

BRAZIL-AFRICA RELATIONS: FROM THE SLAVE NEXUS TO THE CONSTRUCTION OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS¹

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Introduction

After a long period of estrangement, Brazilian relations with the African continent overcame rhetoric and gained new force with the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva government. The particular attention payed to these relations reflects an old aspiration of Brazil, that until then had not been pursued with determination. The historical bonds, the country's large population of afro-descendants and the internal debate on racial equality, are elements in the Brazilian view regarding the need for rapprochement and cooperation. Even though Africa is a continent with alarming poverty indexes, it is not a stagnant one. The dynamism and development of "African" alternatives for its own problems define the stance of many of its leaderships.

The discourse and diplomatic exercise during the Lula government converged towards the building of preferential alliances with partners in the scope of South-South relations. The Dilma Rousseff government kept the interest in relations with the continent, but redefined the axis in regards to its priority. Nevertheless, the African continent represented one of the areas of greatest diplomatic investment during the 2000s. The President Lula and Foreign Relations Minister Celso Amorim, during their first term, made several visits and established numerous agreements with different African countries. In just over two years in office, there were four trips to the continent, resulting in visits to seventeen countries. The rapprochement with the African continent is not only focused on the accomplishment of short

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term results, even though, under the economic aspect, Africa presents itself as an important market.

In that sense, despite weakened, Brazil's African policy is diplomatically dynamic, gaining special importance when Brazilian actions in the continent are considered. However, the political, economic and sociocultural dynamics has, in both regions and varied historical moments, made the relations either more difficult or easier. In a number of periods, Brazil's actions resulted from a mistaken understanding of its foreign policy priorities. Such actions, ignoring the country's long term political and strategic interests, and taking into account only the short term economic and financial interests, postponed the implementation and renewal of bilateral projects, as well as the establishing of multilateral cooperation agreements. It is therefore appropriate to analyze the trajectory of the relations between Brazil and Africa.

From the slave nexus to estrangement

Africa's and Brazil's history are closely related, since Portuguese colonists occupied both South Atlantic shores in the 16th century. With the arrival in Brazil of the first African slaves, in 1533, following the construction of the first sugar mill in the São Vicente village, a long period of close links initiated, mostly because of the slave trade, which extended until 1850, when its decline began. Thus:

Table 1: Slave trade – arrival estimates of Africans in Brazil, 1531-1780

<i>Period</i>	Arrival Estimates of Africans		
	<i>In the period</i>	<i>Annual average</i>	<i>% over total slaves taken to America in each century (1)</i>
1531-1575	10,000	222	
1576-1600	40,000	1,600	
1601-1625	100,000	4,000	22
1626-1650	100,000	4,000	
1651-1670	185,000	7,400	
1676-1700	175,000	7,000	
1701-1710	153,700	15,370	
1711-1720	139,000	13,900	
1721-1730	146,300	14,630	43
1731-1740	166,100	16,610	
1741-1750	185,100	18,510	
1751-1760	169,400	16,940	
1761-1770	164,600	16,460	
1771-1780	161,300	16,130	30
Total	1,895,500	-	33

(1) This estimate excludes Africans sent to Europe or the Atlantic islands, a movement that only had importance in the 16th century.

Source: Linhares, 1990

These relations were not of less importance to the global stage, because, if in the 17th century the South Atlantic was the dynamic center of the world economy, with Brazil boosting the Portuguese Atlantic Empire; in the 18th century it was surpassed by the North Atlantic, due to the rising of powers like France and England³. Despite the Eurocentric view of Africa as a sparsely inhabited and cultural and socially primitive continent, based on the contacts established by merchants and colonial employees (often uninterested

3 See Rodrigues, José Honório. 1964. *Brasil e África: outro horizonte*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2a ed.

in deepening their understanding of the lands around them), important civilizations have developed in the region, allowing the creation and mastering of techniques posteriorly exported to the New World.

These cultures already had slavery as a consolidated practice, with records been found from the second millennium B.C. detailing captures in the Nubia region. This institution, however, becomes usual only from the contact with the Islamized people of the north of the continent, who since the 9th century undertook expeditions to the south of the Sahara with that intent. A number of African societies begun, thus, to be strongly based on slavery bonds. The Tuareg had, in the beginning of the 19th century (importantly: before direct European interference), 70% of its population made up of slaves; in the Sahel region, this number was around 50%; and in the great kingdoms of the continent, near the rain forests, the percentage reached 20%.

When the Portuguese arrived, in the 15th century, the practice intensified, given that the breaking of the monopoly of the eastern spices trade forced the creation of colonial enterprises, demanding a large, ever-growing amount of manpower to the maintenance of its plantations. In the Lusitanian case, the main target was Brazil, with which the metropolis was beginning to strengthen the domination ties, vital to the preservation of its Portuguese Empire.

It is worth noting that, with this, the Europeans also significantly altered the profile sought among slaves, abandoning the preference for children and women and favoring young men, able to resist the rigors imposed in the plantations. Regardless, the estimates point that, for every slave landed in America, another died in Africa during the capture process, making the population loss even more dramatic⁴.

As it has been shown, during the Colonial and most of the Imperial periods of Brazilian history, millions of Africans were brought to country, so that the *Europeanization* of the new lands was followed by its *Africanization*. The historiography highlights the African contribution to the makings of the Brazilian society with its culture, art and religion, besides the demographic aspects. But the Africans also brought techniques that boosted agriculture, cattle raising, mining and the fight against diseases, given that the knowledge possessed by the Portuguese was inadequate to the development of the tropical world. The metal casting and utensils production, as well as the introduction of a number of political behaviors and social organization patterns were also important African contributions.

4 See Linhares, Maria Yedda (org.). 1990. *História geral do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 9^a ed.

The King of Benin was the first sovereign to recognize Brazil's independence, in 1823, and, between 1822 and 1830, there was a strong political movement across the Atlantic aiming to turn Angola into a part of Brazil, given the economic bonds created by the slave trade and the fact that most of the Angolan colonial elite was Brazilian. Only the pressure of the English diplomacy prevented it, remaining the African country a Portuguese colony. At the same time, a colonial era phenomenon ensued: the returning of former slaves to Africa, particularly to the Gulf of Guinea, where they constituted an elite that, in the eyes of the natives, was westernized.

The English pressure for the end of the slavery was ever growing and the promulgation of the Aberdeen Act (1845), allowing the boarding of any ship carrying slaves, resulted in an important increase of the clandestine trade. The Brazilian slave owners, trying to enlarge their stock before the trade was definitely extinct, ended up indebted and decapitalized. The state reacted with the promulgation of the Eusébio de Queiroz Act, that, in 1850, officially prohibited the trade. That was, however, followed by a spirit that aimed the creation of a "white and westernized" society, with the "whitening" ideology and the immigration of European workers. After all, the Brazilian elite considered the country as having a European political regime, monarchy, and a European dynasty, the Bragança, being obliged to differentiate itself from its neighbors.

The end of the trade coincided with the beginning of the European colonial expanse in Africa, resulting in the regression of relations and absence of contacts between Africa and Brazil. In the first half of the 20th century, ninety percent of Brazil's trade with the continent was exclusively with South Africa. After the Second World War, the relations with Portugal were priority for successive Brazilian governments, that bargained the electoral support of the Lusitan immigrants (encouraged by Salazar, through the "Casas de Portugal" – Houses of Portugal), in exchange for Brazilian support to the Portuguese colonialism in UN forums. Furthermore, Brazil avoided supporting decolonization, given that Dakar was a strategic point for the aeronaval communications with Europe and Portugal was a member of NATO.

The contradictory rapprochement with postcolonial Africa

In 1952, Vargas signed the Brazil-Portugal Treaty on Friendship and Consultation, that Kubitschek took even further, with the proposal of the establishment of a Portuguese-Brazilian Community. It was the time of Gil-

berto Freire and his luso-tropicalism, giving Salazar, leader of the Portuguese fascism, a theoretical basis for the maintenance of the colonial empire in Africa and the turning of Brazil into a paradigm for its assimilation policy through the legal fiction of the “Overseas Provinces”. As compensation, a Coffee Agreement was signed (the African production competed with the Brazilian), in a moment in which the European Economic Community was formed (1957) and the Itamaraty (Brazil’s Ministry of Foreign Relations) was restructured, creating a Commercial Department.

In addition to the persistence of what José Honório Rodrigues (1964) called the “old conservative mentality of Mr. Raul Fernandes” (chancellor⁵ from 1946 to 1951 and 1954 to 1955), typical of the Cold War alignment, the introduction of the Pan-American Operation by JK, in 1958, restricted Brazil’s foreign policy to America. The African independences, started exactly during the Kubitschek government, were largely overlooked. In 1960, the *African year*, seventeen countries became independent, and Brazil adopted a merely protocol stance. The triggering of the Independent Foreign Policy, in the Jânio Quadros government, was fundamental to the gaining of importance of Africa to the Brazilian diplomacy.

With the Independent Foreign Policy, from 1961 to 1964, a rapprochement began to take shape, followed by a new estrangement during the two first military governments (1964-1969). From the Médici government to the end of the Sarney government (1969-1990), there was a qualitative leap in the Brazil-Africa relations, involving intense cooperation in a number of areas, but the coming to power of the neoliberal administrations, from Fernando Collor de Mello to Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) (1990-2002), following the globalization tendencies, resulted in renewed distancing. However, with the turn of the century, particularly with the beginning of the Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva government, the African continent would finally become a priority to Brazil.

In 1961, with the announcement of the Independent Foreign Policy by Jânio Quadros and his chancellor Afonso Arinos, Brazil started an African policy and took a stand in favor of the right to self-determination of colonized peoples, especially in the Portuguese colonies, that were beginning their armed fights. Such a stance, that brought tensions with Lisbon, was not exempt from setbacks, given the action of the powerful pro-Portuguese lobby. Anyway, Itamaraty created an African Division, a navigation line was established and five Embassies opened: Senegal (visited by Afonso Arinos), Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Ghana. In relation to the last one, an inter-

5 Minister of Foreign Relations.

esting episode took place when Quadros designated as Ambassador the black writer Raimundo de Souza Dantas. Kwame N’Krumah, the combative leader of the country, quipped: “if Brazil meant to show us it is not a racist country, it should have appointed a black [ambassador] to London, Washington or Paris, not Africa”.

The signing of a number of Cultural Agreements allowed the establishment of a scholarship program for African students in Brazil, that eventually became the Exchange Program for Students (PEC, in the Portuguese acronym). The country also denounced the Sharpeville massacre, in South Africa, and criticized the *Apartheid*, seeking to keep relations with the South Africans in a more discreet level, even though there was significant trade. Despite João Goulart, that took on the presidency following Quadros’ renounce, and his chancellor, San Tiago Dantas, keeping and even deepening the Independent Foreign Policy, there were hesitations and setbacks in the relations with Africa, given the weakness of the government and the ideological suspicions against it.

In fact, Quadros and Arinos desired to increase Brazil’s bargaining power against the USA, take advantage of new niche markets to Brazil’s increasing industrial production, projecting the country in the international stage and play the role of a link between the West and Africa, given the recess of colonialism. It is interesting that one of the government’s concerns was the “unfair competition” poised by the African countries because of their privileged access to European markets when it came to tropical products (coffee, sugar and cocoa), both as colonies, or because of the preferential bonds created after the independencies.

From the Cold War geopolitics to economic relations

This first draft of a South-South Cooperation, however, was considerably set back by the 1964 military coup. Castelo Branco desired to end the politicization of the Independent Foreign Policy and set aside the Third-Worldist discourse. Despite sending a commercial mission to West Africa, the new regime focused on improving relations with Portugal and, on behalf of the security of the South Atlantic, condemning the Marxist-influenced national liberation movements in Southern Africa. Once again, because of the geopolitical approach of the Cold War, the collective security theme was rescued, both in regards to America (with the proposal of an Interamerican Defense Force), as to the South Atlantic (with the proposal of a South Atlantic Treaty

Organization – OTAS, in the Portuguese acronym). The last one implicated cooperation with the Portuguese colonialist and South African racist regimes. The Costa e Silva government, despite criticizing the great powers hegemony and moderating the discourse regarding multilateral defense mechanisms, did not promote rapprochement initiatives towards Africa during his short government (1967-1969).

Such initiatives took place during the Médici government, the regime's most repressive one. In 1970, diplomatic relations with three countries were established and, in 1972, the chancellor Mário Gibson Barboza visited nine countries in the West and East Africa, signing many commercial, cultural and technical cooperation agreements. Because of the "Brazilian Miracle", with its concentrated income and rapidly expanding industry, the country needed markets and raw materials, particularly oil. On the other hand, Brazil's intermediate and "tropicalized" technology was useful to the provision of services and served as an inspiring model to the African states. Brazil also needed the African sympathy to legitimate the expansion of its territorial sea to 200 miles, at the same time as the OTAS idea was forgotten. The "National Interest Diplomacy" of the Médici government, however, avoided the Southern African controversial agenda, where the national liberation wars preparing the final assault against the failing Portuguese colonialism.

The 1973 oil crisis, and the beginning of the Geisel government (1974-1979), pointed towards a deepening of the African policy. Diplomatic relations were established with six countries in Africa, and Brazil was the first to recognize the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola's (MPLA, in the Portuguese acronym) government, of Marxist inclinations, in November 1975. The firm condemnation of the Rhodesian and South African racist regimes marked, as well, the "Responsible Pragmatism" diplomacy under Geisel and the chancellor Azeredo da Silveira, characterized by a strong Third-Worldist discourse. While Brazil exported consumer goods, food, cars and the building of infrastructure, it imported growing amounts of oil. Braspetro, a Petrobrás subsidiary, began prospection activities in Africa, the Vale do Rio Doce company developed mining projects and the Mendes Jr. and Odebrecht contractors built highways, bridges, harbors and hydroelectric dams.

The relations with Angola, Gabon, Nigeria and Argelia were the most intense, while Brazil received hundreds of African students into its universities, through the PEC program, and dozens of trainees in its companies, in particular in the state-owned ones. The "Universalism" diplomacy, under president Figueiredo (1979-1985), and chancellor Saraiva Guerreiro, maintained and expanded the Brazil-Africa cooperation. Figueiredo was the first

Brazilian president to officially visit Africa: Nigeria, Senegal, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde and Argelia. With the end of the Rhodesian racist regime, in 1980, Brazil grew closer to the new Zimbabwe and continued to harshly criticize the South African racism and aggressions against the newly-freed countries. Beyond the ever-growing trade, the cooperation programs were intensified in a number of areas, while more African representations were established in Brasília.

The Sarney government, despite the growing economic difficulties and the problems originated in the international system, kept a high profile in the Brazil-Africa relations. He visited Cape Verde and, after, Angola and Mozambique, that faced difficulties because of the South African aggressions and civil war. In 1986, exactly during the Reagan Era and in a context of militarization of the South Atlantic (post-Malvinas), he managed the approval by the UN of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (Zopacas). In this context, in 1988, he promoted the I South Atlantic Summit, in Rio de Janeiro, with the participation of 19 African countries. The Namibian emancipation, the *Apartheid* criticism and the support to peace in Angola (through the withdrawal of South African and Cuban forces) were important aspects of this policy, paired with the pursuit of development.

However, the obstacles were mounting. The impact of the debt crisis was strong in Brazil and even more so in Africa, devastated by the IMF's adjustment plans and the Cold War conflicts. Thus, the first post-military government sought an inflection towards the Portuguese speaking countries, using the room left by Portugal, that joined the European Community. In 1989, the I Portuguese-Speaking Countries Summit, in São Luís do Maranhão, with the presence of Brazil, Portugal, and the Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (PALOPs, in the Portuguese acronym), resulting in the creation of the International Portuguese Language Institute, to be based in Cape Verde.

The era of transatlantic economic adjustments

The ascension of Fernando Collor de Mello to presidency and the adoption of neoliberalism as the economic policy in Brazil, in 1990, inaugurated a new time of absence towards Africa. The strategic objectives of the Washington Consensus guided Brazil's new elite, stressing the vertical North-South relations, instead of the horizontal South-South ones. In the context of end of the Cold War and the creation of Mercosur, in 1991, Africa

was relegated to a secondary status, following a diplomatic First-Worldly and neoliberal view of globalization. The following decline in trade resulted from adjustment plans in both sides of the Ocean, the withdrawal of the state from the financing of exports and many areas of the economy and the need to buy oil from Argentina, as a way to balance the trade relations within the Mercosur.

In any way, the diplomatic transition in South Africa and the independence of Namibia, that received Brazilian help to structure its war Navy, brought the president to the region in 1991. Meanwhile, the number of Brazilian diplomats in Africa constantly diminished: in 1973, they were 25, reaching 34 in 1989 and falling to 24 in 1996, already under Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Worse than that, the African status within the Itamaraty structure was reduced, together with that of the Middle East, in political-administrative terms. All of these was done based on short-term cost-benefit views, despite the strategical policies undertaken by former administrations.

During the Itamar Franco government (1992-1994), with Fernando Henrique Cardoso and, then, Celso Amorim as chancellors, a certain level of articulated vision returned in regards to an African policy. Some key-countries were selected as priorities and the limited efforts in them centered. The new South Africa, Angola and Nigeria were the main focus of Brazil's foreign policy, seeking to reach their neighbors through them. In 1993, Itamar Franco reactivated the Zopacas and, in the following year, hosted the Portuguese-Speaking Countries' Chancellors Summit, in Brasília. More important, however, were the bilateral and multilateral (through the UN) supports to the peace process and rebuilding of some countries of the continent, particularly Angola.

During the FHC government (1995-2002), Africa's role in Brazil's foreign relations remained modest, though some important initiatives were made and a certain inflection occurred during his second term, posteriorly qualitatively deepened by the Lula government. From 1995, the Brazilian army actively partook in the UN's peace missions in Angola and some other countries. In 1996, FHC visited Angola and South Africa, signing agreements on a number of areas and, in 1998, the president Mandela visited Brazil. In the year 2000, his country signed a Framework Agreement with the Mercosur.

In this sense, the cooperation in the public policies scope grew, especially when Brazil started its campaign to remove the patent rights of AIDS drugs, epidemic in the Southern Africa region. When the president, because of the Real crisis, began its critic against the "asymmetrical globalization",

a greater convergence in the global diplomacy and its multilateral forums started, particularly in the economic area.

It is also important to point out that, since the end of the 1980s, Brazil's influence in Africa increased because of its television companies (especially its soap operas), of the evangelical churches⁶ and even the establishment of smuggling networks, drugs and arms trafficking and money laundering (in a two-way flow). Cultural and security aspects, thus, become common agendas in the relationship between both shores of the South Atlantic. Brazil has also come to receive refugees from the African continent.

The multidimensional cooperation era

The Lula presidency, from 2003, initiated a new chapter in the Brazil-Africa relations, combining a new vision regarding the international order with internal social transformations. Already in his inaugural speech, the president nominated South Africa among the great developing powers (along with China, India and Russia) and stressed that the African continent would be a fundamental vector of his foreign policy, auto-defined by him as affirmative and propositional. At the same time that the fight against poverty adopted effective solutions such as the “Fome Zero” (Zero Hunger), the “affirmative policies” sought to integrate the afro-descendants in the developments of the Brazilian society. In this sense, one of the initiatives, already in March 2003, was the promotion of the admission of the group to the diplomatic staff, through preparatory scholarships for the Rio Branco Institute entrance examination.

Three months later the India, Brazil and South Africa Dialogue Forum (IBSA or G-3) was announced, a South African initiative for South-South cooperation. During his first term, Lula visited Africa on four occasions: in November 2003, he visited São Tomé and Príncipe, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa; in July 2004, São Tomé and Príncipe, Gabon and Cape Verde; in April 2005, Cameroon, Nigeria, Ghana, Guinea Bissau and Senegal; and, in February 2006, Algeria, Benin, Botswana and South Africa. Ten new embassies were established and the number of diplomats in the African continent greatly increased. Besides maintaining concrete support to the peace and rebuilding processes, the president forgave the debt

⁶ Only in South Africa there are more than 300 temples of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, where Brazilian ministers can even tell jokes in Zulu, but the phenomenon is even more intense in the Portuguese-speaking countries.

a number of countries had with Brazil, granted loans and offered assistance in many areas.

In the educational scope, the Student Agreement Program (PEC, in the Portuguese acronym) was enlarged and extended to the post-graduation level, with Brazilian scholarships and the cooperation regarding scientific research and professors exchange fomented. Courses in Africa and a number of seminars aiming at mutual acknowledgement on both shores of the Atlantic were promoted. Among these, the II Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora, that took place in Salvador, Bahia, in July 2006, is worth highlighting. Thus, Africa became Brazil's most important laboratory on South-South relations, combined with the increasing bilateral trade.

While the opposition accused the government of "wasting money on a futureless continent", Brazilian companies gained prominence in the region, consolidating their presence, above all Petrobras. If the Chinese and, more recently, Indian penetrations, aimed at economic goals, despite their contribution to infrastructure works, and the fresh North-American presence is related to geopolitical and security concerns, the cooperation with Brazil, aside from the undeniable material interests, introduced new elements.

These are the fight against poverty and epidemics (particularly HIV-AIDS), the introduction and creation of technologies adapted to Third World problems and the active alliance in multilateral forums to defend common interests regarding development and the building of a multipolar and pacific global system. Two examples are the G-3 and the G-20, contributing to the strengthening of the African countries position in the WTO negotiations. Crowning this policy, took place, in Abuja, Nigeria, the I Africa - South America Summit (ASA), in November 2006, providing both regions with unprecedented international projection, much contributing to the "African Renaissance". Meanwhile, black movements developed, seminars took place, legislations prohibiting racial discrimination were drafted and research centers specializing in African studies were established in Brazil.

How much of these is political discourse and economic interests, or the association between two peripheral regions seeking socioeconomic development, only time will tell. The African governments, on the one hand, face the need to overcome their assistentialist and victimized mentality, originated during the Cold War and aggravated because of the "lost decade", and intensify their integration processes, against the challenging impact of the globalization. To overcome the colonial legacy of "divide and rule", visible in the configuration of small and unfeasible states, is an urgent need. Mean-

while, they must deepen their bonds related to foreign cooperation with an autonomist perspective, reversing the marginalization of the continent.

The development of capitalism in Africa, however, creates new contradictions, expressed through the emergence of modern ways of social inequality, that will, unavoidably, create new agendas and political actors in the future. Still, such economic development shall build the infrastructure and modernity Africa needs to obtain a more effective liberation than that found in the political discourse of other times. It is interesting to note, as an example, that the South-African urbanization, promoting the coexistence of not only national cultures and ethnicities, but of thousands of workers from other African nations, is generating a new culture. The black urban youngsters are transforming the English language, enriching it with new expressions and grammatical structures, at the same time that they use it as the common language.

Brazil, on the other hand, is a *mixed-race* country, not a “racial democracy” (flawed conservative concept) nor a multicultural nation (European/North-American post-modern concept). Miscegenation does not mean whitening, but *mixture*, something related to a culture that ignores a number of differences and feels great attraction towards others. We are building our own culture, one in which the African element imparts a fundamental contribution that needs recognition, and the social inequalities, through which black people are especially penalized, must be eliminated. Even so, amongst these many injustices, we show enormous tolerance, that could serve as a model for an intolerant world.

Far beyond the commercial aspect, Brazil can be an important partner to the African continent, provided that it can overcome certain internal political, social and economic obstacles. Africa, in turn, is also interesting to Brazil, both in economic and political-cultural terms. Even though it is a developing Third World country, a First-Worldly temptation always presents itself to the Brazilian elites. Besides welcoming African students, Brazil should send its own students and tourists to Africa, which would contribute to the improvement of our identity. Finally, the tension between a transoceanic cooperation facing towards the North Atlantic (resulting from the history of capitalism) and another facing towards the South Atlantic (based on the South-American integration, the association with Africa and the South-South cooperation), represents a fundamental contradiction. In this context, the Brazil-Africa relations are paramount to its overcoming.

After decades of stagnation, the African economy begins to show signs of important improvements. In the last decade, the continent has not

only experienced a constant acceleration of its economic growth, but also accompanied new opportunities for trade and investments. The African states have worked towards the promotion of economic growth based on regional political actions: the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) are clear signs of the will to overcome historic problems. Furthermore, their aims are defined by the Africans themselves, that take on all the difficulties related to projects of this size.

In this perspective, it is important to look into the potential of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP, in the Portuguese acronym). Few countries have received from the Itamaraty a treatment as differentiated as the members of the CPLP, that comprises a 22 million inhabitant population, besides Brazil, in four continents. Portugal, East Timor, Guinea Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique and Angola seek through Brazilian cooperation develop the security, business, health and education areas. Already in the first year of the Lula government, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique and Angola received visits of the president⁷.

In this context, Brazil developed with the countries of the Community strong bilateral cooperation programs. Among the most significant ones are the opening of technical education centers in Timor and Angola and the offering of electronic ballot boxes to the election in Guinea Bissau, that ended up postponed because of the military coup in the country. Furthermore, the installation of an antiretroviral drugs factory was agreed, bringing great enthusiasm to the members of the CPLP.

It is important to point out that Brazil, while chair of the organization, played a fundamental role in the diplomatic negotiations that contributed to the reestablishment of democracy in São Tomé and Príncipe. Additionally, a cooperation with the country's National Oil Agency took place to help them develop their regulation and bidding system. The relations with Angola, traditional partner in a number of areas, was extended. Regarding Mozambique, commercial bonds were strengthened and a cooperation in the agricultural sector created. With all the countries of the Community, there were negotiations involving agricultural development, the fight against AIDS and poverty.

⁷ In the occasion, the possibilities for investments in a number of industry and commerce sectors were discussed. 128 businessmen accompanied Lula, interested in the expansion of exports. Cement and medicine factories were negotiated, as well as the construction of railways, the exploration of coal, exports of cellular phones, mounting of buses and sale of garbage collecting machines, amongst others. The estimates for the value of the negotiations surpassed US\$ 1 billion.

Visiting the headquarters of CPLP, in Lisbon, president Lula highlighted the particular responsibility of the organization to revert the condition of extreme poverty of some peoples and the need to mobilize the international community.

The South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (Zopacas, in the Portuguese acronym) also presents significant potential to the Brazilian diplomacy regarding the building of agreements in a multilateral scope, capable of uniting groups of nations with converging interests that can mutually support each other and favor common objectives in the global forums. Both CPLP and Zopacas provide intersection points for a number of economic integration processes in the South Atlantic region, favoring exchanges between the Mercosur, SADC and ECOWAS. The Brazilian government has been significantly supporting a growing number of Brazilian business, mainly service exporters, that seek the African continent to the implementation of projects. Notably, the Vale do Rio Doce company won the competition to the exploration of the carboniferous complex of Moatize, in northern Mozambique, strengthening the country's relations with Brazil.

The rapprochement with the African continent has shown to be an important development of the Brazilian foreign policy. Through a superficial evaluation, the strategy attracts criticism, so far as it can seem paradoxical to a developing country as Brazil to focus its diplomatic efforts on poor partners, with limited influence in the global geopolitical context and an overall low impact in Brazil's trade balance. However, it is necessary to take into account the internationalization movements and some political and economic tendencies accelerated by the deepening of globalization.

Brazil is beginning to be a capital and technology exporter, besides a traditional (and now competitive) exporter of primary products, services and manufactures. The phenomenon taking place in Brazil is also observed in other developing economies, as India, South Africa and China. Africa is one of the most adequate territories for the Brazilian companies to invest, even though the continent is marked by some unstable regimes, armed conflicts and other forms of violence, significant sanitary issues and immense poverty. Meanwhile, it is one of the few natural frontiers still open to the expansion of business in sectors such as oil, gas and minerals extraction and stage of a global dispute for the access to raw materials, increasingly scarce and demanded.

With the beginning of his second term of office, Lula made his seventh trip to the continent, visiting Burkina Faso, the Republic of the Congo,

South Africa and Angola⁸. The agenda, besides the signature of bilateral and multilateral agreements, included the participation in the 2nd India, Brazil and South Africa Dialogue Forum Summit. The travel to Burkina Faso, retributing the visit to Brazil of president Baise Compaoré, in 2003, allowed to agreements of technical cooperation in the educational area and a protocol for cooperation in health sectors such as traditional medicine and milk banks. Retributing the president Denis Sassou Nguesso's visit to Brazil in 2005, in the Republic of the Congo the countries agreed on the fight against malaria and HIV/AIDS. When the travel was done, the Brazilian president had visited 19 of the 52 African countries, some of them more than once⁹.

Nevertheless, the biggest investment was in diplomatic terms. In 2007, by participating, in South Africa of the 2nd IBSA Summit (the first one took place in Brasília, in September 2006), the Brazilian diplomacy intensified trilateral cooperation and political articulation¹⁰. The reform of the United Nations Security Council and the Doha Development Round were some of the discussed matters. The WTO negotiation round is a priority for all three countries, because they integrate the G-20 and, together, fight for the opening of the agricultural market of the developed countries to the production of those in development.

In any way, the formation of the IBSA will already have played an important role by pointing out to the North countries the intention of the South countries of having their voice heard about the big global themes and will have, to some extent, influenced the G-8 to invite them to their internal debates. The IBSA, in this sense, is succeeding in projecting its members in the international stage, alerting the global community that the countries

8 The president was, this time, accompanied by businessmen in the energy, construction, aeronautic industry and finances sectors. An agreement regarding biofuels was also signed, with the Economic Community of West African States, as well as a cooperation regarding the cotton industry, besides a business event, during the visit to Burkina Faso. In the Republic of the Congo, the countries signed agreements about palm growing and modernization of the sugar-alcohol sector.

9 Since the beginning of the Lula administration, Brazilian exports to Africa more than tripled – in 2003, Brazil exported US\$ 3,06 billion, in 2006 they were US\$ 7.86 billion. In 2007, the data up until September showed a growth of 15% in comparison to the former year.

10 The countries also established daring aims to the increase of trilateral trade. In July 2007, during the 4th Trilateral Ministerial Commission Meeting, in New Delhi, the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, proposed a goal of US\$ 15 billion until 2010. During that year, Brazil, India and South Africa intended to reach US\$ 10 billion in commercial exchanges. In the occasion, Amorim also defended the creation of a free trade zone between Mercosur, India and the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), group that includes South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland.

are willing and able to break the limitations of their regional contexts and decisively contribute to the advance of a multipolar order. Finally, the Forum opened an important political space to the international action of South Africa and Brazil.

The possibilities for commercial exchange were, as well, one of the main topics of the bilateral meeting of president Lula with the South-African president Thabo Mbeki. In the political sphere the governments agreed on instruments on the social, energetic, educational, cultural, health and tributary administration areas. In South Africa, the president also partook in a Business Council, Academic Seminar, Parliamentary Forum and Women Forum. The end of the trip was in Angola, where Lula, with his Angolan counterpart José Eduardo dos Santos, signed treaties regarding the prevention of malaria, teaching and graduation. In Luanda, the Brazilian president was honored in a solemn session of the National Assembly and opened a business meeting with representatives of more than 30 Brazilian companies installed in the country.

Angola, Africa's second biggest oil producer, was stage for an intense discussion regarding what president Lula called a "biofuel revolution". According to him, both countries – Angola as an oil power and Brazil as self-sustaining in its production – could together be part of the next energy revolution, of the biofuels. The "Brazilian energy revolution", as announced by the president, has in the Brazilian potential to the production of ethanol an exit to the substitution of non-renewable energy to clean energy sources. The importance given to the theme by the Brazilian government is clear, and it has been approaching other countries on the subject, aiming the development and improvement of this energy source.

In November 2007, Brazil and China announced they would release free of charge to all of Africa images of the China-Brazil Earth Resources Satellite (CBERS). The announcement, made by the Brazilian delegation during the 4th meeting of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), in Cape Town, had the objective of increasing the capability of governments and organizations in Africa to the monitoring of natural disasters, deforestation, drought and desertification, threats to agricultural production and food security, and threats to the public health. Beyond providing high quality satellite images, Brazil also committed to the providing of the necessary software for the processing and other tools required to the interpretation of the images, as well as the training of interested African users.

The relations between Brazil and Africa, during the second Lula government, leaned towards an deepening. In December 2007, Brazil was

chosen by the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to coordinate the organ's works in Guinea Bissau. The choice followed requests made by the country itself. In the coordination of the PCB works to the Guinea Bissau, Brazil will increase its contribution to the country, already evident through the bilateral cooperation, as well as through the CPLP and the IBSA Fund. In March 2008, because of severe floods affecting Mozambique and Zambia, Brazil reinforced initiatives of humanitarian help to the African nations, donating 3 tons of basic and emergency drugs to each of the countries, as well as continuing the support to Guinea Bissau and Angola, also affected by the disasters.

Despite being impossible to precisely determine the impacts of the favorable conjuncture to the rapprochement between Brazil and the African continent, it is a fact that Africa is in a privileged position within the international insertion strategy developed by Lula's foreign policy. Brazil seems to wish to be a responsible and active actor in the international system and, historically, Itamaraty has been the institution that, with excellency, plans the long-term national interest. Granting greater importance to regions yet poorly explored and developing countries, without neglecting the well-established relations with more traditional partners, does not only agree with a broader definition of national interests and Brazil's insertion in the global economy, but also contributes to the conferring of legitimacy to the Brazilian diplomacy.

If during the Dilma Rousseff government it is possible to observe a certain "recess" in the intensity of the relations with the continent, it is worth mentioning that Africa's importance to the Brazilian policy can be shown in numbers. According to the World Bank/Ipea Report (2012), in 2009, 50% of Brazil's projects financed by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC, in the Portuguese acronym), were destined to the African continent. In 2011, that value increased to almost 60%, accounting for more than US\$ 22 billion. Even though the validity of becoming involved with poorer countries, with a limited participation in Brazil's trade balance draws criticism, Africa has shown to be a great destination to Brazil's exports and investments, besides being a route to Indian Ocean. Moreover, as the Report stresses, Brazil's knowledge in the fields of tropical agriculture and health constitute a unique opportunity to the African countries to import effective solutions to the development of both areas. Furthermore, the imports of Brazilian social protection services are highlighted. The similar social inequality situation in both shores of the Atlantic, the apparent success of social programs such the Fome Zero, led to the implementation of adaptations of these social support systems in countries like Angola, Kenya and Senegal, from 2003. Despite being still early to make an assessment of the results obtained so far, the initiatives are examples of Brazil's long-term participation in the continent.

The similar interests in both shores of the ocean, the search for joint solutions to common problems, the importance to safeguard the peace in a way that strengthens regional development and integrations, and the growing trade flow with the southern African nations comprise the main points of Brazil's African policy.

Conclusion

It is important to point out that, to Brazil, Africa is not only a link to Asia. The South Atlantic has been serving as stage for the discovery of a wealth of natural resources, such as the Brazilian pre-salt, but also the oil reserves in the Angolan shore, where Brazil is already investing and cooperating regarding the providing of the technical resources needed to the exploration. The affirmation of sovereignty over the territorial waters, the maintenance of safety of navigation in the oceans and the blocking of any attempts by extra regional powers to militarize the region are, thus, urgent. It is worth considering, yet, the North-American need to control safer and less expensive reserves than the Venezuelan and Middle Eastern ones, besides the close military relation of the country with South Africa – a country that could be a gateway to Africa and, ergo, the South Atlantic region.

Despite the criticism, the development of military capabilities by regional powers is indispensable, while the emphasis on the Zopacas must be reinforced, especially given the attempts to militarize the region, as shown by the situation in the Malvinas (Great-Britain), the recreation of the IV Fleet (United States of America) and the AFRICOM (United States Africa Command), besides the North-American insertion in the South American continent, with its bases in Colombian territory.

The great potential to the transformation of the South Atlantic in a security and energy supply community, as an option to the Euro-North-American North Atlantic system, is perceived by the Brazilian foreign policy. Brazil seeks to lead the consolidation of this project, something that seems to be succeeding through the country's assertive international projection policy. In this sense, South Africa, possessing a central position between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and a strong economy, makes it impossible to any country to disregard it when seeking to act in the continent (Kornegay 2011).

It is fundamental to stress that the regional conflicts resolution in Africa (as exemplified by Angola and South Africa) boosted an "African turnaround", allowing Brazil to act in the rapprochement with and between

these countries. The expansion of these relations is important to increase the options within the SADC, which may generate a joint maritime security plan capable of bringing the region closer to Brazil, ergo, strengthening IBAS. While the South Atlantic does not possess an institutionalized organization, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the international relations in the region shall lead to a transatlantic maritime security architecture (Kornegay 2011). In this sense, the creation of the Council of South American Defense, under the leadership of Brazil, must be taken into account.

Diplomatic discourse and practice during the Lula government converged on building preferential alliances with partners within the scope of South-South relations. The Dilma Rousseff government maintained interest in relations with the continent, but redefined this axis in terms of priority. However, the African continent represented one of the areas of greatest investment in diplomatic terms during the 2000s. The approach to the African continent is not aimed at obtaining results in the short term, even though, in economic terms, Africa represents an important market.

In this sense, today, despite being weakened by the events of the political crisis in the country, Brazil's African policy is dynamic in the diplomatic sphere, assuming special relevance when considering Brazilian actions on the African continent. However, the political, economic and socio-cultural dynamics of both regions, at different historical moments, blocked or boosted this relationship. In different periods, Brazilian actions resulted from a misreading of the priorities of Brazilian foreign policy. These actions, which did not take into account long-term political and strategic interests, only immediate economic and financial interests, postponed the implementation and renewal of bilateral projects, as well as the establishment of multilateral cooperation agreements. Thus, it is necessary to monitor the trajectory of relations between Brazil and Africa.

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ABSTRACT

The Brazilian relations with the African continent, after a long period of estrangement, gained a new momentum since the 2000's. The historical links, the consolidation of a Brazilian policy of Africa and the important changes on the African continent are present in the Brazilian perspective about the need of rapprochement and cooperation. The discourse and the diplomatic practice converge to the building of preferential alliances with partners in the context of South-South relations. In this perspective, the African continent represents one of the largest investment areas in diplomatic terms from the recent governments. And still, the building of a strategic space that connects Brazil to the African coast makes the Atlantic Ocean an area to be preserved for cooperation between both sides. In this sense, this study evaluates the interaction between Brazil and the African continent and analyses the Brazil-Africa relations, especially Lusophone Africa, in the framework of South-South Cooperation.

KEYWORDS

South-South Cooperation; Brazil-Africa relations; Foreign Policy.

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