORMING COALITIONS: THE CASE OF BRAZIL IN THE BRICS

Gisela Pereyra Doval

### Introduction

With the rise of Lula to the presidency, Brazil has settled in the international system more strongly than in the past. Although its presence had been permanent and sustained in the past, the political and economic internationalization that this country went through in the Lula administration was unprecedented in its history. As argued by Soares de Lima & Castelan (2012), there are three instances in which Brazil has stood out:

1. through the internationalization of both public and private companies and their investments, with strong government support;
2. through political agreement and participation in coalitions bringing together common positions in multilateral fora; and
3. through the cooperation for development, whereby Brazil has ceased to be a mere recipient to become a donor to countries with lower relative growth.

The second instance is the most important for this work because it reflects the importance of belonging to a group that puts pressure internationally through a coalition pursuing similar objectives. At this point, and although Vigevani & Cepaluni (2007) call the model adopted by Lula Da Silva *Autonomy through Diversification*, we believe that *Autonomy through Coalition* is the correct expression to describe Da Silva's foreign policy, as its most distinguishing feature was the constant search for partners to form coalitions and coordinate policies in public fora. The process of coalition building has been central in Brazil's multilateral negotiations regarding the prospects of balancing centre-periphery forces (Nunes de Oliveira, Onuki & de Oliveira, 2006).

In this regard, it must be stressed that despite accusations that the coalition government of Da Silva was a return to the Third World of the 1970s, coalitions now are totally different because while coalitions in the 1970s were defensive, built against an unjust international order, twenty-first century coalitions are offensive groups that have the capacity to respond to the order and sufficient room for manoeuvre to be able to propose agendas and have a voice internationally.

With regard to the above, it is also interesting to note that the formation of coalitions with countries of the same status has given Brazil the possibility of acting in



international organizations and in multilateral negotiations from a balancing viewpoint, instead of following the traditional bandwagoning of peripheral countries. That is, Brazil is a country that ceased to 'join' the decisions made by the strongest states in the international system. The idea of the "need to agree" with the rules imposed by others implied lack of options. However, under Da Silva's administration, other possibilities were opened aiming at attaining a balance through the pressure exerted by several states, united in search of a common goal.

In this sense, we could also talk about the possibility that this type of coalitions offers in that they enable a rule taker country to become a rule maker country. As suggested by Arbilla (1997), Brazil's self-identification as a mediator or "consensus builder" operationalizes the strategic need for Brazil to strengthen mechanisms for South-South cooperation and also North-South cooperation in order to take advantage of the approximation with emerging states without compromising the political and economic interests resulting from a confrontation with countries in the North.

Similarly, we can use Lechini's explanation of *Variable Geometry*. As the author states,

*"In aviation, a variable geometry wing is a wing configuration that allows altering the platform for various flight conditions, which allows taking advantage of aerodynamics of a swept wing at high speeds while avoiding their disadvantages at low speeds" (2008: 178).*

Thus, Brazil would *play* with the same actors in different scenarios using a

*"(...) building alliances system that can coexist or overlap to create a network of relations that enables acquiring greater degree of autonomy in the international context" (Lechini, 2008: 178).*

In this regard, *selective multilateralism* would be more of a legacy than a principle. This is because it is considered to be a pragmatic policy which can increase the room for manoeuvre, voice demands and eventually change rules considered to be unfair and create new standards accepted by other countries in the international system (especially peripheral countries through internal activism). Thus, we agree with Eiras when he says that Brazil is a country with a *voice* in the international system, having attained a prominent role in international discussions, not only participating in the most important groups but also being constantly invited to participate in other encounters.

*"Energy issues and climate change, agricultural commodities, and nuclear non-proliferation (we are, perhaps along with Japan and Germany, among the most important countries without nuclear weapons, acting as a kind of international poster boy) stand out, among others" (2011: 9).*



It should be noted that this work focuses mainly on the Da Silva administration, although it is known that the current president has increasingly lowered her profile regarding foreign policy. However, one can establish a line of continuity in terms of the importance of *strategic partnerships*. By *partnerships* or strategic alliances we refer to the

*"(...) interstate relationship which, for various reasons and factors, stands out, in terms of importance, from the other bilateral diplomatic relations that make up the universe of a country"*  
(Cortés & Creus, 2009: 120).

In some cases, including the one we now examining, daring to jeopardize one of these strategic partnerships would be deemed unwise, even in the Rousseff world.

Of all the coalitions that Brazil has participated in or initiated, this article deals exclusively with the BRICS and the place that Brazil has in the group. We believe that of all the groups that Brazil is part of, this is the one that has or will have a greater economic impact and greater influence in the global order in coming years (Almeida, 2010b).

### **The emergence of the BRICS**

The BRICS form a very special group. Usually a group is named after its formation, taking into account the characteristics it has acquired in practice; however, with the BRICS it was quite the opposite. From the acronym used to refer to the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China by the Goldman Sachs investment bank in its 2001 report (O'Neill, 2001), these countries have made efforts to find common denominators, potential complementarities and prospective joint actions. As Baumann writes,

*"this case probably has no historical precedent, whereby an acronym is converted into motivation expressing diplomatic efforts and trade initiatives"* (2010: 5).

In 2006 the term gave rise to a grouping that, to date, resulted in more than 70 meetings at the highest levels, incorporating the fifth member - South Africa - in the 3<sup>rd</sup> BRIC Summit<sup>1</sup> in Sanya (China).

Especially since 2008 - the year when the international financial crisis broke out - the assumption that in the future China and India will become the largest suppliers of manufactured goods and services, respectively, while Brazil and Russia will also be key countries in the supply of raw materials, became fundamental to inform practical actions. In this line of thought, according to Armijo & Sotero (2007), the coherence of grouping these countries lies in the fact that they can have a similar kind of influence or

---

<sup>1</sup> These summits have Head of State/Government status.



equivalent implications in the international political and economic system. That is, the idea that these states may, in the not-too-distant future, alter the conditions of international interactions for the rest of the actors, whether states, multinational corporations and international organizations, increases their importance in terms of academic analysis and opportunity for joint action. This means that discussions on the possible role the sum of the five largest emerging economies gain importance in the economic and political agenda.

It was just after the 2008 crisis that these trends began to show. The financial crisis intensified the perception of American failure to exercise control on global governance and also of the European Union's inability to replace or supplement the United States in the task of leading the international community, at least from an economic point of view. In the old continent, this was experienced as a triple crisis: sovereign debt, the banking system and the economic system in general. Although it originated in the United States, it quickly hit the oldest block, highlighting structural weaknesses, generating new imbalances and, most importantly, creating speculation about the continuity of the integration process. These features accentuated the relative power of the BRICS, whose uninterrupted growth in those years went hand in hand with the G-7 countries' loss of influence. At this point the importance of the economic model must be stressed. According to Morales Ruvalcaba (2013), one of the problems facing G7 countries (more beset by the crisis) is that they do not want to *let go* of the neoliberal model. In contrast, at the beginning of the millennium, countries like Russia (2000), Brazil (2003) and China (2004) adopted the guidelines proposed in the Power Vertical and the Buenos Aires and Beijing Consensus, respectively, as models to follow.

Whereas the Russian model comes under the ideological concepts of "sovereign democracy" and "dictatorship of law" - strong control of civil society and the media, reduction of regional autonomy and strengthening of presidential authority – that is, based on political principles<sup>2</sup>, consensus have more economic goals, as they emerge in opposition to the Washington Consensus. In this sense:

*"The basic idea of the Beijing and Buenos Aires Consensus lies in a total distrust of the benefits of the privatization processes and free trade, without a minimum control from the states. If the state participates, the countries will be integrated in the global economic system in a more autonomous way, safeguarding their life style, looking for their own solutions and keeping their national interests protected. The aim is to grow while preserving independence and sovereignty in the decision-making process" (Pereyra Doval, 2008: 16).*

Thus, the state gets back the importance it had lost in the nineties, becoming the controller of private processes and regulating the opening of its markets to foreign investment, which is crucial to its development<sup>3</sup>. This is true at least in the case of

---

<sup>2</sup> Although it is noteworthy that the Russian state has played a leading role in the management of the national economy since Putin's presidency.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed study of the FDI in Brazil see Pereyra Doval & Actis (2012).



Brazil, India and South Africa, since in the cases of China and Russia, the state is always present despite the liberal opening.

At this point it becomes necessary to refer to the economic crises that these countries have been facing in recent years. First, it is clear that most "middle class" countries are going through an economic crisis. In some cases, this has a simple explanation in the old terms of the ECLAC, which is called deterioration of the terms of trade and is nothing but falling commodity prices on the world market and these countries' dependence on the export market as a result of being producers of raw materials. This is what is happening now in Brazil and Russia. Moreover, the economic policies, particularly monetary ones, used by the United States deeply affected the economies of these countries (which are actually emerging, thus have not yet fully emerged). Accordingly, at the prospect of a rise in US interest rates, the currencies of the five countries often fall (which in all cases reached their lowest peak since 1999) together with the bonds; investment rates in these countries are shrinking; and they have enormous difficulties to sustain their stock markets:

*"(...) A confluence of powerful forces - especially a strong dollar, low commodity prices, a slowing Chinese economy and US higher rates - at least limit growth" (El Financiero, 2015).*

Particularly in the case of Brazil, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), a country is considered to have entered recession when it shows negative results for two consecutive quarters. Last year Brazil entered its first recession since 2008, then as a result of the aforementioned international financial crisis. At the same time, various studies project that the Brazilian economy will shrink by 0.58%, which represents the biggest drop in the last 25 years. Rousseff has already begun to take some steps to try to reverse this situation, but due to the corruption scandal plaguing her government, the Congress<sup>4</sup> would not be eager to adopt fiscal and budgetary measures allegedly necessary to revive the ailing economy.

Dilma began her second term in the aftermath of a bad 2014: rising inflation (even higher than the set target of 4.5% with a tolerance of plus or minus 2%); decline in exports; increase in the deficit in the capital account - to balance the deficit of the balance of payments, capital flows were increased through higher income from loans and bonds -; falling tax revenue; low level of activity, especially industrial activity - mainly the manufacturing and construction industries -; increase in public sector net debt (in a countercyclical effort, the government increased social spending and public investment); exchange rate volatility; significant fall in investment; positive rate of private consumption, but less than in the previous year (ECLAC, 2014). To this one adds the corruption scandal that has paralyzed not only Petrobras but several construction companies - all stars of the South American giant - so, no wonder that the president is trying different solutions to this situation. It comes also as no surprise that the president has paralyzed the international stage, although we agreed with Lafer that

---

<sup>4</sup> It should be recalled that in the last elections her party bench lost almost 20 allies, strengthening the more conservative circles - evangelists, agricultural business and the so-called bullet block.



the main objective of foreign policy is to translate internal needs into external opportunities (2002).

### A common agenda?

Despite the economic crises mentioned in the previous paragraph, it can not be denied that there has been a reordering of international power. However, these changes have not yet been translated into the political arena. According to Pfeifer (2012), this is due to three reasons:

1. at plurilateral level, the difficult articulation of a common agenda, not only from the members of BRICS countries themselves, but also from the G-7 and from the most comprehensive financial formulation of the G-20;
2. at a multilateral level, the current architecture is not appropriate to the global economic and financial governance; and
3. at global level, the extreme uncertainty of the contemporary crisis in its economic, financial, political, and social aspects.

Now, the most interesting aspect about these countries that are so diverse is to ascertain to what extent they come together sufficiently to build an identifiable unit on the international stage, acting together in multilateral fora, given that, as Almeida (2010a) puts it

*"(...) the accumulation of economic power, military capability and technological innovation of these countries is significant enough to tip the axis of international relations in a different direction from the one experienced thus far."*

Changing power hierarchies are reflected on the institutional arrangements of international politics and manifest themselves in international organizations and pressure groups. At the same time, the emergence of these new powers coincides with the much discussed need to reform the multilateral system. There is a repeated need to develop new instruments of global governance because the most important multilateral organizations date from the post-war period.

Thus, it should be noted that all countries have similar views with regard to:

- *The governance of the IMF and the World Bank:* they emphasize the need for reform to ensure the legitimacy, effectiveness and representation of multilateral lending agencies. The most important measure adopted thanks to the intervention of the BRICS was the reform programme of the quota system<sup>5</sup>. This amendment strengthens the representation of the most dynamic economies through quota increases. It also strengthens the participation of low-income countries by increasing basic votes by nearly three times. This leads to the transfer of quota

---

<sup>5</sup> Quota subscriptions are a central component of the IMF's financial resources. Each member country is assigned a quota, based broadly on its relative position in the world economy. The share of each country determines the maximum of its financial commitments to the IMF and its voting power in the institution. It helps determine its access to IMF financing.





shares to the economics of dynamic emerging markets. Thus, China became the third largest member country of the IMF, while Brazil, India and Russia are among the top 10 shareholders of the Fund (International Monetary Fund, 2012)<sup>6</sup>. However, the need for both this reform and for the reform of other multilateral organizations has two different readings. The first is more optimistic and aims at strengthening and democratizing the multilateral system to address threats to international peace and security and achieve real progress in the areas of development, security and human rights. The second view is that emerging powers want to have a more important role in the existing international order. In this regard, as Valladão suggests "(...) because of their heavy dependence on the European and US markets, they have been acting more like reluctant followers of one or the other Western powers than real powerful protagonists. BRICS countries want "voice", not "change". They are not fighting for another "order" but only to acquire the political tools to better defend their own national interests inside the present framework" (2012: 7). The main objective of countries such as the BRICS is the preservation of a status quo in which these countries have more influence.

- *Reform of the United Nations structure to ensure greater effectiveness, efficiency and representativeness*: the UN reform became more important after 2011 when five BRICS became part of the Security Council at the same time, China and Russia as permanent members and Brazil (2010-2011), India and South Africa (2011-2012) as non-permanent. In this sense, the last three countries claim the right and the advisability of permanently integrating the Council. For their part, Russia and China are not committed to their statements that emphasize the importance of the status of the rest in international affairs and support their aspiration to play a greater role in the organisation<sup>7</sup>. However, at this point, and specifically in the case of Brazil, one cannot help noticing the hostility of major countries in the region such as Argentina and Mexico to this reform. Both countries are part of the group Uniting for Consensus with Pakistan, Canada and Italy, which only support the creation of ten new non-permanent seats. In this regard, the entry of Brazil as a permanent member would jeopardize Mexico's chances of becoming the valid interlocutor of the region, as well as the traditional alternation that has always existed between Argentina and Brazil in the organization. Also, as we propose in the previous section, the intention is to reflect on the need to reform the United Nations Security Council. It is certainly a wanted and necessary reform for most of the 192 member states of the Organization. However, extending the Council without changing the ethics with which the states have exercised their power so far would be redundant; all one would get would be an increasing number of members that would impose their will upon others. For the Council to gain authority a change in the behaviour of states parties is needed, otherwise no institutional reform would be worthy of the name.
- *Fight against terrorism*: in this sense, Almeida (2010b) wisely suggests that three of the BRICS countries (Russia, India and China) could conduct joint actions as the three are considered to have the same warning signs against a possible terrorist

<sup>6</sup> It should be stressed that to date the United States has not ratified these reforms.

<sup>7</sup> According to Lins da Silva (2012), the differences regarding the reform of the Security Council are irreconcilable: China opposes it, Brazil and India are in favour of including Japan and India as new permanent members. As for Russia, the longer the five permanent members' status quo remains unchanged, the better.





attack (Islamic fundamentalism based in Central and South Asia). With regard to this point, both Brazil and South Africa would be oblivious to this scenario and would only be minor partners in any action of this kind. However, this does not mean that all BRICS countries would not condemn terrorist acts, especially the inhuman acts of violence perpetrated by the Islamic State terrorist movement and the Al Nusra Front.

- *Environment*: It is interesting to note that for BRICS countries caring for the environment is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication. The latter is important because it shows that, despite great development in recent years, these countries have high socioeconomic inequality and disparity within their territories, which make them different from the world powers. Thus, the environment ministers of the five countries met for the first time in April this year and agreed to explore the possibility of creating a BRICS platform for exchange of best practices and clean technology for the environment and know-how.
- *Health*: the assistance provided by the BRICS to global health is still small when compared with the United States and Western Europe. However, in recent years it has increased rapidly. The chiefs of the five countries have met several times to discuss the subject, alone and with other authorities (the WHO Director-General and the Executive Director of UNAIDS) to share and compare their experiences. According to Minghui, Chenyue & Chen (2011), the BRICS countries face several very similar public health challenges, including unequal access to health services and medicine, funding, and growing rates in communicable diseases. Although significant progress has been made - from 2005 to 2010, the assistance provided by Brazil has grown up around 20.4% per year, India 10.8%, China 23.9%, and South Africa about 8%. Russian assistance has increased substantially in this period, stabilizing at around \$US 450 million per year (Global Health Initiatives Strategies, 2012) - The power of these five countries together can be a great engine to improve technology transfer and the current system of intellectual property rights.
- *Food Security*: the BRICS seem to see in the rise in the price of agricultural products (2006-2008), and in the subsequent drop in prices (2009), a chance to increase their share of the agricultural market - emphasizing increased productivity in the sector - as well as their leadership in the global governance on food security, due to the advancement of specific initiatives in the area of FAO (Naidin & Trindade Viana, 2012). Accordingly, the BRICS – based on the principle of common responsibilities, differentiated solutions – have declared that developed countries should provide financial and technological support to developing countries in the area of food production capacity, while still urging the former to lower production subsidies.

Also, progress is evident in the cooperation of these countries in other areas such as education, innovation policies, tourism, and infrastructure development, among others. This year alone (2015), and despite the crises these countries are going through, we can mention the following examples: the discussion by ministers of education to create a university network, cooperation in the area of technical and vocational education and



the development of education assessment methodologies. In the area of commerce, one of the projects is using local currencies for export and import operations among them. In the area of agriculture and agricultural development, a joint statement addressing the major initiatives of the block and drawing a cooperation agenda for the coming years has been agreed. The countries have agreed to take steps to expand access to their agricultural markets, to establish a favourable climate, eliminate export subsidies and reduce the level of domestic support hindering trade. In the financial area, despite problems involving the creation of the BRICS Bank, in May the Russian Duma ratified the creation of the pool of currency reserves. Thus, there has been an advance that is coupled with declarations that the investment projects will be approved at the beginning of next year. Even in the economic and trade area, the chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress proposed the creation of a market.

With regard to Brazil and the rest of the BRICS, it is important to mention that China is its biggest trading partner. In 2015, Brazil signed 35 lucrative contracts with Chinese companies for infrastructure and energy projects, with investment of nearly 50 billion euros in the construction, mining, agriculture and energy sectors, including state oil company Petrobras. Brazil is the largest trading partner of Russia in South America. Brazil, South Africa and India are old acquaintances in the context of the India-Brazil-South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA).

No less important is to mention that there are clear differences with regard to the scope of the WTO,- as well as the fact that Russia is not a member of this organization yet - in the discussions on the energy mix and the positions of the financial G20. However, despite the divergence among BRICS countries on vital issues, we believe that even in the context of crisis, cooperation among members continues to be crucial for an international order in transition.

### **Brazil and the BRICS**

With regard to Brazil, we believe that one of the most important things is that, through the BRICS, the country has gained international visibility and influence, which is one of the historic goals of the country, although in recent years it has figured less prominently in the international scene. With the extension of these international networks, Brazil's influence has increased markedly, and its performance on the world stage is valued for its ability to build bridges between countries with very different economic interests and ideologies.

Moreover, the rise of Brazil in the international system has to do with the fact that its interests are generally consistent with those of the Western powers. That is, Brazil has never had an agenda contrary to the status quo. At best, at multilateral level, it took a somehow revisionist position to join the club of the powerful and not to dismantle it. Indeed, the two constants priorities of Brazilian governments were to expand the margins of autonomy and gain space and influence in international affairs; these were the two objectives which guided foreign policy actions when it attempted to modify existing international regimes, at least during the administrations of Lula Da Silva.



As Rubens Barbosa suggested (2012), Brazil is the country that benefited the most from the creation of the acronym and has the most to gain in the future, given the importance of the countries whose group it is part of.

Thus, Brazil's foreign policy makers should act so as to:

- a. seek to encourage greater political presence of the BRICS in the international arena and try to extract higher gains from the group's existence;
- b. the role of Brazil in the BRICS should be defined on the basis of realistic analysis and not gloating ones about what could have been done;
- c. realism should not be an inhibitor that limits ambition in terms of using the group to serve the country's objectives.

In this regard, we believe it is important to make clear that during the first administration of Dilma Rousseff and so far the second, these maxims have not been carried out. The current president has too many problems to solve internally and, unlike her predecessor, she does not believe that foreign policy can help overcome them. Thus, the external lethargy of Rousseff contrasts with Russia's geopolitical projection and China's economic position, both converging in terms of jointly promoting their presences in Asia. However, it cannot be ignored that by participating in the group, Brazil increases its relative strength in international discussions, improves its image in the world and helps expand its potential influence in South America and elsewhere. It can also be a way for Brazil to work with China regarding the ambitions the two countries have in the dispute for economic and political influence in Africa<sup>8</sup>.

Brazil has always been a big country in absolute terms: regarding territory and population it stands among the top five in the world and among the top six in terms of nominal economic weight. It is the largest of its sub region, with almost half of the territory, population, production, and resources. Its economic and political importance, especially diplomatic, has grown to become an essential actor in several multilateral negotiations, such as the WTO with the G-20, NAMA-11 or G-4; the UN, with the G-4 and the demand for the reorganization of the Security Council; and in the financial G20, among others. According to Pfeiffer (2012), Brazil is a small multiple BRICS. It is large in population and territory, it is the most "Western" country in customs and institutions, and the most democratic, the better equipped in terms of environmental and natural resources, with increasingly valuable agrarian and energy assets because it has abundant water resources and solar energy. In economic terms, the pre-salt is a reality; it is estimated that in five or six years, when full production is reached, Brazil will attain oil power status. Domestic consumption indicates that this country will be one where the middle class will become the majority in the near future. This phenomenon is extremely valuable to gauge both the strength of household wealth generation and the redistribution of income carried out by the previous government.

However, Grabendorff (2010) notes some weaknesses. Brazil's participation in the global economy, especially in trade, investment and services, as well as its military

---

<sup>8</sup> In this sense, there are two stances. One warns about Brazil's economic presence in Africa, showing that it is extremely limited and that, except for two or three large companies, few have plans to invest in that continent (Pereira da Costa, 2014); and another - most widespread in our opinion - which supports our hypothesis (Lechini, 2013a, 2013b, 2015; Alves, 2010; Alden, 2010).



capabilities, is still quite far from the hard power of the great powers. Despite its wealth in primary resources, Brazil still suffers from dysfunctions in its production system and its international competitiveness levels - with the exception of the aviation industry, it stands outside the most dynamic markets -.

As suggested by Almeida (2010a), the factors that contribute to reducing its productivity are historical and related to the low technical and educational training of its workforce, poor infrastructure, a credit market that is underdeveloped regarding the magnitude of its GDP (this despite the excellent work the Brazilian Development Bank - BNDES - has been doing in for some years), and especially to the excessive size of the state and high and unnecessary bureaucracy.

## Conclusion

As Gelson Fonseca Jr. (2012) wrote, since the end of the Cold War, and especially since the beginning of the twenty-first century, *there has been a demand for order and it is unclear who will produce the offer*. That demand, especially since the 2008 crisis, corresponds to the inability of traditional powers to create new paradigms. But it is also related to the emergence of countries (and groups) that have interests and ideas on how the order should be designed. Another thing to note is that there is nothing radical or revolutionary on the emerging side. The rise of the BRICS is a sign of the new multipolar international order, but it does not define what kind of multipolarity is emerging. Accordingly, although the actual economic crisis that these countries are experiencing is real, it is no less real than the international order has definitely changed. Traditional powers, despite retaining significant influence, are wondering about the reaction of these countries before making decisions that affect the system. In terms of their nature, the BRICS are only an informal association and are far from being a multilateral agency. However, together and separately, they have a strong enough international presence that enables the group to be used as a platform, and in coordination, make proposals to influence decisions of multilateral agencies, especially in the financial area.

These coordinated actions revalue multilateralism, place development at the centre of the agenda and stress the need for concerted efforts to promote sustainable development. These observations reveal an obvious fact: in almost all the issues on the international agenda, the BRICS have some leverage, showing that although it is a group that arises essentially due to its economic potential, the state of affairs has gone further, showing these countries have a say in other matters.

Still, the question is whether the "rise" of emerging powers is real or a product of the crisis of those that have already emerged. Will the BRICS fall into nothing when traditional powers readapt to the economic downturns? More importantly, does the current economic crisis in these countries mean that the BRICS have fallen from grace?

We believe the answer to this question is no, despite the enormous internal difficulties that have visibly diminished the influence of the group and its members on an individual basis. Moreover, except for some issues mentioned above, on many important issues the positions of the group's countries converge and they are planning better and increased cooperation.



In Brazil, the economic crisis and, above all, the current political and institutional crisis brought about by the *Lava Jato* Operation<sup>9</sup> paralyzed the country's foreign policy. Dilma Rousseff has been reluctant to take on great diplomatic initiatives and virtually disappeared from the international debate in addition to cutting the budget, starting at Itamaraty.

Already in Dilma's first government there were adjustments that had more to do with groups and personal temperaments than with a worldview different from the one held by the previous government. That is, from the election platform Dilma shared with Lula his way of seeing the world and his methods. However, Dilma has a much lower profile and is more used to domestic issues. Still, we must not forget that the rise of Brazil in the international system is a goal that has been pursued at least since the early nineteenth century with the Baron of Rio Branco. Therefore, it would be wrong to say that the "bad practices" of a single government can have long-term consequences in the long run when the path taken for so long has been constant.

## References

- Alden, Christopher (2010). "Resurgent continent?: Africa and the world: emerging powers and Africa", en Kitchen, Nicholas (ed.), *Emerging Powers in Africa*, London: LSE IDEAS.
- Almeida, Paulo Roberto de (2010a). "Política Exterior: potencia regional o actor global", *La Vanguardia*, No. 36.
- Almeida, Paulo Roberto de (2010b). "O BRIC e a substituição de hegemonias: um exercício analítico (perspectiva histórico-diplomática sobre a emergência de um novo cenário global)", in Baumann, Renato, (dir.), *O Brasil e os demais BRICS. Comércio e Política*, Brasília: CEPAL/IPEA.
- Alves, Ana Cristina (2010). "Brazil in Africa: Achievements and Challenges", in Nicholas Kitchen (Ed.), *Emerging Powers in Africa*, London: LSE IDEAS.
- Arbilla, José Maria (1997). *A diplomacia das ideias: a política de renovação conceitual da política externa na Argentina e no Brasil (1989-1994)*, Master Degree Dissertation, IRI/PUC, Rio de Janeiro: mimeo.
- Armijo, Leslie Elliot & Sotero, Paulo (2007). "Brazil: to be or not to be a BRIC?", *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 31, No. 4.
- Barbosa, Rubens (2012). "O Brasil e os BRICS: Policy Paper", in *O Brasil, os BRICS e a agenda internacional*, Brasília: FUNAG.
- Baumann, Renato (2010). "Introdução", in Baumann, Renato, (dir.), *O Brasil e os demais BRICS. Comércio e Política*, Brasília: CEPAL/IPEA.
- Cortes, María Julieta & Creus, Nicolás (2009). "Argentina-Brasil. Intensidad variable en una relación estratégica inevitable", en: G. Lechini, V. Klagsbrunn, W. Gonçalves (eds.), *Argentina e Brasil. Vencendo os preconceitos. As várias arestas de uma concepção estratégica*, Rio de Janeiro: Revan.

---

<sup>9</sup> Corruption scandal that erupted in March 2014. This is a money laundering and diversion scheme involving Petrobras, large companies - especially construction - and Brazilian politicians from various political parties.



Eiras, André (2011). "Autonomia pela diversificação: continuidade e mudança na política externa do governo Lula", Paper presented at the 3º Encontro Nacional da ABRI Governança Global e Novos Actores, 20-22 June (São Paulo).

*El Financiero* (2015). "Hace 14 años Wall Street se enamoró de los BRICS, hoy se siente traicionado", Grupo Multimedia Lauman.

Fonseca Jr., Gelson (2012). "BRICS: notas e questões", in *O Brasil, os BRICS e a agenda internacional*, Brasília: FUNAG.

Grabendorff, Wolf (2010). "Brasil: de coloso regional a potencia global", *Nueva Sociedad*, No. 226.

International Monetary Fund, "Las cuotas en el FMI". Available online: [www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org). Accessed on 15 July 2012.

Lafer, Celso (2002). *La identidad internacional de Brasil*, Buenos Aires: FCE.

Lechini, Gladys T. (2008). "La cooperación internacional del MERCOSUR en el Sur: los acuerdos con la SACU y la India", in Leita, Francisco & Negro, Sandra, (dir.), *La Unión Europea y el MERCOSUR: a 50 años de la firma de los Tratados de Roma*, Buenos Aires: Facultad de Derecho de la UBA.

Lechini, Gladys (2013a). "Construyendo puentes sobre el Atlántico", en *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Buenos Aires.

Lechini, Gladys (2013b). "China en África: discurso seductor, intenciones dudosas", en *Nueva Sociedad*, No. 246, Buenos Aires.

Lechini Gladys (2015). "La cooperación de los emergentes en el mundo en desarrollo", en Pelfini, Alejandro & Foulquet, Gaston, *Auge y caída de las potencias internacionales: Una evaluación de los BRICS*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

Lima, Maria Regina Soares de & Castelan, Daniel Ricardo (2012). "O Brasil, os BRICS e a institucionalização do conflito internacional", in *O Brasil, os BRICS e a agenda internacional*, Brasília: FUNAG.

Lins da Silva, Carlos Eduardo (2012). "BRICS: de acrônimo esperto a fórum influente", in *O Brasil, os BRICS e a agenda internacional*, Brasília: FUNAG.

Minghui, Ren, Chenyue, Zhao & Chen, Lucy (2011). "BRICS en Beijing: Enfocándose en el acceso a los medicamentos", *Health Diplomacy Monitor*, Vol. 2, Issue 4.

Morales Ruvalcaba, Daniel Efrén (2013). "Caminos bifurcados para G7 y BRICS: políticas económicas diferenciadas en la gestión de la Gran Recesión", *México y la Cuenca del Pacífico*.

Naidin, Leane & Trindade Viana, Manuela (2012). "O equilíbrio 'ideal' entre volatilidade no preço dos alimentos e segurança alimentar: que espaço para os BRICS nos arranjos cooperativos?", *Policy Brief*, Rio de Janeiro: BRICS Policy Center.

Nunes de Oliveira, Amâncio Jorge, Onuki, Janina & de Oliveira, Emmanuel (2006). "Coalizões Sul-Sul e Multilateralismo: Índia, Brasil e África do Sul", *Contexto Internacional*, Vol. 28, No. 2.

O'Neil, Jim (2001). "Building Better Global Economic BRICs", Global Economics Paper 66, Goldman Sachs.





Pereira da Costa, Katarina (2014). "Continuities and changes in patterns of direct investment flows between South America and Africa", *Atlantic Future*, September 23.

Pereyra Doval, Gisela (2008). "Alternatives to Hegemony: The World Social Forum", *South-South Collaborative Programme, Occasional Paper Series*, Buenos Aires: CLACSO, CODESRIA, APISA, No. 10.

Pereyra Doval, Gisela & Actis, Esteban (2012). "Identidad nacional, desarrollo económico y política exterior en Brasil. Un análisis a partir de los casos de Vargas, Geisel y Lula", in *Pereyra Doval, Gisela & Morasso, Carla (eds.), Argentina y Brasil: proyecciones internacionales, cooperación Sur-Sur e integración*, Rosario: UNR Editora.

Pfeifer, Alberto (2012). "O Brasil, os BRICS e a agenda internacional", in *O Brasil, os BRICS e a agenda internacional*, Brasília: FUNAG.

Valladão, Alfredo (2012). "BRICS: Path Openers or Reluctant Followers?", en Madariaga College of Europe Foundation, Bruselas.

Vigevani, Tullo & Cepaluni, Gabriel (2007). "A política externa de Lula da Silva: a estratégia da autonomia pela diversificação", *Contexto Internacional*, Vol. 29, No. 2, Available online [[http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S0102-85292007000200002&lng=en&nrm=iso](http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0102-85292007000200002&lng=en&nrm=iso)]