

INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

A country's foreign policy is chosen by the state to safeguard its national interests and to achieve its goals in international relations. Brazil has long held potential to become a major world power, but its rise to prominence has been held back by political setbacks, social problems, and slow and uneven economic growth (Ribando, 2007). However, it is clear that Brazil is a large power in Latin America and a leader among developing countries. The foreign policy of Brazil reflects this current position and history of the country.

The Ministry of External Relations (Ministério das Relações Exteriores) conducts Brazil's foreign relations with other countries.

CURRENT POLICY

The ministry of External Relations of Brazil mentions various issues on their international agenda. The main issues addressed by the ministry are:

- Science and technology; Brazil is one of the cleanest countries in the world when it comes to energy consumption. They want to contribute to sustainability by sharing their knowledge about bio fuels.
- Environment; they stress out that every country should focus on ensuring a sustainable future environment. Therefore, the demand that other countries take responsibility in reducing emissions.
- Development; they want countries to work together and stimulate developing countries to improve world trade.
- Human Rights; they are committed to improving the universal application of human rights but struggle to apply it in Brazil itself.
- Drugs trafficking; Brazil cooperates with the US and regional countries to put an end to the drug trade.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Brazil is by far the largest and most developed country on the continent of South America. The Brazilian government is putting much effort in the development of relations with the surrounding countries, since this is a large growth market for Brazil. Brazil participates in the following regional treaties:

OAS AND RIO TREATY

The Organisation of American States (OAS) -first being named the Union of American Republics (1890-1948)- has as their major target "to achieve an order of peace and justice, to promote their solidarity, to strengthen their collaboration, and to defend their sovereignty, their territorial integrity, and their independence".

RIO GROUP

The Rio Group (founded 1986) consists of (almost) all South- and Middle American states and is said to be founded as an alternative body to the OAS, since the United States had a much too dominant role in this organization (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2009).

MERCOSUL/MERCOSUR

Mercosul stands for 'Mercado Comum do Sul', which means 'Southern Common Market'. It is pronounced in Spanish as Mercosur (Mercado Común del Sur), so these two names are interchangeable. Mercosul is a treaty to create a free trade market between Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay (SICE, 2009).

UNION OF SOUTH AMERICAN NATIONS

The Mercosul countries and the other South American nations cooperating in the Andean Community of Nations signed an agreement for cooperation in 2004, which ultimately led to the creation of the Union of South American Nations, a political and economical power that has great potential (Bloomberg, 2008).

MAJOR BILATERAL RELATIONS

Brazil aims to strengthen bilateral relations with partner-countries in order to increase the country's weight in political and economic negotiations on an international level. Brazil has diplomatic relations with all United Nations member states with only few exceptions. According to Brazil's extensive diplomatic relationships with UN-countries, it seems that Brazil's international politics thoroughly focuses on bilateral relationships with other countries.

ARGENTINA

After the democratization and the signing of several agreements, a strong integration and partnership was established between Brazil and Argentina, resulting in signing the basis for Mercosul in 1985. Meanwhile, both countries found military rapprochement and cooperate for instance in developing nuclear energy and space programs. In 2008, the presidents of both countries started organizing bilateral summits every six months.

CHINA

In 2009, China overtook the United States after 80 years as Brazil's largest trading partner, by increasing trade that grew nearly twelve-fold since 2001, with iron ore being Brazil's largest export product.

In 2009, an important discussion between Brazil and China was the expelling of the US dollar as trade currency between the two countries, enabling free trade independent of the US. (Zimbio, 2009)

THE UNITED STATES

The relations between Brazil and the United States (US) have a long history of ups and downs. The US has increasingly regarded Brazil as a significant power, especially in its role as a stabilizing force and skilful mediator in Latin America. However, the US realizes that President Lula da Silva has shifted his priority to building relations with neighbouring countries and strengthening ties with non-traditional partners like India and China.

PORTUGAL

Based on historical grounds, Portugal and Brazil have a lot of bilateral agreements in the area of culture and language. Portugal, for instance, lobbies for Brazil to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and helps Brazil by increasing collaboration with Europe. Furthermore, Brazil and Portugal strongly cooperate in improving the position of the Portuguese language

THE NETHERLANDS

Although the bilateral relation with the Netherlands shows no remarkable facts, it is interesting to mention the Dutch Brazilian Chamber of Commerce (DUTCHAM). DUTCHAM is highly committed to provide a qualified and continuous support to enhance the commercial interchange between the business communities of Brazil and the Netherlands. (DUTCHAM, 2010)

To strengthen the ties between the Netherlands and Brazil, the Social Economical Councils of both countries signed an agreement in July 2009 to improve the bilateral relation. (Economic and Social Development Council (CDES) & Social and Economic Council (SER), 2009; SER, 2009)

MULTILATERAL RELATIONS

In its multilateral relations, Brazil is not the largest and most powerful country, like with regional relationships. It is one of the largest developing countries, but at times it has to struggle for power with the settled developed countries.

UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations (UN) is an international organisation founded in 1945 after the Second World War by 51 countries, including Brazil. It is committed to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations and promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights (United Nations, 2010). Brazil is one of the founding members of the UN and has a seat in most main bodies, organizations and agencies. Brazil has stated that it feels that the UN Security Council should be reformed and that Brazil should get a permanent seat.

LARGE ECONOMIES

Brazil is part of the G-20 which represents the key emerging countries and enables them to join discussion about global economy and government. The G-20 summit was chaired by Brazil in 2008 in São Paulo (G20). Brazil also belongs to the G-15 as it holds the 7th position of the world's leading economies in this group.

LARGE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Brazil seeks connection with other large, booming developing countries. The countries that are developing close connection to Brazil in this process are Russia, India, China and South Africa. Along this group of countries several multilateral relations can be found (e.g. BRIC, BASIC and IBSA).

COMMUNITY OF PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE COUNTRIES

The Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) is an organisation of friendship between countries in which Portuguese is an official language (e.g. Angola, Mozambique and Senegal). The CPLP promotes the similarities between the cultures of its members and the speaking of the Portuguese language as a worldwide language for trade. (Hudson, 1997; CPLP, 2009)

CONCLUSION

Regarding the international political situation of Brazil, we can conclude that Brazil takes position between the developed and developing countries. Compared to its surrounding countries and many countries it has a close relationship with, Brazil can be seen as well-developed. However, compared to developed countries like the United States and countries in Western Europe, Brazil is still developing. We believe that Brazil benefits from this unique position. In this scenario, instead of just being the lower class of the developed countries, Brazil belongs at the same time to upper class of the developing countries, which brings some additional advantages.

Together with the enormous size of the country and the large population, this international strategy could lead Brazil to become a huge world power soon. The current position of Brazil makes the country an interesting destination for a study tour.

COMPARATIVE TABLE BRAZIL AND THE NETHERLANDS

Topic	Brazil	The Netherlands
Science & Technology	In international relations, Brazil promotes its knowledge on renewable energy and the use of Bio Fuels.	In international relations, the Netherlands promotes its knowledge on water management.
Environment	Wants other (developed) countries to take responsibility and concentrate on using renewable energy.	Wants to help other (developing) countries in working toward sustainable development.
Development	Focus on opening the worldwide market for primary goods. Brazil finds that developing countries should be aided in development.	Is proponent for improving open trade and focuses on a coherent policy in the EU in aiding poor countries.
Human rights and social issues	Brazil is committed to improve the universal application of human rights. Brazil has not (yet) succeeded in really improving the application of human rights. In most cases, women are not considered equal to men. Also child labour is still an issue.	Actively committed to improve the application of human rights. Women are equal to men. Children are very well protected.
Drugs Trafficking	Close relations with neighbouring countries (Venezuela, Colombia, etc.) and the United States to fight drugs trafficking. Brazil is opposed to the use of drugs.	Focuses security on main ports (airport Schipol, Rotterdam Harbour). Has relations with some West-European countries for maritime observation. The Netherlands allows the use of soft drugs.
Major Bilateral relations	Argentina, China, United States, India, Russia, Portugal	EU-countries (e.g. Germany, France, UK), United States, Suriname/Indonesia, Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, South Africa
Regional relations	Mercosul, Union of South American Nations, OAS	EU, NATO
Major Multilateral relations	United Nations, G-20, BASIC, IBSA Dialogue Forum, CPLC	United Nations
United Nations	Founder, and actively involved in several committees. Currently holding a seat in the Security Council but wants a permanent seat and is therefore proponent for a reform of the Council.	Founder, and actively involved in several committees.
Defence Treaties	Brazil has no direct enemies and supports all disarmament efforts	The Netherlands has no direct enemies and supports all disarmament efforts
Development Aid	The budget for development aid is mainly spent in its own country	The budget for development aid is mainly spent on projects in developing countries
Free Trade Agreements	Brazil wants to expand the number of free trade agreements with more countries	As a member of the EU, the Netherlands has a free trade agreement with many countries
Trade barriers	Several multilateral organizations called on Brazil to further reduce trade barriers	The Netherlands has (almost) no trade barriers, as obligated by the EU
Foreign ownership restriction	It is difficult for a foreign individual or company to acquire land in Brazil	The Netherlands has no restrictions concerning foreign ownership

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