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Brazil's African policy and the experience of the first Lula government (2003 to 2006)

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This article aims to analyze Brazil-Africa relations in the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva government (2003 to 2006). The hypothesis supported is that Brazil-Africa relations can be characterized as a varying intensity process, declining sharply in the 1980 to 1990 period and gaining momentum from 2003 to 2006. Structurally, the text is organized as follows: In the first section, a brief characterization of Brazil's African policy was conducted by identifying its origins, goals and constraints. Next, the Lula administration's foreign policy was focused on. The third topic centers its attention on Brazil-Africa trade relations during the same administration. In the final considerations, the main aspects developed in the text are reviewed.

Key words: Brasil, Africa, Lula government.

INTRODUCTION

This article aims to analyze Brazil-Africa relations in the Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva government (2003-2006). The hypothesis supported is that Brazil-Africa relations can be characterized as a varying intensity process, declining sharply in the 1980–1990 period and gaining momentum from 2003 to 2006. Structurally, the text is organized as follows: In the first section, we conduct a brief characterization of Brazil's African policy, by identifying its origins, goals and constraints. Next, we focus on the Lula administration's foreign policy. The third topic centers its attention on Brazil–Africa trade relations during the same administration. In the final considerations, the main aspects developed in the text are reviewed.

METHODOLOGY

The article aims to assess the changes occurred in the Brazilian

foreign policy for Africa building on the methodology proposed by Hermann (1990). As described in Table 1, Hermann considers that changes in the course of a State's foreign policy can be classified in four levels. As this study seeks to show, over the period under analysis the actions of the Brazilian foreign office towards Africa fit into a process of change as described in the first level: Brazil's relations towards Africa are characterized by adjustments in the foreign policy traditionally developed by the Itamaraty in relation to that continent, in that changes in the guidelines adopted do not necessarily occur. In this process, changes that took place and were set in place in the international setting of the late 1980s are consolidated in the following decade and necessarily lead to redirecting the Brazilian diplomatic action vis-à-vis the international system and the African continent in particular

BRAZIL'S AFRICAN POLICY: ORIGINS, GOALS, AND CONSTRAINTS

Despite the fact that Brazil has the world's second largest

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Table 1. Foreign policy: Levels of change and characteristics.

Degrees of change	Characteristics
Adjustment changes	Characterized by adjustments in the foreign policy in place, with no changes in the guidelines adopted
Program changes	Characterized by changes in the methods and means used for the achievement of goals that lead to changes of a qualitative nature by broadening the role of negotiation through diplomacy rather than for example, the use of military force
Problem/goal changes	Concerns a change in the foreign policy goals themselves that leads to a redefining of the goals and the setting in place of new foreign policy goals and guidelines;
International orientation changes	Regards a type of much deeper change, entailing not only the redirecting of the actor's orientation in international relations, but also of the international system and its own positioning.

Source: Based on Herman (1990).

black population, the perception that Africa could represent a privileged dimension for Brazilian foreign policy emblematically only emerges in the 1960s,ⁱ in the context of the Independent Foreign Policy, launched by the Jânio Quadros (1961) government. This notion appears and gains momentum supported by the academic debates that were already taking place at the time of the Juscelino Kubitschek administration, championed by intellectuals such as Gilberto Freyre, who advocated the constitution of a Lusitanian-tropical community in the Atlantic space.ⁱⁱ In that period, however, the ratification by Brazil of the Treaty of Friendship and Consultation eclipsed the African theme and relegated it to the Portuguese sphere. Thus, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the dimension of Africa's potentialities was progressively and substantially incorporated into the Brazilian foreign policy. Drawing on a third-worldist rhetoric, initially it sought to counterbalance the weight exerted by its relations with the U.S. and oppose the constraints imposed by the Cold War's East-West cleavage. In the midst of a process of decolonization that was taking place in the African-Asian world, Brazil identified in Africa the possibility of diplomatic arrangements capable of enabling it to position itself distinctly in the international scene.ⁱⁱⁱ

Brazil's action towards Africa and the country's solidarity policy towards the peoples of the Third World, in the early 1960s, are directly associated with the leadership role Brazil claimed in the international sphere. They are part of a set of actions (establishment of diplomatic and trade relations with the socialist countries of Asia and Europe, particularly the USSR) which pursued a revision of the country's relations with the USA and its hegemonic power. The initiatives for Africa constitute elements that mark the start of an indeed African policy in Brazil. It was devised and planned in the context of the diplomatic corps, highly insulated, in the Brazilian case,^{iv} based on a consistent blueprint and strategic calculations; an important chapter in the Brazilian quest for new international political and economic partners and, at the same time, a space for the conquest of greater autonomy within the framework of the international relations of the time.^v

From this point of view, Brazil's African policy and the universalistic behavior of its diplomacy, in which value is placed on the establishment of non-excluding partnerships aimed at promoting its own autonomy. In this period, however, the preponderance of Brazil's special relations with Portugal hindered the implementation of a policy that effectively supported the African territories in their process of independence. The Brazilian posture of supporting Portugal in those matters regarding the Portuguese colonies was still pegged to a rhetoric of traditional ties of friendship, based on its condition of former colony and on the Lusitanian cultural heritage.^{vi}

It was only in the 1970s, with the Carnation Revolution (1974) and the independence of the Portuguese colonies (1974-1975), that Brazil's actions towards Africa began to evolve more substantially in favor of the autonomy of the new States and the consolidation of friendly and equitable relations of the former with Lisbon.^{vii} From that decade on, Portugal launches a process aiming at redefining its role in international relations, and shifts from its relative international isolation towards integration with the European Economic Community, a process that materializes in 1985.^{viii}

In this period, under the military governments of Emílio Garrastazu Médice (1969-1974), Ernesto Geisel (1974-1979) and João Baptista de Oliveira Figueiredo (1979-1985), Brazil's relations with the Portuguese colonies in Africa are substantially deepened. By means of the so-called responsible pragmatism policy, Brazil becomes a privileged partner of African countries, mainly of Nigeria (from which the country purchased oil), countries of Southern Africa and the former Portuguese colonies.^{ix}

Relying on the presence of Brazilian corporations, (both public and private) such as Petrobras, through its subsidiary Braspetro, and construction contractor Norberto Odebrecht^x, which operated in the continent, trade exchange reveals a definitely positive performance both in the interest of African buyers of Brazilian products and that of Brazilian importers of African goods, so much so that, in 1974, Brazilian exports grow by 129.1% year-on-year, from US\$ 190,001,000 to US\$ 435,323,000.

Over the same period, imports from the African continent record a dramatic growth of 300.2%, advancing from US\$ 169,903,000 to US\$ 679,998,000.^{xi} Yet with the José Sarney administration (1985-1990), changes at home and abroad negatively impact Brazil-Africa relations. Starting in that period, Brazil begins to experience a critical phase, one in which the country's strategies of action at the international level prove obsolete, as the foreign policy model associated with "national development" gives place to a phase of crisis and contradictions.^{xii} In this context, the policy towards the African continent is severely undermined by the demise of third-worldist principles and by the economic crisis affecting with different, albeit equally negative intensities, both sides of the Atlantic.

In the early 1990s, Brazil-Africa relations are marked by a process of adjustments, in which we witness a clear loss of importance of the African partners in the country's international positioning. Economic and political factors alike contribute to this process. With regard to the former factor, we may point out the international economic crisis, which affects the developing countries, particularly Sub-Saharan African States, and the adverse domestic economic situation. With reference to the political sphere, it is the transformations in the international order and a clear loss of coordination capacity by the developing countries, in addition to the tenets guiding the Brazilian diplomacy with regard to South-South relations.

The lesser commercial importance of the African countries did not completely eliminate Brazil's foreign policy for that continent. If economic and commercial expectations were frustrated, the same cannot be said of the place occupied by the PALOP (African Countries of Portuguese as Official Language) and by the South Atlantic in the Brazilian diplomacy. The setting up of the International Portuguese Language Institute (IILP), in 1989, and of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP)^{xiii}, should be viewed as resulting from initiatives by the Brazilian government, which, in 1999, hosts the first summit of Heads of State of the Portuguese Language Countries. As for the South Atlantic, with the establishment of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone (ZOPACAS)^{xiv}, the region begins to represent a singular space for projecting Brazilian diplomacy, a geopolitical context in which Brazil is clearly capable of acting as a protagonist among and a mediator between the countries of South America and those of the Sub-Saharan Africa washed by the ocean.

At any rate, the overall tally of Brazil-Africa relations in the post-Cold War indicates that they were assigned a dimension of smaller relevance in the country's international positioning strategy, especially when compared to the military regime period. Yet this phenomenon cannot simply be explained by a change of the political regime or the rationale of trade relations, but rather by Brazil's own difficulty in reading and responding to the foreign constraints that pushed the country and, with greater speed and intensity, the African continent, to a marginal situation in the international environment.

The adjustments made to the Brazilian foreign policy towards the African continent denote, thus, a shift in Brazilian diplomacy as a response to the international context of the 1980s and 1990s, marked by the polarization established by the US and the USSR and by the imposition of an international system of an unpredictable transitory character. For Brazil, this period reflects the country's new posture with respect to its adherence to international regimes and cooperative arrangements,^{xv} in which the foreign policy towards the African continent comes to have a relatively high "cost".

The carrying out of the regionalization process, with the Mercosur, and the economic feebleness observed in Brazil and across the Atlantic, inhibit the Brazilian foreign policy for Africa, which is limited to focusing on developing preferential relations with CPLP member countries.^{xvi} A reduction in diplomats,^{xvii} the continuous decline in trade relations^{xviii} and a concentration of relations with the PALOP countries^{xix} and with South Africa reveal a general tendency of declining trade relations, which becomes much more clear-cut with the decision, during the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration's two terms of office (1995-1998 and 1999-2002), of closing diplomatic posts in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Yaoundé (Cameroon), Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Lomé (Togo) and Lusaka (Zambia); a process that indeed limited the capacity of Brazil's foreign policy to leverage strategic objectives of a political and economic nature in Africa.

In such a context, it is perceptible that the Brazilian diplomacy underwent a phase of redefining its priorities, with its South American neighbors regaining a priority status in Brazil's foreign agenda. Thereafter, the Brazilian diplomacy endeavors to: (a) Modernize and align the country's foreign agenda with the international moment; (b) Redefine relations with the United States, by overcoming the contentions then existent, and; (c) Rid the Brazilian foreign policy from its third-worldist character (Hirst and Pinheiro, 1995).

In the domestic front, the economic stabilization policy and the reform of the Brazilian State exert dramatic influence, prompting the country to promote a trade opening policy that privileges relations with the U.S. and the European Union. In this context, it may be clearly perceived that the decline in Brazil-Africa trades is associated with the role of the State in the economy, characterized by deregulation and widespread privatization. Hence, it must be acknowledged that, with some rare exceptions, Brazil-Africa trade relations were more often than not supported by projects conducted by State agencies, a situation that hampered the promotion of a more robust African policy. Yet the weight of the African continent on the Brazilian diplomatic agenda would be altered with the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the Presidency of the Republic. As will be analyzed in the next topic, as of 2003, African countries will be worthy of greater Brazilian diplomatic attention and investment.

Brazil's African policy faces, from then on, an inflection

point, with its African partners once again occupying a top position in Brazil's international agenda.

THE LULA GOVERNMENT FOREIGN POLICY: ADJUSTMENTS AND INNOVATIONS

However relevant to the concern expressed by several political and economic sectors (both domestically and overseas), the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the Presidency of the Republic did not substantially alter the conduction of the Brazilian macroeconomic policy (Paulani, 2003). The Lula government retained the economic benchmarks of the Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) administration – flexible exchange associated with growing financial liberalization; an inflationary target regime; and the attainment of considerable primary surpluses in public accounts. The official argument for maintaining this “tripod” was that only by supporting the fundamentals of the macroeconomic policy would the government be able to ensure its “credibility” with the financial markets; which would, furthermore, impose the effort of creating structurally stable financing conditions for the public sector, in particular, and by way of constitutional reforms (social security, tax, Central Bank independence, etc.), capable of compressing expenditures and solidifying the aforementioned “tripod” (Prates and Cunha, 2004). Meanwhile, the course of the Brazilian foreign agenda underwent considerable adjustments, particularly in comparison with the FHC government, whose concern and foreign goal was to consolidate relations with the mainstream of the global economy – the United States, Europe and Japan in opposition to the third-worldist tenets. Now with Celso Amorim, reinstated to the office of Foreign Relations Minister, which he had held during the Itamar Franco administration, and with Marco Aurélio Garcia, as Special Advisor to the President of the Republic for International Affairs, the Lula government promoted significant changes in the country's foreign policy. Largely for the fact that such actors were, historically, favorable to Brazil's closer political and commercial relations with all developing countries.

The government's foreign agenda would focus on favoring integration with Argentina and the consolidation of the South-American Community of Nations; promoting exports and harmonizing its interests with those of the G-20 at the WTO; strengthening multilateralism, with the U.N. and its Security Council reform; deepening partnerships with India and South Africa; coming closer to other regions of the developing world, such as Africa, the Arab countries and Central America and the Caribbean, and developing relations with traditional partners (the U.S., Europe and Japan), besides China and Russia (Ribeiro, 2007).

As observed by Lima, such changes are derived from the government's international project, drawing on its vision of the international reordering, namely, that at the

global level there is room for a more affirmative presence of Brazil, which reflects “[...] a certain evaluation of the world context, which assumes the existence of breaches for a middle power like Brazil, which, by means of active and consistent diplomacy, may be enlarged” (de Lima, 2003). Such perception about the international order may be observed in both the Lula government pronouncements and initiatives. Broadly speaking, it is endorsed by the assessment that, despite the military predominance accomplished by the U.S. globally, the economic order still holds more pluralistic possibilities, given the fact that, with the strengthening of the European Union on account of the creation of the euro, there is a subsequent weakening of the dollar. Hence, the existence of a less homogeneous and more competitive world would allow, in the current administration's view, a counter-hegemonic movement, whose axes would rest on an enlarged Europe, with the inclusion of Russia, and on Asia, where powers like China and India may come to represent a counterpoint to the United States in the region. By this perception, unipolarity cannot legitimate itself, for the imperial temptation is permanent, which, simultaneously, stimulates the investment of the remaining powers (de Lima, 2003). From that perspective, the appointment of Ambassador Celso Amorim to the Foreign Relations Ministry constituted a sign that Brazil's foreign policy would not significantly alter its course. Rather, it would seek to review the country's negotiations and the terms of its international partnerships, in an attempt to build alliances outside the hemisphere as a way to enlarge its power of influence in the international arena, by adopting an active agenda and a leading behavior. Thus, the foreign policy's priorities would be to consolidate and possibly enlarge the Mercosur and South-American integration, conceived as a space for the Brazilian international promotion. The government began to emphasize the construction of agreements with other partners, aiming to closer trade and economic relations that rest on the assumption that, “The strategy for global insertion must not overlook the countries of the south, where opportunities may be extremely attractive for the Brazilian exporter” (Amorim, 2003b). Thus took shape the integration project for South America, which drew on the negotiation of the Mercosur-Andean Community agreement, later joined by the economic complementation agreements signed with Chile and Bolivia, and the Mercosur-Peru and Mercosur-Venezuela negotiations.

In parallel, efforts were made to exploit other opportunities to strengthen ties with developing-world economic and trade partners, in particular with Mexico, South Africa, the Arab world, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, China and India. With regard to the last two markets, it is worth bearing in mind that China rose to a condition of fourth largest importer of Brazilian goods in 2002, and that bilateral trade with India practically tripled in value in the last years of the turn of the century, reaching US\$ 1.2 billion in 2003.

As for Africa, rising domestic interest for African

countries, such as Angola, Namibia and Mozambique, as well as business and joint ventures with Brazil, enabled the Brazilian government to negotiate two preference accords aiming at the establishment of a Mercosur-SACU and Mercosur-SADC free trade area. Moreover, it also enabled a streamlined coordination among social movements' representatives with regard to the African theme.

As we will see further ahead, in the Atlantic, a policy toward the African continent would become a priority. A sign thereof is that, during his first term of office, President Lula made four trips to the African continent, visiting a total of 17 countries in slightly over two years. Taken as a whole, such initiatives would come to signal the government's intention of promoting a balance with regard to what remains as constant factors in the country's international positioning strategy throughout the 1980s and 1990s: The strengthening of relations with the great powers (especially with the U.S.) and creating the required conditions for FDI inflows.

Notwithstanding the importance of these two elements in promoting Brazil overseas, with the Lula government, we observe considerable efforts to build agreements and arenas that will ensure more alternatives and, consequently, more bargaining power for the country at the global level so that Brazil may be understood as an actor with positively diverse characteristics and, thus, capable of having a leading role at the international level. Considering the cycle of international liquidity and the fact that external financing conditions showed a trend towards improvement, such actions converged to reaffirm, rather optimistically, the universalistic character of the Brazilian diplomacy in its strategy of diversifying partnerships. This activism of the Lula government also entailed the setting up of the G-20 and the IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa). The former was set up shortly before the Cancun Ministerial Summit, in September 2003, when Brazil sought to bring together a group of countries interested in ending with internal subsidies to agricultural products exports and improved access to the American, European and Japanese markets.

In this coalition, as in other South-South alliances, the Lula administration pursued, besides enlarging individual economic benefits, the shared construction of a common identity, founded on commitments to a "fairer" and "more egalitarian" social and economic order. The IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) in turn, arose as a governmental proposal for the creation of a coordination and cooperation forum gathering India, Brazil and South Africa, described by the incumbent Brazilian Foreign Relations Minister as "[...] a group which, together with China and Russia, is bound to have a growing international role over the coming decades" (Amorim, 2005). That is, the government seeks to build cooperative arrangements with the most important emerging countries with the purpose of strengthening both the political and foreign trade dimensions, in the search for new strategies of action before the central economies.

In both cases, we may infer that the government follows

the same proposal: To negotiate a common agenda with a group of developing-world agricultural products' exporters in favor of greater trade liberalization for agriculture and, therefore, contrary to farm subsidies. Particularly in relation to the coalition involving Brazil, India and South Africa, it should be added that this policy is directed to the setting up of partnerships within the South-South scope capable of favoring the achievement of a permanent objective of the Brazilian diplomacy: Development hinged on a strategy guided by the relative autonomy it brings about with regard to the developed economies. Thus, the diplomacy of the Lula government would have a special place in the Brazilian political agenda. As we intend to demonstrate, the concern with regaining space in Africa and building new agreements in the most varied fora and regions, lent a markedly engaged tone to the Brazilian foreign policy, which would seek, by engaging with developing countries, the promotion of a common agenda; while simultaneously diversifying ties with the developed countries, with the aim of gaining access to markets and investments, in addition to obtaining a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council.

BRAZIL-AFRICA RELATIONS: A POINT OF INFLECTION

Despite the continuity observed at the economic level, the foreign policy of the Lula government is one of the sectors that best reflect traditional Workers' Party (PT) positions, for the diplomatic rhetoric and practice converge toward the building of preferential alliances with partners in the scope of South-South relations. A sign of that is that the African continent came to be viewed as one of the government's areas with the greatest investment in diplomatic terms, a government that, throughout its first term, not only made it a priority to reopen the diplomatic posts closed during the FHC administration, but also increased them in the African continent.

Accordingly, in the first four years, the Lula government reopened embassies deactivated in the FHC administration and inaugurated diplomatic representations and a general consulate, totaling 13 new posts, which elevated the Brazilian presence in the African continent from 18 to 30 embassies and two general consulates. A movement that, it must be noted intensified Brazil-Africa relations, as evidenced by the interest of several African States (as for instance Benin, Guinea-Conacri, Equatorial Guinea, Namibia, Kenya, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) in opening diplomatic posts in Brazil. Between 2003 and 2006, the number of accredited African ambassadors rose from 16 to 25.

Furthermore, the Lula government adopted administrative measures in the ambit of the Foreign Relations Ministry to ensure a broadened Brazilian presence on the African continent; worthy of mention is the dismembering of the Department for Africa and the Middle East, which

gave place to the reactivation of a dedicated African continent department. We must also point out the creation of the Division for Africa - III (DAF - III), which joined the two other existing divisions (DAF - I and DAF - II), since the importance of the African States in the Ministry of Foreign Relations grew considerably, as the increased number of employees and resource allocations demonstrate. The reopening and increase in the number of diplomatic posts, as well as the administrative restructuring, should be viewed, therefore, as a direct consequence of the Brazilian government's interest in broadening the Brazilian presence on the African continent; with the subsequent reverse effect: the interest of African States in enlarging their presence in Brazil.

In such terms, there is no denying the fact that, albeit weakened, Brazil's African policy still exhibits vitality at the Brazilian diplomatic level, acquiring a unique relevance when we consider the conduction of the African policy by the current administration. Thus, we verify that considerable adjustments were made to the Brazilian diplomatic agenda, which sets out to favor regions and partners which were not valued by the FHC administration. Moreover, we observe that the execution of the Brazilian foreign policy for Africa distinguished itself from the practice developed by predecessor governments, who focused foremost on Brazil's relations with the PALOP countries. In the present administration, we perceive a clear effort to broaden the scope of the action of the Brazilian diplomacy in the African continent. The very itinerary of the presidential visits to the African continent is a clear example of the government's interest in boosting the Brazilian presence in Africa, by striving not to circumscribe the country to just one subregion or a multilateral body, as the CPLP. Without disregarding traditional partnerships, what is pursued is the strengthening of Brazil's relations with regional African bodies (such as the African Union, NEPAD, CEDEAO, SACU and SADC) so as to take advantage of the political and economic possibilities within the scope of South-South cooperation.

From this prism, it is correct to consider that, despite the apparent fragility of the African-Brazilian trade relationship, with a marginal participation in the country's trade exchange throughout the 1990s, the African continent still retains a privileged position for Brazil. In particular, it is worth noting the CPLP and ZOPACAS potential for the Brazilian diplomacy with regard to building multilateral-scope agreements, mechanisms capable of bringing together groups of nations, which, gathered around specific or generic themes, are capable of advancing common objectives in the global forums. Moreover, both the CPLP and the ZOPACAS are potential loci of intersection between various ongoing economic integration processes in the South Atlantic region, capable of favoring the exchange between the Mercosur, SADC and the ECOWAS.

At the economic level, it is worth highlighting that the

presidential diplomacy has significantly favored the Brazilian business sector in the African continent. An example thereof is the rising number of Brazilian companies, especially services exporters, which have implemented projects in the African continent. Worthy of note too is the fact that Companhia Vale do Rio Doce was awarded a competitive bid contract to mine Mozambique's Moatize coalfields, contributing thus to further strengthen ties with Brazil. Meanwhile, President Lula pardoned 95% of the public debt Mozambique has with Brazil in 2004, the equivalent to pardoning US\$ 315 million of a total US\$ 331 million. The outstanding balance, US\$ 16 million, was renegotiated.^x

In Angola, political interaction has favored Brazilian trade relations and investments in that country tremendously. The Lula government increased credit lines to the Angolan State in an effort to reach the amount of US\$ 580 million in the 2005 to 2007 three-year period, enabling the conclusion of the Capanda hydroelectric power plant, and auto and police vehicles exports, in addition to the signing of contracts for projects in the areas of infrastructure, sanitation and agriculture. Growing investments by Petrobrás in Africa are another example of the consolidation of the Brazilian presence in the continent, while the company's operations in Tanzania have also recorded growth.

Also in 2004, a cooperation agreement was negotiated in the air transportation area between Brazil and Cape Verde,^{xxi} which established direct flights between Salt Island and Fortaleza. The Brazilian government's perspective is that such agreement will become the preferential exchange route with Brazil, not only for Cape Verde, but also for the whole of the African western coast, boosting contact and, possibly, trade flows.

What remains to be assessed, therefore, is to what extent such transformations and opportunities are or will be taken advantage of by Brazil and its African partners. In the next topic, we analyze Brazil-Africa trade relations within the period studied. As will be seen, in addition to a growth in trade flows, important new opportunities are opening up for stronger and scaled-up relations between Africa and Brazil. This, obviously, brings to debate the coordination capacity, at the national domestic level, of strategies and projects capable of contributing to boost and diversify trade and investment flows between Brazil and Africa.

THE BRAZIL-AFRICA TRADE DYNAMIC

With regard to the trade relations between Brazil and the African continent, since 2002 the exchange has tripled in value. Brazilian exports to Africa increased more than 487% in the period from 1996 to 2006, with the greatest growth occurring from 2002 to 2006: 315% in four years. As for imports, there was a 478% expansion over the last ten years. In the last four years to 2006, the amount leaped

Table 2. Brazilian exports to Africa by aggregate factor (1985-2006 period in US\$ F.O.B).

Factor	Values per categories of products (US\$ F.O.B)				
	Total	Basic	Semi-manufactured	Manufactured	Special operations
Africa total	45,608,240,890	8,072,096,798	7,217,503,893	30,249,392,379	69,247,820
Share (%)	100.0	17.7	15.8	66.3	0.2

Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

Table 3. Overall Brazilian exports to its main trade partners in Africa by aggregate factor (1985 to 2006).

Country	Values per categories of products (US\$ F.O.B)				
	Total	Basic	Semi-manufactured	Manufactured	Special operations
Angola	4,782,919,021	554,714,487	101,139,666	4,120,866,277	4,717,297
South Africa	8,594,414,676	1,302,303,510	599,442,795	6,684,041,007	8,631,618
Nigeria	8,493,403,155	162,696,830	1,000,205,807	7,319,268,699	11,228,461
TOTAL	21,870,736,852	2,019,714,827	1,700,788,268	18,124,175,983	24,577,376
Share (%)	100	9.2	7.8	82.9	0.1

Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

from US\$ 2.6 to 8 billion. The bilateral trade flow rose from US\$ 6 billion in 2003 to US\$ 15 billion in 2006, figures that made the African continent, overall, rise to the fourth place in the ranking of Brazil's top trade partners, only below the U.S., Argentina and China.

Considering strictly the Brazil-Sub-Saharan Africa exchange, South Africa, Angola and Nigeria can be identified as strategic alternatives for the Brazilian diplomacy, since growth prospects and demand for investments may benefit a great number of enterprises on both sides of the Atlantic. This perception is entirely corroborated when we analyze the trade exchange between Brazil and the African continent, which, over the past years, has favored trade relations with Angola, Nigeria and South Africa. Together, these three countries account for, on average, 48% of Brazil's total exports to that continent and 53% of African imports to Brazil.

Brazilian exports to these three countries amount to significant figures in relation to the total traded with Africa, as a bloc, while also allowing us to perceive a great similarity in values per categories of products with reference to Nigeria and South Africa, which together represent 82% of the amounts exported by Brazil to that continent in the 2003 to 2006 period. Still with regard to the analysis of trade relations by categories of products (aggregate factor), it is important to stress that Brazilian exports to the African States, over the past 20 years, reveal a predominance of manufactured goods, followed at a rather smaller scale by the so-called basic products (Tables 2 and 3).

It is also relevant noting that over the last 20 years Brazil's trade balance is positive in its relations with Angola and South Africa. Yet, with Nigeria, the balance is negative

due to Brazil's oil imports. A cross-section of the last three years in these trade relations enables us to perceive a continuity of the positive balance of the Brazilian trade relations with Angola (+US\$1.1 billion) and South Africa (+US\$2.3 billion), but not so with Nigeria (-US\$3.1 billion). What is striking is the positive trade balance Brazil has with Angola over this period, which accounted for 42% of the overall amount for the last 20 years. A similar fact, yet at a lower intensity (22%), comes from South Africa, which indeed suggests a growth in exports to those two countries. A first characterization of the products exported by Brazil to these countries can be observed in Table 4. Brazil's trade balance with Nigeria has remained negative (Table 4). Despite the remarkable reduction of Brazilian oil imports from that country in 2005 when there is a 23.4% drop in expenditures of hard currency with the importation of crude petroleum oils and reductions of 70.1% with liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and of 17.2% with propane gas, in 2006 Brazil resumed and surpassed the levels of crude oils' imports reached in 2004. The recent events that led to the nationalization of the Bolivian gas reserves, with the ensuing damages to the Brazilian market supply, may further strengthen such trade relations, benefiting imports of Nigerian gas, which in the 2005/2006 were insignificant.

Still in relation to Nigeria, even when excluding Brazilian exports values recorded in the 1984 to 1985 two-year period and more recently in 2005, which, as outliers, reached extremely high levels, the evolution of the trade exchange between the two countries reveals a high level of dispersion (Figures 1 and 2). Nonetheless, such fact does not allow us to assume even an apparent relation of stability over the last 20 years. As for the figures recorded in the last four years, though signaling a tendency toward

Table 4. Evolution of the main products imported by Brazil from Nigeria (2004-2006).

Main products	2006		2005		2004	
	US\$ (F.O.B)	%	US\$ (F.O.B)	%	US\$ (F.O.B)	%
Crude petroleum oils	3,736,143,841	96.18	2,606,061,009	98.28	3,403,316,804	97.15
Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG)	-	-	16,709,398	0.63	56,585,715	1.62
Liquefied butane	-	-	12,704,538	0.48	-	-
Liquefied propane	-	-	4,361,324	0.16	5,268,634	0.15
Total	3,884,591,768	100	2,651,757,958	100	3,503,157,259	100

Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

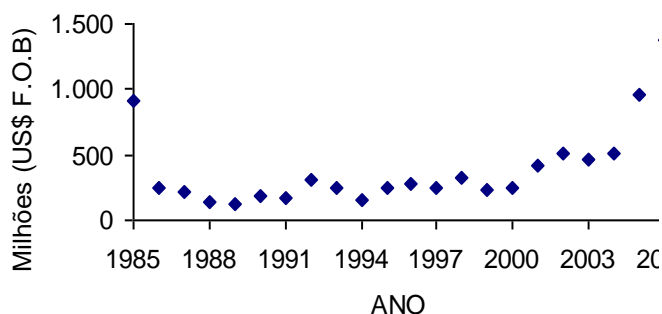


Figure 1. Evolution of Brazilian exports to Nigeria (1985 to 2006). Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

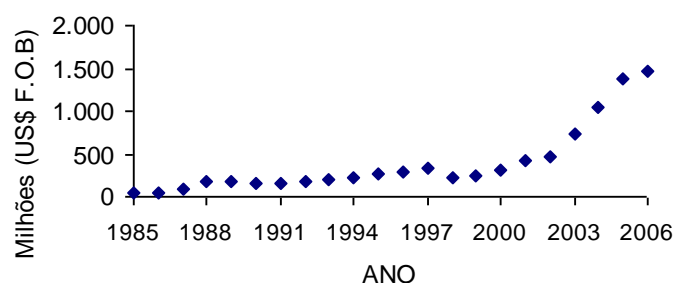


Figure 3. Evolution of Brazilian exports to South Africa (1985 to 2006). Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

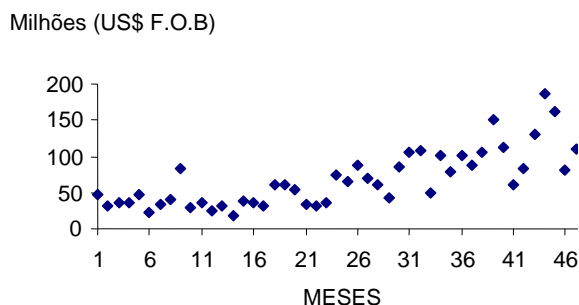


Figure 2. Evolution of Brazilian exports to Nigeria over the last 48 months (2003 to 2006). Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

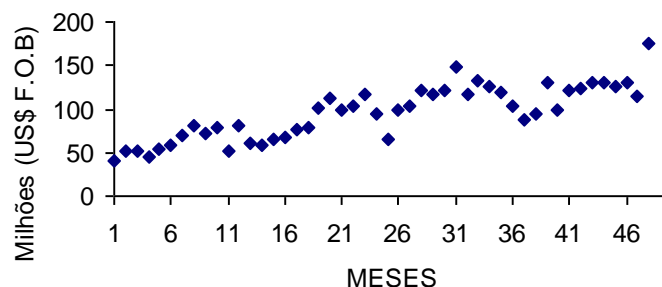


Figure 4. Evolution of Brazilian exports to South Africa over the last 48 months (2003 to 2006). Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

a possible increment of exports, these should not be considered without due care, given the unstable behavior described herein.

Contrary to the outlook for Nigeria, the evolution of Brazilian exports to South Africa is indicative of more stable relations over the last 20 years, with a slight growth rate during the 1990s, followed by a sharp rise over the last 4 years (Figures 3 and 4).

When considering the same periods, Brazilian exports to Angola suggest an appreciable growth, as can be observed in Figures 5 and 6. However, an analysis of the

correlation of the variables involved indicates a 0.52 factor (moderate correlation), which demonstrates a still rather susceptible behavior to oscillations in these relations. Hence the importance of reviewing the African foreign policy developed by Brazil over the last decades, a pre-requisite to “[...] transform the ties of friendship that unite us to the peoples of Africa into mutually beneficial economic and social progress” (Amorim, 2003a).

In light of the data presented, it is possible to affirm that, Angola, South Africa and Nigeria, as well as a growing number of African States, have regained an important position not only in Brazil’s political agenda, but also in the country’s trade agenda. Hence, the promotion of policies

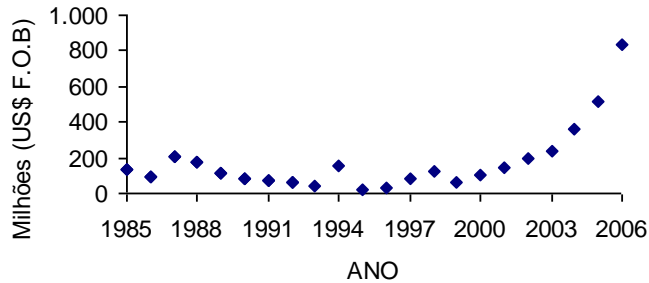


Figure 5. Evolution of Brazilian exports to Angola (1985 to 2006). Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

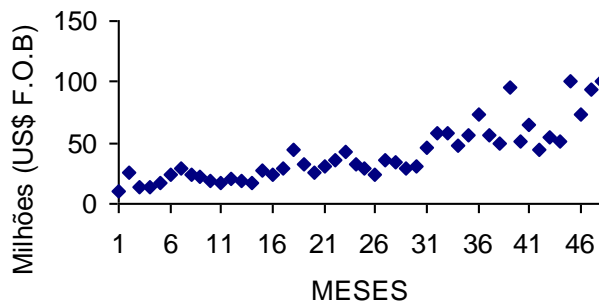


Figure 6. Evolution of Brazilian exports to Angola over the last 48 months (2003 to 2006). Source: Based on data by MDIC, www.mdic.gov.br.

placing value in investments in the energy area is set to be particularly relevant to strengthen Brazil-Africa relations. A fact that becomes more evident when one evaluates the Brazilian exchange with Angola, South Africa and Nigeria. In the period analyzed, Brazil-Angola trade relations have been extremely favored by offshore discoveries. In the last years, Angola has become a leading area in oil exploration and drilling in Western Africa, and is now the second largest producer of Sub-Saharan Africa, with Cabinda responsible for more than half of the Angolan oil production. Well aware of these transformations, Brazil has sought to forge political-commercial projects, by guiding itself by the perception that Angola is not only a geographic and cultural partner, but also economically promising.

In relation to South Africa, the Brazilian foreign policy is directly influenced by the start of the democratization process and the overcoming of apartheid, which for decades relegated the South-African State to an outcast status in the main forums and world bodies. A country with which Brazil has had trade relations since the 1940s, South Africa emerges as a partner in accords with the Mercosur and the Southern Africa Customs Union. With few oil reserves, South Africa is, however, a large producer and exporter of coal. And it has attracted the attention of Brazil for that reason and for the investments

made in the country to set up a highly developed synthetic fuels industry (synfuel), which in addition to using its abundant coal reserves also relies on the offshore condensed and natural gas from Mossel Bay.

As for Nigeria, its bilateral trade with Brazil has been scaled up since the 1980s, when the Brazilian participation in the Nigerian market was so important in 1985 and 1986 that it outweighed the economic importance of England in terms of purchases from that African country (Saraiva, 1994). An OPEC member country, Nigeria is one of the world's largest oil exporters, with the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, a state-controlled oil company, as the country's main upstream and downstream oil player. Brazil's Foreign Relations Ministry has concentrated efforts to create mechanisms conducive to boosting Brazil-Nigeria economic relations, currently focusing precisely on the establishment of channels that will make it possible for Brazilian companies to drill and import Nigerian oil.

In view of the aforementioned, it is undeniable that the scaling up of Brazil-Africa relations has become a reality. Although it is not possible to determine accurately the impacts caused by such movements, it is indeed a fact that they confirm the privileged position occupied by the African continent in the international positioning strategy developed by the Lula government foreign policy. This, in turn, imposes the need to review the Brazilian diplomatic and commercial actions for Africa, and entails the identification and assessment of effective channels for its promotion and dimensioning.

CONCLUSION

As was seen, Brazil-Africa relations have varied in intensity over the past decades. If in the Lula government the African continent received investments and special diplomatic attention, the same cannot be said of predecessor governments, as is evidenced by the great lengths taken to establish closer and stronger ties with the U.S., the European bloc and countries of South America. This fact led to the weakening of Brazil's African foreign policy and, consequently, to a diminution of the national presence on the African continent.

Within the framework of the Brazilian foreign policy, in the 1980s and 1990s, the African continent came to be considered as an economically and politically failed dimension for the Brazilian government. Thereby, the closure of posts and embassies in Africa came as an unambiguous sign of the country's diplomatic options and priorities: The consolidation of the Mercosur and closer relations with the advanced economies. Brazil-Africa relations were guided by a policy of concentration and selectivity. With the exception of the relations maintained with South Africa and Nigeria, the Brazil-Africa dynamic is guided by cultural affinity (linguistic) and, consequently, by prioritizing relations with the PALOP countries.

The election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, however, brought a new dynamic to the Brazilian foreign policy. The diplomatic rhetoric and practice of the Lula administration converged toward the construction of preferential alliances with partners within the scope of South-South relations. A sign thereof is that the African continent became one of the government's areas to receive the largest investment in diplomatic terms, with the President and the Foreign Relations Minister fulfilling an unprecedented visits and agreements-signing agenda. The government's foreign agenda and, in particular, the policy toward Africa, has drawn the attention of and is being closely monitored by representatives of the private sector (interested in starting or expanding their activities on the African continent) and a growing number of other social actors.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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- ⁱⁱ G. Freyre, *Sugestões em torno de uma nova orientação para as relações internacionais do Brasil*, São Paulo, Federação das Indústrias de São Paulo, 1958. G. Freyre, *Uma Política Transnacional de Cultura para o Brasil de Hoje*, Belo Horizonte, Faculdade de Direito/UMG, 1960. For a critical analysis, see: W. da S. Gonçalves, "O realismo da fraternidade. As relações Brasil-Portugal no governo Kubitschek", (Doctoral thesis), University of de São Paulo, 1994.
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- ^{iv} A relevant aspect to be observed in Brazil's foreign policy-making is the fact that the country's Ministry of Foreign Relations has had, for decades long and regardless of the political regime, the capacity to engender the conditions for the continuity of the general guidelines adopted by its diplomacy, whereby the Itamaraty acquired a growing autonomy in relation to the social system and to the state apparatus itself. Such phenomenon has led the Itamaraty to be, *de facto*, the legislator, executor and controller of Brazil's foreign policy, including with regard to the country's African policy. On this issue, see, among others, M. R. S. de LIMA. "Globalização, Instituições Democráticas e Política Exterior." Text presented at workshop El estado del debate contemporáneo en Relaciones Internacionales, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires, July 27-28, 2000. M R. S. de Lima. Instituições democráticas e política exterior. Contexto Internacional, v. 22, n.º. 2, 2000. M R. S. de Lima; F. Santos. O Congresso e a política de comércio exterior. Lua Nova – Revista de Cultura e Política, n.º. 52, 2001.
- ^v J. F. S. Saraiva, "Do silêncio a afirmação: as relações do Brasil com a África", in A. L. Cervo e C. Bueno (org.), *O desafio internacional: A política exterior do Brasil de 1930 a nossos dias*, Brasília, Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1994, pp. 263-332.
- ^{vi} L. Pinheiro, "Ação e Omissão: a ambigüidade da política brasileira frente ao processo de descolonização africana, 1946-1960" (Master's dissertation), Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, 1988.
- ^{vii} J. S. Santos, "CPLP: gênese e instituições", in J. F. S. Saraiva (org.), *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP): Solidariedade e ação política*, Brasília, IBRI, 2001.
- ^{viii} A. Freixo, "Do 25 de abril à CPLP: a inserção de Portugal nas relações internacionais contemporâneas". Master's dissertation. University of the State of Rio de Janeiro, 2001.
- ^{ix} It is important to note that, still during the military government, Brazil was the first country to recognize the independence of Angola in 1975, at the time under the rule of Marxist-Leninist MPLA.
- ^x In relation to the participation of contractor company Odebrecht, it is worth mentioning the fact that it was one of the few Brazilian private institutions that kept its operations in Angola after the start of the civil war. Establishing an unparalleled relation with the MPLA government, Odebrecht had employees kidnapped, planes destroyed and countless clashes in Angolan territory. Even today its own activity in Angola is little explored by researchers, despite worthy of more systematic and in-depth investigations. One of the few existing accounts on Odebrecht's role in Angola can be found in E. A. L. HAZIN. 25 anos em 24 horas (Testimonial). Rio de Janeiro: Gráfica Jornal do Brasil/AP Editora, 1997.
- ^{xi} Over this period, Brazilian exports to the African continent were characterized by the sales of manufactured goods, such as tractors, trucks and buses, among others.
- ^{xii} A. L. Cervo; C. Bueno. *História da política exterior do Brasil*. Brasília: Editora da Universidade de Brasília, 2002, 2nd ed.
- ^{xiii} The CPLP was officially created on 17 October 1996 by a coming together of the globe's seven countries that have Portuguese as their official language – Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal and São Tomé and Príncipe, with East Timor joining the group in 2002.
- ^{xiv} The establishment of the ZOPACAS had as its essential objective to occupy the strategic void represented by the South Atlantic. Its main function was to keep the region from becoming a hotbed for conflicts, as the one that had occurred in 1982, with the Malvinas crisis; or even preventing an advance of the Soviet fleet in the South Atlantic, after the installation of pro-Communist regimes in the formerly Portuguese African colonies.
- ^{xv} Throughout the 1990s, we observe a new Brazilian international stance with regard to adhering to international regimes and cooperative arrangements, with the regional policy toward the Mercosur gaining momentum. Main changes were observed in the field of security, crowned by the signing of the NPT, in external economic relations, in the new position adopted regarding environmental and human rights issues, as well as a deepening of regional integration.

ⁱ In the period spanning from the Independence process to the first half of the twentieth century, the African theme was still rather timid in the Brazilian governmental sphere. Its appearance occurred only as a result of the Brazilian interest for Northern Africa, where the country had kept a consulate since 1861. In this period, the timidity of Brazil's relations with Africa is attributed to the priority given by the country to its border problems' diplomatic agenda, after it conquered its Independence, when Brazilian interests clearly shifted from the Atlantic Ocean to the River Plate Basin, in a process of regionalization of its foreign policy. A. da C. e Silva, *O Vício da África e outros vícios*, Lisbon, Edições João Sá da Costa, 1989.

^{xvi} On the CPLP, we suggest a special issue of *Lusotopie on Luso-Tropicalism*, published in 1997, as well as the works that follow: W. Döpcke, *A CPLP: tanto inútil quanto necessária?* *Meridiano 47*, no 26, September 2002, p.23. A. Freixo. *Do 25 de abril à CPLP: a inserção de Portugal nas relações internacionais contemporâneas*. (Master's thesis in Political History) Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences, University of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, 2001. J. W. Gonçalves. *Relações Econômicas e cooperação na CPLP*. In: J. F. S. Saraiva. (org.) *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP): Solidariedade e ação política*. Brasília: IBRI, 2001. F. A. A. Mourão. *Avaliação Crítica da CPLP – O Projeto, seus Mecanismos e Viabilidade Política*. Text presented at Seminar: *A Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa – CPLP: Oportunidades e Perspectivas*. Brasília: Itamaraty, May 28-29, 2002. (mimeo). J. F. S. SARAIVA. (org.) *Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa (CPLP): Solidariedade e ação política*. Brasília: IBRI, 2001.

^{xvii} Of the 34 Brazilian diplomats assigned to Africa in 1983, only 24 were still there in 1993, data which contrast with the evolution of the number of diplomats serving in other parts of the world, which, in the 1983-1993 period, went from 134 to 161 in Europe, from 44 to 52 in North America and from 68 to 77 in South America. J. F. S. Saraiva. *O Lugar da África. A dimensão atlântica da política externa brasileira (de 1946 a nossos dias)*, Brasília: Editora Universidade de Brasília, 1996, p. 217-8.

^{xviii} Between 1985 and 2002, Africa's share in Brazil's foreign trade falls from 13% to around 5%, but it is worth highlighting that throughout the same period there was a moment it came to represent less than 3% of the Brazilian total imports and exports.

^{xix} A sign of that is that the PALOP countries are the main beneficiaries of Brazil's international technical cooperation, with Latin-American countries lagging behind considerably, in second, with regard to investments made. As for the technical cooperation, it is worth noting the work developed by some Brazilian institutions, as SENAI, SEBRAE, ENAP, FIOCRUZ. Yet the maintenance and efficacy of those cooperation programs are, too often, threatened by momentary interruptions or even suspensions of the activities on account of a shortage of Brazilian resources or local political problems. On the other hand, it is worth mentioning the permanent participation of Brazilian troops in the peace-keeping missions coordinated by the U.N. in African countries whose official language is Portuguese, as is the case with the U.N. first Angolan Verification Mission (UNAVEN I).

^{xx} Negotiated since 2000, the contract was only signed during the visit of President Joaquim Alberto Chissano to Brasília, in August 2004. Thus, Mozambique becomes the fourth country to have its debt pardoned by President Lula in 2004 alone. The other countries were: in July, Bolivia (which owed US\$ 52 million), and in August, Cape Verde and Gabon, whose debts amounted to, respectively, US\$ 2.7 million and US\$ 36 million.

^{xxi} In the African continent thus far only South Africa had a similar agreement with Brazil.