

The EU and Brazil: Partnering in an uncertain world?

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Abstract

The international system is changing fast and both the European Union and Brazil will need to adapt. This paper argues that such a process of adjustment may bring the two closer together, even if their starting points differ considerably. Europe looks at the ongoing redistribution of power as a challenge, Brazil as an opportunity. Europe is coping with the detrimental impact of the economic crisis on its international profile; Brazil is enhancing its influence in its region and beyond. Their normative outlook is broadly compatible; their political priorities and behaviour in multilateral frameworks often differ, from trade to development and security issues. Despite the crisis, however, there are signals of renewed engagement by the EU on the international stage, with a focus on its troubled neighbourhood and partnerships with the US and large emerging actors such as Brazil. The latter is charting an original course in international affairs as a rising democratic power from the traditional South with no geopolitical opponents and a commitment to multilateralism. In testing the limits of its international influence, Brazil will need dependable partners and variable coalitions that go well beyond the BRICS format, which is not necessarily sustainable. This contribution suggests that the strategic partnership between the EU and Brazil may grow stronger not only as a platform to deepen economic ties and sustain growth, but also as a tool to foster cooperation in political and security affairs including crisis management, preventive diplomacy and human rights.



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The EU and Brazil: Partnering in an uncertain world?

Giovanni Grevi*

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1. Introduction

The European Union (EU) is a global actor in the making, against a background of a changing world. There is a fragile but unprecedented experiment of political integration taking place while tectonic shifts are shaking the foundations of the lab itself. The question for the future of Europe is whether or not internal developments and external trends are broadly compatible. Is the EU seeking to transcend the principle of sovereignty and balance of power *realpolitik*, while others gaining ground on the global stage are reinforcing these paradigms? Consonance between the normative heritage and the broad strategic posture of the European Union and the key features of the emerging international system would suggest scope for Europe to retain and even enhance its position in international affairs. Dissonance, with the current redistribution of power and competition of ideas draining the EU's resources and credibility, would point to the marginalisation of Europe in a polycentric world.

No doubt, the EU and its member states have watched uncomfortably as new or restored powers gain shares of the economic and political marketplace, while the neighbourhood of the Union has been growing ever more unstable. Europe has been perceived as lagging behind developments. Arguably, however, the EU may prove better placed than others to address the mutual vulnerabilities associated with deep interdependence and to submit recipes for the management of shared problems.

Although mired in a serious legitimacy and governance crisis, topped up by recession in most member states, the travails of the Union may point to political innovation – not decline. If so, the strategic outlook and priorities of the EU and Brazil, stemming from disparate historical experiences and exposing significant differences today, may prove convergent down the line. Brazil – the ‘country of the future’ – has in many ways become a power of the present. Old Europe – allegedly the ‘power of the past’ – may yet again prove to be of some inspiration for the future, if it gets its house in order.

2. Europe's evolving strategic outlook

Whether the EU can be defined as a normative power – one that acts based on values and according to values – is a matter for debate. For one, the EU is not the only international actor that sets values and principles at the core of its foreign policy narrative.¹ For another, the foreign policy practice of the EU or other players on the international stage does not entirely match this concept. Values matter in politics but they need to come to terms with the balance of other factors and interests. The need for such a balance intensifies as the international system grows more diverse and unstable, calling for pragmatic solutions to accommodate competing interests.

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¹ N. Tocci (ed.), *Who is a Normative Foreign Policy Actor?*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 2008.

That said, beyond philosophical debates, values and norms do play a more or less direct role in framing action, and very much did so when European integration started with the European Coal and Steel Community of 1952 and the European Economic Community of 1957. Europe was built and defined by opposition to its past, namely to authoritarianism and war. It was an ambitious functionalist project (cooperation in one field would lead to joint efforts in others) deeply rooted in shared values (democracy, human rights and peace), and implemented under the American security umbrella (NATO) during the cold war. The North Atlantic security community provided fertile ground for European integration to prosper, paving the way for irreversible peace among member states. At the same time, since its beginnings, European integration was not conceived of as an end in itself. As Jean Monnet put it, the “Community itself is only a stage on the way to the organised world of tomorrow.”² This vocation is deeply ingrained in the *ethos* of the EU. But EU foreign policy was slow to develop, and the ‘world of tomorrow’ is proving less organised than Monnet would have wished for.

The striking feature of the environment surrounding the first decades of European integration, up to the end of the Cold War and beyond, was the marginal weight of the so-called developing world (all but the West and the Soviet bloc), whether from an economic, political or security angle. What was taken for granted over those decades was in fact an extraordinary phase of Western predominance, which endured in different shapes from the early 19th century to the early 21st century. It was in this landscape that, after the demise of the Soviet Union, the Treaty of Maastricht of 1992 established the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU. Seen from this standpoint, the Balkan wars of the 1990s proved to be a very hard, and largely failed, test for the nascent CFSP. But the operations carried out by NATO in Bosnia in the mid-1990s and in Kosovo in 1999 fitted the unipolar moment when a confident West would dispatch humanitarian military interventions to protect civilians from authoritarian and abusive governments. The principle of ‘Responsibility to Protect’ would be codified by 2001 and transposed into the UN World Summit Declaration of 2005.³ Over the same years, following the much contested US-led intervention in Iraq, the EU would adopt its first (and, so far, last) overall security strategy in 2003.⁴

The European Security Strategy (ESS) started off by stating: “Europe has never been so prosperous, so secure nor so free.” The document codified the identity of the EU as the champion of “an effective multilateral system”. Its threat assessment largely focussed on asymmetric threats to an established order (such as terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and state failure). The strategy called for what could be defined nowadays as a ‘forward’ approach to crisis management with an emphasis on prevention and a focus on the deep causes of conflict. Around the Union, Europe’s transformative power would promote “a ring of well-governed countries”. In short, the EES directed the Union to become more active, capable and coherent in addressing non-traditional threats and stressed the comprehensive and multilateral character of Europe’s international engagement. However, it featured no reference to the geo-strategic shifts that would soon challenge the economic and normative foundations of the international system itself. Brazil was not mentioned in the

² J. Monnet, *Memoirs*, London: Collins, 1978.

³ The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, 2001. “2005 World Summit Outcome”, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly, 60/1, United Nations, New York, 2005.

⁴ European Commission, *A secure Europe in a better world*, European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003.

2003 document whereas China and India only appeared, as potential strategic partners, at the very end of the paper.

In pursuing its soft power strategy, the EU sought to promote regional cooperation and integration in other parts of the world, for example establishing partnerships with the Mercosur and the African Union. In its own neighbourhood, alongside the completion of the enlargement of the Union to Central and Eastern Europe, the EU adopted the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003. The latter mirrored the legalistic and transformative logic underpinning the enlargement process. It sought to improve political and economic governance via aid conditional on reforms, but there was no agreement among member states to offer commitment to the final goal of EU accession as the essential motivating factor for neighbouring countries.

2003 also saw the first crisis management operations deployed under the then-called European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP, now Common Security and Defence Policy – CSDP), including the EU police mission in Bosnia Herzegovina and the small military operation Artemis in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As many as 27 operations have been launched since in three continents (Europe, Africa and Asia), most of them civilian and eight of them military.⁵ None of these operations, mainly tasked with post-conflict stabilisation, institution-building and training local forces or police, may have achieved strategic objectives on their own, but some of them have made a difference on the ground, from Kosovo to Chad, whether in laying the basis for stability or offering humanitarian protection. CSDP operations became in a few years an important dimension of EU engagement abroad but have not triggered a clear drive for EU member states to deepen defence cooperation within the EU.

The 2008 report on the implementation of the ESS, an otherwise rather uninspiring document, deserves a mention here as evidence of the (slowly) evolving strategic outlook of the Union, and of creeping questions about the stability of the post-cold war order.⁶ The notion of a ‘changing world’ is central to the very title of the report, which starts by acknowledging that globalisation has brought with it opportunities, but also made threats more complex and interconnected, while “accelerating power shifts and...exposing differences in values.” The threat assessment was complemented by a new focus on climate and energy security in a world of scarce resources, as well as on cyber security. The notion of “partnerships for effective multilateralism” was introduced, referring to cooperation with both multilateral organisations and other important powers, including chiefly the US but also Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Russia and South Africa.

This report was published a few months after the start of the global financial crisis and four weeks after the first meeting of the G20 in Washington, in November 2008. Few anticipated then that the crisis would become a defining experience for the European Union, putting its political resilience and credibility under very severe stress. The banking crisis became a sovereign debt one, and evolved into a crisis of legitimacy when austerity proved the only answer to gaps in public finances and competitiveness. The economic downturn had three principal effects on EU foreign policy. For one, it diverted resources from external initiatives, whether in terms of aid packages or crisis management and defence, given deep cuts in public spending. For another, it drained focus from foreign and security policy at large, as

⁵ J. Howorth, *Security and Defence Policy in the European Union*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. G. Grevi, D. Helly and D. Keohane (eds), *European Security and Defence Policy: the First Ten Years*, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2009.

⁶ Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy, *Providing Security in a Changing World*, Brussels, 11 December 2008.

EU member states turned inwards, quarrelling over the ways out of the crisis and preoccupied with deteriorating socio-economic indicators. Above all, however, the crisis has hit hard the very profile and credibility of the Union as a rule-based experiment of political integration and a supporter of effective multilateralism.⁷

This was not the most fertile ground for the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in December 2009. The Treaty called for more policy coherence at a time when the political cohesion of the Union was being questioned. It established a supposedly more powerful post of EU foreign policy chief at a time when foreign policy took a back seat in EU priorities. However, it restated and expanded the normative bedrock of Europe's foreign policy and external action, stating that "The Union's action on the international scene shall be guided by the principles which have inspired its own creation, development and enlargement, and which it seeks to advance in the wider world." (Article 21 TEU)

The common foreign and security policy of the EU was born in the reassuring post-Cold War unipolar world, but was to grow up in the much tougher strategic environment of the early 21st century, marked by asymmetric threats, power shifts and economic turmoil. It was not supposed to be that way. The EU was not prepared to cope with successive crises and, like other major actors, has been struggling to adapt to a more competitive, diverse and polycentric international context. That said, the track record of the Union and of its member states is not all bleak and important adjustments are in the making, which hint at new levels of engagement and new scope for cooperation with other major actors such as Brazil.

3. Europe as a security provider

Europeans feel at the same time safe and vulnerable. As in the case of Brazil, the territorial integrity of EU member states is not endangered and no major inter-state wars seem in sight, with the possible exception of hostilities involving Iran. Most Europeans do not feel to be the target of deliberate threats from third countries. The threat assessment fleshed out in the 2003 ESS, as complemented by the 2008 report, remains largely relevant. And yet, Europeans feel more vulnerable than ten years ago to the risks affecting an increasingly fragile globalisation, and to the perceived loss of influence in their vicinity. Infrastructure is exposed to disruptions, including in the virtual space, energy supplies to political tensions and security crises, commercial shipping to piracy and welfare to unchained market forces. From a security standpoint, this growing sense of vulnerability is linked to two concurrent geopolitical shifts. Both of them are challenging the EU, but also creating the opportunity for the Union to enhance its role of security provider.

First, it is by now clear that the EU neighbourhood is no longer centred around the Union but has become a more fragmented or polycentric space.⁸ In the fluid context determined by the Arab revolutions, local actors enjoy and exploit greater scope for manoeuvre. Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have taken bold diplomatic initiatives and extended effective networks of influence in North Africa and the Middle East. Other major powers play a growing role in the neighbourhood of the Union. Russia is seeking to reassert its old sphere of influence in the East and China is extending its economic reach well into the Gulf and the Mediterranean. In short, while it retains considerable influence in its vicinity, the EU is no longer the magnet to which most of the region is inevitably attracted.

⁷ R. Youngs, "European foreign policy and the economic crisis: What impact and how to respond?", Working Paper No. 111, FRIDE, Madrid, 2011. J. Vaisse and H. Kundnani, "European Foreign Policy Scorecard 2012", European Council on Foreign Relations, London, 2012.

⁸ K. Kausch, "The end of the (Southern) neighbourhood", EuroMesCo Paper No. 18, Barcelona, 2013.

Second, the US is rebalancing its strategic posture with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. The much discussed pivot to Asia does not necessarily amount to disengagement from Europe and in particular from the critical Middle East theatre.⁹ International security crises there would still see decisive American involvement and the US is keeping a close eye on sources of instability in the region, including via drones and Special Forces. But, alongside their stated disillusionment with the prospects of European ‘demilitarisation’, the US will be less willing to invest political capital and resources to address the many simmering tensions in the region surrounding the EU. As the crises in Libya, Syria and most recently Mali demonstrate, Europeans will have to take more responsibility to support stability around the Union, including with military means as a last resort.

Deepening interdependence requires the EU to enhance its engagement in various frameworks of international cooperation. As a relatively open power in economic terms and one relying on energy provisions and other natural resources from abroad, the EU is critically dependent on the resilience of globalisation. However, geopolitical trends seem to point to a more regional focus for the EU as a security provider. After almost three years without new deployments, the EU has launched four CSDP operations since 2012. These include EUCAP Nestor, tasked with regional maritime capacity-building in the countries of the Horn of Africa and West Indian Ocean; EUAVSEC South Sudan, a tiny mission charged with improving security at the Juba airport; EUCAP Sahel Niger, charged with building the capacity of local security forces to fight terrorism and organised crime; and EUTM Mali, a 500-strong training mission directed to enhance the operational capacity of the Malian army. Notably, all of these missions are taking place in the extended Southern neighbourhood of the Union.

This is also the region where the Union is seeking to upgrade the implementation of the so-called ‘comprehensive approach’ envisaged by the Treaty of Lisbon (and countless internal documents and debates) to prevent and manage crises. The EU has adopted a ‘Strategic Framework for the Horn of Africa’ and a ‘Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel’, both in 2011. Given the shortage of money, there is a risk that the EU will start ‘throwing strategies at problems’ as opposed to developing clear shared priorities and pursuing them by anticipating events and not reacting to them. However, contrary to the conventional wisdom, the Union as a security provider is not standing still and is beginning to build on its considerable experience, for example by supporting effective mediation between Sudan and South Sudan and helping regional organisations such as the African Union in dealing with the ongoing conflict in Somalia.¹⁰

There is a question as to whether EU member states see the Union as the principal vector of their cooperation in security and defence matters or as one platform among others. The EU hardly featured on the radar screen during military operations in Libya in 2011 and its role was marginal to the recent French intervention in Mali. The EU still lacks permanent operational headquarters and is unlikely to acquire them soon, given the opposition of the UK but also other countries. The strategic culture of most EU member states is not an ‘expeditionary’ one and, when sizeable multinational military operations are to be deployed, NATO seems to most Europeans the safest option. For the foreseeable future, the role of the Union as a security provider is best seen as complementary, modular and preventive. This entails both limitations and opportunities, not least for cooperation with important partners such as Brazil.

⁹ A. Echague, “New tactics, same strategy? US policy towards the Middle East”, Policy Brief No. 147, FRIDE, Madrid, 2013.

¹⁰ D. Helly, “From the Sahel to Somalia: responding to crises”, in G. Grevi and D. Keohane (eds), *Challenges for European Foreign Policy in 2013*, FRIDE, Madrid, 2013.

First, the EU cannot handle complex crisis situations on its own. But it can bring much added value in conjunction with others. All military operations under the CSDP have been launched within the frame of a UN resolution and the EU has acquired much experience in cooperating with the UN and regional organisations on the ground, as well as with NATO. The record is surely mixed, but it does point to the shape of future interventions, where national initiatives, coalitions of the willing and multilateral efforts will likely overlap.

Second, there are many ways through which the EU can support peace and stability, regardless of whether that includes boots on the ground or not. Humanitarian support to refugees and displaced people is a case in point at the peak of a crisis, often alongside concrete engagement in crisis diplomacy, followed by engagement in capacity and institution-building in fragile or failed states, including via civilian CSDP missions. The EU has financed the setting up of a crisis or situation room at the headquarters of the Arab League, and is planning to do the same with the African Union.¹¹ Some of these measures fit with the broadly preventive approach of the EU as a security provider, aimed to create the conditions for lasting stability. Failures are much more visible than incremental progress on this score but it is equally the case that, from the Sahel to Palestine via Somalia, peace would stand little chance without the sustained involvement of the EU and of its member states via development assistance, security sector reform and support for democracy, human rights and good governance at large. Demand for these deliverables will arguably grow with a view to sustain peace and security in fragile regions.

4. Reading change: Where you sit is where you stand

When assessing the evolution of the international system, where you sit is where you stand. The difference in the relative positions of the EU and Brazil explains their distinct readings of the emerging order, or disorder. The redistribution of power and the accompanying geopolitical tensions, as well as growing instability in the EU's neighbourhood, challenge the normative outlook and strategic approach of the EU. A great deal of the EU's international role and identity is predicated on replacing the rule of power with the power of rules in global affairs.

As such, the Union has been branded as a post-modern actor bent on overcoming geopolitics and the balance of power through diplomacy, engagement and multilateral regimes, progressively eroding the hard shell of national sovereignty.¹² With this branding, however, came also a warning. Europeans may well be past the modern Westphalian system in their mutual relations, but the surrounding world remained populated by proud, modern sovereign powers, keen on maximising their relative gains through hard and soft means. And vast areas of instability resemble the pre-modern world of weak states and widespread human insecurity.

This diagnosis may be too clear-cut to describe the more complex dynamics at play within different regions and countries, and within Europe itself. While the EU has been preaching a largely post-modern, normative agenda, the practice of the Europeans has been much more uneven, including double-standards in dealings with authoritarian regimes. By and large, however, the consolidation of the multilateral system was central to the grand strategy of the EU.¹³ It was taken in Europe as corresponding to the expansion of the so-called liberal order

¹¹ A. Rettman, "EU builds situation room for Arab League in Cairo", *EU Observer*, 26 June 2012

¹² R. Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations. Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century*, London: Atlantic Books, 2003.

¹³ S. Biscop (ed.), "The Value of Power, the Power of Values: a Call for an EU Grand Strategy", Egmont Paper No. 33, Egmont Institute, Brussels, 2009.

to other international stakeholders, alongside the spread of globalisation. China's entry into the WTO in 2001 seemed to match this vision, as did further trade liberalisation, envisaged under the Doha round. These developments were regarded as fitting both Europe's values and its tangible interests.

Against this background, the combined effect of power shifts, the financial crisis and revolutions in the Arab world requires a redrawing of the mental maps of the European foreign policy establishment. As in all cases of rapid transitions and multiple shocks, it takes time and is not a painless exercise, all the more so for a collective international actor like the EU. European analysts and practitioners have mostly registered the progressive shaping of a multipolar world. From a European standpoint, this is first and foremost a statement of fact, due to the sheer redistribution of power assets, and not a normative consideration. In political terms, multipolarity is regarded with unease both because it affects Europe's influence and interests (growing geo-economic and geo-political competition) and because a multipolar system is generally considered an unstable one, prone to destabilisation.

The European discourse takes the redistribution of power as one important dimension of ongoing change, but qualifies it in two important ways. First, power is not just shifting among states but also growing more diffuse to a variety of non-state actors and networks. From this standpoint, reality might have skipped multipolarity. In other words, actual power trends point to a polycentric and pluralistic international system and not one where a few countries run the show.¹⁴ Second, while power is shifting, interdependence is deepening and so do the challenges associated with an open but fragile international system. In an inter-polar world, the power of major actors rests not just on relative gains but on the coordination and cooperation required to preserve stability, enable growth, fight illicit traffic and avoid the worst effects of climate change.¹⁵ In a context of mutual dependence, a zero-sum world is no destiny, but the possible consequence of wrong choices. One may say that the organising principle of the EU's external action is becoming to prevent the slide towards a hostile zero-sum world by default, out of a vacuum of leadership and responsibility.

Multipolarity looks different in Brasilia. However, the ultimate concerns of the EU may not prove so remote from those of a rising power with a similar value system, aiming to entrench growth and stability in the long-run. Boosted by high growth rates and active diplomacy, Brazil pursues an autonomous strategy of power projection beyond its region by leveraging engagement in a variety of formats. From a Brazilian standpoint, the progressive shaping of a multipolar world carries positive normative connotations, by opposition to traditional American and European hegemony. A multipolar world would be a more fair and democratic place, with major emerging countries and the developing world at large playing a much bigger role in setting the terms of interdependence. Echoes of the traditional claims of the so-called global South versus the rich and selfish North co-exist (and sometimes jar) in the Brazilian discourse with the pragmatic pursuit of national interest on the global stage.

Likewise, Brazil's robust commitment to multilateralism is both principled and instrumental (which, to a different degree, is the case for all international actors). Suspicious of (Western) interference in domestic affairs, Brazil is a vocal although not unqualified supporter of the principles of sovereignty and non-interference and of the central role of the United Nations (UN), notably in legitimising the use of force. As such, Brazil can be considered as both a conservative and a revisionist power. It is reluctant to support innovations in global

¹⁴ EU Institute for Security Studies, *Citizens in an Interconnected and Polycentric World. Global Trends 2030*, Paris, 2012.

¹⁵ G. Grevi, "The Interpolar World: A New Scenario", Occasional Paper No. 79, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris, 2009.

governance that might result in the delimitation of national autonomy, from more intrusive verifications under the climate or non-proliferation regimes to punitive measure or the responsibility to protect, not least out of concern with their abusive or one-sided implementation. However, Brazil vocally calls for the reform of major multilateral structures to carve out more votes, seats and power for large emerging countries. Together with Germany, India and Japan, Brazil has pushed hard for the enlargement of the UN Security Council to these four additional permanent members, so far to no avail. On the other hand, Brazil's voting shares at the IMF substantially grew from 1.3 (before the 2008 reform) to 1.7 (today) to 2.2 (based on the 2010 reform, not yet in force). At purchasing power parity, Brazil's economy accounts for about 2.8% of the world GDP.

In other words, when it comes to global governance, the EU seeks to create new regimes while preserving, or adjusting in a cautious and incremental way, the rules and composition of traditional multilateral frameworks. Brazil is less interested in new governance enterprises, from climate change to multilateral trade deals, but aims to transform the balance of power and some of the normative parameters underpinning existing institutions.

Aside from formal institutional frameworks, Brazil has been investing a lot in cooperation with other emerging powers, notably through the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa) and BASIC (BRICS less Russia) formats. This strategy of 'parallel minilateralism' is overtly directed to boost the influence of Brazil on the international stage. As such, it has been effective to influence the global debate on issues ranging from the reform of multilateral financial institutions, the legitimacy of humanitarian interventions and the development agenda. BRICS countries have been holding annual summits since 2009 and regularly meet at ministerial or senior official level, including on the side of international fora such as the G20.

However, minilateral groupings of emerging countries are unlikely to prove viable building blocs of a new order.¹⁶ The priorities, geostrategic positions and value systems of the BRICS point in different directions over the medium term, once the process of political emancipation from the allegedly 'hegemonic' international order is accomplished and the responsibilities that global engagement entails are acknowledged. There is no unified bloc of rising powers shaping up to confront the traditional West, including the EU.¹⁷ The five BRICS stand out as having in common as much as what divides them.

Brazil and South Africa are democracies pursuing the 'democratisation' of international relations with a bigger voice for the South; Russia is a traditional if declining great power keen on dealing with other major players on a peer-to-peer basis. Brazil complains about 'currency wars' and the under-appreciation of the Renminbi (as well as of the US dollar), which affects the competitiveness of Brazilian industry at a time when China is extracting from Brazil little more than natural resources. Russia and China, jealous of their prerogatives, are reluctant to grant permanent membership on the UN Security Council to fellow BRICS countries. The geostrategic concerns of Brazil in the South Atlantic are remote from the threat perceptions of China, India and Russia. In political terms, for all of the BRICS, the defining relationship remains that with the US, although other partnerships are

¹⁶ See P. Stephens, "A story of BRICS without mortar", *Financial Times*, 25 November 2011; M. Emerson, "Do the BRICS make a bloc?", CEPS Commentary, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, 30 April 2012 and A. Valladao, "BRICS: Path Openers or Recalcitrant Followers?", paper delivered at the conference "Governing Globalisation in a World Economy in Transition", Brussels, 27 June 2012.

¹⁷ G.J. Ikenberry, "The Future of the Liberal World Order", *Foreign Affairs* 90:3, May-June 2011. B. Jones, "Beyond Blocs: The West, Rising Powers and Interest-based International Cooperation", Policy Analysis Brief, The Stanley Foundation, Muscatine, Iowa, 2011.

gaining strength. In economic terms, the EU may have lost market shares, notably in India and Latin America, but it remains a vital trade and notably investment partner for all the BRICS. Spain and Belgium alone have a larger investment stock in Brazil than the US. In 2010, China was ranked 16th in the list of the top 20 investors in Brazil by stock.¹⁸

5. The way ahead: Uncovering common ground

Closer engagement between the EU and Brazil would offer the opportunity to challenge binary narratives on the fledgling international order (old vs. new powers; North vs. South) and to make a difference together. Gaining a better perspective sometimes requires taking a step back. The last few years have been hard on Europe and rewarding for Brazil. But whether recent experience shows divergent paths ahead is a different question. Drawing linear projections of irreversible decline for Europe and unstoppable rise for Brazil may be misleading since Europe has more assets than often acknowledged and Brazil faces considerable challenges to sustain its remarkable performance. In both cases, addressing domestic dysfunctions is a requirement for influence abroad. If they were to succeed, both actors could be regarded as emerging ones on the international stage. And they would share much more than what divides them.

The EU and Brazil share common values but have so far implemented different power strategies – the former anchored to the so-called ‘Western camp’, the latter bent on challenging it through soft balancing.¹⁹ However, both are well placed to overcome the sterile and outdated distinction between North and South. The contention here is that, over time, what may come to define global actors will be less their growth rates than their political and normative outlooks, at home and abroad. This is not to argue that new divides will or should be drawn on normative grounds, for example between democracies and undemocratic regimes. On the contrary, it is to stress the important bridging role that the EU and Brazil could play to expand the common ground between different perceptions and agendas. The future will not be shaped by established or rising powers but will likely have to be co-shaped. Those with the will and ability to connect across traditional cleavages will stand to gain the most influence.

The strategic partnership that the EU and Brazil have established in 2007 has underperformed in many ways. But poor implementation so far should not detract from the aim to leverage bilateral engagement to improve cooperation in broader formats. So-called ‘strategic partnerships’ can be regarded as fulfilling three important roles.²⁰ First, they position the two parties on the map as pivotal mutual interlocutors. This is important political currency for both the EU, whose international actorness is often questioned, and for Brazil, which has long pursued its ‘insertion’ in the big league. Second, structured bilateral relations provide the level playing field for trade-offs to maximise respective interests, notably in the economic sphere. The partnership as such has not matched expectations on this account, with the trade deal held hostage to inter-regional politics and protectionism on

¹⁸ M. Otero-Iglesias, “The EU and Brazil: What crisis? What partner? What strategy?”, in G. Grevi and T. Renard (eds), *Partners in Crisis: EU Strategic Partnerships and the Global Economic Downturn*, ESPO Report No. 1, European Strategic Partnerships Observatory, FRIDE and Egmont Institute, Madrid and Brussels, 2012.

¹⁹ S. Gratius, “Brazil and the EU: Between balancing and bandwagoning”, ESPO Working Paper No. 2, European Strategic Partnerships Observatory, FRIDE and the Egmont Institute, Madrid and Brussels, 2012.

²⁰ G. Grevi, “Why EU strategic partnerships matter”, ESPO Working Paper No. 1, European Strategic Partnerships Observatory, FRIDE and the Egmont Institute, Madrid and Brussels, 2012.

the rise. That said, a traditionally asymmetric economic relationship has evolved into a more balanced one with sustained two-way investment flows and Brazil becoming the fifth-largest investor in the EU. The last bilateral summit in January 2013 suggests that recession in Europe and the economic slowdown in Brazil might have focused the minds of both parties on the opportunities that closer engagement might bring for growth.²¹

The third and key function of the strategic partnership is to help address together big issues on the international agenda through regular consultations, including in international fora. As noted above, progress has been slim but some areas for renewed engagement can be detected. Climate change is one, as discussed in other working papers prepared for this project.²² The EU has been leading from the front to reduce carbon emissions and Brazil has passed national legislation including binding reduction targets, while discretely mediating between advanced and emerging or developing countries in the run-up to the Durban summit in December 2011.²³ Their efforts will simply be vain if they fail to bring more parties on board to commit to meaningful and somehow verifiable targets.

Political and security affairs offer much opportunity for the EU and Brazil to join forces, if pragmatic cooperation progressively diminishes normative dissonance and assuages long-held suspicions of Western imperialism in Brazil. The latter has been making a growing contribution to UN peacekeeping operations. In early 2013, Brazil is the 11th largest provider of troops to peacekeeping operations, with a total of about 2,200 officers. While Brazilian forces serve in operations in Africa (for example in Liberia, South Sudan and Ivory Coast) and the Middle East (Lebanon), 99% of Brazilian troops are concentrated in the MINUSTAH mission in Haiti, which Brazil also leads.²⁴ This is a significant effort but also one that could pave the way for more relevant engagements beyond Latin America, notably in the African continent where the vast majority of peacekeepers are deployed. Peacekeeping is an area of clear potential synergy between the EU, its member states and Brazil, notably when it comes to sharing lessons, devising comprehensive approaches to humanitarian emergencies and deploying jointly. Bilateral negotiations are ongoing on a framework agreement for Brazilian personnel to take part in CSDP operations, following similar deals with eight other partners, including Canada, Turkey and the US.

Of course, broader normative and geopolitical considerations surround issues of peace and security. At the core of the international security conundrum lies the tension between the principles of sovereignty and non-interference on the one side, and those of human rights and their protection on the other. Both have deep roots in international law (as well as in the Treaty of Lisbon and the Constitution of Brazil) and, as any other legal norms, their practise and interpretation are subject to evolution. Work on the concept of human security and the progressive codification of the doctrine of responsibility to protect (R2P) challenge both the

²¹ E. Lazarou, "The sixth EU-Brazil summit: Business beyond the usual?", ESPO Policy Brief No. 8, European Strategic Partnerships Observatory, FRIDE and the Egmont Institute, Madrid and Brussels, 2013.

²² See "EU Policy on Climate Change Mitigation since Copenhagen and the Economic Crisis", Christian Egenhofer and Monica Alessi, CEPS Working Document No. 380, CEPS, Brussels, March 2013 and "Brazilian Climate Policy since 2005: Continuity, Change and Prospective", Eduardo Viola, CEPS Working Document No. 373, CEPS, Brussels, February 2013.

²³ S. Gratius and D. Gonzales, "The EU and Brazil: Shared goals, different strategies", in G. Grevi and T. Renard (eds), "Hot Issues, Cold Shoulders, Lukewarm Partners: EU Strategic Partnerships and Climate Change", ESPO Report No. 2, European Strategic Partnerships Observatory, FRIDE and the Egmont Institute, Madrid and Brussels, 2012.

²⁴ M. Herz and A. Ruy de Almeida Silva, "BRICS and the peacekeeping operations", Policy Brief, BRICS Policy Center, Rio de Janeiro, 2011.

unconditional support of the principle of sovereignty and the unbound pursuit of the 'humanitarian' agenda by military means.

Brazil has tried to build on the framework of R2P with the notion of the so-called 'responsibility while protecting'. According to this approach, the three pillars of R2P (the responsibility of individual states to protect their population, the responsibility of the international community to help them do so and, if that fails, its responsibility to take action) should be seen as strictly sequential in both chronological and political terms, with military action regarded as the very last resort and subject to the careful assessment of its consequences.²⁵ Besides, 'responsibility while protecting' entails that military action should not only be authorised by the UN Security Council but should also be more closely monitored in its implementation. Intervention should be carried out within the limits and to fulfil the ends indicated in UN resolutions. While the politics of intervention are not an exact science and flexibility has to be built into action, the Brazilian contribution can be seen as a step towards bridging agendas and perceptions. It is telling that the cold reception by the US and EU members states, in the aftermath of the air campaign in Libya, has been paralleled by prudent silence on the part of other BRICS countries, except the endorsement of South Africa.

This initiative fits a broader, if very cautious, development of Brazil's diplomatic posture, alongside the shift from the Lula to the Rousseff administration. Since 2011, Brazilian diplomacy has taken more distance from authoritarian or illiberal regimes in Latin America and beyond, including for example Iran. While not supporting further sanctions on Iran and initially hesitating to condemn the Assad regime in Syria, Brazil is increasingly uncomfortable with the dangers and consequences of diplomatic stalemate on both accounts. In the course of 2012, Brazil, supported two UN General Assembly resolutions condemning human rights abuses and calling for political transition in Syria.²⁶ The EU and Brazil should deepen their direct exchanges on major security crises, as both of them will be called upon to exercise greater responsibilities in this domain. At their last summit in January 2013, they agreed to formally establish a high-level dialogue on matters of peace and security, including peacekeeping and peace-building.

Crisis diplomacy and crisis management pose inevitable political obstacles but a wider preventive agenda offers much scope for more structured cooperation, at the nexus between democracy and development. As in other policy areas, diverse historical experiences and attitudes to development cooperation and institutional capacity-building can provide inputs to define more effective approaches and concrete, joint or mutually reinforcing, initiatives. State fragility and bad governance, whether in Latin America or in Africa, are a common concern of Brazil and the EU, not least because they provide fertile ground for the proliferation of illicit trafficking across the South Atlantic and over to Europe.

Brazil has been reluctant to be seen as associated or working with the EU - a traditional donor from the North - for example in Africa. But there is growing recognition that the two parties can at least experiment with selective cooperation on specific issues via triangulation with third countries. Following the so far limited experience of triangular cooperation to promote bio-fuels in Africa, the European Commission has signed the Charter of Brasilia in January 2013. The latter envisages joint initiatives with Portuguese-speaking countries in

²⁵ Letter dated 9 November 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary General; Annex: Responsibility while protecting: elements for the development and promotion of a concept.

²⁶ R. Gowan, *Who is winning on human rights at the UN?*, European Council on Foreign Relations, London, 24 September 2012.

Africa on issues of citizenship and electoral democracy. If implemented, these and other small bottom-up projects may play an important role to incrementally build confidence among the EU and Brazil, as important shapers of the future development agenda.²⁷

6. Conclusion

The EU and Brazil share more than what divides them, but their current outlook on the emerging multipolar system differs. Launched in the reassuring post-cold war strategic environment, the EU common foreign and security policy has had to cope with a turbulent regional and global context in the last decade. The financial crisis has been a game-changer, accelerating the redistribution of power away from Europe and creating more political space for rising powers on the international stage, including through recently-established formats such as the BRICS. Revolutions in the Arab world and the shift in the geostrategic priorities of the US require the EU to become more pragmatic and nimble as both a security provider and a normative entrepreneur. In both respects, Brazil can become a truly strategic partner of the Union as its responsibilities are set to grow in parallel with its global outreach and interests. Political and security affairs, amongst other issues, offer considerable room for deepening cooperation, from crisis management to preventive diplomacy and the normative debate on responsibility to protect. Joint initiatives in third countries, addressing the nexus between development and democracy, could become another terrain for mutual engagement. This would also help overcome questionable divides between old and new powers, or between the global North and South, and shape new shared agendas.

²⁷ L. Cabral and J. Weinstock, "Brazil: An emerging aid player", Briefing Paper No. 64, Overseas Development Institute, London, 2010.



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