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THE GLOBAL (SOUTH) PROJECTION OF BRAZIL

Abstract: Brazil, the 8th largest global economy, has a territory with continental dimensions (measuring the double of the European Union) and a population that surpasses, easily, 200 million inhabitants. Its strategic role is obviously prominent in the contemporary world and especially in the Global South. Indeed, if we add to the aforementioned big numbers some key dynamic variables (such as its production of food and biofuels, its enormous reserves of drinking water, oil, gold, diamonds, critical minerals, biodiversity, precious woods etc.) it will be easier understood why the geopolitical value of this South American country is something more than outstanding (and also, why the U.S. understood that long time ago). On the other hand, it is necessary to add the Brazilian will to grow, influence, and project itself abroad which seems only possible in a multi-polar world order characterized by structures and dynamics different to the current one. It is for all those reasons, objective and subjective, that studying and understanding Brazilian reality is so relevant, and that is what this introductory article is about. For this purpose, we will begin by contextualizing the issue, by placing it in its strategic environment and by reviewing, finally, its internal contradictions. From there, all the chapters that make up this special issue will be introduced trying to explain the specific field of Brazilian reality that is questioned or explained in each text.

Keywords: BRAZIL, COMMODITIES, FOREIGN POLICY, GEOPOLITICS, GLOBAL SOUTH, MULTIPOLARITY, STRATEGIC RESOURCES

Introduction

In 1992, Francis Fukuyama, a RAND Corporation researcher, Sovietologist and a former student of Samuel P. Huntington, published an unexpectedly successful book “The End of History and the Last Man”. Since its release, this work has sold over a million copies, an uncommon record for a political science text. Its significance, however, goes far beyond its sales: it vividly encapsulates the historical period that followed the Cold War.

At that time, the international system transitioned rapidly from a bipolar structure, based on the principle of ‘containment’ - between two ‘super powers’- and in a Neo-Keynesian consensus to a unipolar order in which the United States not only emerged as the only ‘super power’ but also as a model. This marked the dawn of the golden age of ‘super imperialism’ and more specifically, of neoliberalism (Hudson, 2003). It was in this context that Fukuyama dared to declare the “end of history” proving that by the late 20th century, any political or systemic alternative to the hegemonic model had become absolutely unthinkable.

Three decades later, however, this once-undisputed model seems to be approaching its limits. A multipolar reality, characterized by the proliferation of some concurrent powers and counter - powers, some of them “illiberals”, appears to be emerging on a global scale. The first symptoms of the unipolar model exhaustion (and by extension, of neoliberalism) began to surface in 2008 when a massive financial crisis shook the foundations of the world economic order. This big crisis altered the foundations of the monetary policies, investment flows, global demand and, significant to Brazil, supply chains.

Coincidentally or not, the following year witnessed the first meeting, in the heart of Eurasia, of a group of countries that had been “inspired” by a famous article published, in 2001, by the British economist Jim O’Neill: ‘Building Better Global Economic BRICs’. “BRICs” is a clever acronym coined by O’Neill, referred to the initials of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, countries that convened in Yekaterinburg, Russian Federation, in 2009. The following year, at the Brasilia summit (Brazil), South Africa joined the group, adding the capital “S” to BRICS. In his article, O’Neill had posited that, in the long term, these five countries had the potential not only to become attractive destinations for foreign direct investment but also to pose a real geopolitical challenge to the G7 economies. More than twenty years later, the BRICS+, which now includes also Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Ethiopia, and Iran, is helping shape a multipolar world order that is emerging as a complex system and a novel challenge for the United States and its Western allies (Stuenkel, 2020).

The group has indeed demonstrated its capacity to transform certain counter-

hegemonic ideas into specific initiatives. These initiatives include development financing under less onerous conditions, more competitive and flexible payment systems and more decentralized infrastructures adapted to local productive needs, etc (Stuenkel, 2020).

Brazil is now a consolidated part of this structure, which, despite its diffuse and contradictory nature and the criticisms it has faced, has proven its resilience. Within this strategic framework, Brazil is a specific case. On one hand, with India and South Africa, it is a part of the Global South contingent within the BRICS, a hybrid system combining both Asian and Southern countries -“Meridionals”, in terms of a certain Brazilian academic debate- (Martin, 2018). On the other hand, following Argentina’s refusal to join the organization (despite being admitted in 2023, prior to President Javier Milei’s election) Brazil remains the only Latin American country in the group.

The specificities of the South American country such as its enormous territory, which is twice the size of the European Union, have granted it a distinctive foreign policy trajectory. Historically for example, Brazil has been, for various reasons (historical, geographical, geopolitical, etc.) one of the few countries in the region to maintain consistent and continuous links with Africa, especially with the Portuguese speaking countries -such as Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and São Tomé and Príncipe. It is interesting to underline, in this regard, that Portuguese is the eighth most spoken language in the world and the third most spoken in the Western world, after English and Spanish. Since 1996, it has also become a geopolitical tool with the founding of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP), through which Brazil also projects itself abroad and in which African countries have a significant weight.

Brazil is in fact a kaleidoscopic reality that is often poorly understood beyond its borders. Sometimes simplistic stereotypes tend to distort the image of the world’s ninth-largest economy (larger than those of countries such as Canada, Russia, Mexico, Australia or Spain, among others). However, Brazil is a key player on both the global and regional stages. In Latin America it represents nearly half of the region’s territory (42%) and a third of its population (32%) and of its GDP. If viewed from the perspective of South America, Brazil accounts for almost half of its surface (47%), population (49%) and GDP (52%). Its significance remains evident regardless of the scale. From an external standpoint, this is very significant and consequently geopolitically attractive (Furtado, 2007).

The strategic importance of Brazil was recognized by the United States, especially, during Henry Kissinger’s tenure as Secretary of State (1973–1977) as “critical [country] to the U.S. efforts to secure its influence in the region” (Spektor, 2009). This observation was reproduced, some years later, by the Brazilian economist Ruy Mauro Marini, who, consistent with the concept of the ‘semi-periphery’ developed by world-system thinkers such as Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) or, later, Giovanni Arrighi (1994), categorized Brazil’s regional influence as a form of ‘sub-imperialism’ (Marini, 1977). More recently, Oliver Stuenkel revisited this never closed debate (2013). This

supposedly tendency, which has apparently never translated into real intense trade relations with the neighboring countries (maybe with the exception of Argentina) was not a simple product of an inertia tied to, for instance, the country's size. Rather, the will to expand and consolidate its influence in the surrounding region was articulated as a clear geopolitical objective in the mid-20th century by military intellectuals like Mário Travassos (1935) or Golbery do Couto e Silva (1957). Travassos, for example, adapted some geopolitical categories such as the "heartland"—and its associated objectives—developed by the British thinker Sir Halford Mackinder (1904), to the South American reality and to the Brazilian interests. This adaptation occurred within the context of a national debate focused on the expansion, ordering, and utilization of Brazil's then sparsely populated interior (Hecht, 2021).

Brazil remains, at the end of the day, a key player in Latin America, especially in South America, not only due to its size but also because of its geopolitical will. This perception persisted in the United States even after the end of the Cold War. A RAND Corporation report, published in 2001, emphasized Brazil's strategic potential due to "its strategic natural resources, military capabilities, and its growing leadership in regional forums like Mercosur and international ones like the G20" Some years later, Michael Reid highlighted in his book "Brazil: The Troubled Rise of a Global Power" (2014) that U.S. analysts have consistently viewed Brazil as "essential to the region's stability".

South America has remained in the global context, despite the crises, as a very attractive geopolitical area due to its population, its potential as a market but, above all, its strategic natural resources, within the framework of the digital and energy transitions (Bruckmann, 2012). Within this framework, relations between their countries have been shaped by periods of contraction, détente and cohesion, which are reflected in phases of ups and downs in the processes of formation, consolidation and fragmentation of multilateral regional integration arrangements. Beyond the trade exchange Brazil endeavors to exercise a degree of leadership in these regional integration processes, and often has the technical and institutional capacity for it. However, it is unable to effectively fulfill the role of paymaster, economically funding investments to build and maintain physical cross-border infrastructure needed for regional social and economic development (Garcia, 2019). That is a real strategic challenge and, ultimately, an objective limitation for a regional influence that has never been truly complete.

Apparently, China perceived all these fragilities a long time ago, at a time - few after 2001/9/11 - in which all US attention had been focused on Western and South Asia. Not by chance since 2013, following the 2008 financial global crisis, the East Asiatic country became Brazil's largest trading partner, opening a new era of strategic balances in South America. Many of Brazil's neighbors, such as Chile or Peru, have not remained indifferent to this general shift. Since then, South America has increasingly turned its attention to the Pacific Rim and Basin, and Brazil has followed this trend, despite its Atlantic character and historical relations with Europe and the United States (Stuenkel, 2020).

In this case, once again, this is not merely a matter of inertia but of a clear political will. When Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva assumed the country's Presidency for the first time in 2003, the Brazilian Foreign Policy underwent a profound transformation. Celso Amorim, who served as Minister of Foreign Relations twice (1993–1995 and 2003–2011) and once as Minister of Defense (2011–2015), repeatedly described this policy as “*altiva e activa*” (Lopes, 2020). This ‘pride and activism’ led the South American country to diversify its partners and its global strategic priorities with greater emphasis, becoming a founding member of the BRICS and a proponent of multipolarity in various forums (notably the G20 and the United Nations COPs). This Brazilian stated intention has consisted of contributing to the democratization of international institutions crucial for global governance and development, such as the United Nations Security Council or the International Monetary Fund.

Summarizing, Brazil presents a compelling case for study, as it embodies three key characteristics in the current turbulent global context: it is, definitively, an influential actor on multiple scales of contemporary international politics; it is also a net exporter of strategic natural resources to the Global North and last but, not least, it is an open advocate of multipolarity coming from the Global South. This collective work, and the introduction that precedes it, are aimed to show and explain all these nuances writing “from” Brazil, not merely “about” Brazil.

Strategic Assets, Key Point

Brazil, in recent years, has consolidated its international standing due, not only to its size, but to the strategic nature of its natural resources and to its aforementioned geopolitical will, “pride and active”, frequently underestimated. In fact, the commodities exported from the South American country gain momentum in the framework of an increasingly turbulent international system, where the cleavages and tensions that are accompanying the transition towards a multipolar world are rising (Burgess, 2017; Stuenkel, 2020). It is also important to remember that the exported natural resources are having a significant value in the context of two structural transitions: the digital and the energy.

Related to the first one, it is important to remember that the global production system is shifting from an analog to a digital model, transforming how our economies produce goods and services and interact between them (Gereffi, 2018). As for the second, we are beginning to witness a slow but inevitable shift from fossil fuels to clean energy sources in response to the growing climate crisis and the consequent need to reduce carbon emissions. Both processes need specific resources whose demand has risen exponentially, as seen in the case of strategic minerals and agricultural commodities—areas in which Brazil plays, if not a dominant, at least a strategic role.

Contemporary geopolitics pivots around some key questions, decidedly different to those of the XX century: Who possesses the critical resources needed for the

aforementioned ‘transitions’? Under what conditions and at what cost can these resources be extracted? What power relations determine their trade? And most importantly, who adds value to them? (Cruz et al., 2023; Sassen, 2002). These questions are particularly relevant in a context of change, where the Global North is increasingly dependent on the Global South to maintain its competitiveness in international markets (Estenssoro, 2019).

A key feature of the current situation is that the emergence of a new production system, despite the official stories, does not seem to be displacing the old one. Instead, both coexist, generating simultaneous demands. In practice, the need for oil remains high, while the demand for lithium for batteries and electronic devices is only at the beginning. This phenomenon has considerable strategic implications. In Latin America, for instance, Venezuela, with its immense oil resources, and Bolivia, with its vast lithium reserves, serve as concrete examples of how traditional and emerging commodities coexist and together had a real potential to reshape the geopolitical structures of the Global South (Estenssoro, 2019).

In such a context, Brazil is a key player. Its natural assets position the country as a crucial actor in both global and regional geopolitics. In a world marked by instability, moving towards a multipolar conformation, the South American country is increasingly perceived as a source of critical natural resources (Borges, 2017; Bruckmann, 2012).

One of Brazil's most valuable resources is fresh water. The country holds 12% of the world's reserves, making it a “global strategic reserve” in the context of a climate crisis that has water scarcity as one of its corollaries (Silva & Hussein, 2019). At the same time, these water resources are essential for agricultural production and for hydroelectric generation—both pillars of the Brazilian economy. Regions like the Amazon or the Pantanal not only supply the more than 200 million people living in the country but also ensure its agricultural production and energy generation (Oliveira, 2017).

Brazil's agricultural capacity is another key factor in its global projection. In recent years, the country has become one of the world's largest producers of soybeans, beef, poultry, and sugar, positioning it as an indispensable actor in global food supply chains (Baraibar Norberg, 2020; Ponte et al., 2019). As global demand for food continues to rise, both in the Global North and South, Brazil has solidified its role as one of the world's primary suppliers, ensuring global food security (Gereffi, 2018).

In terms of mineral resources, Brazil is also a fundamental player. The extraction and export of iron ore, bauxite, niobium, and other strategic minerals place the country in a privileged position to supply critical inputs for both the digital and energy transitions (Hecht, 2021). Niobium, for instance, is essential for producing electronic devices and batteries, while lithium -present in Brazil and other South American countries, such as Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia- is crucial for manufacturing batteries for electric vehicles, whose demand is rapidly increasing (IEA, 2024).

Besides its wealth in minerals, Brazil also boasts significant reserves of gold and diamonds. Despite controversies, regarding the environmental and social impacts of its extraction, these resources remain an important source of revenue for the country in an unstable world in search of financial refuges (Porto Gonçalves, 2012).

Another strategic resource that cannot be overlooked is the hydrocarbons. Despite the energy transition discourse the global demand for oil and natural gas remains high. In this context, Brazil has consolidated its position as one of the largest hydrocarbon exporters, ensuring its rising competitiveness in global markets (and especially as an oil supplier to China and the US)

Finally, Brazil's rich biodiversity constitutes one more strategic asset. The Amazon, besides being one of the world's most biodiverse regions, plays a crucial role in global climate regulation (Viola & Franchini, 2017). Brazil's biodiversity is invaluable for scientific research and for the development of biotechnological products, with enormous potential for innovation in sectors such as agriculture and pharmaceuticals (Ellwanger et al., 2022). Moreover, preserving vast areas of tropical forest is essential in the fight against climate change, as they contribute significantly to atmospheric carbon sequestration. This is, by the way, another Brazilian asset frequently utilized as a tool in the country's foreign policy (Hecht, 2021).

In this framework, the Amazon is a geopolitical locus for excellence. In fact, in contemporary times, geopolitics is no longer restricted to the power of the state over the use of territory and the pressures and interventions of other states, but how other agents (state, sub-national and non-state - domestic and foreign) manage to influence state decision-making on the use of territory through veiled coercion. Faced with this geopolitical challenge, Brazil and other South American countries should abandon the paradigm of the frontier economy, which has characterized every Latin American formation that has prioritized the continuous territorial incorporation and exploitation of natural resources, and find possible ways of reconciling economic growth, environmental conservation and social justice, which can in fact serve as a counterweight to the geopolitical projects of the powers that dispute the stocks of natural wealth distributed asymmetrically over the earth's surface (Becker, 2005; Garcia, 2019).

In short, and despite its abundant natural wealth, Brazil faces significant challenges in a critical global context such as the contemporary (Le Billon, 2004). The intensive exploitation of all these resources exerts growing pressure on the environment, exacerbating problems such as deforestation, river pollution or biodiversity loss (Moura, 2016). Historically, the Brazilian economy has been marked by successive production cycles centered on the export of products such as sugar, cocoa, cotton, coffee or rubber (Dean, 1976). Currently, within the context of the digital and energy transitions, several of these cycles seem to coexist and overlap, leading to intensive exploitation called by some as 'neo-extractivism' (Svampa, 2019) with potentially irreversible consequences, as could be seen in the so-called 'sacrifice zones' (Zografos & Robbins, 2020).

From an economic perspective, the proliferation of these production cycles has worsened Brazil's terms of integration into the global economy. Despite its wealth in resources, its capacity to add value remains limited due to various factors. This means that much of the added value is exported abroad, perpetuating the dynamics of dependence long debated by Brazilian scholars (Santos, 1972). Furthermore, many of Brazil's strategic productive sectors are not controlled by local companies but by multinational corporations operating in the country, significantly reducing the country's ability to fully benefit from its resources (Cruz et al., 2023; Baraibar Norberg, 2020).

In the end, the paradox between Brazil's geopolitical potential and its economic dependence tends to temper its real weight on the international stage. Although the country possesses relevant assets to be a key global player, its internal economic structures and the power dynamics that characterize the exploitation of its natural resources continue to limit its real ability to exert greater influence in the global system. Nevertheless, due to its ambiguous character and to its geopolitical will, materialized, for instance, in the BRICS, in the G20 or in the UN COPs, Brazil remains an indispensable actor in the contemporary world, making it a subject of critical importance for study: this work is about that.

Understanding Brazil

As coordinators of this special issue about Brazil, what we aim is to facilitate an interdisciplinary and didactic immersion into a reality, really diverse, complex and even, contradictory. Clearly, not all possible angles, focus, perspectives, or viewpoints are covered here, but we sincerely believe that all articles offer a meaningful representation of a country that at the end of the day is heterogeneous and plural.

Our fundamental goal is to help navigate the common stereotypes about Brazil and provide some academic tools to build more robust, informed, and even less mediated approaches to a diverse nation that, in recent years, has emerged as a key player on the international stage, in the Global South, and of course, in the current debate about multipolarity.

We reached out, to this end, a wide group of colleagues (up to 17) from Brazilian cities and regions geographically really distant from one another - for example, there are 4,336 kilometers between the Northern city of Manaus, capital of the State of Amazonas, where two of the authors of the text nº09 lives, and the Southern city of Santa Maria, in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, where the author of the text nº10 lives.

We also wanted to ensure gender balance in our proposal. Often, when collaborative texts are organized about Brazil, there are few female voices contributing to and problematizing their own country. In that sense, we are proud to announce that eight of the 17 authors—almost half—are women.

The most important criterion was, in any case, that the authors, wherever they

come from and whether they are men or women, know well the topics they are talking about. Below and without further delay we will briefly present the texts that you will find developed later.

The special issue starts with text “Brazil and China: a Strong Partnership”, written by Ana Tereza Lopes Marra de Sousa, which presents the evolution of strategic partnerships between Brazil and China, focusing on the Sino-Brazilian High-Level Concertation and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN), and concludes that the flexibility of the partnership’s institutional apparatus, as well as its adaptability to embrace new interests, is what has sustained the relevance of this partnership.

Bilateral relations between Brazil and the United States are historic, often considered the cornerstone of both countries’ foreign policies. But external and internal factors have affected this hegemonic actor’s ability to influence. The text ‘Brazil and the USA: a Relationship in Decline?’ written by Clarissa Nascimento Forner and Rodrigo Fernando Gallo, focuses specifically on the governments of Donald Trump (2017-2021) - USA, Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022) - Brazil, the first years of the Biden administration (2021-2024) - USA, and the beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s presidency (2023-2024) - Brazil.

The following articles seek to portray Brazil’s economic, trade and politics issues over the last two decades.

Gabriel de Oliveira Rodrigues, Daniel Arruda Coronel and Aline Beatriz Schuh in their study ‘Brazil’s Economic Opening from 2000 to 2020’ analyzed the economic performance of Brazil from 2000 to 2020, addressing the behavior of the country’s exports, imports, and GDP. The authors used the degree of Economic Openness and the Export Effort index applied, using data from the Secretariat of Foreign Trade and the World Bank. Over the last two decades, there were periods of decline in Brazilian exports that culminated in the reduction of the country’s GDP. The exception to this situation was the increase in commodity exports, positioning Brazil as a primary export leader in the segment, especially to China.

In the text “Mistaken Theses in the Debate on Deindustrialization and Loss of Competitiveness of Brazilian Industry”, José Luís Oreiro explains why the theses of orthodox economists are wrong in relation to the process of deindustrialisation in Brazil, which took place between 2008 and 2012. Oreiro argues that deindustrialisation in Brazil is not a natural result of the development process, but is premature and caused mainly by the overvaluation of the exchange rate, which is the result of the increase in the terms of trade that occurred between 2005 and 2011.

The text “The Ambiguities of Agribusiness: Potentials and Challenges for Brazil”, the authors Rodrigo Peixoto da Silva, Gesmar Rosa dos Santos and Fernanda Cigainiski Lisbinski aimed to present the current debate by presenting data and information about Brazilian agribusiness, subsidizing discussions about its economic and social functions, as well as its inherent ambiguities, in order to promote a well-informed discussion, dispel certain misconceptions about agribusiness and identify the main issues and externalities that require attention.

The article “Democracy, the Language of Rights, Coalitions and the Political System in Brazil” written by Alessandra Maia Terra de Faria, presents the current complex popular sovereignty of Brazil’s political system, composed of a multi-party congress, in coexistence with the executive and judicial branches, and an electoral system of representation that imposes difficulties for the formation of a majority and the need for coalitions. However, the recent universal suffrage and the longstanding standing historical social inequality is combined with a federative system of unequal units, in which local, regional, and international economic groups and land ownership weigh on the national political situation and decisions.

Roberto Goulart Menezes and Rafael Alexandre Mello in their text “The Political Economy of Inequality and the covid-19 pandemic in Brazil” argue that neoliberalism has been in crisis since 2008, and specifically in the case of Brazil during the Jair Bolsonaro government (2019-2022), the adoption of the ultra-neoliberal agenda has reflected negatively on the Covid-19 pandemic, with direct effects on unemployment, the health system and social protection and welfare measures, increasing the extent and depth of the social and economic crisis.

Regarding environmental issues, the authors Ana Beatriz Castro de Jesus, Ricardo José Batista Nogueira, and Luciana Riça Mourão Borges, in their text “Dilemmas and Challenges for the Amazonian Biome” present an overview of the Pan-Amazon region, which is shared by nine countries, highlighting the extent of the borders and the importance of multilateral actions. However, each country has different standards regarding the relationship between man and nature and provides specific internal actions to attend social demands, implement infrastructure, and establish public policies and environmental laws for environmental protection, such as the creation of Conservation Units (UC) and Indigenous Lands (TI).

The last text, but not least, entitled “Family Farming and Food Sovereignty in Contemporary Brazil” wrote by Rita Pauli, presents the importance of highlighting the elements that link family agriculture with agrifood security and sustainable rural development in Brazil, from an interdisciplinary analysis, which includes economic, social and environmental analyzes and some secondary source data on government incentives for family farming through the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF) and those assigned by Rural Credit for employer agriculture.



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ГЛОБАЛНА (ЈУЖНА) ПРОЈЕКЦИЈА БРАЗИЛА

Апстракт: Бразил, осма по величини светска економија, има територију континенталних димензија (двоструко више од Европске уније) и популацију која лако прелази 200 милиона становника. Његова стратешка улога је очигледно истакнута у савременом свету, а посебно на глобалном југу. Заиста, ако горе поменути великим бројевима додамо неке кључне динамичке варијабле (као што су производња хране и биогорива, огромне резерве воде за пиће, нафте, злата, дијаманата, критичних минерала, биодиверзитета, драгоценог дрвета итд.) лакше је разумети зашто је геополитичка вредност ове јужноамеричке земље више него изванредна (а такође, зашто су САД то одавно схватиле). С друге стране, потребно је додати бразилску вољу да расте, утиче и пројектује се у иностранству, што се чини могућим само у мултиполарном светском поретку који карактеришу структура и динамика другачији од садашњег. Из свих тих разлога, објективних и субјективних, проучавање и разумевање бразилске стварности је толико релевантно, и о томе је реч у овом уводном чланку. У ту сврху, почећемо са контекстуализацијом питања, стављањем у његово стратешко окружење и прегледом, на крају, његових унутрашњих противречности. Одатле ће бити представљена сва поглавља која чине ово посебно издање покушавајући да објасне специфично поље бразилске стварности које се доводи у питање или објашњава у тексту.

Кључне речи: БРАЗИЛ, РОБА, СПОЉНА ПОЛИТИКА, ГЕОПОЛИТИКА, ГЛОБАЛНИ ЈУГ, МУЛТИПОЛАРНОСТ, СТРАТЕШКИ РЕСУРСИ



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BRAZIL AND CHINA: A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

Abstract: At a time characterized by relative equity in their positions within the international system – as developing countries with similar gross domestic product – Brazil and China established a strategic partnership in 1993. Initially, no institutional mechanism was created to manage the partnership. Only in 2004, with the establishment of the Sino-Brazilian High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN), a formal apparatus was established. Since then, with some regularity, COSBAN has become an instrument to operationalize the partnership between the two countries. In this paper, our objective is to evaluate, between 1993 and 2023, the Brazil-China strategic partnership, the challenges for its operationalization, and its institutional mechanisms. We argue that the concept of what it means to be a “strategic partner” in Sino-Brazilian relations, as well as the institutional dimension itself, has evolved as a result of adaptations stemming from changes in the countries’ positions in the international system and their respective models of development. We conclude that the flexibility of the partnership’s institutional apparatus, as well as its adaptability to embrace new interests, is what has sustained the relevance of this partnership. The research was conducted through bibliographical review and data collection from official websites.

Keywords: BRAZIL, CHINA, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Introduction

Brazil was the first country in the world with which China established a strategic partnership, in 1993. This occurred at a time when both countries held relatively equal positions within the international system. By 2023, the partnership had reached its 30th anniversary, but within a vastly different context. The initial equity gave way to growing asymmetries between the nations. While in 1990 their GDPs were comparable¹, today, Brazil ranks as the ninth largest economy in the world, whereas China holds the second position. China underwent a vast process of industrialization and has positioned itself at the center of the global order, while Brazil faced competitive difficulties and remained with unreached potential.

Nevertheless, the strategic partnership, or at least the expectation of imbuing bilateral relations with strategic significance, has prevailed for the most part of the time in the last 30 years and was supported by the creation of institutional mechanisms that tracked the growth of Sino-Brazilian interactions. In 2004, the China-Brazil High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN) was established to operationalize the strategic partnership, coinciding with China's growing importance to Brazil both economically and politically.

In this study, our goal is to evaluate, between 1993 and 2023, the Brazil-China strategic partnership, the challenges for its operationalization, and its institutional mechanisms. We argue that the concept of what it means to be a "strategic partner" in Sino-Brazilian relations, as well as the institutional dimension itself, has evolved as a result of adaptations stemming from changes in the countries' positions in the international system and their respective models of development. We conclude that the flexibility of the partnership's institutional apparatus, as well as its adaptability to embrace new interests, is what has sustained the relevance of this partnership. The research was conducted through bibliographical review and data collection from official websites.

In addition to this introduction, the paper is divided into four more sections. The second section analyzes the establishment of the strategic partnership in the 1990s and its outcomes during that period. The third section focuses on the 2000s, while the fourth section examines the strategic partnership in the 2010s. The fifth and final section presents the conclusions.

1 In 1990, Brazil's GDP was US\$ 384,96 billion while China's GDP was 360,86 (World Bank, 2024).

The Brazil-China strategic partnership in the 1990s

Brazil and China became strategic partners in 1993. Contrary to what might be expected, this partnership did not result from extensive negotiations. The period leading up to this action was characterized by the exhaustion of the previous model of Sino-Brazilian bilateral relations (Sousa, 2016). Cooperation in science and technology for joint satellite production, which had been an important program ongoing since the 1980s, was in crisis due to a lack of resources on the Brazilian side. Bilateral trade, previously characterized by Brazilian manufactured exports and Chinese basic goods imports, was changing due to China's industrialization. In the early 1990s, Brazilian foreign policy, especially under Fernando Collor presidency (1990-1992), focused on relations with developed countries (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2017). Thus, there were no clear indicators that a strategic partnership could be established between the two countries.

Behind-the-scenes information about the partnership's establishment, well analyzed by Biato (2010), suggests that the partnership was not planned. It emerged from rhetorical statements made by Brazilian and Chinese authorities during high-level visits by Chinese representatives to Brazil in 1993. Coincidentally, the countries began referring to each other as "strategic partners." For China, which was facing sanctions due to the Tiananmen Square incidents and a rejected visit by Jiang Zemin to the USA, this assertion emphasized that China had important partners in the Americas. For Brazil, there was an expectation of facilitating the entry of Brazilian products and investments into China. As two big, almost continental-sized countries with significant bilateral cooperation projects² (such as satellites, despite the crisis at that time), and similar international positions as developing nations, the partnership made sense.

Between 1993 and 1994, several high-level visits between the two countries contributed to creating a strategic aspect to the relationship. At that time, China was very interested in Brazil's development process, especially in hydroelectric production. In 1995, in the first year of his term presidency (1995-2002), President Fernando Henrique Cardoso visited China and proposed several bilateral cooperation initiatives in areas such as telecommunications, health, information technology, and banking automation. He also aimed to expand bilateral trade in sectors like mining and agriculture and promote the sale of airplanes and engineering services by Brazilian construction companies.

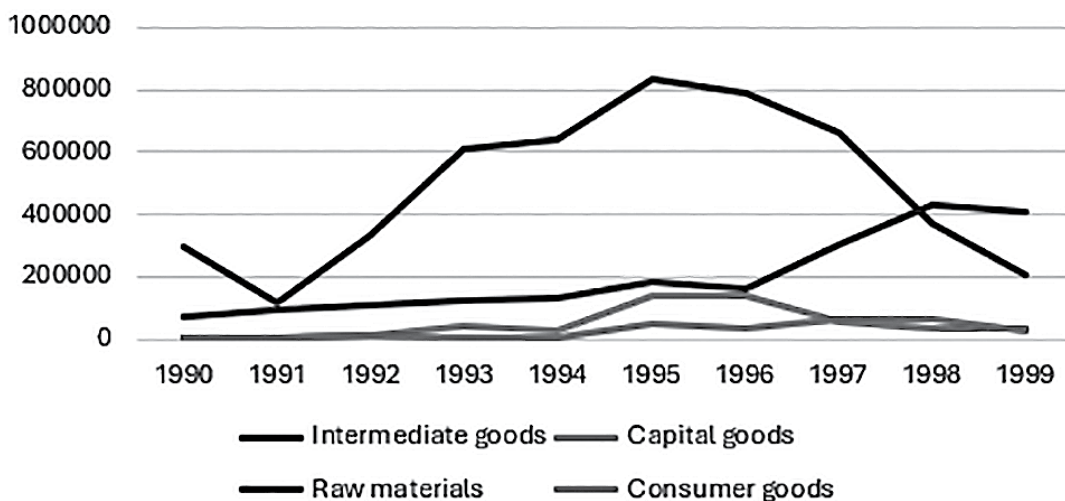
The strategic partnership generated expectations on the Brazilian side that Brazil could be treated preferentially compared to other countries, allowing it to benefit from China's economic modernization process and position its investments,

2 On the Concordia portal (<https://concordia.itamaraty.gov.br/>) it is possible to find documents for all agreements and projects signed between Brazil and China.

especially in infrastructure projects like the Three Gorges Dam (Biato, 2010). However, Chinese interests remained focused on mineral and agricultural raw materials, while Brazil, partly due to its own weaknesses, failed to position itself in higher value-added sectors of the Chinese market or in infrastructure projects.

By the late 1990s, the pattern of bilateral trade between the countries had changed due to China's industrialization and Brazil's competitiveness issues. As graphic 1 (below) shows, basic goods, with lower added value, became the main component of Brazilian exports to China. Difficulties for Brazilian industry to penetrate the Chinese market and increased competition from Chinese products in the domestic market led to frustrations in bilateral relations, reducing expectations for the partnership (Biato, 2010). High-level visits between the countries decreased, and Brazil temporarily deactivated its Consulate General in Shanghai.

Brazilian exports to China (1990-1999) in thousand US\$ by stages of processing



Graphic 1: Brazilian exports to China (1990-1999) in thousand US\$ by stages of processing

Source: WITS (2024)

Another factor that undermined the partnership was that during part of Cardoso's administration, Brazilian foreign policy was focused on developed countries, especially in building good relations with the USA (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2017). In 1996, Brazil voted in favor of a motion against China in the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Commission under USA pressure, causing complaints from China, which considered the action was incompatible with the partnership (Biato, 2010).

Thus, in the 1990s, the strategic partnership can be evaluated more as rhetoric than as stemming from strategic planning for relations between the countries. Although relations advanced, there were still doubts about whether the partnership could effectively guide bilateral interactions.

Consolidating the strategic partnership in the 2000s

In the early 2000s, adjustments allowed for the strengthening of the partnership between Brazil and China. During the second term of Cardoso administration, Brazil rebalanced its foreign policy, seeking to strengthen relations with major developing countries such as Russia, India, China, and South Africa (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2017). Meanwhile, China emerged as one of the world's leading economic powers, transformed into the “factory of the world” with growing influence in the global economy.

This economic emergence created a triangular scheme: at one end of the triangle China became a major producer and buyer of manufactured and primary goods; in the other, developed countries became the largest consumers of Chinese products; and, finally, at the last tip, developing countries served as suppliers of basic inputs to China (Biato, 2010). This scheme expanded markets for primary goods from developing countries and increased international commodity prices, benefiting commodity producers.

Recognizing that Brazil had exportable surpluses of agricultural products and energy goods, bilateral trade relations intensified, with Brazil exporting primary goods and maintaining a trade surplus with China while importing manufactured goods. Brazil had to adjust to this new commercial relationship pattern, realizing it could profit from China's demand for basic products. The presidency of Lula da Silva (2003-2010) was crucial in strategically enhancing Sino-Brazilian relations both economically and politically.

Lula's foreign policy strategy sought to strengthen ties with Global South countries, including China, aiming to diversify partnerships for Brazil's international insertion and build a multipolar environment where Brazil had greater influence (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2017). The year 2004 marked a turning point in bilateral relations, with state visits and efforts to strengthen the strategic partnership with China. For China, Lula brought numerous ministers, six governors, and around 420 businesspeople in the largest Brazilian delegation ever to visit a country (Sousa, 2016). Welcomed in China with honors, the 2004 visit received extensive local and international media coverage.

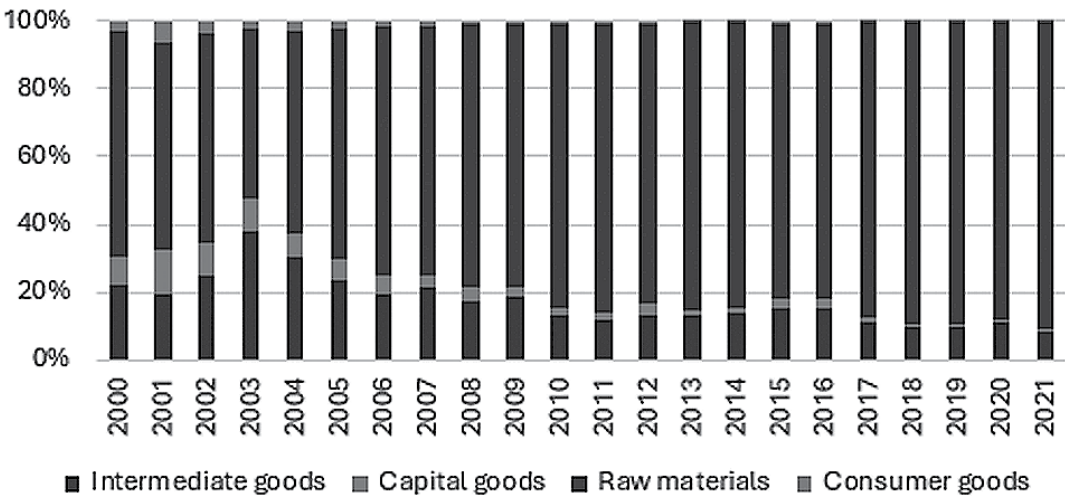
In Brazil, the visit raised high expectations. Mário Villalva, head of Department of Commercial Promotion of Itamaraty, stated that the goal was to make Brazilian businesses “understand that the new commercial frontier is Asia” (Valor Econômico,

2004). During the visit, several agreements, memorandums, and treaties were signed between the countries. One highlight was the Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of the China-Brazil High-Level Coordination and Cooperation Commission (COSBAN), aimed at “guiding and coordinating the development of the relationship” between the countries, co-chaired by high-ranking officials (the vice president in Brazil and the vice premier in China) (Memorando, 2004).

Four principles were established to strengthen the strategic partnership through COSBAN activities: mutual political trust, increased economic and commercial exchange, promotion of international cooperation, and exchange between civil societies (Memorando, 2004). During Chinese President Hu Jintao’s visit to Brazil later that year (2004), he emphasized Brazil’s importance to China’s foreign policy, calling it the “gateway” to Latin America (Sousa, 2016). Lula highlighted the indispensable partnership with China (Silva, 2004), expecting it to assist Brazil in strategic sectors and recognized China’s market economy status after negotiations including trade concessions and investment facilitation. Despite concerns in specific industrial sectors, the expansion of bilateral trade was seen as beneficial in the medium term, justifying the recognition. Additionally, Brazil hoped China would support its bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) (Sousa, 2016).

However, there were mismatched expectations. Economically, Brazil struggled to diversify its export portfolio to China. Throughout the 2000s, trade patterns increasingly resembled a north-south dynamic, marked by rising imports of Chinese industrial goods and exports of Brazilian basic goods (concentrated in three products: soybeans, iron ore, and oil) (Sousa, 2021). Graph 2 (below) shows how Brazilian exports have been concentrated over the last 20 years in basic goods.

Brazilian exports to China (2000-2021) by stages of processing (by % proportion)



Graphic 2: Brazilian exports to China (2000-2021) by stages of processing (by % proportion) Source: WITS (2024)

This frustrated domestic industries, as they not only had difficulties exporting their products to China, but also felt they were losing market share to China inside Brazil, since Brazilian imports were concentrated in transformation industry products for which there were domestic producers. Politically, a significant disconnect arose: China opposed the G-4 (Brazil, Japan, Germany, and India) proposal for UNSC reform. Brazil expected Chinese support, and the opposition caused frustration. Despite this, the strategic partnership showed signs of progress, with COSBAN playing an important role.

Even amid frustration, the first COSBAN Plenary Session was held in Beijing in 2006. The session featured delegations led by Chinese Vice Premier Wu Yi and Brazilian Vice President José Alencar. COSBAN's operational structure was organized, with biennial meetings and a system based on six sub-commissions on specific topics. Despite emerging problems or mismatches, as we will see, COSBAN maintained a long-term commitment to developing the strategic partnership, periodically setting objectives and goals.

During the meeting, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to mutually beneficial development and joint projects in areas like energy, oil, and aviation. The operationalization of COSBAN, even during a period of Brazilian frustration with China, showed that bilateral relations were maturing enough to compartmentalize issues and needs. Table 1 (below) lists the COSBAN plenary sessions.

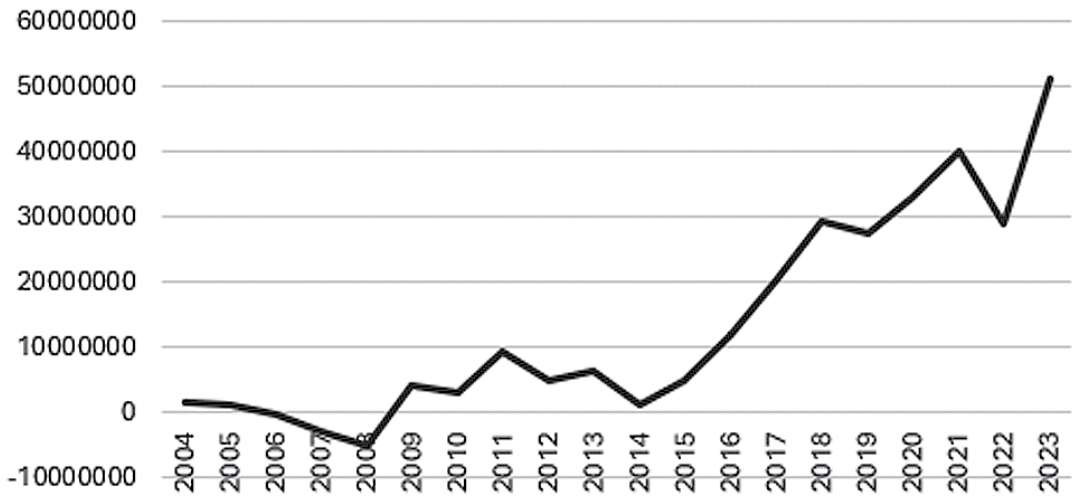
Year	Session
2006	First COSBAN Plenary Session
2012	Second COSBAN Plenary Session
2013	Third COSBAN Plenary Session
2015	Fourth COSBAN Plenary Session
2019	Fifth COSBAN Plenary Session
2022	Sixth COSBAN Plenary Session
2024	Seventh COSBAN Plenary Session

Table 1: COSBAN Plenaries Sessions
Source: Author's elaboration

In April 2007, a strategic dialogue between the foreign ministries of Brazil and China was launched, and in September, the “China Agenda” was released to improve bilateral trade. Among its objectives was to increase knowledge about Chinese tariff barriers in Brazil and identify higher value-added products for Brazilian to export for China. Also, one goal was to increase Chinese investments in Brazil, which were considered low given the level of trade between countries. These aspects show that the countries took their first steps to better structure a strategic partnership, now more planned, and that would be mutually beneficial.

The intensification of Brazil-China relations in 2008, within the context of the global financial crisis, was relevant to the objectives of Lula’s foreign policy, especially to reduce Brazil’s external vulnerability (Paulino, 2011). In 2009, amid the crisis in the USA and other traditional trade partners, China became Brazil’s largest trading partner and source of trade surplus. Graph 3 (below) shows the growth of Brazil’s trade surplus with China after 2008.

Trade Balance between Brazil and China
(2004-2023) in thousand US\$



Graphic 3: Trade balance between Brazil and China (2004-2023) in thousand US\$ Source: Trade Map (2024)

The 2008 crisis, the various articulation arenas between Brazil and China (notably the emergence of the BRIC group), and Chinese efforts for organizing the 2010 Shanghai Expo prevented the second COSBAN Plenary Session to happen in 2009. However, its sub-commissions continued to work, producing the 2010-2014 Joint Action Plan between Brazil and China, the first formal plan for Brazilian bilateral relations. Table 2 (below) lists all the formal plans developed for the Sino-Brazilian strategic partnership.

Year of release	Plan
2010	Brazil-China Joint Action Plan (2010-2014)
2012	Brazil-China Ten-Year Cooperation Plan (2012-2021)
2015	Brazil-China Joint Action Plan (2015-2021)
2022	Brazil-China Executive Plan (2022-2026)
2022	Brazil-China Strategic Plan (2022-2031)

Table 2: Formal plans for the Sino-Brazilian strategic partnership
Source: Author's elaboration

According to Leite (2012, p. 75), the Joint Action Plan's motivation was "to strengthen and organize the integration and cooperation model between Brazil and China, providing strategic and comprehensive guidelines for the development of the bilateral strategic partnership and cooperation in relevant areas given the interests of both nations". The plan had 15 chapters, covering areas such as political dialogue, economy and trade, energy, culture, agriculture, and technology (Plano, 2010). Overall, it aimed to strengthen comprehensive cooperation and support economic development.

By the end of the 2010s, relations between the countries had advanced significantly, with the strategic partnership evolving from rhetoric to more formal development, represented by COSBAN's functioning and the creation of specific plans for bilateral relations, such as the Joint Action Plan.

The ups and downs of the 2010s and early 2020s

In the early 2010s, China reached a new level of importance for Brazil compared to the early 2000s, mainly due to its role as Brazil's top trading partner and source of trade surplus. While Brazil wasn't entirely satisfied with the north-south trade pattern (its exports remained concentrated in soybeans, iron ore, and oil, while importing various manufactured goods from China)³, there was a clear understanding of the significance of bilateral trade and political relations with China, especially regarding broader actions in the international system, notably through BRICS.

During Dilma Rousseff's presidency (2011-2016), Brazil maintained a foreign policy that emphasized developing countries and coordination with major emerging nations (Sousa, 2016). In 2012, the second COSBAN Plenary Session took place, further strengthening bilateral cooperation. That same year, the two countries signed the Brazil-China Ten-Year Plan (2012-2021), setting guidelines and goals for cooperation in various areas such as trade, investment, science and technology, and culture.

This plan aimed not only to increase bilateral trade but also to promote investment in strategic sectors like infrastructure, energy, and mining (Plano, 2012). China was the first country President Rousseff visited outside Latin America in 2011, underscoring the importance the government placed on the partnership. The trip was followed by a large business delegation of around 300 entrepreneurs, aiming to establish business ties with China through missions organized by various institutions. However, the initial optimistic perspective of striking a "business deal" with China, which surrounded Lula's first visit to the country in 2004, had given way to more realistic views (Sousa, 2016).

3 According to data from Comex Vis, from 2013 to 2023, at least 98.6% of Brazilian imports from China were from the manufacturing sector. In the same period, at least 75% of Brazilian exports to China are concentrated in the extractive and agricultural sector, with the sum of exports of soybeans, iron ore and oil always occupying at least 70% of the exports to China. (Comex Vis, 2024).

Lula's government had sought closer ties with China as part of a policy to diversify partnerships and reduce Brazil's external vulnerability (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2017). However, at the time of Dilma's presidency, China had become by far the main destination for Brazilian exports and the largest investor in Brazil in 2010. Meanwhile, Brazil was unable to perform similarly in the Chinese market. This showed emerging asymmetries between countries arising from the fact that during the course of the previous two decades while China had advanced to become one of the largest economies in the world, Brazil, despite having developed well during the Lula government, had lagged behind. In fact, in the post-2008 scenario, Brazil began to suffer from a process of deindustrialization to which many analysts considered that China contributed to (Sousa, 2016).

Thus, the narrative that underpinned the relationship could no longer be diversification; the Rousseff administration replaced it with the principle of reciprocity (Sousa, 2016). As Salek (2011a) illustrated during an interview with Xinhua, Dilma explained: "This is a relationship that, I believe, will be very well developed between the two countries because there are areas where China can be crucial for Brazil and others where Brazil can be crucial for China... based on a concept that I consider very important in a relationship between equals: reciprocity."

The government's perception was that relations with China had played and continued to play a crucial role in helping Brazil deal with the post-international crisis scenario, but the growing economic asymmetry needed to be addressed. Brazil wanted to sell higher value-added products to China and attract productive Chinese investments. The vision was that the growing of the trade and investment flow from China required greater coordination with the Chinese government so that it could serve national development objectives in Brazil: "More than commercial partners, we want to be partners in research, technology, innovation, and development of truly binational technology products," stated Rousseff (Salek, 2011b). For this, the resumption of COSBAN plenary meetings from 2012 was seen as essential.

The February 2012 meeting was chaired on the Brazilian side by Vice President Michel Temer and on the Chinese side by Vice Premier Wang Qishan. Various topics were discussed, from multilateral coordination between the countries to deepening cooperation in science, technology, and innovation. However, trade issues dominated the agenda. In an article published before the meeting, Vice President Temer (2012) set the tone for discussions, arguing that despite growing relations, the challenge remained "to provide means to go beyond complementarity [...] We need to diversify trade flows to increase the share of higher value-added products in Brazilian exports." He emphasized that Brazil had engaged "with Chinese partners to identify new areas for investment, bearing in mind the importance attributed to adding value to our production chains," recognizing that this effort had already yielded concrete results, as in 2011, "16 projects representing \$7.14 billion in Chinese direct investments in Brazil were announced" with "74% destined for manufacturing, semi-manufacturing, and research and development, in addition to Chinese investments in the food, agricultural chemicals, and energy sectors" (Temer, 2012).

However, Brazilian companies needed greater reciprocity when investing in China.

Later in 2012, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Brazil, and several bilateral agreements were signed, notably the Brazil-China Ten-Year Cooperation Plan (2012-2021). The plan elevated the strategic partnership to a global level. It stated: “Since the international economic crisis of 2008, the two countries have held frequent consultations to mitigate its effects. To reflect this new stage in Sino-Brazilian relations, both countries decided to designate them as a global strategic partnership” (Plano, 2012). The plan’s elaboration and implementation aimed to “deepen the execution of the Joint Action Plan signed by the leaders of both countries, focusing on promoting cooperation in science and technology, economic, cultural, and people-to-people exchanges” (Plano, 2012).

The plan also established priorities and key projects in the following areas: science, technology, innovation and space cooperation; mining, energy, infrastructure and transportation; investment, industrial and financial cooperation; economic and commercial cooperation; cultural, educational cooperation and people-to-people exchanges (Plano, 2012). Many parts of the plan reaffirmed points already established in the Joint Action Plan (2010-2014). Notable among the projects and priorities was the goal of creating a “Brazil-China Biotechnology Center, focusing on joint research and development (R&D) in Medicine and Life Sciences, Biomedicine, Bioinformatics, and Nanotechnology, and their application in the aforementioned areas” and a Brazil-China Nanotechnology Center, which had been previously discussed (Plano, 2012) and was subsequently implemented.

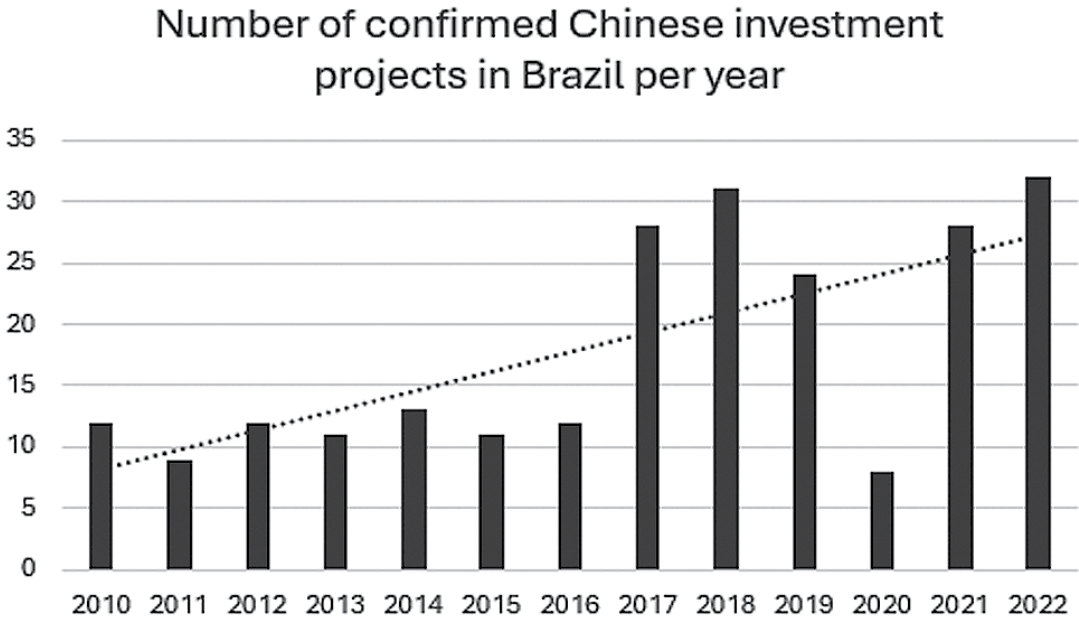
Additionally, the plan aimed to increase cooperation in mining, oil, and gas sectors, targeting the “establishment of coordinated systems for the production and processing of oil and gas with local content, both onshore and offshore, and for the transportation of natural gas, to supply domestic and international markets with added value” (Plano, 2012). The plan also established to increase “the participation of local content in the oil and gas production chain, as well as in the wind and solar energy industries, by promoting joint ventures between companies from both countries” (Plano, 2012). In subsequent years, as stated by Schutte (2020), Chinese investments in Brazil in the oil sector grew, including in association with the Brazilian state company in the sector, Petrobras. Fonseca et al (2024), in turn, they highlighted the increase in Chinese investment in sectors such as wind and solar.

Following the ten-year plan, the third COSBAN Plenary Session was held at the end of 2013, and the fourth session in mid-2015. Both were important for strengthening bilateral plans, especially facilitating the launch of a new Joint Action Plan for the period 2015-2021 in 2015.

Despite the tone of the documents from 2015 onwards still pointing to Brazil’s desire to diversify its exports to China by increasing added value, the focus was more on attracting Chinese investments to Brazil in energy, production, technology, and infrastructure sectors than trying to remedy the north-south trade pattern. As

shown in graph 2 (above), Brazilian exports had been concentrated in basic goods. Faced with the difficulty of changing the north-south trade pattern, attracting Chinese investments was seen as compensatory mechanism by Brazil.

Against the reality - given the countries' positions in the international division of labor (China reaching the top of the global chains, while Brazil faced difficulties in its industry) - it would be very difficult for the trade pattern to change between countries, it seemed more realistic trying to attract Chinese investments that could bring jobs, technologies and contribute to modernizing the Brazil's production structure. Thus, the plan focused on trying to articulate the increase in Chinese investments in Brazil, which produced results, as shown in graph 4 (below).



Graphic 4: Number of confirmed Chinese investment projects in Brazil per year

Source: Cariello (2023)

With Michel Temer's presidency (2016-2018), COSBAN meetings ceased as Brazil temporarily lacked a formal vice-president, who would be responsible for chairing the national session of the Commission. Despite this, Brazil-China relations continued to develop well during his government, benefiting from the already structured relationship framework. During Temer's tenure, Brazil received various Chinese investments previously negotiated and which emerged from new opportunities arose from his concession and privatization policies. As shown in graph 4 (above), from 2017 onwards there has been a significant increase in Chinese investment projects confirmed in Brazil.

However, changes in the dynamics of relations occurred with Jair Bolsonaro's presidency (2019-2022). Bolsonaro's administration was characterized by an alignment with USA foreign policy and open criticism of China. However, the solid structure of bilateral relations built in previous years worked in favor of the continued strategic partnership. After the last decades of growing trade and investment relations, powerful internal actors in Brazil (which have become interdependent with China) acted to constrain the hostile policy that Bolsonaro wanted to direct towards China. Sectors such as agribusiness, animal protein, minerals, telecommunications, among others, supported by pragmatic sectors that existed within the Bolsonaro government, worked to maintain stability for Brazil-China relations (Sousa et al, 2021).

Within Bolsonaro's government, specific Ministries such as of Agriculture and of Economy, and the Vice-Presidency of the Republic maintained a strategic approach towards China. Thus, COSBAN meetings resumed. In 2019, the fifth COSBAN Plenary Session occurred, and in 2022, the sixth session. The main outcome was the drafting of the 2022-2026 Executive Plan and the 2022-2031 Strategic Plan to guide bilateral relations and the strategic partnership. Following the trend from the 2015 plan, the focus was on guidelines related to Chinese investments in Brazil.

From 2023, with Lula da Silva's return for a third term in presidency (2023-2026), the strategic partnership was reinforced. Lula visited China in the first months of his government and was received with honors. In this new phase, efforts are being made to attract Chinese investment to Brazil aimed at industrial development (Sousa et al, 2023). One of the Lula government's goals is to promote a process of reindustrialization in the country, to this end, it wants to use relations with China to direct investments that can generate technology and industrial capacity. One of the sectors chosen has been electrification (which is mentioned in 2022-2026 Executive Plan and 2022-2031 Strategic Plan), for which Brazil has already managed to attract investments from Chinese companies such as Built Your Dreams and Great Wall Motors. In 2024, the countries held the seventh plenary session of COSBAN with Chinese investments in Brazilian industrialization as the main topic.

Conclusions

This study highlighted the development of the strategic partnership between Brazil and China over the past three decades, noting challenges and objectives in each period. Initially, Brazil's expectations were for preferential treatment from China, but later it became clear that even without such treatment, there were significant opportunities for gains, particularly through the expansion of bilateral trade. The second decade of the strategic partnership, the 2000s, was marked by the institutionalization of mechanisms for relationship planning – COSBAN and its subcommittees – and formalizing key orientations for bilateral relations starting a series of plans.

From the 2010s onwards, more emphasis was placed on attracting Chinese investments to Brazil, seen as compensatory mechanism for the established north-south trade pattern (with Brazilian exports concentrated in a few basic products). Over time, the countries' positions within the strategic partnership, and what each sought from the other, evolved according to their international standing and development paths. While China rose within the international division of labor and developed industrially, Brazil faced setbacks in its competitiveness and struggled to integrate into global value chains. Consequently, it viewed the strategic partnership as an opportunity to address these objectives. Since Rousseff's administration (2011-2016), the focus has been on attracting Chinese investment with more quality. With Lula's return to the presidency (2023-current), this momentum continues, the idea is to use these investments to modernize the national economy and reinsert the Brazilian productive sector internationally. There is no way to say whether this goal will be achieved or not. But there are certainly mechanisms in bilateral relations to address issues that arise.

Specifically, regarding COSBAN, it was interesting to perceive its importance as a promoter of formal plans for bilateral relations, while also being flexible with the periodicity of meetings and adaptable to the changing interests of the countries. Obviously, the plans made by the Commission result from the interests between the countries, and the interests of both cannot always be fully met. Brazil's quest to diversify its sales to China has, to this day, remained an unachieved objective, limited by Brazil's own weakness in competitiveness. On the other hand, when investing in Brazil, China had to adapt to the national market and could not reproduce there the same pattern of relationships that it has with countries in other areas of world. COSBAN has played an important role in promoting mutual knowledge between countries, smoothing out rough edges and stabilizing relations, updating over time the meaning of what a strategic relationship is and creating plans to operationalize it.



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БРАЗИЛ И КИНА: СНАЖНО ПАРТНЕРСТВО

Апстракт: У време које је карактерисала релативна једнакост у њиховим позицијама у међународном систему – као земље у развоју са сличним бруто домаћим производом – Бразил и Кина су успоставиле стратешко партнерство 1993. У почетку није створен институционални механизам за управљање партнерством. Тек 2004. године, успостављањем Кинеско-бразилске комисије за координацију и сарадњу на високом нивоу (ЦОСБАН), успостављен је формални апарат. Од тада, са одређеном регуларношћу, ЦОСБАН је постао инструмент за операционализацију партнерства између две земље. У овом раду, наш циљ је да проценимо, између 1993. и 2023. године, бразилско-кинеско стратешко партнерство, изазове за његову операционализацију и његове институционалне механизме. Тврдимо да су концепт о томе шта значи бити „стратешки партнер“ у кинеско-бразилским односима, као и сама институционална димензија, еволуирали као резултат прилагођавања проистеклих из промена у позицијама земаља у међународном систему и одговарајућег модела развоја. Закључујемо да је флексибилност институционалног партнерства, као и његова прилагодљивост да прихвати нове интересе, оно што је одржало релевантност овог партнерства. Истраживање је спроведено кроз библиографски преглед и прикупљање података са званичних сајтова.

Кључне речи: БРАЗИЛ, КИНА, СТРАТЕШКО ПАРТНЕРСТВО



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BRAZIL AND USA: A DECLINING RELATIONSHIP?

Abstract: Over the past few decades, there has been extensive discussion regarding the perceived decline of United States hegemony. These discussions often attribute such decline to external factors, such as the rise of emerging powers like China and Russia, as well as domestic forces - chiefly represented by the growing political influence of far-right movements. Within this intricate and challenging context, it becomes pertinent to inquire about the impacts of these transformations on the bilateral relationship between the United States and Brazil, a relationship often considered a cornerstone of both countries' foreign policies. However, contemporary events, such as the increasing influence of China in Latin America and the recent political transformations undergone by both nations, present new challenges for these relations. This article aims to delve into these events, focusing specifically on the administrations of Donald Trump (2017-2021), Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022), the early years of the Biden administration (2021-2024), and the beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's presidency (2023-2024). Methodologically, the article will draw upon content analysis and literature review.

Keywords: BRAZIL, USA, DONALD TRUMP, JAIR MESSIAS BOLSANARO, JOE BIDEN, LUIZ INACIO LULA DE SILVA

Introduction

In recent decades, the international geopolitical landscape has been marked by an intense debate about the decline of U.S. hegemony. Various analysts and scholars have attributed this situation to a series of external and internal factors that, to some extent, suggest the gradual deterioration of American power. On the external front, the rise of powers such as China and Russia challenges the dominant position of the United States in economic and military realms. Internally, the growing influence of far-right movements has generated significant transformations in U.S. domestic politics, putting liberal democracy in crisis.

In this complex context, it is crucial to understand that beyond the alleged decline of the United States as a global power, these changes also impact bilateral relations between Washington and Brasília from multiple perspectives. Traditionally seen as a cornerstone of the foreign policies of both countries, this relationship faces new challenges in light of contemporary events, such as China's growing influence in Latin America and recent political shifts in both nations.

Historically, the relationship between the United States and Brazil has been characterized by a combination of economic cooperation, strategic alignment, and, in some periods, pronounced political divergences caused by various factors. In recent decades, with China expanding its economic and diplomatic presence in Latin America and becoming Brazil's largest trading partner, Brazil, as the region's largest economy, finds itself in a delicate position of balancing its relations with the two major global powers.

In this regard, the administrations of Donald Trump (2017-2021) and Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022) brought a new dimension to this bilateral relationship. Both leaders shared similar political-ideological views, including skepticism towards multilateralism and international organizations, as well as self-proclaimed patriotic rhetoric based on the exaltation of conservative values and national symbols. However, their policies also introduced elements of unpredictability and tensions that complicated the traditional alliance between the two countries, especially due to the pressure exerted by China.

With Joe Biden's arrival to the presidency of the United States in 2021, a shift in U.S. foreign policy was observed, marked by a return to multilateral dialogue and a renewed focus on issues related to climate change and human rights, which had been neglected during the Trump administration. This new direction

directly impacted the relationship with Brazil, especially considering Bolsonaro's controversial environmental policies, which had also drawn criticism from European Union countries.

More recently, the beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's third term in 2023 brought new developments to this bilateral relationship. Known for his "active and assertive foreign policy" and for reinforcing Brazil's quest for international prominence, Lula da Silva may redefine diplomatic and economic priorities, thereby affecting interactions with the United States in a new phase of this relationship, which continues to be influenced by external forces, especially China and the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza.

This paper aims to investigate these events and their implications for the bilateral relationship between the United States and Brazil in recent years, without the intention of exhaustively covering the debate. With a particular focus on the most recent presidential terms in both countries — the administrations of Donald Trump (2017-2021), Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019-2022), the early years of Joe Biden's administration (initiated in 2021), and the beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's presidency (in 2023) — this study will utilize methodologies of documental content analysis and literature review. Through this approach, the aim is to provide an understanding of the dynamics shaping relations between these two nations today.

In this regard, the purpose of this paper is to address the following research question: based on recent administrations in both countries and the changes brought by internal and external contexts, as well as the alleged decline of American hegemony, is it possible to assert that the relationship between Brazil and the United States is in the process of weakening? And what are the prospects for the partnership, considering the political transformations in both countries in recent years?

The paper is divided into two sections. The first section aims to analyze the relations between Brazil and the United States during the Trump and Bolsonaro administrations, as well as the impacts of the failure of the Republican re-election campaign in 2020 that led Joe Biden to the oval office. The second part of the study will discuss Lula da Silva's third term and Biden's rise in the United States, and their implications for Brazilian foreign policy.

The alignment between Trump and Bolsonaro

The relationship between Brazil and the United States is of significant importance to both countries due to the economic and strategic influence each exerts on the international and regional systems. This relationship will also reach its bicentennial milestone in 2024. For the United States, Brazil represents a crucial partner in Latin America, being the largest economy in the region and a vital market for American exports, including manufactured goods, services, and technology. Cooperation

between the two nations in areas such as security and drug trafficking control is also fundamental to U.S. foreign policy, which aims to maintain its influence in the hemisphere.

For Brazil, the relationship with the United States offers substantial opportunities in terms of trade, investment, and technology transfer. For a long time, the U.S. occupied the top position in Brazilian foreign trade, being the principal destination for exports and the main source of imports. This position has recently been taken by China (Ministério do Desenvolvimento, Indústria, Comércio e Serviços, 2023). The loss of U.S. prominence in the trade and investment sectors was accentuated in the post-Cold War era and has been attributed not only to China's economic growth but also to specific events such as the strategic shift of U.S. foreign policy towards the Middle East — particularly in the early 2000s — and subsequently towards containing China in Asia (Pecequillo, 2011), which led to hemispheric relations and relations with Brazil being relegated to a secondary plan. Another significant factor during this period was the rise of left-leaning Latin American governments under the so-called “pink tide,” which facilitated the strengthening of regional integration projects and deepened the debate on autonomy and development. However, it is important to note that this did not mean the absence of the U.S. in Latin America. As illustrated by Milani (2021), the presence of the U.S. in the region remained relevant through its bureaucratic agencies, particularly in the areas of security and military cooperation.

When Jair Messias Bolsonaro assumed the presidency of Brazil in 2019, Donald Trump had already established some key pillars in U.S. foreign policy that would also resonate in Brazilian foreign policy: criticism of the multilateral system, particularly the United Nations, an emphasis on defending sovereignty, the promotion of economic freedoms, and climate change denial. These traits became some of the hallmarks of the broader phenomenon of the so-called “global new right” (Abrahamsen et al., 2020), to which both Trump and Bolsonaro were associated. Thus, it can be argued that Brazilian foreign policy under Bolsonaro underwent significant changes that reflected the ideological convictions of the president, his team, and part of the electorate, while also resonating with elements of U.S. foreign policy during the period. According to some researchers, Bolsonaro's arrival in Brasília and the appointment of Chancellor Ernesto Araújo represented not only an ideological shift in the government but also an internal restructuring of Itamaraty, which would alter the scope of Brazilian foreign policy (Hirst & Maciel, 2022). These alignments earned Bolsonaro the label of “Trump of the Tropics”, a nickname later adopted by the president himself.

In this sense, Hirst and Maciel (2022) argue that Bolsonaro's foreign policy was guided by three fundamental pillars, which in certain aspects align with the guidelines also followed by the United States under Trump:

The first pillar of foreign policy corresponds to the “ideological political core”, which reveals the alignment of the project with the international far-right ideology;

the second pillar is the “liberal conservative economic policy”, which encompasses the external aspect of its political economy; the third pillar pertains to the “security and defense complex”, related to the external alignments of the militarization of the Brazilian state. (Hirst & Maciel, 2022).

In his inauguration speech, delivered in Brasília on January 1, 2019, Bolsonaro extolled the need to “remove the ideological bias from our international relations” (Bolsonaro, 2019a), although on various occasions, the president himself, or even his Foreign Ministers, indicated a preference for relations with the United States over other international actors, as demonstrated by former Minister Ernesto Araújo in his inauguration speech: “(...) That is why we admire the United States of America, those who raise their flag and venerate their heroes” (Araújo, 2019). In a notorious article published still in 2017, Araújo attributed to Trump the role of “regenerating” the West through a return to the traditional symbols of Western/Judeo-Christian culture and the rejection of the principles of liberal democracy (Araújo, 2017). Although ideological alignment with the U.S. was not new in the history of Brazilian foreign policy (Pinheiro, 2005), the speeches elaborated by Bolsonaro and Araújo suggest a profound shift in the perception of this alignment, with the U.S. being seen as the primary reference point of Brazil’s foreign policy.

Both Bolsonaro and Trump were critics of multilateral institutions and international agreements. Trump, for instance, withdrew the United States from the Paris Agreement, a 2015 treaty on climate change, arguing that the pact harmed the American economy. He also withdrew the United States from other organizations, such as UNESCO and the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). Bolsonaro and his foreign minister, Ernesto Araújo, also expressed recurring skepticism about multilateral institutions, such as the UN and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Brazilian government justified this stance with arguments that such institutions served the interests of a globalism which, according to them, compromised national sovereignty and favored an ideological agenda contrary to the conservative values defended by Bolsonaro. The Brazilian administration echoed certain decisions of the Trump government and, similarly, withdrew Brazil from the UN Global Pact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration and frequently criticized multilateral organizations for allegedly interfering in Brazilian sovereignty.

One of the major points of convergence was the environmental agenda. Both presidents adopted policies favoring economic growth over environmental protection. Trump promoted fossil fuel exploration and reversed several environmental regulations implemented by previous administrations. The Republican argued that such measures were necessary to ensure energy independence and stimulate economic development. Similarly, Bolsonaro’s environmental approach generated significant tensions in Brazil’s relations with several countries and international organizations, particularly the European Union.

Beyond environmental issues, the alignment of Trump and Bolsonaro’s policies also extended to their political narrative-building. Both leaders based their foreign

policies on strong nationalist and populist rhetoric, prioritizing national sovereignty and independence in their domestic policies. Trump frequently referenced the “America First” slogan to justify his actions, asserting that U.S. interests should prevail over international commitments. Bolsonaro adopted a similar rhetoric, emphasizing Brazil’s sovereignty even in United Nations meetings, especially regarding the Amazon, and rejecting what he considered external interference.

The Trump and Bolsonaro administrations also operated from a significant alignment in their economic views, characterized by neoliberal policies that prioritized deregulation of productive forces, tax reduction, and the defense of free market principles, arguing that a less regulated economy would stimulate economic growth and job creation. At the opening of the 2019 annual United Nations General Assembly meeting, the first year of his term, Bolsonaro’s speech emphasized the relationship between economy, freedom, and democracy, which was also a hallmark of Trump’s speeches:

In the pursuit of prosperity, we are adopting policies that bring us closer to countries that have developed and consolidated their democracies. There cannot be political freedom without economic freedom, and vice versa. The free market, concessions, and privatizations are already present in Brazil today. The economy is responding by breaking free from nearly two decades of fiscal irresponsibility, state apparatus corruption, and widespread corruption. Openness, competent management, and productivity gains are immediate objectives of our government. (Bolsonaro, 2019b).

In terms of bilateral initiatives, it was emblematic that the United States was, in 2019, the first destination among the official visits undertaken by Bolsonaro’s government, contrary to the diplomatic tradition that had previously accorded this position to Argentina¹. During this visit, several key issues that would shape the partnership in the following years were discussed, such as: the status of trade relations and visa waiver systems; military cooperation, including negotiations on the use of the Alcântara base and elevating Brazil to the status of a NATO extra-regional ally; and regional issues, such as political instability in Venezuela and the fight against drug trafficking (Forner, 2023).

In the commercial sphere, facilitations were negotiated concerning the export of Brazilian beef to the U.S. and the import of American wheat, through the U.S.-Brazil Economic and Trade Cooperation Agreement. The Trump administration also expressed support for Brazil’s accession to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (Embaixada e Consulado dos EUA no Brasil, 2019). Although Brazil’s entry into the OECD did not materialize, Brazil proceeded to the renunciation of benefits granted by the World Trade Organization’s (WTO) special treatment clause for developing countries. Additionally, the Bolsonaro administration announced that it would unilaterally grant visa waivers to U.S. citizens, a move seen not

1 On the other hand, as highlighted by Motta and Cruz (2024), Trump was the first U.S. president in nearly four decades not to visit Brazil.

only as an expression of automatic alignment with the U.S. government but also as an adoption of a submissive stance by the Brazilian government (Motta & Cruz, 2024).

Another notable point was the relations in the technological and military fields. During the Trump administration, Brazil was elevated to the status of “extra-regional” ally of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), a position previously granted only to Argentina in South America. In practical terms, this designation involved facilitations regarding arms transfers, joint training, and financing for defense products exported by Brazil (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2019). However, it can be asserted that this status entails complex consequences, reaffirming, for example, the dependent insertion of the Brazilian military system into the modern international technological system (Assis, 2022).

In this same regard, the approval of the agreement for the use of the Alcântara military base in Maranhão complements the perspective of technological dependence, by establishing not only the commercial and military use of the base by the U.S., particularly in the space sector, but also prescribing obligations that Brazil would not enter into agreements for space vehicle launches with nations that are not part of the Missile Technology Control Regime (Câmara dos Deputados, 2019). This includes China, indicating that the restriction also aimed to reduce Chinese influence in the region. Furthermore, the agreement maintained specifications on restricted areas of controlled access, which would be monitored and exclusively used by the U.S. (Câmara dos Deputados, 2019). As highlighted by Motta and Cruz (2024), although the agreement facilitates the launch of rockets and satellites from any nation — provided they contain U.S. technology and comply with the Missile Technology Control Regime — no technological transfer provisions benefiting Brazil were included in the agreement document.

Regarding the regional context, the Trump and Bolsonaro administrations also aligned in adopting harsher stances on the Venezuelan situation. In 2020, both administrations expressed support for the opposition front led by Juan Guaidó against Nicolás Maduro’s government. Similarly, Bolsonaro’s presidency deepened the process of diminishing regional integration projects, withdrawing Brazil from Unasul and promoting the creation of more commercialist and neoliberal initiatives such as Prosur.

Despite the alignment with the U.S. government, this did not practically result in Brazil’s commercial and economic distancing from China. Despite Brazilian government figures and the president himself adopting Trumpian rhetoric blaming China for the COVID-19 pandemic, China retained its position as Brazil’s largest commercial partner. In 2021, even during the pandemic, trade between the two countries reached a historic volume of \$135 billion. China continued to be the primary destination for Brazilian exports and the leading source of imports and investments received by Brazil (Rosito & Carvalho, 2022). In light of the increasing relations with China, the U.S. remained in second place, reinforcing the trend observed in recent decades, as indicated in Table 1.

Brazil exports destination	2021 USD bn	% of total	Brazil exports destination	2011 USD bn	% of total	Brazil exports destination	2001 USD bn	% of total
China	87.8	31.3%	China	44.3	17.5%	USA	14.1	24.4%
USA	31.1	11.1%	USA	25.8	10.2%	Argentina	5.0	8.6%
Argentina	11.9	4.2%	Argentina	22.7	8.9%	Netherlands	2.9	4.9%
Netherlands	9.3	3.3%	Netherlands	12.4	4.9%	Germany	2.5	4.3%
Chile	7.0	2.5%	Japan	9.5	3.7%	Japan	2.0	3.4%
Singapore	5.8	2.1%	Germany	9.0	3.6%	China	1.9	3.3%
South Korea	5.7	2.0%	Italy	5.4	2.1%	Mexico	1.9	3.2%
Mexico	5.6	2.0%	Chile	5.4	2.1%	Italy	1.8	3.1%
Japan	5.5	2.0%	UK	5.2	2.1%	Belgium	1.7	3.0%
Spain	5.4	1.9%	South Korea	4.7	1.9%	UK	1.7	2.9%
Germany	5.0	1.8%	Spain	4.7	1.8%	France	1.6	2.8%
Canada	4.9	1.7%	Venezuela	4.6	1.8%	Chile	1.4	2.3%
India	4.8	1.7%	France	4.3	1.7%	Russia	1.1	1.9%
Malaysia	4.7	1.7%	Russia	4.2	1.7%	Venezuela	1.1	1.9%
Italy	3.9	1.4%	Belgium	4.0	1.6%	Spain	1.0	1.8%
Top 15 Partners	198.4	70.7%	Top 15 Partners	167.1	65.9%	Top 15 Partners	36.4	62.7%
Total	280.6	100.0%		253.7	100.0%		58.0	100.0%

Table 1: Brazilian exports between 2001 and 2021

Source: Rosito & Carvalho (2022)

The ambivalence in Brazilian conduct was also reflected in the issue of 5G technology and the negotiations involving the Chinese technology company Huawei. During the Trump administration, the U.S. engaged in an aggressive technological competition strategy, which included, among other measures, raising tariffs on Chinese products in the context of the so-called “trade war” and banning Huawei from the U.S. market, citing violations of national security guidelines. Huawei had been establishing itself over the previous decades as a leader in the 5G frequency market, raising concerns in U.S. economic and military sectors due to its multiple applications and strategic impacts.

In August 2020, then-U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo launched the “Clean Network” program to counteract Chinese presence in telecommunications, through the adoption and dissemination of security measures and guarantees for the privacy of U.S. citizens, businesses, and diplomatic posts abroad (Pompeo, 2020). The initiative was adopted as part of broader national security measures under the Trump administration, which also included, in addition to the Huawei ban, proposed — but not implemented — bans on apps and social networks such as TikTok, on the grounds that the Chinese government could exploit user privacy data. At that time, Brazil diplomatically supported the program but did not ban Huawei from the country or restrict other Chinese apps within national territory.

In 2021, the arrival of Joe Biden (2021-present) to the U.S. presidency triggered a

shift in bilateral relations, breaking with the ideological alignment present during the Trump-Bolsonaro era. Since the electoral campaign, the Democratic president criticized the Brazilian government's environmental policies and emphasized the need for investment in Amazon protection measures. On the other hand, Bolsonaro was one of the last heads of state to congratulate the Democrat on his victory and, on more than one occasion, questioned the legitimacy of the U.S. elections (Sanches, 2022). In this context, the period between 2021 and 2022 was marked by episodes of estrangement and tension between Washington and Brasília, particularly regarding Brazilian stances on the Ukraine war, oscillating between neutral rhetoric on the conflict and positive gestures (including a visit) to the Russian government. Significantly, the first official meeting between the Brazilian and U.S. presidents occurred only in 2022, at the IX Summit of the Americas.

In summary, we can assert that the Brazil-U.S. relations under the Trump and Bolsonaro administrations were characterized by automatic and ideological alignment, which deepened Brazil's dependent insertion pattern in the economic, technological, and military fields. The arrival of Biden to the U.S. presidency brought challenges to the maintenance of this proximity and reinforced points of divergence between the administrations. The next section will discuss the results and prospects regarding the early years of Biden and Lula III.

The relationship between the Lula III and Biden administrations

The beginning of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's third term in 2023 as president of Brazil brought significant changes compared to Jair Bolsonaro's administration, particularly concerning environmental issues and multilateral relations, which were once again prominent on Brazil's foreign policy agenda. From the 2022 presidential campaign, the leftist coalition had already signaled that, if victorious, it would be necessary to recalibrate certain aspects of foreign policy to break the perceived international isolation created by its predecessor and reinsert the country onto the global stage, especially through the repositioning in agendas such as environmental protection, regional integration, and a reinforcement of multilateralism (Lima, 2023, p. 82). This scenario is linked not only to internal conditions but also to the external context: following Trump's defeat to Joe Biden in the 2020 elections, some analysts argued that Brazil's distancing from its tradition of supporting multilateralism had become less viable, including due to potential American pressures (Hirst & Maciel, 2022).

In this context, Brazil reaffirmed the need to prioritize environmental protection and combat climate change, reversing the previous administration's stance on Amazon deforestation — although criticisms regarding the effects of territorial preservation persist. The Lula administration implemented more rigorous

environmental oversight policies and reaffirmed Brazil's commitment to the Paris Agreement, aiming to restore the country's credibility as a leader in the global environmental agenda. This commitment led to the confirmation that the city of Belém, Pará, would host COP 30 in 2025.

The Lula III government also resumed an active engagement stance with multilateral institutions and international forums, contrasting with Bolsonaro's skeptical view. The Lula administration reaffirmed Brazil's commitment to the UN and the WTO, advocating for multilateral cooperation as essential for addressing global issues, including economic, social, and environmental matters. Under Lula, Brazil sought to strengthen its regional alliances through Mercosur and the revitalization of Unasur. These shifts in foreign policy signaled an attempt to rebuild Brazil's image as a responsible and collaborative actor on the international stage, including presenting criticisms of multilateralism management and the global governance dominated by the central powers, as evidenced in the 2023 United Nations General Assembly speech (Lula da Silva, 2023a).

In his inaugural address for the third term, Lula emphasized what his government proposed for international relations:

Our protagonism will be realized through the resumption of South American integration, starting with Mercosur, the revitalization of Unasul, and other regional sovereign coordination mechanisms. On this basis, we will be able to reconstruct an assertive and active dialogue with the United States, the European Community, China, the countries of the Middle East, and other global actors; strengthening the BRICS, cooperation with African countries, and breaking the isolation to which the country had been relegated. (Lula da Silva, 2023b).

Joe Biden had been in office in the White House since 2021 when Lula was elected in Brazil. One of the first "tests" of the new relationship came with the anti-democratic riots of January 8, 2023, which culminated in the invasion of the Brazilian Congress by supporters of former President Jair Bolsonaro. In that context, the reactions from the U.S. government, including President Biden's statements, were unanimous in condemning the acts and reinforcing the importance of respecting democratic institutions. The similarity between the events in Brazil and the Capitol invasion on January 6, 2021, seemed to reaffirm the Democratic administration's concerns about the strength of extreme-right movements, suggesting that Biden's stance could also be interpreted as a response to the internal context in the U.S., which was still intensely polarized at the time.

Since then, relations between Brazil and the United States under the two presidents have been marked by a revitalization of bilateral dialogue, partially hindered by the tensions between Bolsonaro and the Biden administration, and an emphasis on environmental issues, human rights, and economic cooperation. Still in 2023, Biden and Lula held their first official meeting during the Brazilian representative's visit to the White House. During the meeting, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitments to environmental agendas and the preservation

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of democratic institutions; they also promised to revitalize the Joint Action Plan Brazil-U.S. for the Elimination of Racial and Ethnic Discrimination and Promotion of Equality (Embaixada e Consulado dos EUA no Brasil, 2023), indicating the reemergence of human rights issues on both administrations' agendas. Investments for the Amazon Fund were discussed, and intentions to expand commercial and technological partnerships between the two countries were reinforced, though no specific agreements were finalized on the matter.

In September 2023, during a new bilateral meeting at the United Nations General Assembly, Lula and Biden launched the "Workers' Rights Partnership," a cooperation program aimed at the promotion of decent work, structured around five points: a) promotion and dissemination of labor rights; b) guarantee of job opportunities and encouragement of the transition to clean energy; c) enhancement of the importance of labor issues in multilateral forums; d) protection of labor rights on digital platforms; and e) involvement of the private sector and combating workplace discrimination (Presidência da República, 2023). The plan introduced a relatively novel dimension to bilateral relations and resonated with both administrations' domestic priorities regarding job creation.

Despite the return to a friendly and cooperative pattern, U.S.-Brazil relations have also been marked by disagreements during this period. In particular, three aspects stand out: Lula's critical positions on the conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza; the Brazilian moves to expand South-South cooperation and promote "BRICS Plus"; and the debate over the UN Security Council reform.

Regarding international conflicts, the Lula III administration sought to reaffirm Brazil's mediating role, suggesting, for example, the creation of a "Peace Club" involving participants such as the U.S., Turkey, India, and the European Union (Poder 360, 2023). However, statements made by President Lula during a visit to China in 2023 blamed the U.S. for "encouraging war" (Haubert, 2023), causing some strain in the bilateral relationship. Subsequently, the U.S. government sought to promote a meeting with the Brazilian leader to discuss the Ukraine conflict during the G-7 Summit in 2023 in Japan, but the request was met with hesitation by the Brazilian administration. During the summit, President Lula maintained a critical tone towards U.S. positions, stating that President Biden was exerting pressure on Russia without discussing peace (Yazbek, 2023). Subsequent meetings were characterized by some degree of accommodation, especially after the meeting between President Lula and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky during the UN General Assembly in 2023. Nonetheless, Brazil maintained a pro-ceasefire stance, including a joint proposal with China for the creation of a peace conference to resolve the conflict (Presidência da República, 2024).

In the case of Israeli military incursions in Gaza, Lula also supported ceasefire measures and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population, comparing the events to the Holocaust, which provoked disagreements from U.S. representatives (Poder 360, 2024). The Brazilian head of state criticized U.S. positions on maintaining

military partnership with Israel and blocking attempts within the Security Council to the formulation of multilateral resolutions to end the conflict.

Relations with China and the Global South also remained a focal point of indirect questioning of U.S. influence in the international system. During Lula III's administration, Brazil promoted the expansion of the BRICS arrangement (through the so called "BRICS Plus"), with the accession of Egypt, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Iran². Besides expanding and diversifying the group, this move also suggests perspectives for increased commercial relations among its members, potentially promoting a reduction in dependence on the U.S. dollar.

Finally, although President Biden has indicated support for a possible expansion of the Security Council, there were no explicit mentions of Brazil's inclusion, frustrating Lula's government expectations regarding the country's historic bid for a permanent seat. This position, however, maintains continuity with the U.S. stance on this issue, which, despite possible rhetorical fluctuations, preserves an approach that favors the status quo and the maintenance of the existing order.

These points suggest that while Biden-Lula relations have reestablished bilateral partnership in a path of "normalization" – represented by the return of both countries to active roles in multilateral forums and cooperation on priority agendas – disagreements and divergences persist, reinforced by Brazil's renewed projection, especially in the South-South relations axis, and the intensification of Brazil's critical stance on international conflicts and institutions.

2 The invitation was also extended to Argentina, but it was declined by President Javier Milei.

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Aspect	Bolsonaro Administration (2019-2022)	Lula III Administration (2023-)
Diplomatic Orientation	Strong alignment with the United States; focus on privatization, deregulation, and economic reforms.	Recalibration of foreign policy; emphasis on multilateralism, environmental protection, and regional integration.
Relations with the United States	Emphasis on strategic partnership with the U.S.; support for U.S. policies; significant cooperation in military and economic areas.	Revitalization of bilateral dialogue; focus on environmental issues, human rights, and economic cooperation. Some tensions over international conflicts.
Environmental Policy	Minimal focus on environmental protection; criticism from the international community for deforestation and climate policies.	Strong commitment to environmental protection; re-engagement with global environmental agendas; hosting of COP 30 in 2025.
Multilateral Engagement	Skepticism towards multilateral institutions; withdrawal from Unasur; creation of Prosur.	Strong commitment to multilateralism; re-engagement with the UN and WTO; revitalization of Unasur and Mercosur.
Regional Integration	Shift away from regional integration; focus on bilateral and commercial agreements.	Focus on regional integration through Mercosur and Unasur; promotion of South-South cooperation.
Relations with China	Increased alignment with U.S. positions against China; continued economic cooperation with China.	Expansion of BRICS Plus; promotion of closer ties with China; diversification of international partnerships.
Military and Technological Cooperation	Enhanced military and technological cooperation with the U.S.; use of Alcântara base; dependency on U.S. technology.	Continued emphasis on defense and technology partnerships; cautious approach to U.S. military influence.
International Conflicts	Support for U.S. positions on Venezuela and other international conflicts.	Critical stance on U.S. involvement in conflicts; emphasis on Brazil's mediating role in international disputes.
UN Security Council	Support for status quo; no significant moves towards expanding the Council.	Continued push for reform and inclusion of Brazil in the UN Security Council; frustration over lack of U.S. support.

Table 2: Brazilian Foreign Policy Between Bolsonaro and Lula III

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the initial discussion proposed by Vidigal (2019).

Final remarks

This paper has explored the transformations in the bilateral relations between the United States and Brazil during the administrations of Donald Trump and Jair Messias Bolsonaro, and Joe Biden and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

The analysis reveals that the partnership between Trump and Bolsonaro was characterized by an ideological and submissive alignment, which deepened Brazil's dependent insertion into the international system, particularly in the military and technological fields. However, this alignment did not affect the relations with China, which continued to be Brazil's primary commercial partner, despite the presidential rhetoric critical of the Chinese power.

The arrival of Joe Biden and Lula da Silva as presidents of their respective countries introduced a perspective of normalization and pragmatism into the bilateral relationship, marked by convergences — particularly on environmental, humanitarian, and labor issues — and divergences concerning international conflicts and the reform of international institutions. In this new context, there is an increased emphasis on Brazil's engagement with China, not only in trade but also in broader debates such as peace-building in Ukraine and the expansion of the BRICS.

Despite these developments, the question of whether US-Brazil relations are in decline is complex. While there have been some setbacks, particularly in the economic domain, the bilateral relationship has demonstrated a notable capacity to adapt to political changes and transformations experienced by both countries. It is also important to note that the United States continues to exert significant regional and local influence, particularly in the military sphere. A study published by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA) in 2024 indicates that the United States remains the primary focus of Brazil's external defense interactions (Barros, Lima, Barros, 2024). This is reflected not only in arms transfers but also in military joint training and the application of Brazilian military doctrine.

These elements underscore the importance of studying US-Brazil relations to understand not only the foreign policies of both countries but also the critical impacts of these interactions, especially for Brazil.



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БРАЗИЛ И САД: СТАГНИРАЈУЋИ ОДНОСИ?

Апстракт: Током протеклих неколико деценија, водила се опсежна дискусија о уоченом стагнацији хегемоније Сједињених Држава. Ове расправе често приписују такав пад спољним факторима, као што је успон сила у настајању, попут Кине и Русије, као и домаћих снага – углавном представљених растућим политичким утицајем екстремно десничарских покрета. У овом замршеном и изазовном контексту, постаје релевантно да се утврди утицај ових трансформација на билатералне односе између Сједињених Држава и Бразила, односа који се често сматра каменом темељцем спољне политике обе земље. Међутим, савремени догађаји, као што је све већи утицај Кине у Латинској Америци и недавне политичке трансформације које су претрпеле обе нације, представљају нове изазове за ове односе. Овај чланак има за циљ да се удуби у ове догађаје, фокусирајући се посебно на администрацију Доналда Трампа (2017-2021), Жаира Месијаса Болсонара (2019-2022), ране године Бајденове администрације (2021-2024) и почетак Луиза Председништво Инасија Луле да Силве (2023-2024). Методолошки, чланак ће се ослањати на анализу садржаја и преглед литературе.

Кључне речи: БРАЗИЛ, САД, ДОНАЛД ТРАМП, ЖАИР МЕСИАС БОЛСАНАРО, ЏО БАЈДЕН, ЛУИЗ ИНАЦИО ЛУЛА ДЕ СИЛВА

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BRAZIL'S ECONOMIC OPENING FROM 2000 TO 2020

Abstract: This study aims to analyze the economic performance of Brazil from 2000 to 2020, addressing the behavior of the country's exports, imports, and GDP. To that end, the degree of Economic Openness and the Export Effort index were applied, using data from the Secretariat of Foreign Trade and the World Bank. The indicators calculated did not show significant performance over the analyzed period, and a tendency of stagnation was observed, which indicates that Brazil still faces challenges in global trade. Even after the rupture from the import substitution process, the country has encountered difficulties inserting itself as a major player in the international market. Over the last two decades, Brazil experienced moments of decline in its commercial interactions, mainly immediately after the 2008 global financial crisis, and later with the internal political and economic instability it experienced from 2014 onwards, which negatively impacted its GDP. The country's reliance on commodity exports and the limited dynamism of its domestic industrial production are important factors to be considered by economic policymakers, to enable greater balance, autonomy and competitiveness for the Brazilian trade sector.

Keywords: INTERNATIONAL TRADE, DEGREE OF ECONOMIC OPENING, EXPORT EFFORT INDEX

Introduction

During the 1960s and 1980s, the Brazilian economy was characterized by protectionist economic policies that hindered the country's integration into the international market; however, from the 1990s onwards, Brazil began a process of economic opening, leading to increased trade interactions and a reduction in protectionist barriers. As a result, in the last two decades, the country achieved greater integration in global trade (De Aquino, 2014).

The surge in worldwide demand for commodities from the early 2000s, known as "commodities boom", also contributed to promote the expansion of Brazil's exports. Among the Brazilian export basket, soybeans stand out, with China as the country's main trading partner (Da Silva; Lunelli; Cleto, 2021). Recent export data corroborates this important relationship, as it shows that the Asian nation is currently the main destination of Brazilian soybeans, as well as sugar cane exports (Agência Gov, 2024).

The favorable international scenario during the first part of the 2000s, the strengthening of relations with China, and the adoption of internal measures helped Brazil improve its terms of trade over the last two decades. Nevertheless, even though progress has been observed in this regard, the country also experienced distinct cycles, interspersed with periods of development and recession.

Given this scenario, it becomes imperative to understand and measure, precisely, those time periods. Hence, this study aims to analyze Brazil's economic performance, from 2000 to 2020, addressing the behavior of the country's exports, imports, and GDP. To that end, the degree of Economic Openness and the Export Effort index were applied.

Understanding Brazil's development from a macroeconomic perspective is essential to determine whether there has been significant progress, stagnation, or recession over the years, and it also contributes to a greater knowledge of the performance of its trade balance, identifying moments and factors that influenced the dynamics of the country's foreign trade. Nevertheless, this study aims to differentiate itself by analyzing relevant performance indicators of international trade, covering a broad time frame, which allows for a comprehensive and quantitative review of Brazilian commercial achievements in the first two decades of the 21st century.

The remainder of this article is structured into four other sections: the second section presents the literature review; the third section outlines the methodological framework; and the fourth section analyzes and discusses the results. Finally, section five presents the main conclusions.

Literature review

The ECLAC line of thought argued that the fundamental factor for Brazil to achieve economic development was to increase its exports. The country's industrial process was one of the major obstacles to economic growth, as it was developing insufficiently due to the scarcity of foreign currency and the limited demand of its domestic market. Thus, the expansion in trade relations with foreign countries was seen as a solution to develop the country's economic framework (Medeiros; Serrano, 2001).

Trade liberalization in Brazil has been debated since the 1980s, but at that time discussions were based on the "import substitution process" – an economic and industrialization policy centered on the domestic market. However, this model presented several ruptures and limitations, especially when its achievements were compared to those of countries focused on exports (Honório; Araújo, 2014).

After its re-democratization, Brazil began to seek different economic policies and adopted a new model of international trade. In the 1990s, the country implemented a different pattern of economic and accumulation strategy, based on "neoliberal" ideas (Gennari, 2002). Moreira and Correa (1997) detailed how the trade liberalization process was conducted at that time:

Between 1988-93, a broad process of trade liberalization was carried out, in which greater transparency was granted to the protection structure, the main non-tariff barriers were eliminated, and the degree of protection of local industries was gradually reduced (Moreira; Correa, 1997, p. 68, our translation).

The Brazilian economy benefited considerably from this economic opening, but the achievements obtained were not only the result of the internal measures adopted. The expansion of Brazil's participation in global trade is also attributed to the international scenario (Hiratuka; Sarti, 2016). In the 2000s, the world observed the rise of emerging markets, especially China, while the United States and other developed countries were expanding their internal markets, through consumption, which led to the increase in commodity prices worldwide (Lélis; Cunha; Linck, 2019). Brazil took advantage of this favorable context, strengthening ties with China, which became one of the country's main trading partners. As a result, national exports gradually increased, especially commodities, with soybeans as the protagonist.

From that period on, the country's export basket has undergone some changes.

According to Da Silva, Lunelli, and Cleto (2021), during the 2000s, Brazil had semi-manufactured products as its main national exports, followed by commodities; however, from the beginning of the 2010s, the share of semi-manufactured and manufactured products fell sharply, while that of commodities grew exponentially.

Since then, Brazilian exports have been dependent essentially on the trade of primary products. The close trade relationship between Brazil and China leads to recurring surpluses in the Brazilian trade balance; but the excessive dependence on only a few trading partners and the fact that the export agenda is largely linked to primary products, which have more volatile prices, bring uncertainty regarding the sustainability of Brazil's trade situation (Da Silva; Lunelli; Cleto, 2021).

Another important fact about Brazil's international insertion is that, even though the country has adopted trade liberalization policies, with an emphasis on exports, it is still considered relatively closed, and its participation in international trade is not as significant if compared to other nations. The Brazilian economy is absent from global production networks, and this is largely due to national economic policies, both past and recent, concerning production and trade (Canuto; Fleischhaker; Schellekens, 2015).

One approach to quantitatively assess the development of a country's trade relations is by calculating the degree of Economic Openness and the Export Effort index. Cavalcante et al. (2017) applied this methodology for Brazil as a whole and for each region, between 2007 and 2015, and identified that the country presented stagnation and decline in the performance of the analyzed indicators, with an average value of 19.01% for the degree of Economic Openness, and 10.07% for the Export Effort index. The authors also pointed out that the 2008 international crisis affected Brazil's trade relations, due to a decrease in commercial interactions with foreign countries and an increase in the country's nominal gross domestic product (Cavalcante et al., 2017). Another important finding worth highlighting from their study is that Brazil's export agenda is highly linked to primary products, with China and the United States as its main destinations. Thus, Brazilian exports are intrinsically linked to the land factor, which is the most abundant production factor in the Brazilian economy (Cavalcante et al., 2017).

Similarly, in a study proposed to regionally assess the degree of Economic Openness and the Export Effort index in Brazil, Menezes (2023) found that all Brazilian regions were affected by the 2008 international crisis, which harmed the performance of the indicators, considering them individually, for each region. In addition, the author identified that the North region was the one that presented the greatest commercial openness, followed by the South, Central-West, Southeast, and finally the Northeast. Nevertheless, the study evidenced that Brazil managed to recover its performance in international trade after the 2008 crisis; however, internal instabilities, both political and economic, made this recovery difficult (Menezes, 2023).

Methodological approach

The Export Effort (EE) index is a simplified way of analyzing the level of trade openness of a country, relating the country's total exports (X) to its GDP (Equation 1). It also indicates how much the international market influences the national GDP.

$$EE = \frac{X_t}{GDP_t} \tag{1}$$

As for the degree of Economic Openness (EO), it shows how intense the country's trade relations with the international market are, considering its total exports (X) and imports (M) in relation to its GDP (Equation 2). The higher the index, the more open the country can be considered.

$$EO = \frac{X_t + M_t}{GDP_t} \tag{2}$$

To analyze Brazil's economic performance from 2000 to 2020, addressing the behavior of the country's exports, imports, and GDP, both indicators (EE and EO) were obtained for the specified period. Data were extracted from the Secretariat of Foreign Trade - SECEX (Brasil, 2024) and the World Bank (World Bank, 2024). The results were contextualized and contrasted with the economic theory, as discussed in the next section.

Results and discussion

The degree of Economic Openness and the Export Effort index show a relative stagnation in Brazil's economic opening process (Table 1). Until 2004, both indicators were increasing, but from that year onwards, there was no major progress, and there were even moments of decline.

Year	Exports	Imports	GDP	EO	EE
2000	\$54.993	\$56.976	\$655.400	0,170	0,083
2001	\$58.032	\$56.569	\$560.000	0,204	0,103
2002	\$60.147	\$48.274	\$509.800	0,212	0,117
2003	\$72.776	\$49.307	\$558.200	0,218	0,130
2004	\$95.121	\$63.813	\$669.300	0,236	0,142
2005	\$118.597	\$74.692	\$891.600	0,216	0,133
2006	\$137.581	\$92.531	\$1.108.000	0,206	0,124
2007	\$159.816	\$122.041	\$1.397.000	0,200	0,114
2008	\$195.764	\$174.707	\$1.696.000	0,218	0,115
2009	\$151.791	\$129.397	\$1.667.000	0,168	0,091
2010	\$200.434	\$183.337	\$2.209.000	0,162	0,090
2011	\$253.666	\$227.969	\$2.616.000	0,184	0,096
2012	\$239.952	\$225.166	\$2.465.000	0,188	0,097
2013	\$232.544	\$241.500	\$2.473.000	0,190	0,094
2014	\$220.923	\$230.823	\$2.456.000	0,192	0,089
2015	\$186.782	\$173.104	\$1.802.000	0,198	0,103
2016	\$179.526	\$139.321	\$1.796.000	0,176	0,099
2017	\$214.988	\$158.951	\$2.064.000	0,180	0,104
2018	\$231.889	\$185.322	\$1.917.000	0,216	0,120
2019	\$221.126	\$185.928	\$1.873.000	0,216	0,118
2020	\$209.180	\$158.786	\$1.449.000	0,252	0,144

Table 1: Brazilian exports, imports, GDP and trade indicators

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on data from the SECEX and the World Bank.

Brazil's exports grew almost steadily from 2000 to 2011 (Figure 1). A major factor that influenced the gradual increase in national exports in the 2000s was the so-called "commodities boom". This trend facilitated the country's expansion of exports, primarily driven by soybean and ore commodities, which were destined for strategic trading partners, especially China. This commercial rapprochement encouraged trade between the two countries, turning Brazil into a primary exporting power, and it also increased Brazilian imports of Chinese manufactured products (Da Silva; Lunelli; Cleto, 2021).

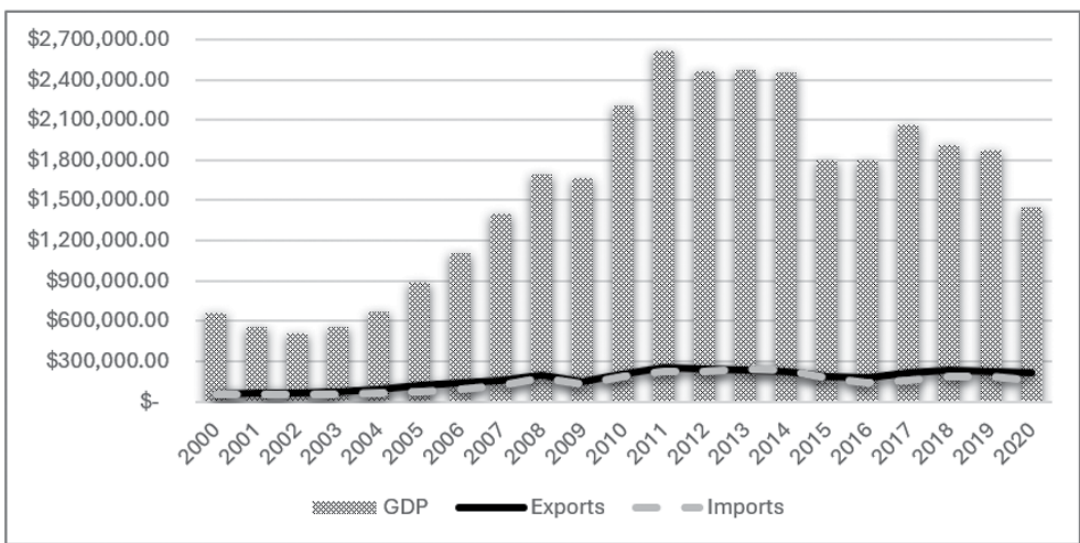


Figure 1: Brazilian GDP, exports and imports (in US\$)

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

According to Black (2015), the increase in commodity prices, the rise of China and its influence on demand, as well as the expansionary monetary policy in the USA contributed to the success of the commodity market and the improvement in the terms of trade for net exporting countries such as Brazil during the period between 2003 and 2011. Brazilian GDP benefitted from this scenario, as it showed successive growth until 2011; however, from that year onwards it declined and did not return to the level of R\$2.6 trillion reached at the peak of the historical series in that same year.

The global financial crisis that emerged in the United States in 2008 also affected the Brazilian trade balance, as the results show a reduction in exports and imports between 2008 and 2009. The crisis reduced trade relations between countries, since the financial markets throughout the world became highly averse to risk, which abruptly slowed down financial and commercial transactions worldwide, also reducing the supply of credit (Borça Junior; Torres Filho, 2008). This, however, did not represent the end of the commodity cycle, because the prices recovered, and

in 2011 it surpassed previous peaks (Black, 2015). It is possibly for this reason that Brazilian exports between 2010 and 2012 recovered, surpassing results prior to 2008.

After the first half of the 2000s, an inflection point is notable, where exports begin to decrease, as well as the country's GDP, which has kept a general downward trend until the end of the historical series. This demonstrates the importance that exports have for the Brazilian economy, reinforcing the role of primary exports, and indicating a strong relationship between the export sector and the country's GDP (Carmo; Raiher, Stege, 2017).

Even though Brazil is generally a country with a surplus in its trade balance, it presented deficits in 2013 and 2014 (Figure 1). According to a representative from the Brazilian government, this condition was a result of a combination of factors, such as the reduction in the price of commodities and global demand, and the economic crisis in Argentina, for example (Máximo, 2014).

In 2014, the country's economy entered a recession, which can be seen as a cause and consequence of the slowdown in Brazil's trade operations in that period. According to Lélis, Cunha, and Linck (2019), one-third of the economic downturn experienced in Brazil after 2014 can be associated with the changes observed in the commodity price regime. This fact also suggests how much Brazil's economy depends on exports to grow. Cervo and Lessa (2014, p. 149) analyzed the insertion of Brazil in the international context between 2011 and 2014 and concluded that the main reasons for the decline in the country's participation in trade relations in the period involved internal and external factors such as:

[...] the weakening of the dialogue between the State and the dynamic segments of society; the loss of confidence of national and foreign investors and businesspeople in the government; the weakening of strategies and the lack of new ideas capable of motivating external agents; the stagnation of public management with the loss of the State's capacity to induce; finally, the leading role of Russia and China within the BRICS (Cervo; Lessa, 2014, p. 149, our translation).

From 2016 to 2019, Brazilian exports appeared to recover from the crisis period and showed a positive trend; but this was interrupted by the global pandemic. Nevertheless, the effect of the pandemic on Brazilian exports was considered small if compared to other economies, especially due to trade interactions with China, which was also recovering from the global crisis, but kept its investments and the demand for commodities (Mota, 2021).

These fluctuations and the moments of rupture in the performance of exports, imports, and GDP identified over the historical series culminated in the stagnation of both the degree of Economic Openness and the Export Effort index (Figure 2). Both indicators have similar behaviors, with peaks in 2004, 2008, and 2020, but do not show sustainable growth.

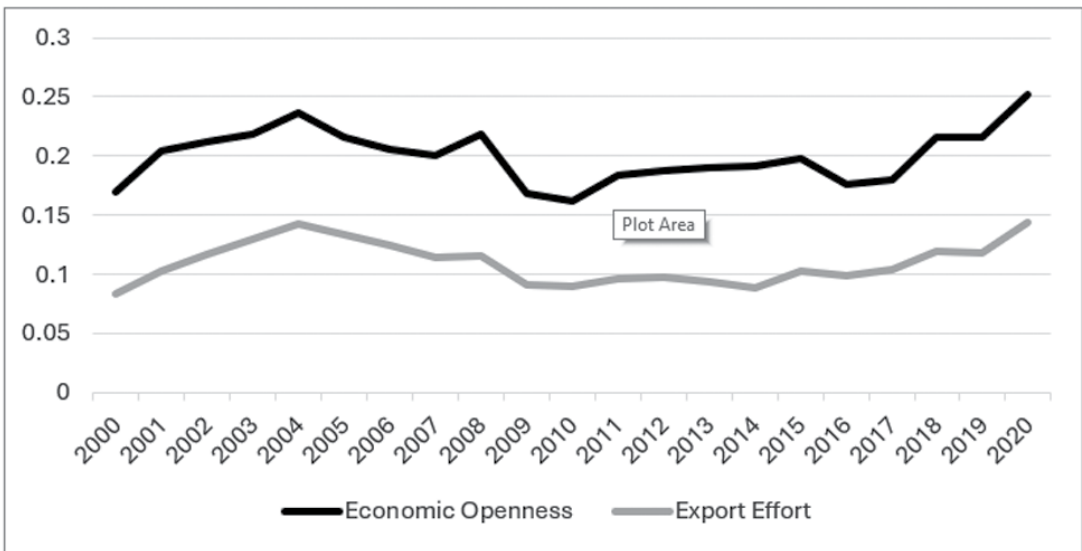


Figure 2: Degree of Economic Openness and Export Effort index

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As mentioned earlier, until 2004, Brazil was experiencing a process of greater economic openness. According to an analysis by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea, 2010), in the early 2000s, Brazilian exports benefited from the strong devaluation of the real that was observed until 2003, which contributed to reversing the negative results of the Brazilian trade balance of previous years.

The period immediately after the 2008 crisis marked a sharp drop in the degree of economic openness and the export effort index, which resulted from the reduction in trade between 2008 and 2009, as previously mentioned. After this period, the recovery was slow and gradual, and held back by the crisis that the country experienced from 2014 onwards. The long period of fiscal deficit and political and economic instability contributed to worsening the so-called “Brazil Cost”, which also helps to explain the fact that the country’s Economic Openness index showed poor performance and stagnation throughout the last two decades (Jorge; Martins, 2013).

The context outlined and the results obtained through this study corroborate others related to the analysis of the Brazilian trade balance over the last two decades. Menezes (2023) obtained very similar results in a study focused on the analysis of Brazil’s regional performance, emphasizing the international crisis of 2008 that reduced the global trade flow and the period of institutional crisis experienced in the domestic economy from 2014 onwards, generating an inflection point in Brazilian GDP. Cavalcante et al. (2017) also found results that indicated a decline in the performance of these indexes after the international crisis of 2008 and the domestic crisis of 2014. The authors also observed that the depreciation of the national currency from 2012 onwards was a factor that contributed to expanding Brazilian

exports, thus softening the effects of the crises on the Brazilian trade balance and, consequently, on the performance of the economic indicators analyzed.

The values found in this study, both for the Export Effort index and the degree of Economic Openness, demonstrate similar results, evidencing that the Brazilian economy went through some periods of stagnation and decline in trade relations, resuming the upward trend from 2016 until the period before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even in the face of the negative impacts imposed by the pandemic, Brazilian international trade was resilient (Mota, 2021). According to an analysis presented by Chade (2020), based on WTO data, the pandemic led to greater trade openness in Brazil, as a result of the reduction in protectionist measures adopted by the government to minimize the effects of the crisis. This is also evidenced by Figure 2, which shows an upward trajectory during the last years of the series. Further post-pandemic analyses are necessary, however, to accurately assess its effects on Brazilian trade relations

Concluding remarks

The degree of Economic Openness and the Export Effort index did not show significant performance over the analyzed period, and a tendency of general stagnation was observed. This may indicate that Brazil still has difficulties in its commercial interactions in a global context. Thus, issues such as transport logistics, and macroeconomic and political instability are issues to consider.

Another fact that may have contributed to this scenario is the recession and the increase in inflation that the country experienced from 2014 onwards, which led to fiscal deficits. In addition, it is noteworthy that, even after the rupture from the import substitution process that was based on economic policies focused on the domestic market, with barriers to international trade, Brazil still faces challenges inserting itself as a major player in the international market.

Over the last two decades, there were periods of decline in Brazilian exports that culminated in the reduction of the country's GDP. The exception to this situation was the increase in commodity exports, positioning Brazil as a primary export leader in the segment. This is also why the country has recurrent trade surpluses, which have helped mitigate the cyclic economic crises it experiences. Another important factor to consider is the role of China as a trading partner, which has been fundamental in Brazil's insertion into international trade by being the main destination of its national exports ever since.

Although Brazil has benefited from the strengthening of these trade relations, the performance of its exports, and consequently, of the country's economy, are highly susceptible to Chinese demand. Even though trade liberalization is essential, the country's strong reliance on commodity exports and the limited dynamism of its domestic industrial production, which is heavily dependent on imports, especially

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technology, are issues that need to be addressed by the country's economic policymakers. In addition to strengthening relations with traditional partners, it is also fundamental to expand the consumer market to ensure greater balance, as well as autonomy and competitiveness.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this work applied only some of the various performance indicators available in the literature. Furthermore, exports and imports were not verified for each sector, which could allow for a more accurate analysis of Brazil's agenda concerning international trade and its development. Nevertheless, from this research, it was possible to delve deep into the subject, revisiting some important topics regarding Brazil's trade performance, which can serve as a basis for future research.



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БРАЗИЛСКО ЕКОНОМСКО ОТВАРАЊЕ ОД 2000. ДО 2020.

Апстракт: Ова студија има за циљ да анализира економске перформансе Бразила од 2000. до 2020. године, бавећи се понашањем извоза, увоза и БДП-а земље. У том циљу примењени су степен економске отворености и индекс извозних напора, уз коришћење података Секретаријата за спољну трговину и Светске банке. Израчунати индикатори нису показали значајније резултате у анализираном периоду, а уочена је тенденција стагнације, што указује да се Бразил и даље суочава са изазовима у глобалној трговини. Чак и након прекида процеса супституције увоза, земља је наишла на потешкоће да се убаци као главни играч на међународном тржишту. Током последње две деценије, Бразил је доживео тренутке опадања својих комерцијалних интеракција, углавном непосредно након глобалне финансијске кризе 2008. године, а касније и са унутрашњом политичком и економском нестабилношћу коју је доживео од 2014. надаље, што је негативно утицало на његов БДП. Ослањање земље на извоз роба и ограничена динамика њене домаће индустријске производње су важни фактори које треба узети у обзир креатори економске политике, како би се омогућила већа равнотежа, аутономија и конкурентност бразилском трговинском сектору.

Кључне речи: МЕЂУНАРОДНА ТРГОВИНА, СТЕПЕН ЕКОНОМСКОГ ОТВОРЕНОСТИ, ИНДЕКС ИЗВОЗНОГ НАПОРА



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DEMOCRACY, THE LANGUAGE OF RIGHTS, COALITIONS AND POLITICAL SYSTEM IN BRAZIL

Abstract: The Brazilian political system is organized according to a complex popular sovereignty: the 1988 Citizen Constitution is the landmark language of human rights in the country. It establishes a multi-party congress aimed at the expression of minorities, in coexistence with the executive and judiciary powers. At the same time, it coexists with an electoral system of direct representation, and indirect representatives in an open list, which imposes difficulties on the formation of a majority and the need for coalitions. The recent universal suffrage and the longtime standing historical social inequality is combined with a federative system of unequal units, in which local, regional, and international economic groups and land ownership weigh on the national political situation and decisions. Understanding recent crises involves analyzing the ways in which the country incorporates or does not incorporate social demands to mitigate these systemic inequalities.

Negotiating elections and coalitions to survive over time

Brazil is a country whose history is intertwined with elections in a paradoxical way – despite being the first place where elections were held on the continent¹ – it took the country four centuries to guarantee the full exercise of universal, systematic and democratic suffrage for its entire population. Anyone interested in Brazil is familiar with the challenges regarding its continental size, wealth, environment and cultural diversity. As a matter of fact, it is a hard work to present the complexities of how different societies and cultures have interacted over time and how economic, political, and social structures have developed, without reducing their dynamics.

Archaeological and historical evidence suggests that, at the time of the arrival of European colonizers in 1500, Brazil was originally populated by an Indigenous population of several million people, belonging to thousands of different societies (Santos et al., 2019). Since the arrival of the colonizers, war, diseases and massive violence was the mood of the centuries. Historical narratives about the conquest of Rio de Janeiro, for example, have always included indigenous groups and tried to describe their political practices with their own colonizer lens:

The Tupinambá live arranged in villages; in each one, everybody recognizes one person as their leader, or chief, so that in war he directs them; this is the only act in which they offer him any demonstration of obedience. They elect him by the proof he has given of having more power and valor than others; yet outside of instances of war, he does not receive better treatment, esteem, or respect than the rest, from whom he is not distinguished (Anonymous, 1587, apud Schwarz et al, 2019).

As Almeida (2010) remarks, to study those groups and their survival strategies of resistance along time, it is important to notice that the Brazilian territory was invaded and conquered through a very violent war in which all social segments of the colony participated: authorities, missionaries, settlers and native people of different ethnicities. To the focus on the latter, seeking to understand their relationships with Europeans from their own interests, we suggest here the uncovering of a complex and dynamic panorama about future political tendencies involved.

The identification of the different ethnic groups that responded to the contact with Europeans in different ways dismantles simplistic schemes that presented

¹ Less than a year after his arrival in São Vicente, Martim Afonso coordinated, on August 22, 1532, the first popular elections in Brazil and the Americas, installing the first City Council in American territory. <https://www.camarasaovicente.sp.gov.br/copia-berco>

combatants in monolithic blocks and crystallized in the roles of allies or enemies. In Rio de Janeiro, instead of French and Tamoios from one side, and Portuguese and Temiminos on the other, we perceive a complicated network of interactions in which the different Tupi subgroups circulated, in a back and forth of agreements and disputes among themselves and with the foreigners. They changed sides frequently, according to circumstances and their interests, which changed with contact experiences (Almeida, 2010).

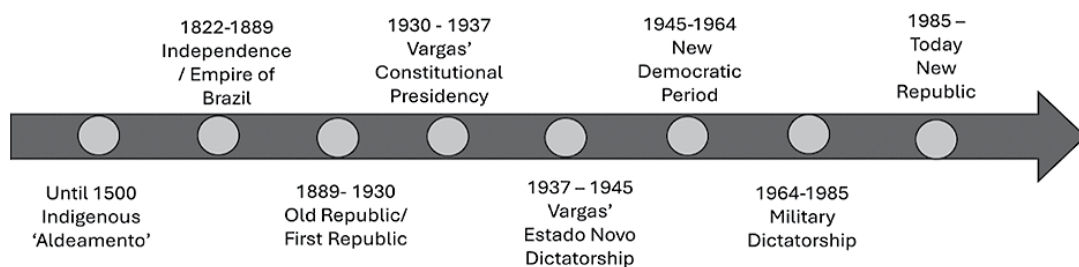
Remembering our original peoples' practices, we highlight more complex conceptions that value the internal dynamics of societies in social structures, including the agencies of the most diverse actors. The construction of laws and their varied forms and possibilities of application and use for different social agents are another theme that has been renewed under new perspectives of analysis. Understood as resulting from negotiations and clashes between interested agents and their respective capabilities to make serve their interests, they are no longer seen solely as instruments of legitimizing unequal relations².

Nevertheless, to providing gains to the most powerful, their legacy contains possibilities of mediation through loopholes that allow demands from the least favored (Thompson, 1987). The countless studies on the multiple forms of indigenous action, Africans and their descendants in the colony in defense of their anchored interests these conceptions and, at the same time, contribute to reinforcing them. Analyzing all these groups together therefore allows us to understand how their actions of alliance or rebellion with the constituted powers provided, to each other, greater or lesser possibilities for negotiation and survival (Alonso, 2021).

Challenges, pressures and agreements exerted by subordinates influenced decisions of agents from different levels of power and the laws themselves that were constructed, adapted or annulled, depending on pressures and circumstances. Fundamental to these analyzes are current theoretical and conceptual trends of political history (Maia & Faria, 2024) which, incorporating the ideas of pact, negotiation and political culture, complexify power relations.

2 This is for example the initiative of Maia & Faria (2024) when analyzing the development of dependency theory as a specific form of interpretation of Latin American history and political critique. Taking Fernando Henrique Cardoso's writings as a reference, they analyze the (meta) theoretical environment in which he formulated his approach, the substantive historical interpretations and the normative elements in his thinking. They show how historical-structural analysis underwent a "political turn" due to clashes with theoretical competitors and criticism of political authoritarianism.

Figure 1- BRAZILIAN POLITICAL REGIME TIMELINE



Source: elaborated by the author

So, as remarked by literature, Brazil was the last independent state in the Americas to abolish slavery (1888), and the last to declare itself a Republic in 1889 (Bethell, 2018). If we observe the different moments along the country history listed in the Brazilian Political Regime Timeline (Figure 1) above, one can observe it was no accident that the republic was finally proclaimed in 1889, the centenary year of the French revolution. The ideology of republicanism, especially radical republicanism, supported by progressive urban middle-class intellectuals, was profoundly French inspired (Carvalho, 2012).

On the other hand, the absence of popular participation is a long time characteristic of Brazilian politics and connects with the fact that there was no revolution in Brazil in 1889, nor in 1822. The number of Brazilians legally enfranchised was severely reduced because of the Saraiva law of 1881. As Bethell remarks, by the time, as the coffee economy expanded and the shift from slave to free labour finally started to be seen, abolition was inevitable. There was a growing fear amongst the dominant political class – shared by many liberal reformers – that ex-slaves, in the rural areas but more particularly in the rapidly expanding urban areas, would readily acquire the low income sufficient to secure the right to vote.

To avoid this possibility, 'elections for the Chamber of Deputies were made direct; the property/income qualification for eleitores was removed; and non-Catholics, naturalised citizens (though not resident foreign immigrants) and ex-slaves (freedmen) were eligible to become voters' (Bethell, 2018, p. 150). However, these apparent liberal/democratic advances were followed by a new requirement for future voter registration that was introduced for the first time: namely, education as measured by a literacy test or rather a capacity to sign one's name. In a country in which 80–85 per cent of the population was illiterate, this law made most Brazilians consciously and deliberately excluded from political participation. This effective restriction lasted until 1985.

In this manner, the Brazilian First Republic came out of a military coup born of a conspiracy between a small number of army officers and representatives of the rising coffee-producing landed oligarchy of the state of São Paulo. Like the transition from colony to empire, the transition from empire to republic was marked more by fundamental social and economic continuity than by change (Bethell, 2018, p. 151).

Thus, the history of the rupture with the colonial pact, the process of independence and the formation of a new nation-state, differed from the experience of Hispanic colonized places in the continent. While across Spanish neighbors' former colonies were becoming republics, Brazil would adopt neither a republican nor a presidential form of government. On the contrary, the elites, especially those from Rio de Janeiro, preferred a monarchy, judging a royal figure to be a strong symbol that could prevent the disintegration of the country after independence³.

As it is presented in the classic thesis about the "Brazilian passive revolution" by Luiz Werneck Vianna (1996), in Brazil, there was never, in fact, a revolution. Vianna described how political authoritarian movements and elites classified themselves as revolutionary along time, and self-named as 'Revolution of Independence', the 'Revolution of 1930', the 'Revolution of 1964'. Werneck highlighted a language of paradoxes in which conservation, to fulfill its role, needs to claim what should be its opposite - revolution. In this Brazilian dialectic in which the thesis seems to always be naming itself as a representation of the antithesis, avoiding revolution has consisted, in some way, in its realization.

But how historical processes and inequalities shape this political system? Nowadays, more than ninety-eighth percent of the Brazilian population descends from people who arrived in the country, willingly or forced, during the last five

3 Pedro I heeded the advice of José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva, one of his closest advisors, who affirmed that the people already knew the term "emperor" because of the popular Feast of the Divine, which each year elected an emperor. At the same time, it reflected Pedro's secret admiration for Napoleon Bonaparte, who had also been acclaimed emperor. Thus, Brazil became an independent constitutional monarchy surrounded by republics on all sides. After his coronation in 1822, he convened a constitutional convention to write a new national charter. The body quickly found itself divided between those delegates who wanted a liberal document that would limit the powers of the emperor and those who supported granting the monarch greater authority. Frustrated by the proposed limitations on his rule, Pedro dissolved the convention and appointed a new commission to draft the document. The final version, the Constitution of 1824, established the usual three branches of government— executive, legislative, and judicial— but added a fourth power, known as the 'moderating power'. This 'poder moderador' granted additional authority to the emperor in order to moderate conflicts between the legislative and judicial branches. Through this moderating power, the emperor could convene or dismiss the legislature at will, appoint lifetime senators from a list of three nominees, choose members of a Council of State, select and remove judges without restrictions, and approve ecclesiastics of the Roman Catholic Church. While the charter adopted some liberal elements, such as the inherent right of citizens (a status denied to slaves) to liberty, individual security, and property, elections for the legislature were indirect, and the moderating power deposited considerable control of the government in the hands of the monarch. (Schwarz et al. 2019, p.163)

centuries (Moya, 2020)⁴. Initially populated by indigenous peoples, it's important to recall that most of those worlds vanished without their disappearance being seen as an elimination (Krenak, 2020). This multiple immigration processes along time engendered a multicultural society, with patterns of cultural violence, racism and inequalities to surpass (Ribeiro, 2014, Gonzalez, 2023, Almeida, 2019).

As observed by Maia & Faria (2021) it was forged in such imaginations of crisis and objectives of structuring a power parallel to the European one, on the other side of the ocean, that the federalist engineering found the figure of the president of the republic. It was meant to safeguard the parallelism with the figure of executive power in the hands of the king (*à la Montesquieu*). In this manner, asymmetric relations among the powers many times create a crisis environment, as analyzed by Vianna (2002), about the relations between the democracy and the three powers in Brazil. The president of the Republic nowadays is head of both state and government, holding executive power and appointing the council of ministers. The president is elected by universal suffrage, together with the vice-president, for a four-year mandate.

We can observe these trends of negotiating to survive along time, we suggest here, as an impact for future trends in Brazilian contemporary political coalitions.

4 Although French and Dutch Calvinists established colonies during the 1500s and 1600s, the Portuguese, including Jewish conversos, later expelled these imperial rivals. Close to four-tenths of the eleven million slaves trafficked across the Atlantic landed in Brazil, giving the country the largest Afro-descendant population in the world outside Nigeria (Moya 2020). The large numbers, the traffic's long temporal span, and the country's close connection to Portuguese Africa distinguishes Brazil with intense and varied African ethnic cultures that shaped both the slaves' strategies of adaptation and resistance and the national resistance against racism (Gonzalez 2023, Almeida, 2019). Still according to Moya (2020) Brazil also received over five million immigrants after its independence in 1822, most of them between the 1880s and the 1920s. Others came from elsewhere in Europe and beyond. One can observe nowadays that the country has the largest population of Japanese descendants in the world outside Japan, and the largest of Lebanese descendants outside Lebanon. Just after the United States, Brazil also has the second largest of German descendants outside Germany.

Understanding coalitions in the contemporary democratic Brazilian system

A democratic state under the rule of law established by the representatives of the Brazilian people⁵, Brazil is today a country where the constitution provides for the concomitance of participatory forms and political representation based on universal suffrage. Therefore, a pluralistic conception of society is already outlined in its principles, under the prescription of politics as a space that must be open to a plurality of organizations – parties, unions, councils and social associations.

The Constitution of 1988 – also named the ‘Citizen Constitution’ – defines Brazil as a federative republic, formed by four types of autonomous federated entity: the union, 26 states, 5 570 municipalities and the federal district (the capital, Brasília), according to official statistics from IBGE⁶. The exercise of these entities’ autonomy is regulated by the constitution. The authorities and bodies of the union represent the Federal State at international level.

The states and the federal district have their own elected governors and legislative chambers and can pass legislation on matters within their competence. Municipalities have their own legislative, governmental and administrative capacities within the powers reserved to them by the constitution (Brazil, 2013). According to the fundamental principles in article 1, ‘The Federative Republic of Brazil is formed by the indissoluble union of the states and municipalities and of the Federal District, is a legal democratic state and is founded on: I – sovereignty; II – citizenship; III – the dignity of the human person; IV – the social values of labour and of the free enterprise; V – political pluralism’.

From 1979 to 2013, Brazil witnessed an intense political participation of minority groups that had previously been invisible and silenced. The return of exiles and the advance of democratization occurred together with civilian mobilization for *Diretas Já* [Direct Elections Now] and were followed by the Constituent Assembly and the approval of the new Constitution (Werneck et al, 2003).

After, the control of inflation with the Real Plan let space for the adoption of reparation policies, although limited. As Tatiana Maia (2023) observed, the advancement of identity agendas and the presence of diverse social movements in the public sphere together with increased educational attainment, access to higher education through the expansion of technical schools and federal universities,

5 Brazil, 2013, p.10: ‘We, the representatives of the Brazilian People, convened in the National Constituent Assembly to institute a democratic state for the purpose of ensuring the exercise of social and individual rights, liberty, security, well-being, development, equality and justice as supreme values of a fraternal, pluralist and unprejudiced society, founded on social harmony and committed, in the internal and international orders, to the peaceful settlement of disputes, promulgate, under the protection of God, this Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil. (our italics).

6 IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics [Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística]) available at <https://cidades.ibge.gov.br/>.

redistributive policies and economic growth during the PT governments (2003-2016) generated a belief in a new and qualitatively better future with greater social equity.

Thus, Brazil is a presidential federated republic, in which the constitution gives extensive powers to the government. 'All power emanates from the people, who exercise it by means of elected representatives or directly, as provided by this Constitution'. Art. 2 of the Brazilian constitution establishes the principle of the separation of powers of the union into legislative, executive and judiciary as 'independent and harmonious to each other'. The president must obtain an absolute majority of the votes to win in the first round, or a simple majority in a second round; and can be re-elected only once to a four-year mandate. Presidents do not need the support of the legislative to stay in power but can be impeached by Parliament. Although the wide powers given to the president by the Constitution have led some to qualify the executive as 'imperial presidentialism' (due to the before explained "poder moderador" and dictatorship tendencies of the past), the president's need for support in Congress and at state level has also led the classic thesis of Sérgio Abranches to consider it rather as a 'coalition presidentialism':

Brazil is the only country which, as well as combining proportionality, a multisystem and an 'imperial presidentialism', organizes the Executive based on large coalitions. I will call this peculiar trait of the concrete Brazilian institutionality, for lack of a better alternative, 'coalition presidentialism' (Abranches, 1988, p. 5).

Presented as a peculiar feature of the Brazilian concrete institutionality, 'coalition presidentialism' concept was named to distinguish it from the regimes of Austria and Finland and France, technically parliamentary, but that could be called 'cabinet presidentialism'. As Marcos Nobre (2022) observes, throughout the 1990s, Abranches recognizes that coalition presidentialism began to appear as a more generalized form of governance in Latin America, and the Brazilian model of coalition presidentialism had become normalized.

As Marcos Nobre (2022) remarks, the emphasis in coalitions means that the mediations are crucial to understand the Brazilian case. We also suggest here that the very idea of human rights is among Brazilian constitutional democracy, and a cluster that can aggregate coalitions and mediations, as it is seen above. The Constitution is a mandatory, historical, collectively agreed and a foundational document, that operates as a guide to Brazilians, where the Constitutional legislators of the past agreed in terms about the Brazilian political system, and for what the political programs of different parties must be accountable to the principles once established in it.

As the classic study of O'Donnel & Schmitter (1986) once observed, the "negotiating pacts" and political moments, can be described as "consociational" solutions to deep-seated ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or religious conflicts, and tends to be regarded as a stable, quasi-permanent form of democratic rule' (O'Donnel & Schmitter, 1986, p.41).

Trying to study the challenges of Brazilian political system, Tarouco (2023) highlights that debates on the Brazilian electoral system usually concern its combination with the government system. Being an emblematic case of coalitional presidentialism since the regime transition in the early 1980s, there were controversies on the inadequacy of its political institutions.

As described before, its electoral system is based on open list proportional representation, that allows for a highly fragmented party system (Nicolau, 2022). Some authors argue that combining an open list with a presidential system would explain the lack of governability and would create difficulties to the Brazilian party system's institutionalization (Tarouco, 2023, Mainwaring & Shugart, 1997).

Despite keeping the main features of the electoral system, after redemocratization, minor rules were changed (such as financial regulation of campaigns, for example) that affected electoral competition (Fisch & Mesquita, 2022). Furthermore, the judiciary has given new interpretations of old rules that work in practice as new rules of the game (Tarouco, 2023, Marchetti, 2022). The Workers Party (PT) and the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) disputed presidential elections from 1994 to 2014.

One remarkable pattern to understand Brazilian politics is Marcos Nobre's well known thesis that it is possible to identify in Brazil a historical disconnect between a 'Pemedebist political culture'⁷ (mostly embodied in what is known as 'Centrão'⁸), which dominates the political system, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, a new model of possible society, which requires renewal in terms of political culture. Both PT and PSDB, when elected, faced difficulties and even were blocked by Centrão parties.

Such renewals are observable throughout the post-1988 Constitution in Brazil, and concern far-reaching transformations, partially assimilated, whether by the political system or the economic system. Nobre points out that the unity of the post-Real period in relation to the previous period is observed in two major phases, namely, the Fernando Henrique Cardoso - FHC (1995- 2002) government on the one hand, and Luis Ignacio da Silva - Lula (2003 -2011) government and Dilma Rousseff government (2012-2016), on the other. The point of connection between the two would be the common objective of trying to control Pmedebismo and failing to radically reform the political system (Nobre, 2022).

7 'I have called pemedebismo, in honor of the party that, for at least three decades, was the leader of the cartel of companies selling parliamentary support, the Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement (PMDB). As of 2018, it changed its name to Brazilian Democratic Movement (MDB), the name it had when it was the official opposition party during the military dictatorship (1964–1985)', (Nobre, 2022, p. 2).

8 'In its first version, during the Constituent period, between 1987 and 1988, the Centrão was a defensive strategy of the conservative majority in Congress. During almost a year of constituent work, the progressive alliance had demonstrated sufficient unity, support, and strength to impose relevant defeats on conservatism. The Centrão organized itself in reaction and opposition to that progressive front. Between the promulgation of the Constitution and the crisis of Dilma Rousseff's second term, starting in 2015, the Centrão dissolved into a broader archipelago, that of the pemedebismo of the political system'. (Nobre, 2022, p. 109)

In other words, despite the differences in his political projects, FHC, by achieving control over inflation and stabilizing the economy with Real Plan, made the country's absurd inequality explicit, making it clear and bringing the issue to the center of political disputes. In this sense, the fundamental project undertaken by the Lula governments was to mitigate inequalities and thus promote a new model of society. The great turning point that this debate provided on the national scene was that it began to discuss how and at what speed to reduce inequality.

The social-developmentalism that was sustained in the country from then on, constantly dealt with the obstacles and barriers of *pemedebismo* against a change in the model of society, or the process Nobre calls *immobilism in movement*. There was, therefore, an identifiable process based on the constitutional parameters of 1988, which takes into account the social metrics, the distributive issue, economic development that does not mean environmental devastation or a structurally corrupt political system.

But the country was surprised by the winning of Bolsonaro, a former military backbencher from a then irrelevant political party (Tarouco, 2023), after the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff (2016). Under the flag of "*Bandido bom é bandido morto*" ("A good thief is a dead thief") and a political agenda against human rights, Bolsonaro was elected president in 2018 in Brazil. Under those circumstances, we can observe a transformation on the public debate about human rights in the country. Faria, Silva & Jorge's (2022) study about the elections presents Bolsonaro as a right-wing candidate. They highlight his advocacy of a military-run education can be assigned as an indicator of extreme right political position.

In Brazil, the defense of the participation or intervention of the military in civil affairs is clearly done by authoritarian and far-right actors. The apology for the period of civil-military authoritarianism (1964-1985) appears when the candidate identifies the military as "heroes" who, in 1964, "prevented the taking of the power by leftist forces planning a communist coup in Brazil" (Bolsonaro, 2018: 33, apud Faria, Silva & Jorge, 2022).

Simultaneously, it disqualifies the current democratic period by describing it as a phase in our history in which "the left corrupted democracy and stagnated the economy" (Ibid). By employing anti-Communist rhetoric and praising military intervention, he wanted to appear to be a "true democrat" and a "genuine liberal". However, this same strategy allowed the conclusion that he was the one who best fit the extremist profile. At the same time, we can notice that there were statements in the public scene for and against the protection of rights, something that was not observed this way before.

Tarouco (2023) observes that beyond the electoral system, electoral governance institutions are also crucial for democracy because they rule the electoral process itself. The Brazilian electoral governance body is TSE (Superior Electoral Court [Tribunal Superior Eleitoral]) which owes both management and adjudication functions. At the management level it organizes and conducts the elections, and at the adjudication level it judges electoral litigations and resolves disputes concerning the electoral competition. TSE is independent of the executive branch, does not have any partisan

representative in its higher council, being autonomous also from political parties.

TSE was very important to deal with the crisis of 2022 elections. The disconnection between the society of the 1988 Constitution and the Pmedebismo of Brazil's long transition to democracy becomes the main characteristic of the political system. Bolsonaro became famous with Dilma's impeachment in 2016 (Faria, Rivetti & Butterby, 2023). Described as a coup by many sectors, Bolsonaro even being a candidate for reelection, acted with his supporters to spread distrust in the voting system and the judiciary as a whole. As Tarouco (2023) remarks:

Military, who had been granted many civil offices in the government (Couto, 2021; Passos, 2021), repeatedly confronted electoral authorities criticizing their work, demanding superfluous justifications, raising mistaken questions, requesting sudden meetings, and claiming for extra legal roles in the certification of electoral procedures' (Tarouco, 2023, 157).

The consistent threat to democracy and the principles and values guided by the Constitution, took shape in the coalition between the center and the extreme right, which was an obstacle to be overcome in 2022 elections.

In this sense, the national way to defeat the Centrão and its support for fascist tendencies in an effective – and democratic – way, with support at the polls in 2022, consisted of an alliance between Lula and Alckmin. Not just because it marks the two main political party projects with electoral success in Brazilian democratic context of the recent past, not especially because Alckmin had to leave the PSDB and go to the PSB to carry out the alliance, but because of the political principles that such moves suggest. It was a Brazilian Geringonça to be explained⁹.

As André Freire reminds us, when dealing with Lisboa's case and the dominant doxa in the treatment of left and right forces in Portugal, the term Geringonça arises from a political implication. This type of schism, in Brazil in 2021, could give rise to memes about it, perhaps. Something like the pet peeves between 'coxinhas and mortadella'. The term was originally used in a pejorative way by Vasco Pulido Valente, historian and columnist for the newspapers Observador e Público, and by the leader of the CDS-PP in the Portuguese Parliament. It was a way of criticizing the "governmental alliance of the lefts" in the political fight over the 21st Portuguese Constitutional Government. (Freire, 2017, p.26)¹⁰

9 This expression was first coined in a conjuncture analysis published by Ateliê de Humanidades, before 2022 elections in Brazil : <https://ateliêdehumanidades.com/2021/12/18/fios-do-tempo-geringonca-a-brasileira-por-alessandra-maia/>

10 This observation aims to deal with the naturalization, in general, of the chronic "disagreement" of progressive sectors, considered insurmountable. To deal with this dilemma, Freire bets on solutions that come from cities, in this case, Lisboa: 'the solution of the type of left-wing government found in Portugal is a minority government of socialists, but supported in Parliament by parties of the so-called radical left – Bloco de Esquerda (BE), Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) and the Ecologist Party 'Os Verdes' (PEV)' (FREIRE, 2017, p. 11). In Portugal, Freire argues that from 1987 onwards there was only one coalition, and throughout democratic history parties to the left of the PS never entered government. When it did not govern alone, the PS governed with the CDS or PSD.

The main idea when asymmetries are broken is that there is a gain for the quality of democracy. Multiplying opinions and support to overcome inequality and undemocratic issues in a sustainable way, despite divergences, can improve governance, make the political scene more inclusive and guarantee greater diversity of solutions. Checking out where the Brazilian-style Geringonça has now been driving us: a coalition for democracy.

Final Observations

According to TSE, approximately 156.4 million Brazilians were eligible to vote directly for president in the country and abroad in 2022. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Geraldo Alckmin, president-elect and vice-president-elect, respectively, were sworn in on January 1, 2023 for a four-year term. In one of the fiercest elections in the country, Lula da Silva from the Workers' Party was elected for the third time as president of the Republic, with a little more of 60 million direct votes, surpassing his own record in 2006. He is the most directly voted person ever elected in the country. A four-year term government began on January 1, 2023 and will end on January 5, 2027. It was the ninth presidential election in the country held under the Constitution promulgated in 1988.

But the inequalities are still a great path towards a democratic society that seeks to guarantee the democratic constitutional principles established in 1988. As observed by Prusa and Picanço (2019), the status of women in Brazil is emblematic of the country's internal tensions. In Brazil, at the same time, a woman can become president; yet it also has one of the highest rates of femicide (the killing of women due to their gender) in the world.

The 2022 election was a challenging test for the young Brazilian democracy. As the populist wave is being pointed as risky in many countries, Brazil has been added to the roll of worrisome cases on backsliding track. According to Tarouco (2023), the Brazilian 2022 election brought along the spread of distrust, violence, high electoral volatility, high party fragmentation, and low presence of women.

As Faria, Rivetti & Butterby. (2023) remark, the figure of women as vices gained more visibility in the Brazilian political scene last years. This occurs, above all, after the impeachment process against Dilma Rousseff (PT) in 2016, when the vice-president assumed the presidency of the country. They identified that in the following elections there was a significant increase in women's candidates as vices on electoral lists, whether at the national, state or municipal level.

Observing data obtained by the Superior Electoral Court and outlining an analysis of this "phenomenon" in female political representation, they describe women as the "others" in Brazilian politics. They suggest that after the impeachment it becomes strategic for the conservative field to recruit women candidates representing their vision of the world, that is, in the ostensible sense of combating what these sectors

classify as feminist approaches. We can see that for one side women organize, but on the other hand, in history the hegemonic group of men in power resist to concrete changes.

Finally, Brazil achieved a record number of candidates from women, black people and indigenous people in 2022 general elections. According to data from the Superior Electoral Court (TSE), of the 26,398 candidacies registered, 49.3% are from black people and 49.1% from white people. Indigenous candidacies represent 0.62% of the total. The percentage of women in the dispute totals 33.4%.

Brazil also elected a record number of women and black people (men and women) to the Chamber of Deputies in 2022. The Chamber now has 91 federal deputies and 135 black parliamentarians – (brown or black [pardos e pretos], according to the IBGE name). It is the greatest representation in history, in both cases. For each group of six parliamentarians, on average, one is a woman. One in four federal deputies is black. In both cases, representation remains well below the proportion found in the population. Brazil has 56.1% of self-declared brown and black inhabitants, and 52.8% are women.

Nevertheless, resistance is also a remark of original peoples in Brazil. In 2022 elections, for example, it was the first time in the history that an indigenous caucus disputed the general elections in a coordinated manner, based on recommendations from grassroots indigenous organizations. They supported the elected coalition of Lula and Alckmin against Bolsonaro and the Centrão parties. The Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (Apib) presented 30 applications from all regions of the country and 31 people¹¹. They were able to elect two representatives, both women.¹² As remarked by Schwarz et al. (2019) it is crucial to understand the complex social hierarchies that developed in a society based on extracting labor from the indigenous population, enslaved Africans, free people of color, and immigrants. It is also remarkable to recognize the legacy of slavery, the ideologies that have justified it, and their relationship to notions of race, equality, and democracy in Brazil. The roles that women of all social classes have played in Brazilian public life and the importance of ideas about masculinity and femininity that undergird relationships of power, also influence the patterns mentioned above.

11 For more information see the official page of APIB (Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil [Articulação dos Povos Indígenas do Brasil] <https://apiboficial.org/2022/08/29/apib-lanca-bancada-com-candidatos-indigenas-pela-primeira-vez/> .

12 The number of votes for representatives of indigenous peoples broke at least two records in 2022. For the first time in Brazil's history, two people linked to the indigenous movement entered the Chamber of Deputies at the same time. In addition, they are two women: Sônia Guajajara and Célia Xakriabá - both from the PSOL, one from São Paulo and the other from Minas Gerais. The two representatives of the indigenous movement will share the Federal Legislature with three other deputies who declare themselves as such. For the PT, they will be Juliana Cardoso (SP) and Paulo Guedes (MG). In addition to them, the Bolsonaroist Sílvia Waiãpi (PL-AP). For more details see <https://www.brasildefato.com.br/2022/10/06/com-votacao-inedita-em-eleicoes-gerais-nove-indigenas-ocuparao-cargos-legislativos-no-brasil>



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ДЕМОКРАТИЈА, ЈЕЗИК ПРАВА, КОАЛИЦИЈА И ПОЛИТИЧКИ СИСТЕМ У БРАЗИЛУ

Апстракт: Бразилски политички систем организован је према сложеном народном суверенитету: Устав грађана из 1988. је оријентирни језик људских права у земљи. Њиме се успоставља вишестраначки конгрес чији је циљ изражавање мањина, у коегзистенцији са извршном и судском влашћу. Истовремено, коегзистира са изборним системом директног представљања, и индиректних представника на отвореној листи, што отежава формирање већине и потребу за коалицијама. Недавно опште право гласа и дугогодишња историјска друштвена неједнакост комбиновани су са федеративним системом неједнаких јединица, у којем локалне, регионалне и међународне економске групе и власништво над земљом утичу на националну политичку ситуацију и одлуке. Разумевање недавних криза подразумева анализу начина на које земља укључује или не укључује друштвене захтеве за ублажавање ових системских неједнакости.



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THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF INEQUALITY AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BRAZIL

Abstract: Income concentration has risen sharply in the world since the 1980s. The global health crisis shook global capitalism and gave rise to an unprecedented crisis. In Latin America, the most unequal region in the world, the health crisis has further aggravated the picture of inequity. Since 2014, due to the end of the cycle of commodities, the reduction of poverty and income inequality in the region has lost momentum. With the pandemic, the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean, already with low economic growth in recent years, have increased uncertainty and put to the test the state's capacity to provide public health services and policies to alleviate the shortages for vast portions of the population. With the attention of Brazilian society focused on fighting the pandemic, the Bolsonaro government (2019-) has taken advantage of this situation to try to advance its ultra-liberal agenda to reverse public policies for the promotion of equality. The understanding of the Bolsonaro government is that the Brazilian social state foreseen in the Constitution does not fit into the country's budget. The objective of this article is to discuss the possible paths and policies that the Brazilian State may take as a result of the pandemic and the concomitant political and economic crisis. In the first part, we present the elements that allow us to understand the crisis of neoliberalism from the 2008 crisis and its persistence; in the second, we analyze the Bolsonaro government from the implementation of its ultra neoliberal agenda and the worsening of the picture of inequalities in the country; in the third, we discuss the health crisis and its effects on employment, the health system and the need for a basic citizen income that gained strength with the extension and deepening of the social and economic crisis.

Keywords: BRAZIL, INEQUALITY, NEOLIBERALISM, PANDEMIC, STATE, WELFARE

Introduction

Income concentration has risen sharply in the world since the 1980s. The latest edition of the World Inequality Report (Piketty et al, 2022) confirms that global inequality continues to grow: the richest 10% have 52% of the income and 76% of the wealth. On the bottom of the pyramid, half the world population holds only 2% of the wealth and 8.5% of the income. In Brazil, according to Oxfam (2017), income inequality continues to be brutal: six Brazilians have the same income as half of the country's poorest population. We live in one of the most unequal countries in the world, where "an adult in the 95% [i.e. the richest 5%] has an income almost eight times higher than one in the 33%; in the 99% [i.e. the richest 1%], almost thirty times higher [...] the top is so much richer than the rest, but so much richer, that it is unequal even in relation to the highest incomes" (Medeiros, 2024, p. 24-25).

As he did in his first two terms in office, between 2003 and 2010, President Lula is now trying to take up the agenda of promoting social justice by revamping the Bolsa Família Program, fighting hunger and poverty, raising the minimum wage above inflation, and launching a number of initiatives in the areas of education and health. Social indicators in these almost two years of Lula's government have improved, albeit very slowly. Key obstacles include the congressional inroads into, and control of the federal budget since 2016, fiscal austerity, and the persistence of neoliberalism.

In Latin America, the most unequal region in the world, the health crisis has further exacerbated the situation of inequality. Since 2015, due to the crisis in the commodities cycle, the reduction in poverty and income inequality in the region has been losing momentum. According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean's Social Panorama for Latin America 2019 (2020), there are 191 million people living below the poverty line, 72 million of whom are in extreme situations, compared to 185 million in 2018. With the pandemic, the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean, which have already been experiencing low economic growth in recent years, have seen uncertainty increase and have tested the capacity of their states to provide public health services and policies to alleviate the situation of vast portions of the population in these countries. The Brazilian case is emblematic.

Brazil, the largest economy in the region which, between 2002 and 2014, managed to reduce inequalities by "[...] combining over time the effect of different policies aimed at different audiences, whose common characteristic has been the prospect of reversing the long trajectory of stability of high inequality in Brazil" (Arretche, 2015, p. 455), has seen this process lose momentum.

In the context of the chaos caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the then Bolsonaro administration (2019-2022) took advantage of Brazilian society's focus on fighting the

pandemic to try to advance its ultra-liberal agenda by reversing public policies that promote equality. His administration radicalized austerity policies with the adoption of new cuts to social rights and social security as well as further deregulation of the labour market and the privatization of public services. The understanding of the former Bolsonaro administration was that the Brazilian welfare state provided for in the Constitution did not fit into the country's budget. Thus, the commodification of everything public became the government's priority.

Thus, in this paper, we address the following topics: 1) the role of the state and its relationship with the market; the global economic crisis in the context of the pandemic; changes in the Brazilian welfare state; the myth of the neoliberal state; and post-Keynesian social welfare policies; and 2) Brazil under the then Bolsonaro administration in the contemporary world system. The aim of this paper is to discuss how the pandemic has reinforced the picture of inequality in Brazil, due to the ultra-liberal agenda of the Bolsonaro administration. Therefore, the questions we are working on are: 1) considering the scenario of recession in the world economy, could the economic policy trajectory of the former Bolsonaro administration have been altered due to the pandemic?; 2) what are the relevant social forces that, in this crisis, reinforce or resist the current economic policy?; and, from there, 3) is an alternative scenario possible in the post-pandemic in which the Brazilian state is no longer guided by neoliberal logic? To do this, we will use the theoretical perspective of world systems in dialog with specific works on inequality and neoliberalism.

In addition to the introduction and final considerations, the article is structured as follows: in the first part, we present the elements that allow us to understand the crisis of neoliberalism from its birth to the 2008 crisis and its resistance; in the second, we analyze the then Bolsonaro administration based on the implementation of its ultra-liberal agenda and the worsening inequalities in the country. In the next section, we discuss the health crisis and its effects on employment, the health system, and the need for a basic citizenship income, which has gained strength with the extent and depth of the social and economic crises.

Neoliberalism in crisis

The 2020-2023 health crisis exacerbated a broader social problem: the lack of social control over resources and decision-making. To understand why societies around the world have allowed these deaths, why they have allowed the gap between the super-rich and middle classes and the poorest to widen so dramatically (Piketty, 2014), we must look at the history of the political relationship between the state and the market. Following Saskia Sassen (2018, p. 65), we should understand how "[...] the difference between periods over time is only minimally accidental: [that] such differences are the outcome of a mix of identifiable transformative processes". It is in this trajectory that the impact of the corona virus on societies around the world can be best captured.

Karl Polanyi (2021) was one of the first to observe a slow pendulum trend (decades in the making) as power shifted between the state and the market. As the relative power of the market increases in relation to the state, the ability of the latter to curb the agency of the former would gradually diminish. In this pendulum, when the market's prowess is so expansive that economic crises begin to threaten general stability, the state has historically intervened by deciding to regulate and tame the market. Throughout this process in which the market has sought to expand its self-regulatory horizon, the state has not lost its management responsibilities (sometimes more focused on market demands, at other times also concerned with dealing with society's problems). The pendulum of power has tended to swing back towards the state as a counter-movement by society in search of stability.

In a more sophisticated understanding of the world system, Giovanni Arrighi (2010), based on the work of Fernand Braudel, highlighted the main trends in historical capitalism's *longue durée*. The essential characteristics of capitalism lie in its need for flexibility and eclecticism. The investment of capitalist agencies, from this perspective, is considered not as an end in itself, but as a means of acquiring greater flexibility and freedom of choice.

For Arrighi (2010), mainstream thinking is at odds with capitalism and the market economy. Unable to make a clear distinction between the two, it also sees state power as antithetical to market power. Within the world systems approach, however, the emergence and expansion of capitalism is understood as having an absolute dependence on state power. Over the last five hundred years, a central tendency has been for periods of struggle to be preceded by a process in which the accumulation of capital reaches its limits. Underlining the symbiotic relationship presented, the ability to control the most abundant sources of surplus capital is linked to the ability to organize the next phase of capital expansion. Interstate competition for mobile capital alone cannot guarantee capitalist power, but depends on political structures and the formation of organizational capacities to "[...] control the social and political environment of capital accumulation on a world scale" (Arrighi, 2010, p. 15). Alongside the material aspects of state/market power, ideology has played an important and complementary role in these movements.

The first decades of the post-war period saw an increase in production and trade, creating a demand for greater financial flows (Ruggie, 1982). The rapid response of private banks to the 1973 oil price crisis led oil-producing countries to inject huge amounts of petrodollars into the financial system. The unilateral abandonment of the convertibility of the dollar into gold agreed by the United States in 1971, which brought an end to the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates, ushered in a new system of floating exchange rates. Among other conjunctural elements, these helped weaken the Bretton Woods movement, notably undermined by the very state that had risen to hegemonic status as a result (Gonçalves; Pomar, 2000; Helleiner, 1994; Ruggie, 1982).

A defining feature of the neoliberal era is the greater liberalization of the world economy, accompanied by renewed freedom of choice for financial capital. This

process of financialization is distinguished by a fundamental change in the capitalist world-system, whereby productive capital has lost to finance (or fictitious) capital its centrality in organizing the system's reproduction. Herein, the profits of the financial sector have come to prevail over that of the real (productive) sector; the debt-to-GDP ratio has increased ubiquitously; the rise of fire (finance, insurance, real estate); the proliferation of exotic financial instruments; and the growing importance of financial bubbles for the system's functioning (Braga, 2012; Foster; Mcchesney, 2012).

Sassen (2022) adds that (high) finance is best understood as containing transformative dynamics, in which its effects go beyond the winners and losers of distribution. Within the literature that discusses the shifts in income distribution from the lower and middle classes to the upper classes (Piketty, 2014), her concern is with finance's ability to pull together key elements from the 1980s onwards, and with understanding the shifts in its power and role vis-à-vis, its continued presence in and importance to the world economy. While traditional banks were previously in the business of "making money", constituted within the logic of mass consumption, finance today is characterized within the logic of extraction. The former's profits came from the money it owned, while the latter derived from the invasion of other sectors, abstracted as "financialization".

Although we can, more abstractly, speak of a "return" to the dominance of the market over the state, observed at the beginning of the 20th century and in the interwar period, there are two additional significant qualitative differences in the current world economy: a transformation in the elaboration of *de facto* norms, through which the privilege of financial interests has been increasingly institutionalized; and the ability of finance to "[...] systemically, not just through influence, shap[e] elements of national government economic policy and, by extension, other policies" (Sassen, 2018, p. 72). The market, therefore, came to occupy a role traditionally thought of as belonging to the citizenry: that of holding administrations accountable.

The Great Recession of 2008-2009 is best understood within this general context of the dominance of financial capital and its new predatory logic of invasion (or financialization), its distancing from the "business of making money," and the end of the Bretton Woods commitments to multilateralism and domestic stability (i.e. in employment and income).

Of particular importance is the Anglo-Saxon Reagan-Thatcher neoliberal revolution of the 1980s, through which the myth of "There is No Alternative" (TINA) penetrated the collective minds of even the most progressive parties (Solomon, 2010). The acceptance of the power of finance capital has led to a new, broad neoliberal consensus, even if the political choices within the parties were not universal.

Celia Kerstenetzky and Graciele Guedes (2021) provide a careful analysis of the welfare state in the 21st century. They counter, quite convincingly, that the welfare state has not disappeared, and that it will most likely not disappear in the near future. Although many scholars have shown that inequality has grown, and specific policies seem to be receding, aggregate data shows that: (a) there has

been a growth in state social investment in much of the West; and (b) there has been a qualitative change in the type of social services provided that reflect global economic transformations (for example, state support for vocational training and early childhood care). In other words, we should not so easily dismiss the ideological power that underpins the welfare state.

Solomon (2010) and Kerstenetzky and Guedes (2021) provide counter perspectives but which can complement each other in specific ways regarding ideational vitality of market liberalism and resistance of the welfare state, respectively. Solomon demonstrates how neoliberalism's ideological dominance in society has made significant inroads, encouraging us to raise awareness of its power. Kerstenetzky and Guedes, on the other hand, give us hope that all is not lost, as the state continues to provide welfare to its populations, albeit not at the desired (or even necessary) level. This battle of ideologies is central to our issue. What the latter do not seem to recognize is how the changes they describe demonstrate in qualitative change in whose needs the state is seeking to meet: from a citizen-centered focus the welfare seems to have shifted to a market-centered focus—that is, in meeting the welfare needs that the market deems necessary, to best prepare the citizen for the market over a high living standard. This battle of ideologies is central to our problem.

Following Arrighi's (2010, p. 27) insight, the aim of this section is to briefly demonstrate how "[...] what initially may appear to be mere historical contingency will begin to appear to reflect a structural logic". There are different sources of the COVID-19 crisis—man's incessant incursions into nature as a systemic component of the capitalist world-system; the current management structure of the world-system that privileges profit over life and which has left governments and international governance agencies unprepared for such crises; and the associated distribution problem, which has not only exacerbated inequality, but turned it into a profit-making enterprise within a predatory logic. But each source—and potentially others—needs to be placed and understood within the broader framework of the capitalist world-system in general, and the current cycle of neoliberal expansion in particular.

Brazil under Bolsonaro: persistence and deepening of neoliberalism

Bolsonaro affirmed his commitment to the financial sector when he announced he would invite Paulo Guedes to join his cabinet before the 2018 electoral cycle and again with his subsequent appointment to head the new Ministry of Economy in 2019 at the start of his administration. Guedes, a banker and graduate of the University of Chicago, defends the neoliberal agenda as the solution to Brazil's economic and social problems. Until then little known in intellectual, political, and academic circles, he had been a figure of no significance in the debate on national issues. But

he would become a super-minister in Bolsonaro's administration, as the Ministry of Planning, Budget, and Management, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Social Security, and the Ministry of Development, Industry, and Trade were all grouped under his command within the new Ministry of Economy. The predecessor Ministry of Finance became this expanded "super-ministry" under the new administration, serving as an umbrella for all matters concerning the economy. This allowed for the coordination of an ultraliberal organizational logic under an ultraliberal hawk, which included participation of international trade negotiations and negotiations around Brazil's entry into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Paulo Guedes has been a staunch opponent of the social protections guaranteed by the 1988 Federal Constitution as well as a proponent of second-generation neoliberal reforms. In his view, and in line with what Sassen (2022) has termed the neoliberal predatory logic, the federal government should transfer the provision of education, health and social security, among other areas, to the market. A few months before the start of the pandemic, the then minister declared: "Don't look to us to end social inequality" (UOL, 2019).

The challenges posed by the pandemic did not deter the former minister Guedes from pursuing his ultraliberal agenda. On the contrary, the minister relied on the absence of social protests and the low social mobilization that the pandemic imposed on citizens to persuade Congress to approve several unpopular measures.

Faced with the need to deal with the paralysis of the economy imposed by covid-19, the Bolsonaro administration reluctantly proposed a bill to Congress to ensure emergency aid for the millions of Brazilians who had lost their jobs and the millions of workers in the informal sector. His initial proposal called for the payment of three monthly installments of R\$200.00 (about US\$1.25 a day). In the press, Paulo Guedes not only defended this amount, but also threatened that if the amount was higher, the country could go bankrupt and thus jeopardize the austerity policy. After several sessions, the Congress raised the amount to R\$600.00 (US\$3.75 per day). Although still an insufficient amount, it was three times higher than the Bolsonaro administration's proposal.

As soon as the federal government started registering workers in the new emergency aid payment system, reality turned out to be different from what was initially expected. An unexpected 40 million Brazilians were not listed as beneficiaries in any of the existing social programs (Bolsa Família or the Single Registry System). These millions of invisible citizens, left to their own devices, had to expose themselves to the lethal virus, as most were forced to appear in person in the government-designated agencies to regularize their documentation and prove their need to receive the aid. The televised press repeatedly showed the saga of these workers, from the queue to register—many had no access to the internet nor a bank account—to the service points in search of information and the long waits in the harsh sun or rain to be able to access benefits.

After being exposed to the risks of contamination, around six million workers were still unable to receive support. The pandemic brought new dimensions of inequality to Brazil. At the end of Bolsonaro's administration, one in two Brazilians needed some kind of aid or benefit from the federal government. At the same time that Bolsonaro was reluctant to acknowledge the country's social reality, he and his ministers sought to take advantage of the health crisis to roll back social rights in Congress. In contrast to the previous period, from 2002 to 2014, in which Brazil's relative inequality fell, it began to grow again after 2015, in a scenario of greater concentration of income at the top (1%).

Maristella Svampa (2019) argues that, between 2003 and 2013, Latin America moved from the Washington Consensus to the Commodities Consensus. Without disregarding the importance of resources from the export of primary products in the trade balance and fiscal surplus, the author points out that this favorable situation meant that "Indeed, over the years, past all of the ideological differences, all the Latin American governments implemented the return of a productivist vision of development and sought to deny or conceal discussions regarding the implications (impacts, consequences, damage) of the extractive export model" (Svampa, 2019, p. 1).

Domestically, in the wake of the deepening crisis in the commodities cycle, Dilma Rousseff implemented an economic platform in 2015 opposite to the one she had defended during the electoral period the year before. Her appointment of Joaquim Levy to the Ministry of Finance, in November 2014, represented the option for the agenda of neoliberal orthodoxy, further opening up the arena for predatory logic to take hold. According to Levy, to get Brazil out of the crisis, it would be necessary to carry out (pro-market) social security reforms, review benefits and other social programs, privatize state companies, reform the state, and advance other policies that make up the well-known structural adjustment programs. This orthodox agenda was eventually embraced by President Rousseff as necessary and unavoidable to overcome the economic crisis that had begun in her first term. Although the Workers' Party (PT) never embraced neoliberalism, this option was not foreign to the coalition led by the party. Lula da Silva had also implemented neoliberal policies, while defending the strengthening of the state and its centrality in economic and social development. This is one of the contradictions, as we saw earlier, of Latin America's progressive wave—pink tide, for some—between 1998 and 2016. As mentioned above, although it did not fully embrace the neoliberal agenda as a proposal for government, the PT ended up internalizing part of its logic.

With this economic agenda, the Rousseff administration failed to achieve its goals vis-à-vis economic growth, and an irreversible political attrition was already evident by the end of 2015. The impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff in August 2016 brought to power a coalition headed by conservative forces in Brazilian politics. Involved in corruption scandals and with little political legitimacy, then-president Michel Temer proposed a constitutional amendment to Congress that would impose a ceiling on public spending. Approved in December 2016, Constitutional

Amendment 95/2016 boasts an understanding of political economy based on the notion of 'expansionary austerity', which is based on cutting spending before increasing taxes. This conception presupposes that, under an environment of ostentatious government sacrifice to indicate to market agents the commitment to service the public debt, the risk of the respective bonds is reduced. Consequently, there are favorable conditions for lower interest rates, with a positive impact on the supply of credit and confidence in the country's macroeconomic stability. It is believed that businesses would make new investments, which would allow for economic growth and an environment of prosperity (Tavares; Silva, 2020, p. 2).

Health crisis, social protection, and welfare in Brazil during the covid-19 pandemic

As discussed above, one of the first effects of the pandemic, in Brazil and around the world, was the rapid loss of income for millions of workers. The health crisis further exposed Brazil's deep social inequality. By revealing an invisible contingent of around 40 million workers who simply were not in any of the government databases—a fifth of the Brazilian population, left to their own devices and performing different tasks in the informal economy—the health crisis shed new light on “the long trajectory of stability of high inequality in Brazil” (Arretche, 2015, p. 455). The interruption of the “redistributive experiment,” combined with the dispossession of many labor rights, has pushed workers towards the phenomenon known as “Uberization”—the “Gig worker”. The Brazilian welfare state, built through much struggle since the 1988 Constitution was enacted, suffered a severe blow with the approval of Amendment No. 95. This austerity policy, expanded during the Bolsonaro administration, has deepened the structure of inequality in the country. It is worth noting that the federal government, under Bolsonaro's presidency, aimed to privatize all public services, including health, education, and public policies for children and young people.

The labor counter-reform approved in 2017 by the Brazilian Congress allows for intermittent work, outsourcing of essential activities, and negotiations of labor agreements to supersede current labor legislation. Recent research has shown that “[...] almost half of the existing jobs in the country are of poor quality, with low wages, instability or excessive working hours, corresponding to 40.8 million jobs or 45.5% of the total” (Bôas, 2020).

In addition to the loss of income, the uncertainty of obtaining emergency relief, and the small number of installments paid by the federal government, access to health care represents an additional source of anguish for the population. Images of then-president Bolsonaro encouraging non-compliance with social isolation, trifling, above all, with the lives of the country's poorest and dismissing the deaths of thousands of Brazilians, are a clear demonstration of necropolitics. In December 2022, 693,800 Brazilians had already had their lives taken by COVID-19.

The Bolsonaro administration health authorities' disregard for indigenous, quilombola, and riverside communities, among other traditional peoples, is another example of this. Meanwhile, gold miners, loggers, and large and small-scale miners invaded the territories of these populations, with the undisguised support of the federal government, and spread the COVID-19 virus. The result was an increase in violence against these peoples. Historically, the right to life has not been guaranteed in Brazil but, at that moment, this violation gained frightening proportions.

The situation was not worse only because of Brazil's Unified Health System (SUS). Few countries in the world have a sophisticated and universal system like SUS, partly inspired by the British National Health Service (NHS) created in 1948. SUS was only made possible through the articulation of hundreds of social movements in Brazil, health professionals, and leaders in the progressive field committed to the right to health. Based on the principles of equity, integrality, and universality, SUS has social participation through health councils and national conferences.

In relation to the ethnic-racial profile of the victims, inequality is once again evident. Although we do not have disaggregated data for all COVID-19 victims in the country, black men and women are more likely to die than the non-black population. According to the then High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations (UN), Michelle Bachelet, black people and ethnic minorities have been hit hardest in Brazil and the United States.

SUS has a drug distribution program that the vast majority of the population would have difficulty accessing if the drugs were not provided free of charge. As the service is universal, the rich also have free access to medicine and treatments for the most diverse diseases. The social struggle that led to the creation of SUS ensures that health is considered a right and not a commodity. However, a back door has been created in Brazil's excellent public hospitals, allowing care through private health insurance. Although it is compulsory for health insurers whose clients are treated in public hospitals to reimburse these institutions, it is an ongoing struggle for plan operators to pay into the public coffers. The situation has only become less tragic thanks to their capillarity throughout the national territory and the fact that two thirds of the population receive medical care through the Family Health Program.

Brazilian science also suffered from budget cuts. With the pandemic, Brazilian universities and research centers began to expand their connections with research centers abroad, in a countermovement to the inertia during the former Bolsonaro administration. The president and his ministers demonstrated great lack of awareness to the country's social reality and insensitivity to its concrete problems. They showed concern with the damage the pandemic could do to Bolsonaro's administration and his political image, as well as the possibility of the Brazilian social conscience maturing in relation to the need to rethink the administration's ultraliberal policies—in a potential shift to valuing what is public and the common good (such as the SUS). In short, Bolsonaro and his administration have not lived up to the call made by the then High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michele

Bachelet: “Ultimately, efforts to tackle COVID-19 and to begin the recovery process will only be successful if everyone’s rights to life and health are protected, without discrimination” (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2020).

Concluding remarks

The text sought to contextualize the coronavirus crisis within the general framework of the post-war period and the Bretton Woods system, as a first moment, which was followed by the rise of financial capital at a global level, under the auspices of neoliberalism and US hegemony. The political and economic events discussed in the second and third sections are best understood within this general context. It is within and through this conjuncture that alternatives must be sought in an attempt to recover social welfare with the support of the state, to help in the fight against inequality and for an end to social precariousness in Brazil. This movement permeates the confrontation with the predatory logic embedded in the neoliberal program and its counter-reforms.

The aim of this article was to discuss how the pandemic tended to reinforce the situation of inequality in Brazil vis-à-vis the ultraliberal agenda of the Bolsonaro administration. After the economic crisis of 2014, together with the political crisis of 2015-2016, which resulted in the impeachment of then president Dilma Rousseff, neoliberal policies were intensified in the country. In the administration of former president Michel Temer (2016-2018), the passing of Constitutional Amendment No. 95/2016 represented a restriction on public spending and “marked the interruption of the redistribution experiment” begun in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century. It also represented a retreat from the social rights enshrined in the Constitution. The labor counter-reform was an additional factor that contributed to the increase in social inequality. Approved in 2017 with strong support from the business community, federal deputies, and senators, the elimination of some existing labor protections pushed workers into precarious and poorly paid jobs.

This aggravated picture of social inequalities continued under the Bolsonaro administration and took on new forms. Throughout Bolsonaro’s mandate, his administration pushed to privatize public services and, thereby, financialize access to health and education. The drive was to reproduce in Brazil the economic and social experience of Chile under Pinochet. The attempt to end public pensions is exemplary, a move that would leave individual workers worrying about their individual savings without taking into account current levels of (most often negative) disposable income.

However, the global health crisis, as was the case with the 2008 financial crisis, has demonstrated the extent to which neoliberal hegemony is incapable of providing an adequate response to critical situations of crisis. The state’s legitimacy is more readily reclaimed, whereby it can, through its capacity, guarantee the subsistence

of the population. In Brazil, the existence of the Unified Health System was crucial in dealing with the pandemic. Despite being underfunded, SUS has saved millions of lives. Once again, the neoliberal logic has failed to pass the test of reality.

With the economy at a virtual standstill beginning in early 2020, the need to guarantee a minimum income for workers became apparent. According to the logic of the Bolsonaro administration, the state should not intervene to prevent an increase in poverty and misery. However, Congress, despite the reluctance of the president and his ministers, approved emergency aid in the context of a state of public calamity. Bolsonaro sought, at all costs, to take advantage of the moment of crisis to further deny social rights.



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ПОЛИТИЧКА ЕКОНОМИЈА НЕЈЕДНАКОСТИ И ПАНДЕМИЈА КОВИД-19 У БРАЗИЛУ

Апстракт: Концентрација прихода је нагло порасла у свету од 1980-их. Глобална здравствена криза је уздрмала глобални капитализам и довела до кризе без преседана. У Латинској Америци, најнеравноправнијем региону на свету, здравствена криза је додатно погоршала слику неједнакости. Од 2014. године, због завршетка робног циклуса, смањење сиромаштва и неједнакости прихода у региону изгубили су замах. Са пандемијом, економије Латинске Америке и Кариба, већ са ниским економским растом последњих година, повећале су неизвесност и ставиле на тест капацитет државе да обезбеди јавне здравствене услуге и политике за ублажавање несташице за огромне делове становништва. Уз пажњу бразилског друштва усмерену на борбу против пандемије, Болсонарова влада (2019-) искористила је ову ситуацију да покуша да унапреди своју ултра-либералну агенду и да преокрене јавну политику за промоцију једнакости. Болсонарова влада схвата да се бразилска социјална држава, предвиђена Уставом, не уклапа у буџет земље. Циљ овог чланка је да се расправља о могућим путевима и политикама које бразилска држава може предузети као резултат пандемије и пратеће политичке и економске кризе. У првом делу представљамо елементе који нам омогућавају да разумемо кризу неолиберализма из кризе 2008. године и њену истрајност; у другом анализирамо Болсонарову владу из спровођења њене ултра неолибералне агенде и погоршања слике неједнакости у земљи; у трећем, разматрамо здравствену кризу и њене ефекте на запошљавање, здравствени систем и потребу за основним приходима грађана који су јачали проширењем и продубљивањем социјалне и економске кризе.

Кључне речи: БРАЗИЛ, НЕЈЕДНАКОСТ, НЕОЛИБЕРАЛИЗАМ, ПАНДЕМИЈА, ДРЖАВА, БЛАГОСТАЊЕ

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MISTAKEN THESES IN THE DEBATE ON DEINDUSTRIALIZATION AND LOSS OF COMPETITIVENESS OF BRAZILIAN INDUSTRY

Abstract: Nowadays it is a consensus among Brazilian economists that Brazil suffered a huge process of deindustrialization since 2005. But this consensus had emerged only in the last years. During the period between 2008 and 2012 a huge debate between heterodox and orthodox economists in Brazil occurred about the existence of deindustrialization. The orthodox economists had denied the existence and/or the relevance of deindustrialization for the Brazilian economy for many years. At the end, they lost the debate, heterodox economists, mainly the ones related with the so-called the Brazilian new-developmental School were right: Brazil deindustrialize, and this negative structural change had reduced the long-term growth of Brazilian economy. The objective of this paper is to present the orthodox thesis about the deindustrialization of Brazilian economy, identifying the reasons by which they proved to be wrong. As we shall argue on this article, deindustrialization in Brazil is not a natural outcome of development process, but it is premature and caused, mainly, by exchange rate overvaluation that is the result of the increase in terms of trade occurred in the period between 2005 and 2011. Moreover, deindustrialization is not an irrelevant phenomenon for development of Brazilian economy in medium and long-term, since manufacturing industry is a unique sector where we observe the highest levels of labour productivity.

Keywords: DEINDUSTRIALIZATION, EXCHANGE RATE OVER - VALUATION, BRAZILIAN ECONOMY

Introduction

In the economic literature, the term deindustrialization has been used to explain the relative loss of industrial employment in developed countries since 1970. For Tregenna (2009), the most appropriate concept would be a persistent relative loss of both employment and value added. In addition, deindustrialization is followed by strong growth in the service sector, including total exports¹. Sometimes the process of deindustrialization is also associated with the problem of 'Dutch disease'². According to Rowthorn and Ramaswamy (1999), in the dynamics of development, deindustrialization can be seen as a natural phenomenon, because as countries consistently increase per capita income, the income elasticity of demand for industrialized products decreases, which leads to a relative reduction in demand for industrialized products. In addition, strong productivity growth in the industrial sector leads to a fall in the relative prices of industrial goods, thus leading to a reduction in the manufacturing sector's share of value added and total employment³.

Regarding the long-term effects of the deindustrialization process, Oreiro and Feijó (2010) and Tregenna (2009) argue that deindustrialization is seen as a problem for the growth of capitalist economies by the heterodox literature à la Kaldor, since in the orthodox perspective the sectoral composition of production is not relevant to economic growth. According to Kaldor (1967), manufacturing industry is the engine of long-term growth due to four fundamental characteristics of the manufacturing sector, namely: i) presence of increasing returns to scale; ii) higher forward and backward linkages in the production chain; iii) creates and diffuses technological progress and iv) have a greater income elasticity of exports. In this context, a process of deindustrialization reduces long-term potential growth.

Palma (2005) points out four explanations for deindustrialization: i) reallocation of industrial labour to services due to growing outsourcing; ii) reduction of the income elasticity of demand for manufactured goods; iii) high productivity growth in industry

1 See Rowthorn and Wells (1987).

2 The term 'Dutch disease' refers to a process of premature deindustrialization, as occurred in the Netherlands in the '70s when there was a 'reprimarization' of exports, resulting from the discovery of natural resources [Nassif (2008)].

3 Given the various concepts of deindustrialization, Oreiro and Feijó (2010) call attention to the fact that deindustrialization is not necessarily a bad thing. The relative drop in the participation of manufacturing industry in output and employment may be accompanied by an increase in the participation of products with higher technological content and added value in the export basket. However, it is worth noting that this is not the case in Brazil.

driven by ICTs and iv) a new international 'division' of labour. About the last aspect, we could call it a growing specialization resulting from North-South trade⁴. These arguments converge not only with Kaldor's 'stylized facts', but also with Rowthorn and Ramaswamy's (1999) explanations for deindustrialization. In the case of Brazil and the countries of the Southern Cone, the author draws attention, however, to external shocks or structural changes as drivers of premature deindustrialization.

Nassif (2008) points out that, although there is no consensus on the occurrence of deindustrialization in the Brazilian case, the literature has sought to explain the process of deindustrialization because of both the import substitution model, the process of trade liberalization and overvaluation exchange rate policy combined with the rise in relative price of commodities. However, he concludes that the reduction in the share of manufacturing industry in the GDP occurred in the second half of the 80s, even before structural changes, such as the opening of trade and the stabilization process and is mainly due to the strong drop in labour productivity in this period. In the 90s, the scenario was different with the increase in productivity and a drop in investment rates, the author points out.

It is worth emphasizing, however, that from 1999 onwards labour productivity in Brazil assumed an unstable behaviour, but with higher levels than in the early 90s. Investment also presents some instability and with a downward trajectory in the 90s, reaching the lowest level in the last quarter of 1999 (14.7% of GDP). In the first quarter of 2000, investment had a strong growth, but continued with a downward trend, whose recovery only occurred from 2004 onwards and reached a higher level in the third quarter of 2008. With the global financial crisis, which had its worst moment in the last quarter of 2008, investment suffers a drop of about two percentage points. The output and relative employment in industry also dropped, but the biggest reduction was seen in the productivity of the industry.

In this context, Nassif (2008) opposed to the deindustrialization thesis point out that the relative loss of industry in employment and total output is the result of the lack of a favourable macroeconomic environment for the resumption of growth than an effective deindustrialization of the Brazilian economy. This is one of the arguments of Bonelli and Pessoa (2010) that reinforce the idea that the evidence, in the Brazilian case, regarding the thesis of deindustrialization is not conclusive. For these authors, it would be necessary to distinguish three aspects: i) whether the relative reduction of manufacturing industry is associated with macroeconomic instability; ii) whether there is a worldwide trend of relative loss of manufacturing industry from global production and iii) whether there is a persistent decline in manufacturing activity. Considering these aspects,

4 The 'stylized fact' evidenced in the North-South models is the greater income elasticity of the demand for imports to the countries of the South compared to those of the North, which explains the uneven development [Dutt (2003)]. These models also refer us to the ideas of the Ricardian theory trade model and to ECLAC's thinking of deterioration of the terms of trade.

the authors point out that the loss of the industry's participation was not so intense and occurred mainly in the period prior to 1993, a phase in which the Brazilian economy and the world economy went through external crises and macroeconomic instability.

Bresser-Pereira and Marconi (2008), in turn, argue that deindustrialization in Brazil is the result of the 'Dutch disease'. They claim that the simultaneous occurrence of an overvalued exchange rate and trade imbalance of the manufacturing would be proof of the existence of 'Dutch disease' in Brazil. The authors also highlight the change in economic policy initiated in the 90s, favouring this scenario⁵. From the point of view of foreign trade, the authors state that the process of trade opening provided not only an increase in imports, but favoured the increase in exports (new consumer markets).⁶ Regarding exchange rate policy, the authors' argument is that the reduction in the real exchange rate, the increase in external demand, combined with the increase in relative commodity prices and the growth of the world economy contributed to the boom in Brazilian exports until 2007. Despite this favourable result in the trade balance, the central issue is the effect of an overvalued exchange rate on industrial production. The authors point to a discouragement of production in less competitive sectors⁷. From this perspective, an overvalued exchange rate may contribute to a 'Dutch disease' scenario because even if there is no discovery of new natural resources, there would be a tendency towards the specialization of exports of primary or manufactured products intensive in natural resources and labour, favoured by the exchange rate policy⁸.

The analysis of the recent Brazilian literature about deindustrialization seems to leave little room for doubt about the effective occurrence of this process (Oreiro and Feijó, 2010; Oreiro, D'Agostini and Gala, 2020). In fact, once the usual definition of deindustrialization is accepted as a process in which there is a reduction in the share of value added in industry in GDP and/or industrial employment in total employment, it becomes unquestionable that this process has been occurring in Brazil, with greater or lesser intensity, in a linear way or not, since the end of the 1980s.

In the debates on deindustrialization and the competitiveness of Brazilian

5 The country has moved from a regime of tariff and exchange rate control markedly from an ISI model to a policy of trade openness and a floating exchange rate regime.

6 Since 2002, the country has been accumulating a positive balance of trade and it is only after the 2008 crisis that this situation begins to be reversed. Moreira (1999) points out that the process of trade liberalization favoured, mainly, imports in sectors that were intensive in technology and, in exports, those that were more intensive in natural resources or little intensive in technology and capital.

7 Rowthorn and Ramaswamy (1997) call attention to an aspect that is rarely mentioned about the effects of exchange rate appreciation. Certainly, in this context, an additional symptom for the verification of 'Dutch disease' should be associated with the growth of unemployment in the economy. Because if deindustrialization is not a natural process, then the service sector would not be able to absorb this labour liberated from industry.

8 This debate about the behaviour of the exchange rate and the possibility of specialization of the structure of exports has gained space in the economic scenario mainly from the discovery of the pre-salt layers.

industry, that occurred mainly between 2008 and 2012, economists of orthodox theoretical matrix have presented a series of arguments in the sense of denying the occurrence of the phenomenon of deindustrialization or minimizing the effects of this phenomenon on the long-term growth potential of the Brazilian economy. These arguments, although not always compatible with each other, constitute a set of ten theses regarding the situation of Brazilian industry at that time. Based on these theses, deindustrialization – if effective – would be a natural consequence of the development process of the Brazilian economy, that is, of the increase in the income elasticity of the demand for services that is induced by the growth of per-capita income; and aggravated by the low dynamism of labour productivity, resulting from the semi-autarkic nature of the Brazilian economy. In this context, real wages tend to grow above labour productivity, thus increasing the unit cost of labour in national currency, which leads to a growing deterioration in the competitiveness of manufacturing industry. The observed overvaluation of the real exchange rate observed between 2005 and 2012 would be a secondary - that is, not a fundamental - reason for the loss of competitiveness of industry; but it would be related to the very logic of the Social Welfare State implanted de jure in Brazil with the 1988 Constitution and de facto with the two terms of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Thus, the restoration of the competitiveness of industry through the devaluation of the exchange rate would be something unfeasible from the political point of view. Finally, it is argued that deindustrialization, even if irreversible, would not have negative effects on the growth potential of the Brazilian economy, because manufacturing industry is a sector like any other, not being fundamental for a sustained increase in per-capita income in the medium and long term.

That said, this article aims to present the theses of orthodoxy on the deindustrialization of the Brazilian economy, pointing out the reason why they are mistaken. As we will argue throughout this article, Brazilian deindustrialization is not a natural consequence of the development process, being of premature nature and caused, above all, by the exchange rate appreciation overvaluation caused by the appreciation of the terms of trade observed between 2005 and 2011. In addition, deindustrialization is not an irrelevant phenomenon on the development of the Brazilian economy in the medium and long term, since manufacturing industry is not a sector like any other, but it is the sector where the highest levels of labour productivity are observed.

Thesis on deindustrialization and loss of competitiveness of Brazilian industry

An analysis of the arguments presented by the orthodoxy in the debate on the deindustrialization and loss of competitiveness of the Brazilian economy allows us to list the following set of Theses:

1. Deindustrialization is a worldwide phenomenon.
2. The Brazilian economy is not deindustrializing.
3. Brazilian deindustrialization is a natural consequence of its stage of development
4. Manufacturing industry is a sector like any other.
5. Brazilian deindustrialization is not due to the overvaluation of the exchange rate.
6. The exchange rate appreciation in Brazil is like that of other emerging countries.
7. The loss of competitiveness of Brazilian industry is due to the low dynamism of productivity and wage growth.
8. The exchange rate overvaluation is a result of the implementation of the "Social Welfare State".
9. The overvalued exchange rate in Brazil is a permanent phenomenon.

This set of theses does not constitute an internally consistent set of propositions as they reflect the position of several representatives of Brazilian orthodoxy. In fact, while some representatives of orthodoxy simply deny the occurrence of the phenomenon of deindustrialization (Thesis 2); others accept the occurrence of the same (Thesis 1 and 3), but minimize the impact of this phenomenon on the long-term growth of the Brazilian economy (Thesis 4 and 5) or consider that such a phenomenon is irreversible, resulting from the de facto implementation of the Social Welfare State in the Brazilian economy during the two terms of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the low growth of labour productivity resulting from the semi-autarkic character of the Brazilian economy⁹.

The theses listed above point to the idea that deindustrialization evidenced by the Brazilian economy (disregarding Thesis 2) is a natural result of its development process, that is, resulting from the increase in the income elasticity of the demand for services that is induced by the increase in the level of per-capita income. In this context, the deindustrialization that occurred in the Brazilian economy would reflect a phenomenon that occurs on a global scale, that is: the loss of importance

9 Some exponents of one or more of these theses are Pessoa (2011) and Ferreira and Frageli (2012).

of industry in the total employment and GDP of the various countries. It is admitted, however, that the deindustrialization that occurred in Brazil may be deeper than that observed in the rest of the world due to the semi-autarkic character of the Brazilian economy, which translates into productive inefficiency and low dynamism of labour productivity¹⁰. In this context, real wages grow faster than labour productivity, thus leading to a sharp increase in the unit cost of labour and, consequently, to a sharp reduction in the competitiveness of Brazilian industry.

The overvaluation of real exchange rate observed since 2005 (Oreiro, D´Agostini and Gala, 2020) may accentuate this loss of competitiveness, but it is not its main cause. This is because the exchange rate appreciation verified in Brazil would be like that observed in other emerging countries, in such a way that the relative competitiveness of the Brazilian economy would not have been seriously affected by it. In addition, the exchange rate appreciation observed since 2005 would be of a permanent nature, which would make any attempt to correct the problem of loss of competitiveness through an adjustment of the real exchange rate unfeasible. In fact, it is argued that the exchange rate overvaluation results from the strong appreciation of the terms of trade of the Brazilian economy from 2005 to 2011 (Bacha, 2024), due to the economic growth of China, and the de facto implementation of the Social Welfare State in Brazil during the two terms of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, which would have led to an increase in the price of non-tradeable goods with respect to tradeable goods.

Finally, it is argued that deindustrialization would have no significant effect on the long-term growth prospects of the Brazilian economy because not only manufacturing industry is one sector but also another; and, moreover, Australia's historical experience shows that the existence of a robust industrial sector is not essential for long-term economic development.

Did Brazilian economy deindustrialize?

To answer this question clearly, we must precisely define the meaning of the term deindustrialization. As we argued in the introduction to this article, deindustrialization is defined as a process of a structural nature in which the share of manufacturing industry in employment and GDP is consistently reduced over time. As highlighted by Oreiro and Feijó (2010), deindustrialization may or may not be accompanied by a re-primarization of exports, the occurrence of the latter only reinforces the negative character of the former.

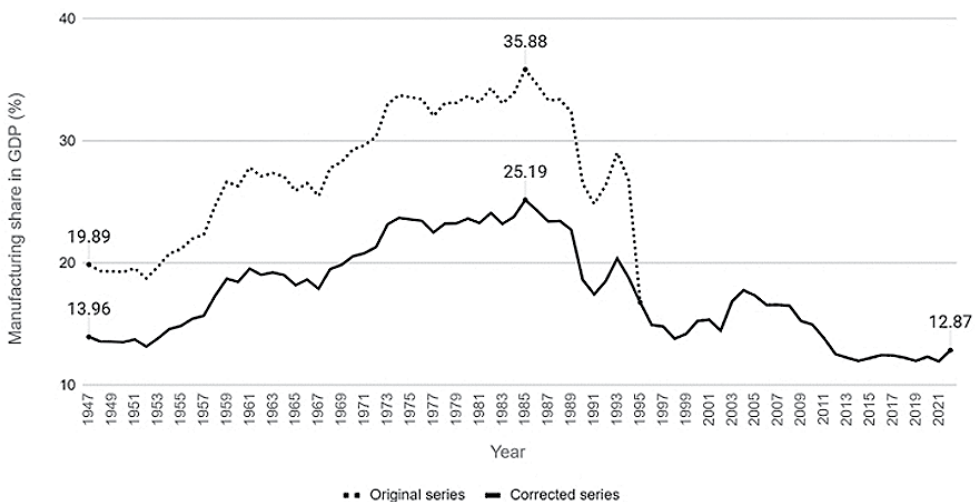
There is also a difficulty in determining the occurrence of deindustrialization process from the mid-1990s onward, as there were methodological changes in GDP calculation implemented by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics

¹⁰ The same argument is presented recently by Bacha (2024)

(IBGE) in 2007, making it impossible to compare the industry's value-added share in GDP series in the periods before and after 1995 (Oreiro and Feijó, 2010). However, the data series provided by IBGE regarding the share of the industrial sector in the total GDP can be adjusted to be comparable, and it clearly indicate the occurrence of deindustrialization after 1995.

It was possible to correct the IBGE series by using the database provided by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipeadata) and applying the same methodology as Bonelli and Pessôa (2013), in which they used the percentage variations of the nominal values from the old systems and retroactively applying these rates to the 1995 result. After that year, the two series (original and corrected) coincide. As shown in the Figure 1 below, the corrected series is still indicative of deindustrialization, even up to 2022. While the millennium began with approximately 15.37% of the manufacturing industry's share in the total Brazilian GDP, 21 years later, this share was reduced by 2.5 percentage points, representing only 12.87% of the GDP in 2022. Its highest point was 25.19% in 1985, while the lowest was 11.97% in 2021. There was a decrease of approximately 12.3 percentage points in the manufacturing share in total GDP between the years 1985 and 2022.

Figure 1: Evolution of the manufacturing share in GDP for Brazilian economy (1947-2021)

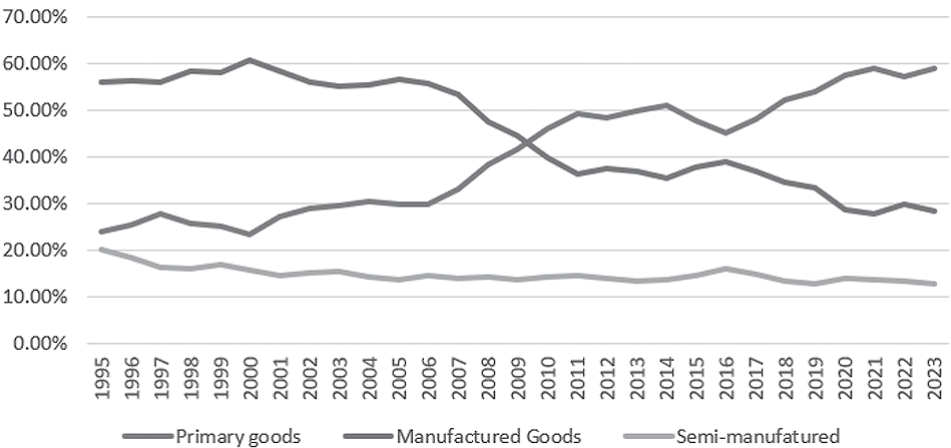


Source: Nascimento and Oreiro (2024).

This movement of loss of the manufacturing share in value added has been accompanied by a change in the composition of exports since 2005. In fact, as we can see in figure 2 below, the share of manufactured products in the export basket began to show a strong downward trend from 2005 onwards, having been

surpassed by the share of primary products in 2009. Based on these data, we can say that Brazil has returned to being a primary-exporting economy.

Figure 2 - Composition of Brazilian exports (1995-2023)

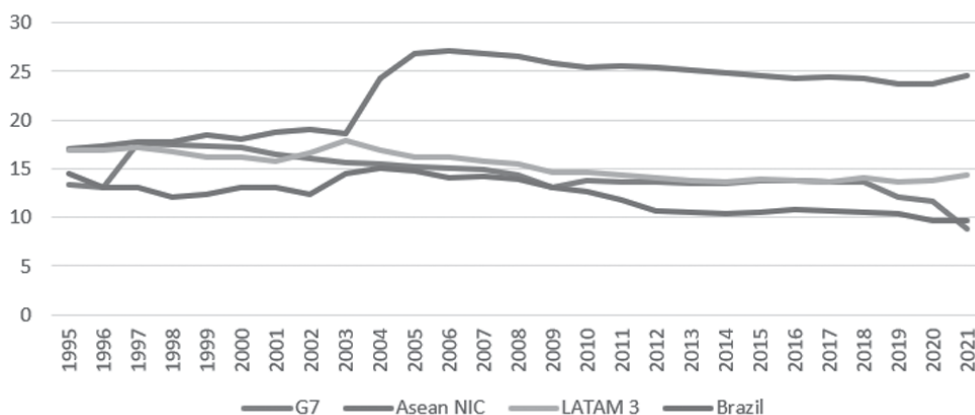


Source: IPEADATA. Authors own elaboration.

Is deindustrialization a global phenomenon?

It is not true that deindustrialization is a worldwide phenomenon. As we can see in figure 4 below, while the share of manufacturing industry in GDP has been decreasing in the G7 countries and in the three biggest Latin American economies (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico) since, at least, 1995; but in the New Industrialized Countries (NIC) of Asia (China, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia) in the dynamic countries of Asia, it increased at almost 7 pp. of GDP from 2004 on and stabilize at a level of 25% of GDP in 2021. Thus, what has been observed worldwide is not the loss of importance of manufacturing industry, but a change in its spatial location from the West to the East, notably Asia.

**Figure 4 - Manufacturing output as a Share of GDP,
Current Prices (1995-2021)**



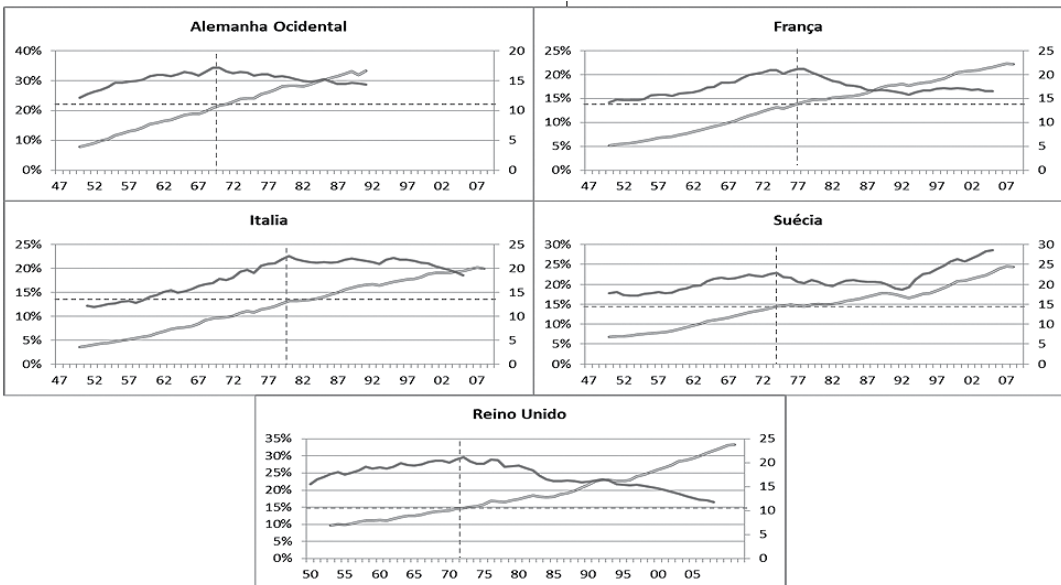
Source: World Bank Data Base. Own elaboration.

Is Brazilian deindustrialization a natural consequence of its stage of development?

The term premature deindustrialization was originally created by Palma (2005) to represent a situation in which the share manufacturing of industry in employment and/or in the value added of a given country begins to be reduced to a level of per-capita income lower than that verified in developed countries when they began

their deindustrialization process. As we can see in figure 5 below, deindustrialization in developed countries began in the first half of the 1970s with a per-capita income level between 10 and 15 thousand dollars.

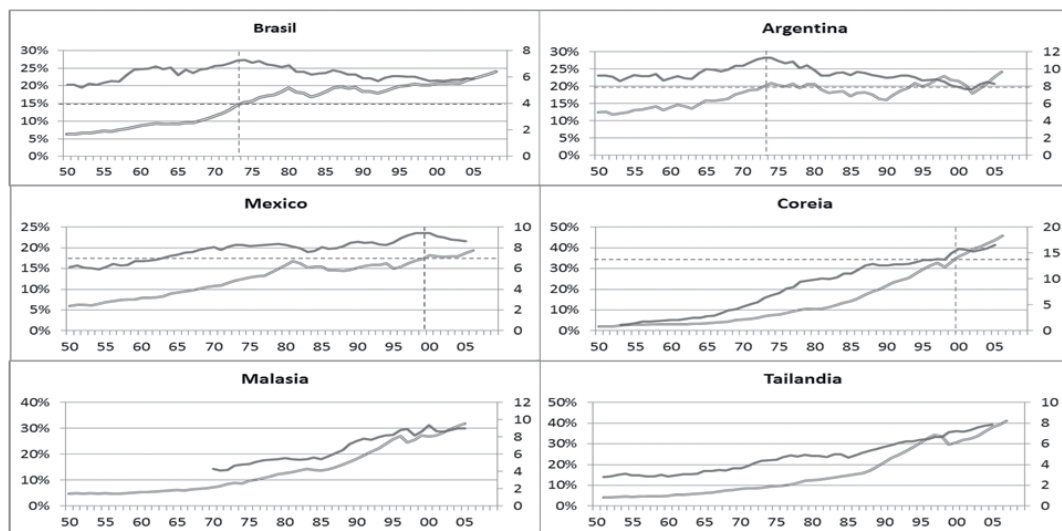
Figure 5: Share of the manufacturing industry in value added and per-capita income (US\$ thousands) in Selected Countries (1947-2007).



Source: Marconi and Rocha (2011).

The data available for the Brazilian economy clearly show that the deindustrialization that occurred in Brazil is premature. As we can see in figure 6 below, the share of the manufacturing industry in the value added of the Brazilian economy began to reduce throughout the 1970s to a level of per-capita income of around US\$ 4 thousand. Not only is this a value much lower than that observed in developed countries when they began their deindustrialization process, but also lower than that observed in other developing countries.

Figure 6: Share of the manufacturing industry in value added and per-capita income (US\$ thousands) in selected countries (1947-2007).



Source: Marconi and Rocha (2011).

Is manufacturing industry a sector like any other?

An argument that recurrently appears in the Brazilian debate on deindustrialization is that industry is a sector like any other, so that the reduction of its participation in employment and value added does not have major consequences for long-term growth. Thus, the increase in the importance of the service sector and primary activities in the Brazilian economy in recent years should not be seen as a source of concern for economic policymakers, as they do not signal a reduction in the growth potential of the Brazilian economy.

It is not true, however, that industry is a sector like any other. Indeed, when we look at the value-added/employment ratio – the relevant measure of productivity in a modern economy – we find that the value of this ratio for the manufacturing industry is approximately three times higher than that prevailing in the production of agricultural and extractive commodities (see Figure 7). This means that a

reallocation of resources from the manufacturing industry to primary activities – a typical process of economies suffering from deindustrialization caused by Dutch disease – should produce a reduction in average labour productivity in the economy as a whole and, therefore, a reduction in per-capita income levels.



Source: Marconi and Rocha (2011). Own elaboration

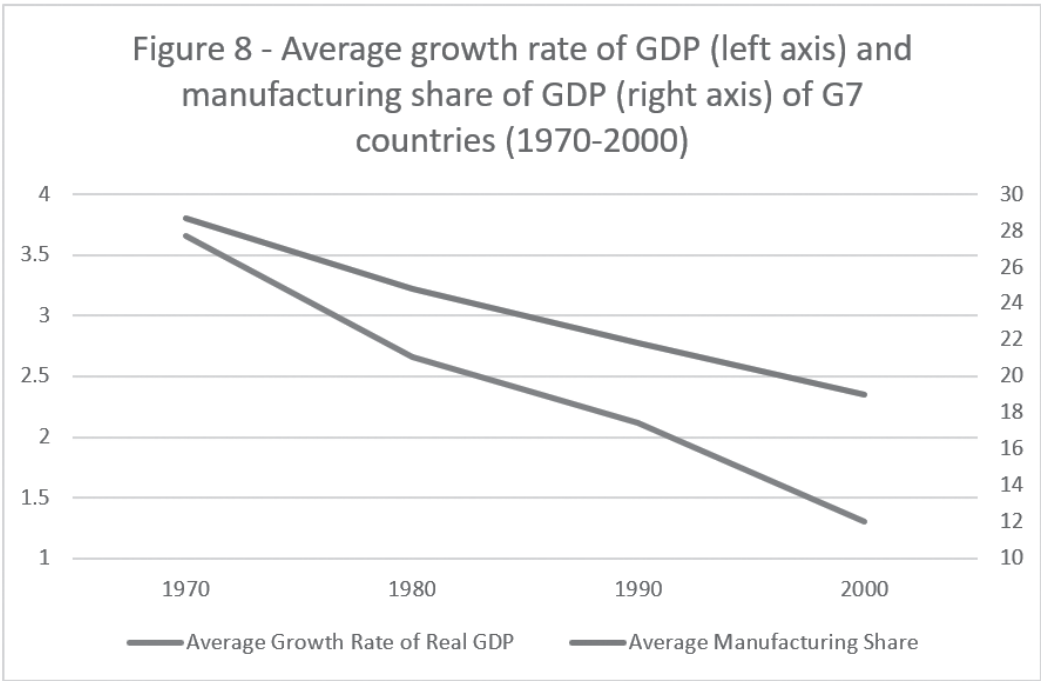
In Table I we can see the evolution of labour productivity in Brazilian tradable sectors in the period 1995-2008. Except for agricultural and extractive commodities that presented a remarkable growth of labour productivity during this period, the other tradeable sectors productivity stagnates or fall. This is particularly worrying for the low and medium-lo manufacturing sector, where cost advantages are of fundamental importance for international competitiveness. Labor productivity in the manufacturing industry remained stagnant in the period 1995-2008, because of the low investments made in the expansion/modernization of productive capacity (Oreiro et al, 2018). Moreover, the share of the employment in manufacturing industry on total employment remained unchanged in the period 1995-2008 because the manufacturing industry met the increase in sales with greater capacity utilization, but without making investments in the expansion/modernization of productive capacity. The manufacturing industry invested little in this period due to the combination of overvalued exchange rate/high real interest rates.

Table I: Evolution of labour productivity of Brazilian tradable sectors (1995-2008)

	Change % in Labour Productivity(1995-2008)
Agricultural and extractive commodities	88, 17%
Manufacturing Industry	-0, 74%
Derived Agricultural and extractive commodities	-6, 53%
low and medium-low tech manufacturing	-3, 79%
medium-high and high tech manufacturing	-0, 7

Source: Marconi and Rocha (2011). Own elaboration

In addition, the data also seem to disprove the thesis that deindustrialization has no negative consequences over long-term growth. As show in Figure 8 below, the average growth rate of real GDP and the share of the manufacturing industry in the GDP of the G7 countries show a clear positive correlation in the period 1970-2000, where it can be seen that the observed reduction in the GDP growth rate of this group of countries was followed by a very significant reduction in the share of the manufacturing industry in the GDP of these economies.

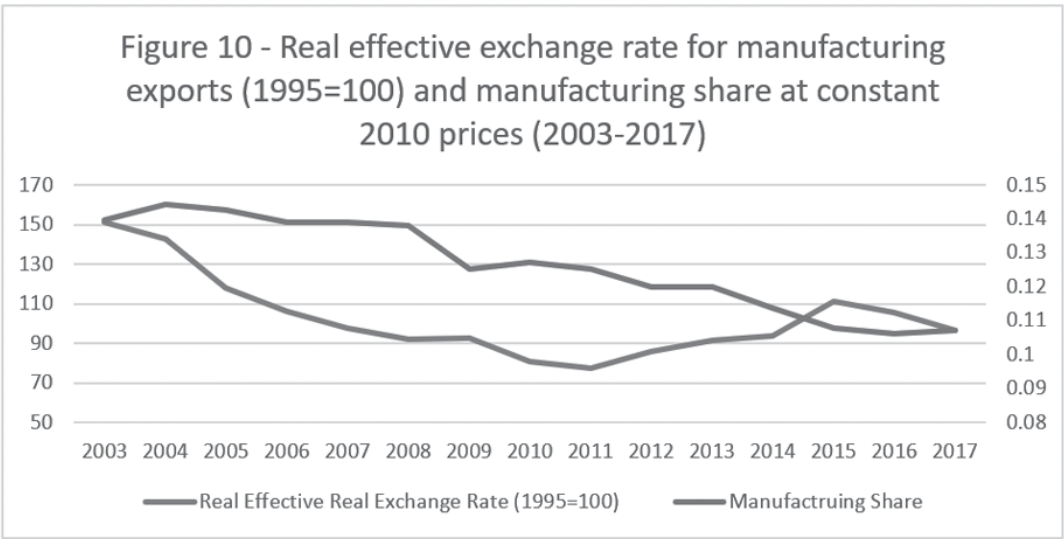


Source: Rocha (2011). Own elaboration

Isn't Brazilian deindustrialization due to the appreciation of the real exchange rate?

This is perhaps the most widespread thesis among orthodox Brazilian economists. Currently, there are few who deny the deindustrialization of the Brazilian economy, but they claim that it is not related to the strong appreciation of the exchange rate that has occurred since 2005 (See, for instance, Bacha, 2024).

Once again, this thesis seems to be not very robust. When we compare the evolution of the real effective exchange rate for manufacturing exports and the share of the manufacturing industry in the GDP of the Brazilian economy in the period 2003-2017 (figure 10); we found that an appreciation of the real effective exchange rate of 36% in this period was followed by a drop in the share of the manufacturing industry in the GDP by 23%. It is clear to the naked eye that the strong appreciation of the real exchange rate is an important factor to explain the deindustrialization of the Brazilian economy in this period.



Source: Ipeadata. Own elaboration

Real exchange rate overvaluation, however, it is not the sole cause of Brazilian deindustrialization. As a matter of fact, the correlation between real effective real exchange rate is 0.42 for the period 2003-2017, which is positive but moderate. And correlation does not mean causality. Oreiro, D'agostini and Gala (2020) presented a new methodological procedure to decompose the deindustrialization of the Brazilian economy in the period 1997-2017 in the share that can be attributed to

real exchange rate overvaluation and the share that can be attributed to the loss of non-price competitiveness of the Brazilian manufacturing industry due to the reducing economic complexity of Brazilian economy. To do that, the authors calculated the so-called industrial equilibrium exchange rate for the Brazilian economy during the period 1998-2017, which is defined as the real exchange rate for which the manufacturing share should be constant through time. Once this industrial equilibrium rate was calculated then the authors calculated what should be the manufacturing share if the real exchange rate was kept at this industrial equilibrium level during the entire period. The authors show that only 38,94% of the deindustrialization over this period can be attributable to real exchange rate overvaluation, and 61,06% are due to loss of non-price competitiveness of Brazilian manufacturing share, that means due to increasing technological backwardness of Brazilian manufacturing industry.

Still about the issue of the appreciation of the real exchange rate, a widespread thesis is that the appreciation of the real exchange rate observed in Brazil is similar to that of other emerging countries, which is why the relative competitiveness of the Brazilian industry would not have been affected by the behaviour of the exchange rate.

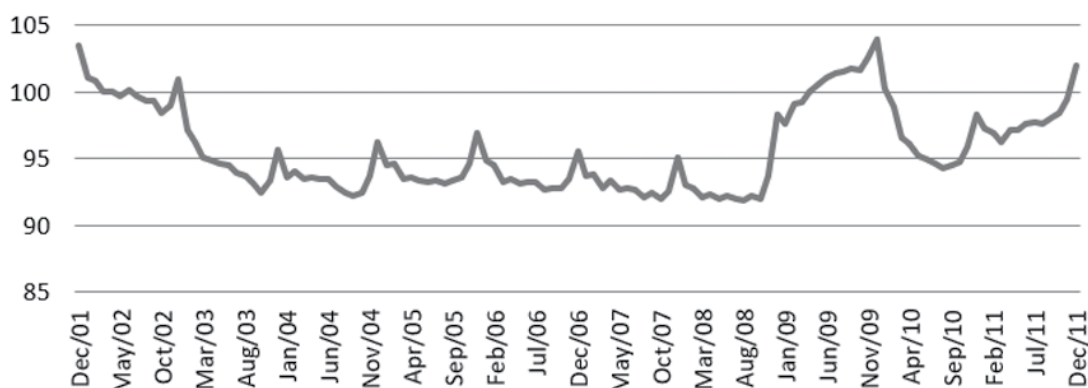
This thesis also does not correspond to the facts. In fact, as shown by Frenkel and Rapetti (2011), taking the year 2000 as the basis of the series, it is observed that the real exchange rate in Brazil was the one appreciated the most in a group of six Latin American economies in the period 2000-2010.

Is the loss of competitiveness of Brazilian industry due to the low dynamism of productivity and wage growth?

This thesis is also widespread, even among heterodox economists. According to this thesis, Brazilian deindustrialization would be the result of the loss of competitiveness of the industry that results from the growth of wages above productivity, that is, from the increase in the unit cost of labour measured in national currency.

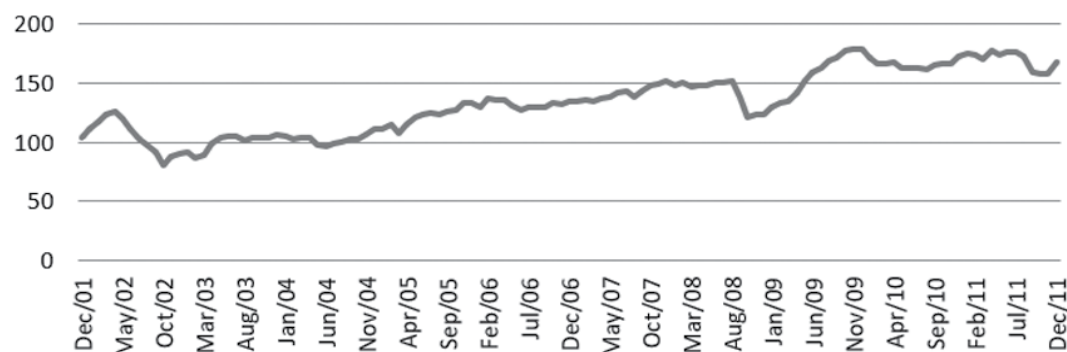
This thesis also does not adhere to the facts. In fact, when we look at the series of unit labour costs of the Brazilian manufacturing industry in the period between 12/2001 and 12/2011 (Figure 11), we do not find any upward trend in the variable in question. In fact, the prevailing index at the end of the period is like the prevailing at the beginning of the period. However, when we look at the unit labour cost/real effective exchange rate series (Figure 12) we find that in the period under consideration it found an increase of about 60%. It follows that the fundamental reason for the loss of competitiveness of Brazilian industry is the appreciation of the real exchange rate, not the growth of wages above productivity.

Figure 11- Unit labour cost of the manufacturing industry, moving average of the last 12 months (Dec.01/Dec.11)



Source: CEMACRO. Own elaboration

Figure 12: Unit labor cost/Real effective exchange rate of the manufacturing industry (Dec/01-Dec.11)



Fonte: CEMACRO. Own elaboration.

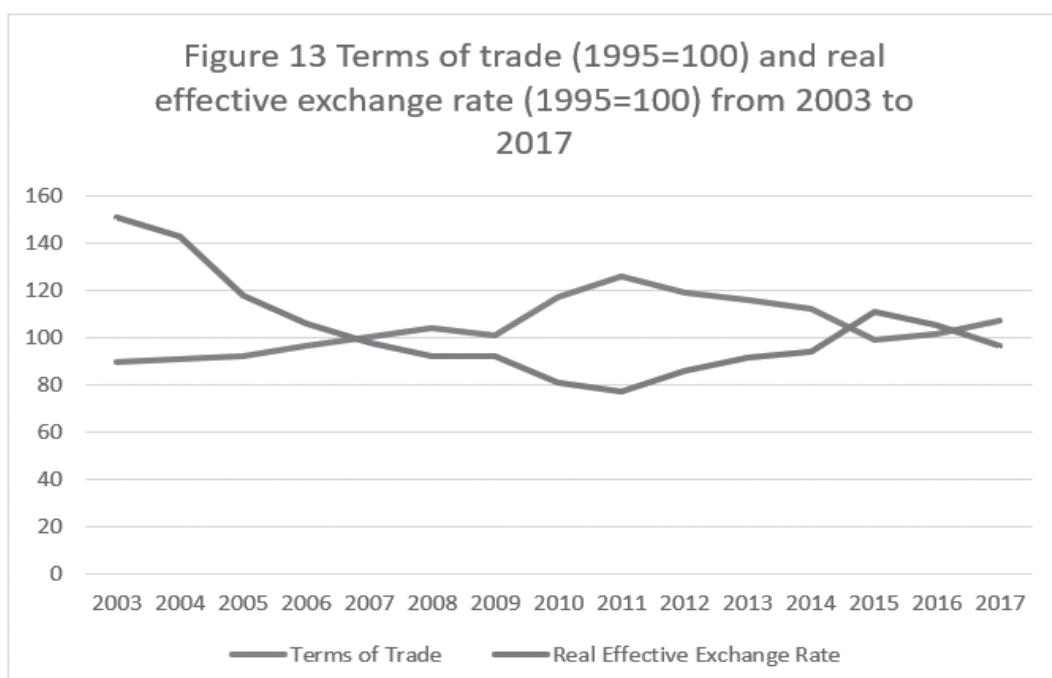
Is the exchange rate appreciation a result of the implementation of the “Social Welfare State”?

This thesis is based on the following reasoning. The implementation of the Social Welfare State in Brazil after the promulgation of the 1988 Constitution would have produced a perverse structure of incentives (broad social security coverage, unemployment insurance, etc.) that discourage intertemporal substitution of consumption and make the domestic savings rate in Brazil low. Thus, the macroeconomic balance between aggregate supply and demand requires a high real interest rate, which creates a large positive differential between the domestic interest rate and the international interest rate. In an open economy with capital mobility, such as Brazil's, this interest rate differential creates enormous incentives for the entry of speculative capital, which tends to appreciate the real exchange rate. In this way, the exchange rate appreciation and, consequently, the loss of competitiveness of the national industry, would be the by-product of the Brazilian Social Welfare State.

The premise that Brazil suffers from a problem of chronic scarcity of domestic savings due to the perverse incentives produced by the 1988 Constitution does not seem to be a plausible hypothesis. From the point of view of Keynesian theory, just as aggregate spending determines the overall income of the economy, aggregate savings result from business investment decisions. In fact, when we observe the behaviour of the investment rate and gross savings in Brazil between the 1st quarter of 2000 and the 1st quarter of 2011, we find that (i) the fluctuations of the savings rate are more intense than the fluctuations of the investment rate, but, roughly speaking, the fluctuations of the latter follow the fluctuations of the former, and (ii) the gross savings rate presents two moments of intense variation, namely, between the 1st quarter of 2003 and the 1st quarter of 2004, a period in which it presents a strong increase of 4%; and the 1st quarter of 2008 and the 1st quarter of 2009, a period in which the savings rate suffered a very significant reduction of 4.2%. These sudden changes in the gross savings rate cannot be attributed to changes in the welfare state, but rather to developments in the real exchange rate, the inflation rate, and the government's tax policy. In fact, the beginning of the Lula government was characterized by the combination of a depreciated real exchange rate and a relatively high inflation rate (although declining), factors that combined depress real wages, thus producing a reduction in private consumption and, consequently, an increase in private domestic savings. Between 2008 and 2009, the reduction in the savings rate can be explained by temporary tax relief measures to stimulate the consumption of some durable goods to combat the effects of the global financial crisis. After the end of the temporary tax reduction programs, there was a significant recovery in the gross savings rate, which increased by 2.2% between the 1st quarter of 2009 and the 1st quarter of 2011.

The behaviour of the real exchange rate in recent years seems to be more related to

the recent dynamics of the terms of trade of the Brazilian economy. In fact, as shown in Figure 13 below, the terms of trade appreciated by 19,4% in the period between 2003 and 2017. In the same period, the real effective exchange rate appreciated by approximately 36%. Thus, the appreciation of the terms of trade, not the social policies of the Brazilian State, seems to be the main cause of the appreciation of the real exchange rate and, consequently, of the loss of competitiveness of the national industry.



Source: IPEADATA. Own elaboration

Is the exchange rate appreciation here to stay?

A final argument that is presented in the debates on the deindustrialization of the Brazilian economy is that the exchange rate appreciation that has occurred in recent years is of a permanent nature – because of the appreciation of the terms of trade – so that the competitiveness of the Brazilian industry cannot be altered through changes in the exchange rate. Thus, the option would be to increase the productivity of the industry – probably by (sic) new rounds of trade opening – or to accept the continuity of the deindustrialization process.

It is not appropriate here to discuss the policies that could be used to reverse the exchange rate appreciation resulting from an improvement in the terms of trade¹¹. We will limit ourselves to arguing that there are no grounds to affirm that the exchange rate appreciation experienced in recent years by the Brazilian economy is of a permanent nature.

To do so, let us consider figures 14 and 15 below, which show the behaviour of the prices of metal commodities and tropical and non-tropical agricultural goods in the period 1865-2009. In the case of metal commodities, the recent behaviour of their prices is clearly atypical, being well above the historical average, which does not show any trend of increase or decrease over time. In the case of tropical and non-tropical agricultural goods, a clear downward trend in prices has been observed since the beginning of the twentieth century, which was partially interrupted at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This behaviour of the price of metal commodities and tropical and non-tropical agricultural products explains the improvement in the terms of trade observed in the Brazilian economy after 2003, thus being one of the reasons why the real exchange rate has shown a strong tendency to appreciation in recent years. But this situation is unlikely to last indefinitely. At some point, the price of metal commodities should return to the historical average and the prices of tropical and non-tropical agricultural products should continue their downward trend. When this occurs, the terms of trade of the Brazilian economy should show a significant worsening, thus reversing the trend of appreciation of the real exchange rate.

Figure 14: Metal commodity price index (1970-1979=100)

Figure 14: Metal commodity price index (1970-1979=100)

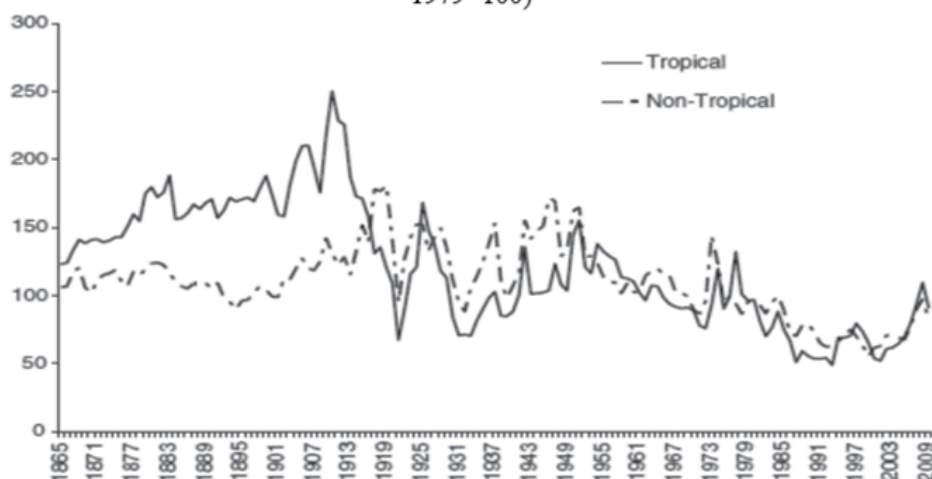


Source: Ocampo and Parra (2010)

11 In this regard, see Bresser-Pereira (2008) and Bresser-Pereira, Oreiro and Marconi (2015).

Figure 15: Terms of trade for tropical and non-tropical agricultural products (1970-1979=100)

Figure 15: Terms of trade for tropical and non-tropical agricultural products (1970-1979=100)



Source: Ocampo and Parra (2010).

Final comments

Throughout this article we have made a critique of the various theses that orthodox economists present in the debate about the deindustrialization of the Brazilian economy. Although these theses are not necessarily compatible with each other, they present a common denominator, which is the idea that deindustrialization – if effective – would be a natural consequence of the development process of the Brazilian economy, that is, of the increase in the income elasticity of the demand for services that is induced by the growth of per-capita income; and aggravated by the low dynamism of labour productivity, resulting from the semi-autarkic nature of the Brazilian economy. In this context, real wages would tend to grow above labour productivity, thus increasing the unit cost of labour in national currency, which leads to a growing deterioration in the competitiveness of industry. The appreciation of the real exchange rate observed since 2005 would be a secondary – that is, not a fundamental reason for the loss of competitiveness of the industry; but it would be related to the very logic of the Social Welfare State implanted *de jure* in Brazil, with the 1988 Constitution and, in fact, with the two terms of President Luiz Inácio

Lula da Silva. Thus, the restoration of the competitiveness of industry through the devaluation of the exchange rate would be something unfeasible from the political point of view. Finally, it is argued that deindustrialization, even if irreversible, would not have negative effects on the growth potential of the Brazilian economy, because industry is a sector like any other, not being fundamental for a sustained increase in per-capita income in the medium and long term.

Contrary to these theses, we argue that:

1. The share of the Brazilian manufacturing industry in the GDP has been falling continuously since the mid-1970s, thus characterizing a clear process of deindustrialization.
2. In the last 10 years, deindustrialization has been accompanied by a re-primarization of the export agenda.
3. Brazilian deindustrialization is premature when compared to similar processes that occurred in developed countries, as it began at a level of per capita income much lower than that observed in developed countries when they began to deindustrialize.
4. There is strong evidence that Brazilian deindustrialization is strongly associated with exchange rate overvaluation.
5. The loss of competitiveness of the manufacturing industry in the period 2001-2011 is mainly due to the overvaluation of the real exchange rate, although the growth of real wages ahead of labour productivity after 2008 has contributed to accelerate this process.
6. Labor productivity in the manufacturing industry remained stagnant in the period 1995-2008, because of the low investments made in the expansion/modernization of productive capacity.
7. The share of the manufacturing industry in total employment remained unchanged in the period 1995-2008 because the manufacturing industry met the increase in sales with greater capacity utilization, but without making investments in the expansion/modernization of productive capacity.
8. The manufacturing industry invested little in this period due to the combination of overvalued exchange rate/high real interest rates.



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ПОГРЕШНЕ ТЕЗЕ У ДЕБАТИ О ДЕИНДУСТРАЛИЗАЦИЈИ И ГУБИТКУ КОНКУРЕНТНОСТИ БРАЗИЛСКЕ ИНДУСТРИЈЕ

Апстракт: Данас је међу бразилским економистима консензус да је Бразил претрпео огроман процес деиндустријализације од 2005. Али овај консензус се појавио тек последњих година. У периоду између 2008. и 2012. године водила се огромна дебата између хетеродоксних и ортодоксних економиста у Бразилу о постојању деиндустријализације. Ортодоксни економисти су годинама порицали постојање и/или важност деиндустријализације за бразилску економију. На крају су изгубили дебату, били су у праву хетеродоксни економисти, углавном они који се односе на такозвану бразилску новоразвојну школу: Бразил се деиндустријализовао, а ова негативна структурна промена је умањила дугорочни раст бразилске привреде. Циљ овог рада је да представи ортодоксну тезу о деиндустријализацији бразилске привреде, идентификујући разлоге због којих су се оне показале погрешним. Као што ћемо аргументовати у овом чланку, деиндустријализација у Бразилу није природан исход развојног процеса, већ је преурањена и узрокована, углавном, прецењеним курсом који је резултат повећања услова трговине у периоду између 2005. и 2011. Штавише, деиндустријализација није небитна појава за развој бразилске привреде у средњем и дугорочном периоду, будући да је прерађивачка индустрија јединствен сектор у којем се посматрају највиши нивои продуктивности рада.

Кључне речи: ДЕИНДУСТРИАЛИЗАЦИЈА, КУРС ПРЕКО - ВРЕДНОВАЊА, БРАЗИЛСКА ЕКОНОМИЈА

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THE AMBIGUITIES OF AGRIBUSINESS: POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES FOR BRAZIL

Abstract: Agribusiness is a contentious topic in Brazil, both conceptually and in terms of its functions and externalities across the economy, environment, and society. While this discussion is grounded in facts and data, it is occasionally shaped by varying interest or viewpoints. This essay aims to contribute to the ongoing debate by presenting data and information about Brazilian agribusiness, supporting discussions on its economic and social roles, as well as its inherent ambiguities. To this end, the essay undertakes an exploratory analysis from recent periods, emphasizing both the positive and negative findings from the literature and selected databases. The goal is to encourage discourse on potential pathways for economic, social, and environmental improvement. The broader aim is to foster a well-informed discussion, dispel certain misconceptions about agribusiness, and identify key issues and externalities requiring attention.

Keywords: AGRICULTURE, PUBLIC POLICIES, HETEROGENEITY, SUSTAINABILITY, PRODUCTIVITY

Introduction

The history of agriculture in Brazil reflects large economic, social, and environmental transformations, evolving from rudimentary and subsistence practices to a highly mechanized and competitive agribusiness sector on the international stage. However, this sector is characterized by significant economic, social, and environmental disparities (Silva & Vian, 2021; Silva & Lisbinski, 2023), which pose various challenges to the country.

During the colonial period, Brazilian agriculture was primarily based on the production and export of sugarcane, tobacco, and coffee, established on large farms and slave labor. This phase was marked by intense deforestation and environmental degradation, particularly in the Atlantic Forest, to make way for plantations (Dean, 1996). In the 19th century, Brazil became the world's largest coffee producer, further intensifying deforestation in the Southeast. The expansion of coffee monocultures, driven by international demand, led to soil degradation, erosion, habitat fragmentation, and social problems, exacerbated by the absence of sustainable practices and the continued use of slave labor (Dean, 1996; Schwarcz & Starling, 2018). In the second half of the 20th century, Brazilian agriculture underwent a process of modernization, rooted in the principles of the Green Revolution, introducing technologies such as chemical fertilizers, pesticides, and agricultural mechanization (Goodman, Sorj & Wilkinson, 2008). While these innovations increased productivity, the indiscriminate expansion of agriculture exacerbated soil degradation, water contamination, and biodiversity loss, often neglecting long-term sustainability. Agricultural expansion in the Midwest, particularly in the Cerrado biome (Brazilian Savanna), was driven by government policies promoting the occupation of these lands within a context of national integration, leading to habitat destruction and increased greenhouse gas emissions (Jepson, 2005).

Building on this process, by the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Brazil had become one of the world's largest producers and exporters of agricultural commodities such as soybeans, corn, beef, and sugar (Hosono, Rocha & Hongo, 2016). However, this agribusiness expansion increased pressure on ecosystems, particularly in the Amazon rainforest and Cerrado, where deforestation driven by livestock and soybean production has become a major global environmental concern (Fearnside, 2005).

Agribusiness is a widely discussed topic in Brazil, both for its analytical breadth, which examines the interrelationships between agriculture and downstream and upstream sectors, as well as for its capacity to represent specific social groups. In Brazil, the term is extensively used in academic and market debates within research institutions, universities, companies, and government bodies that develop scientific research and public policies related to agriculture.

The concept of agribusiness encompasses not only agriculture as an economic activity but also the activities that supply inputs, the industries that process agricultural products, and the support services such as storage, transportation, distribution, and financial intermediation. Therefore, it represents a value chain that integrates various sectors, covering the production and commercialization of both raw and processed agricultural goods. The scope of agribusiness activities, when measured in terms of value added, employment creation, and political influence, surpasses the representativeness of agriculture in its strict sense. The main advantage of using this analytical term is its ability to provide a more comprehensive view of economic relations between agriculture and other related sectors.

However, the term agribusiness is often used in Brazil from a political standpoint, in the relationships between its agents (producers, input suppliers, processors, and distributors) and the state, aiming to defend specific economic and political interests before the population and its representatives. Although the analytical concept of agribusiness is broad and does not discriminate between large or small producers, suppliers of fresh food or commodities, family farmers or large-scale producers, political representation is unequal (Pompeia, 2020).

The diversity of production methods and ways of life in rural Brazil fuels this debate, contrasting the perspective of agribusiness as an analytical category with that of a political association around the concept. From these perspectives, academia, rural producers, politicians, and other agents position themselves and defend their interests concerning the formulation of public policies related to the topic.

This debate requires considering the different realities of farmers and their productive activities, reflecting conceptions present in other contexts (such as in Europe), which encompass small-scale production, inclusive policies, sustainability, and the multifunctionality of farms (Bonnal, Cazela & Maluf, 2008; Schneider & Cassol, 2014). This includes understanding the diversity of productive realities and living conditions of the rural population (Santos & Silva, 2022), considering: i) rapid urbanization – the portion of the population living in rural areas decreased from 80% in 1970 to 10% in 2017 (IBGE, 2019); ii) the significance of the rural population – 10% of the economically active population is involved in agriculture, compared to 3% in OECD countries; iii) the concentration of means of production; iv) public policies focused on non-inclusive agricultural credit; v) regional imbalances and disparities between types of producers (family farms and large-scale producers).

Understanding agribusiness in Brazil requires considering three structural aspects: i) representations and forums for debate, including producer entities, social movements, and the National Congress; ii) the structure of public policies related to activities, diversity, production, and commercialization of goods; and iii) the outcomes of agribusiness, its contributions, and limitations for the national economy in productive, social, and environmental aspects. Analyzing these three points allows for a better understanding of the reality of agribusiness in Brazil, its potentials, and challenges. This work aims to discuss the term agribusiness and its developments, focusing on the analytical concept to explore its main characteristics and ambiguities,

which permeate both the analytical and political aspects within the Brazilian context.

The paper is divided into four additional sections. Section 2 reviews the literature on the analytical concept of agribusiness, its relevance for research and Brazil's economic position, while also discussing the appropriation of the concept by political and organized groups within agribusiness. Section 3 addresses the structure of public policies for different producer profiles. Section 4 analyzes the recent evolution of agribusiness in Brazil, discussing economic, social, and environmental aspects. Section 5 offers final considerations.

Agribusiness: economic measurement and political representation

This section focuses on the first of the three points highlighted earlier: the representations, agendas, and forums of debate that influence decision-making in agribusiness, distinguishing between the analytical concept and the political conception of the term. This section is based on a literature review on the topic, differentiating the technical aspects and outcomes of the agribusiness concept from its political representativeness.

The term agribusiness was coined in the United States in the 1950s by Davis and Goldberg to rationalize and measure the increasing connections between the food industry and agriculture (Pompeia, 2020). The concept encompasses all sectors related to rural activities, integrating upstream and downstream segments of agriculture and their interrelationships. Davis and Goldberg (1957, p. 136) define agribusiness as “The sum of all operations involved in the manufacture and distribution of farm supplies, production operations on the farm, and the storage, processing, and distribution of farm commodities”. Based on Wassily Leontief's Input-Output Matrix studies, Davis, and Goldberg (1957) quantified these relationships, proposing methods to measure this system.

Analytically, this approach is broader than viewing agriculture as an independent sector, highlighting the interconnections between the segments of the productive system (Zylbersztajn, 2017). Moreover, it does not distinguish between small or large, family, or corporate, encompassing all profiles of producers, suppliers, manufacturers, and distributors involved. This presumes an economic connection between the various agents in agribusiness, disregarding political and distributive conflicts among them (Pompeia, 2020). However, Davis and Goldberg recognized that individually, farmers had little power in an economy dominated by agribusiness (Hamilton, 2016).

In Brazil, the term agribusiness (“agronegócio”) gained prominence with the work of Araújo, Wedekin, and Pinazza (1990), bringing the concept into the academic and market context and proposing an integrated view of agriculture (Pompeia, 2020). Since then, macroeconomic statistics on agribusiness have been researched and analyzed by institutions as the Center for Advanced Studies in Applied Economics

at the University of São Paulo (CEPEA - ESALQ/USP), which publishes data on the GDP and employment in agribusiness.

Numerous studies measure these macroeconomic aggregates for Brazil and its regions¹. These analyses underscore the significance of agri-food and energy functions, including their environmental impacts, employment, income generation, international currency, and inflation control. Furthermore, encompasses discussions on family succession, production and management technologies, and the heterogeneity of agriculture (Silva & Vian, 2021; Santos & Silva, 2022). Thus, the analytical use of the agribusiness concept defines the interconnections between sectors linked to agriculture without politically representing a specific group.

Brazilian rural areas are characterized by various distinct realities, some more aligned with subsistence farming and others more connected to the principles of the Green Revolution (high-scale production, capital/technology intensity, high productivity, and market integration). Public policy arenas reflect these different realities, their representations, alliances, and converging or diverging forces. Therefore, while it is recognized that the agendas, research, and policies focused on agribusiness are concentrated on aspects like technology, productive efficiency, economies of scale, and capital intensity, the concept itself does not prevent analyses, studies, and debates on the contradictions of agribusiness.

On the other hand, the use of the term “agribusiness” as a form of political legitimacy and representation often allows specific groups, though involved in agribusiness, to appropriate the term to promote their economic interests, for example, through media campaigns, aiming to influence public opinion and, especially, the state in the formulation and approval of public policies that benefit them.

In this context, Pompeia (2020) highlights that entities linked to workers, such as the National Confederation of Rural Workers and Family Farmers (CONTAG) and the Movement of Small Farmers (MPA), are not part of the nucleation of recognized entities in the context of agribusiness, such as the Brazilian Agribusiness Association (ABAG), the Brazilian Confederation of Agriculture and Livestock (CNA), the Institute for Agro Thinking (IPA), and the Parliamentary Front of Agriculture (FPA), due to their divergent interests, even though family farms represents 76.8% of the farms.

Similarly, the differing interests between small agriculture family in Brazil and corporate farmers reflect the contradiction in political representation, with frequent conflicts between these classes, despite both being part of the analytical concept of agribusiness. An example of this divergence is the existence of two ministries related to agriculture in Brazil: the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAPA), representing corporate agriculture, and the Ministry of Agrarian Development and Family Agriculture (MDA), focused on the demands of family farming. Given the divergent interests between producer groups, the MDA seeks to balance the

¹ See Sesso Filho et al. (2022); Luz & Fochezatto (2023); Barros & Castro (2017); Sesso et al. (2023); Guilhoto et al. (2007); Nascimento, Figueiredo & Miranda (2018); Araújo Neto & Costa (2005); Cruz, Teixeira & Gomes (2009); Montoya & Finamore (2001)

insufficient political representation of small family farmers in Federal Government institutions and in Parliament².

Two key conclusions emerge from this discussion. First, agriculture has relations of varying intensity with other sectors of the economy, legitimizing the importance of the analytical concept of agribusiness to measure this productive system. Second, although the analytical concept establishes a vision that aggregates upstream and downstream activities of agriculture, the actors involved in agribusiness are not represented in a balanced way before the state and public opinion.

Structure of agricultural policies

This section focuses on the second of the three key points mentioned earlier: the description of the structure, function, and focus of current public policies in agribusiness. This discussion covers the last 20 years, addressing: i) the structure and types of initiatives based on implemented laws; ii) the identification of the central aspects that these initiatives aim to modify or improve, as well as the key divergences in the debate.

Beyond local specificities, directives from the FAO and the European Union have shaped agricultural and rural policies in Brazil (Santos and Sant'Anna, 2022). These policies, in addition to addressing the traditional economic functions of agriculture, have incorporated issues such as environmental conservation, regional development, and rural development (Santos and Sant'Anna, 2022; Lowe, Buller, and Ward, 2002; OECD, 2020; Glauber and Effland, 2016). Governments thus aim to meet the demands of all segments in the productive chain while also addressing agrarian, environmental, innovation, and social issues.

Despite the numerous public policies aimed at providing structural support for agricultural establishments, the budgetary and credit resources controlled by the government represent approximately one third of the total required for funding and investment in annual agricultural production. Additionally, the budgetary resources allocated to small-scale agriculture are more limited compared to those for large-scale activities. The diversity of agricultural activities, the multifunctionality, and the farm pluriactivity require multiple programs that make up agricultural policy, which is the responsibility of the Federal Government, with complementary actions from the states. However, for decades, the Federal Government expenditures have been concentrated in: i) credit and insurance; ii) administrative expenses; iii) stock formation, minimum price policies, and commercialization; iv) agricultural defense. Table 1 presents the main budgetary actions, excluding those of an administrative nature.

2 For more details on these political conflicts, see Pompeia (2020).

Table 1. Federal Government disbursements for key agricultural policy actions in Brazil

Year	BUDGETARY ACTION	Amount (R\$ MM)
2000	Interest equalization for extension of debts originating from rural credit	7,508
	Federal public debt issuance of agrarian debt bonds	2,592
	Financing and price equalization for Federal Government purchases and formation of regulatory and strategic stocks	2,483
	Formation of public stocks	2,061
	Financing and interest equalization for family agriculture - Pronaf	1,667
	Loan amortization for public stock formation	1,1
	Financing for voluntary stock retention	1,088
	Financing for coffee crop maintenance	687
	Construction of common use irrigation infrastructure	442
2010	Financing for coffee production and sales investment	2,664
	Formation of public stocks	2,625
	Financing of productive sector projects under the Northeast Development Fund (FDNE)	2,454
	Price guarantee and support in the commercialization of agricultural products	2,368
	Interest equalization in agricultural costing operations	733
	Interest equalization for family agriculture - Pronaf	544
	Financing of productive sector projects under the Amazon Development Fund (FDA)	393
	Support for agricultural sector development projects	385
2020	Contribution to the Garantia-Safra Fund (FGS)	366
	Support for school feeding in basic education	4,316
	Financing for agribusiness in the coffee sector	3,669
	Economic subsidy for operations under the national program for strengthening family agriculture – Pronaf	2,275
	Compensation and restitution under the agricultural activity guarantee program - Proagro	1,941
	Economic subsidy for rural insurance premium	881
	Support for the agricultural sector	861
	Contribution to the Garantia-Safra Fund (FGS)	468
	Economic subsidy for operations resulting from the extension of debts originating from rural credit	457
	Economic subsidy for rural and agro-industrial investment operations	431

Source: Adapted from Santos and Sant’Anna (2022), using data from the Integrated System of Planning and Budgeting of the Federal Government (SIOP).

**Values deflated to December 31, 2020, by the National Consumer Price Index (INPC).*

In 2000, most of the resources allocated by the Federal Government to agriculture were directed towards production support: interest rate equalization for rural credit, issuance of agrarian debt securities (with the funds intended for agrarian reform), and price policies for Federal Government acquisitions and stockpiling. In 2010, credit continued to be the main expenditure, with the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (Pronaf) gaining prominence. In 2020, in addition to credit, expenditures expanded to include the National School Feeding Program (PNAE) and agricultural insurance, such as Proagro. The top 10 actions in 2000, 2010, and 2020 were directed towards agricultural production, representing 82%, 75%, and 65% of the total disbursement, respectively.

This concentration of resources limits the ability of policies to alter the structural conditions and heterogeneity present in Brazilian agriculture, limiting policies aimed at access to land, water, and technical support services, and reproducing the concentration of production factors in a small portion of agricultural establishments. Table 2 presents the allocated amounts for selected years, identifying the main policies and programs, grouped into structural and support categories for agriculture. The oscillations on the Structural support for rural life/productive organization and low values in essential policies such as Support for other activities/environmental care are evident.

Table 2. Allocated values for agricultural policies in Brazil in 2000, 2010, and 2020

Description / Total	R\$ MM*		
	2000	2010	2020
Structural management, agricultural defense, other supports, and operational costs	286.6	2,026.7	359.7
Structural support for goods supply/consumption, food, and nutrition security (SAN)	7,075.4	5,297.3	4,658.7
Structural support for rural life/productive organization	1,375.5	1,030.4	255.0
Support for other activities/environmental care	43.8	20.4	1.5
Production support	14,981.5	8,958.0	13,158.1
Support and promotion of R&D and technologies	272.7	445.5	265.4
Total	24,035.4	17,778.3	18,698.3

Source: Santos and Sant'Anna (2022), using data from IBGE (2019) and the Integrated System of Planning and Budgeting of the Federal Government (SIOP).

*Values deflated to December 31, 2020, by the National Consumer Price Index (INPC).

Dualism of Brazilian agribusiness

This section focuses on the third of the three points highlighted in the introduction: the outcomes of agribusiness, its contributions, and limitations to the national economy in terms of productive, social, and environmental aspects. Data were gathered on income generation, employment, number of agricultural establishments, planted area, production value, and the concentration of both production and land ownership.

Social and economic issues

Several studies employ the concept of agribusiness as defined by Davis and Goldberg (1957) to quantify its economic value and employment generation. The CEPEA has been publishing historical series of the Brazilian agribusiness GDP since 1996, disaggregated into four segments: inputs, agriculture, industry, and services.

Agribusiness is one of the main driving forces of the Brazilian economy, significantly contributing to GDP, employment generation, and trade surplus. In 2023, agribusiness accounted for 23.8% of Brazil's GDP, equivalent to R\$ 2.58 trillion, with the services segment contributing the most (43.4%), followed by agricultural activity (27.6%), agroindustry (23.4%), and inputs (5.6%) (CEPEA, 2024). Activities related to vegetable production have historically contributed about 70% of the agribusiness GDP, generating R\$ 1.86 trillion, while livestock-related activities contributed around 30%. According to Sesso Filho et al. (2022), Brazil had the fifth largest agribusiness GDP globally.

A huge portion of production value is concentrated in commodities such as soybeans, corn, sugarcane, and beef, making Brazil one of the world's largest exporters (FAO, 2021). Brazil led global exports of soybeans, coffee, beef, and poultry, and was the third-largest exporter of corn in 2023. In that year, agribusiness exports totaled US\$ 166.55 billion, representing 49% of Brazil's total exports (Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, 2024). Soybeans accounted for 23% of total Brazilian exports, with sugar and beef contributing 4.8% and 3.3%, respectively (MDIC, 2024). Soybeans, corn, sugarcane, and coffee led Brazil's agricultural production value, representing 42%, 17%, 11%, and 6% of the total in 2022 (PAM IBGE, 2024).

Agricultural commodity exports strengthen Brazil's trade balance and contribute significantly to its GDP. According to the FAO (2021), Brazil is one of the world's largest food exporters, consolidating its importance in global supply chains and enhancing its trade and diplomacy. Participation in the international market also drives technological development and innovation in Brazilian agribusiness. Global competition pushes producers to adopt more efficient and sustainable practices, increasing productivity and product quality while attracting foreign investments for economic growth (Leite, 2018).

The sector's competitiveness is fueled by the availability of arable land, favorable climate, and advanced technology. Although exports are concentrated in a few products, trade surplus contributes to exchange rate stability, benefiting the overall economy. Additionally, high productivity and low prices in agriculture reduce the cost of raw materials for other sectors, lowering food prices and helping to control inflation.

In terms of employment, agribusiness accounted for about 26% of total employment in Brazil in 2023, employing approximately 28 million people, with 47% engaged in agricultural activities (28% in commercial production and 19% in subsistence production) and 37% in the service sector, which includes commercialization, financial intermediation, transportation, and storage (Cepea, 2024).

Despite agribusiness's contributions to income generation, employment, and foreign exchange, significant inequalities persist in rural areas. Land concentration is a striking example: in 2017, 32.8% of agricultural land (114.5 million hectares) was controlled by just 0.3% of establishments (16,865 farms), while 90.7% of establishments occupied only 20.4% of the total agricultural area (IBGE, 2019). This concentration leads to land conflicts, particularly affecting small farmers and Indigenous communities, exacerbating social inequality, and hindering sustainable development (Souza Ferreira Filho, 2013; Pacheco and Carvalho, 2019). Land concentration and dependence on commodities also expose the country to international price volatility (Graziano da Silva, 2010; Pompeia, 2022).

Of the seventy-two products tracked by the IBGE's Municipal Agricultural Survey, the shares of soybeans (45%), corn (23%), and sugarcane (11%) together accounted for 79% of the crop land 2022. In terms of production value, soybeans accounted for 42% of the total in 2022. Both soybeans and sugarcane are concentrated in the South-Central region, indicating that the direct economic benefits of agribusiness are unevenly distributed across the country, posing a challenge to be addressed.

The expansion of monocultures can compromise long-term economic and environmental sustainability, leading to soil and water contamination, biodiversity loss, and depletion of water resources (Strand et al., 2018; Galford, Soares-Filho, and Cerri, 2013). The lack of crop rotation depletes soil nutrients, increasing the risk of erosion and reducing agricultural productivity (Lal, 2015; Pimentel, 2006), while the loss of genetic diversity makes crops more vulnerable to pests and diseases (Tscharntke et al., 2012; Tilman et al., 2002; Altieri & Nicholls, 2020) and harms local fauna that rely on diverse plant species for food and habitat (Perfecto and Vandermeer, 2010).

Access to technology is also unequal. While mechanization has increased agribusiness competitiveness (Daum, 2023; Bustos, Caprettini, and Ponticelli, 2016), small farmers and traditional communities often lack access to technology, credit, and technical assistance, exacerbating social inequality and hindering their market competitiveness (Carter, 2015).

Despite the economic benefits, agribusiness growth exposes Brazil to significant infrastructure challenges. Poor transportation, storage, and logistics result in substantial losses and increased costs. Poor road conditions and lack of investment in infrastructure delay the flow of goods, affecting producers' ability to meet international demand efficiently, and causing product deterioration, which reduces the quality and value of exports (Araújo et al., 2024). According to the FAO (2019), up to 20% of agricultural production is wasted due to logistical deficiencies, such as poor roads, port congestion, and inadequate rail infrastructure (Pontes, Carmo & Porto, 2009; Soliani, 2015; 2022). Improving logistics infrastructure is essential to mitigate losses, reduce costs, and increase the competitiveness of Brazilian agribusiness, particularly for the small farmers. These challenges can be addressed through public-private policies that encourage infrastructure investment and promote public-private partnerships (Soliani, 2015; 2022).

These data reflect the diversity and duality of Brazilian agribusiness, which presents economic, social, and environmental contrasts. On the one hand, a significant part of the modern agriculture has become more efficient and sustainable, adopting practices such as no-till farming, crop rotation, and biotechnology to reduce agrochemical use (MAPA, 2021). Agribusiness also generates millions of jobs, drives rural development, and supports small local businesses (Schneider, 2010). On the other hand, the conversion of forests into agricultural lands increases deforestation, especially in the Amazon rainforest and Cerrado, leading to biodiversity loss and increased greenhouse gas emissions (Brando et al., 2020). Small producers face precarious conditions, low wages, and lack of access to resources, technology, technical support, and financing for efficient production (Carter, 2015), reproducing the cycle of poverty and inequality in rural areas (Carter, 2015; Lin, 2011; Kiani et al., 2021).

This dualism underscores the need for public policies that promote a more equitable distribution of agribusiness's economic benefits by providing small farmers with greater access to credit, technology, technical assistance, and training, as well as reducing land concentration and improving logistics infrastructure (Pacheco, 2009). It is also necessary to balance production for export with domestic food supply, promoting sustainable food security (Marengo et al., 2022). Diversifying agricultural production and encouraging sustainable practices are ways to increase economic resilience and ensure a stable and diversified food supply for the population (Birthal and Hazrana, 2019; Chonabayashi, Jithitikulchai, and Qu, 2020).

Graeub et al. (2016) and Aquino, Alves, and Vidal (2021) highlight the importance of income supplementation for rural families, particularly for smallholder agriculture, which faces difficulties integrating into the market. Structural and support policies for farms have not been effective in distributing resources, leading to difficulties in accessing markets, credit, insurance, and extension services, as well as poor land and water distribution (Santos and Sant'Anna, 2022; Grisa et al., 2014; Schneider and Cassol, 2014; Belik, 2021).

Environmental issues

Brazil's agribusiness is a crucial sector for the economy, with a grain harvest estimated at 300 million tons over 80 million hectares of planted area (CONAB, 2023; Cepea, 2024; Brasil, 2024). However, agribusiness also has negative environmental impacts due to the diversity of techniques and production practices employed. In recent years, Brazil has adopted more sustainable agricultural practices, aiming to reconcile high productivity with environmental preservation. Among these practices are conservation agriculture, no-till farming, crop rotation, and integrated crop-livestock-forestry (ICLF) systems.

Conservation agriculture, which includes no-till farming, crop rotation, and permanent soil cover, aims to conserve natural resources, improve input use efficiency, and increase the resilience of production systems. These practices have been shown to improve soil health, increase organic matter, and reduce erosion (Embrapa, 2022).

No-till farming, which involves seeding without prior plowing, is widely used in Brazil, covering approximately 32 million hectares. This technique preserves soil structure, increases organic matter, and reduces erosion, while also improving water infiltration and reducing soil compaction (Derpsch et al., 2014).

Crop rotation, which alternates different crops on the same land over time, helps disrupt pest cycles, improve soil fertility, and increase agricultural biodiversity, reducing dependence on chemical inputs and increasing productivity (Franzluebbers, 2007). Brazil's agricultural sector has also invested in technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promoting practices like recovering degraded pastures and integrated crop-livestock-forestry systems (ICLF). The ICLF system, used on approximately 15 million hectares, has shown promising results in recovering degraded areas and sustainably increasing productivity (Balbino et al., 2011).

Despite these advances, Brazil's agribusiness faces significant environmental challenges, particularly deforestation in the Amazon rainforest and Cerrado, driven by agricultural expansion. Pendrill et al., 2019 pointed more than 8 million hectares of forest were converted to agricultural land annually between 2011 and 2015, with 90% to 99% of this deforestation related to agriculture, though only 45% to 65% resulted in effective agricultural production expansion (Pendrill et al., 2019). From 2008 to 2023, the Amazon rainforest lost 123,982 km² of forest, with the highest deforestation peak occurring in 2022, totaling 12,479 km² (INPE, 2024). The state of Pará leads in deforestation with 42.26% of the total deforested area, followed by Mato Grosso (19.07%), Amazonas (13.52%), Rondônia (13.15%), and Acre (5.50%). Outside the Amazon rainforest, deforestation totaled 8,555 km², with a peak of 729 km² in 2022. Mato Grosso, Roraima, Pará, Rondônia, and Amazonas were the most affected states. Agricultural expansion, particularly for pasture and soybean cultivation, was the main cause of this deforestation.

Mato Grosso is the leading Brazilian state in grain production, but it is also among the states with the highest deforestation rates in 2023. This exemplifies the pressure that agriculture exerts on forested areas, highlighting the need for stricter environmental monitoring. The conversion of forests into agricultural areas in Brazil is driven by land demand, lack of enforcement, land grabbing, illegal deforestation, and flexible government policies. The lack of effective monitoring and impunity in protected areas and Indigenous lands exacerbate the situation, allowing illegal activities to expand (CNJ, 2024).

Fires in the Amazon rainforest and other biome are also a critical issue. Between August 2019 and May 2024, 474,012 fire outbreaks were recorded in the Amazon, with Pará state leading (36.54%), followed by Mato Grosso (17.58%), Amazonas (17.50%), Rondônia (10.83%), and Acre (9.04%). In the Cerrado, there were 290,201 fire outbreaks during the same period, concentrated in Maranhão (23.63%), Tocantins (18.32%), and Mato Grosso (15.09%) (INPE, 2024). In the same way, Pantanal biome was devastated in 2022 and 2024. These data highlight the severity of the fires and the urgent need for effective prevention and control policies to mitigate their impacts (Fearnside, 2005).

Intensive monoculture and cattle pastures in Brazilian agribusiness also significantly contribute to soil degradation. According to the FAO, 30% of the world's agricultural lands face some degree of soil degradation (UN, 2021), compromising long-term agricultural production and increasing dependence on fertilizers and other chemical inputs (Pimentel, 2006).

Additionally, the extensive use of agrochemicals in Brazil is a serious environmental problem. As one of the world's largest consumers of agrochemicals, the country faces soil and water contamination and biodiversity loss. Some studies show that 50% of drinking water samples collected in selected agricultural areas contained pesticide residues (Gil et al., 2012; Moreira et al., 2012; Vieira et al., 2017), requiring continuous studies, comprehensive monitoring, and strict application of national laws. This contamination may cause severe impacts on human health and fauna, affecting aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems (Van der Werf, 1996).

To promote more sustainable agribusiness in Brazil, it is crucial to intensify environmental law enforcement to combat illegal deforestation and protect ecosystems (Fearnside, 2005). Financial and technical incentives for farmers who adopt sustainable practices can accelerate the transition to low-impact agriculture (Cohn et al., 2014). Additionally, education and training programs on sustainable agricultural practices and agrochemical management are essential to improve field practices (Pretty, 2008). Investing in research and development of modern technologies that increase productivity without harming the environment is vital to ensuring long-term sustainability (Tilman et al., 2002).

Final considerations

This study discusses the complexity and contradictions of Brazilian agribusiness. On one hand, the sector has played a crucial role in the GDP, employment, food safety, strengthening the country's trade balance, and labor market. This success is supported by the availability of arable land, favorable climatic conditions, and the use of advanced technologies, which together position Brazil as one of the world's largest food exporters. However, this economic expansion has been accompanied by significant challenges, particularly in terms of social and environmental inequalities, such as land concentration and natural resource degradation.

Although the country has adopted more sustainable agricultural practices and public policies to mitigate these impacts, deforestation, - an indirect step that has made new lands viable for agribusiness -, especially in the Amazon and Cerrado biomes, remains a severe problem, exacerbated by weak enforcement and flexible government policies. This situation threatens not only the environment but also the long-term sustainability of the agricultural sector itself, which is formed by a significant portion of small and large producers that are efficient and do not need to deforest.

The future of Brazilian agribusiness depends on a balanced approach that harmonizes economic growth with environmental sustainability and social justice. More effective public policies are needed to promote a more equitable distribution of economic benefits, support small farmers, and reduce land concentration. Additionally, investments in infrastructure and sustainable agricultural practices are essential to ensure that Brazil continues to be a global leader in the agricultural sector without compromising its natural resources and the welfare state of its rural population.



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НЕЈАСНОСТИ АГРОБИЗНИСА: ПОТЕНЦИЈАЛИ И ИЗАЗОВИ ЗА БРАЗИЛ

Апстракт: Агробизнис је спорна тема у Бразилу, и концептуално и у смислу његових функција и екстерних ефеката у економији, животној средини и друштву. Иако је ова дискусија заснована на чињеницама и подацима, повремено је обликована различитим интересовањима или гледиштима. Овај есеј има за циљ да допринесе текућој дебати презентовањем података и информација о бразилском агробизнису, подржавајући дискусије о његовој економској и друштвеној улози, као и његовим нејасноћама. У том циљу, есеј обухвата истраживачку анализу из новијих периода, наглашавајући како позитивне тако и негативне налазе из литературе и одабраних база података. Циљ је да се подстакне дискурс о потенцијалним путевима за економско, и социјално побољшање животне средине. Шири циљ је да се подстакне дискусија са dobrим информацијама, да се разбију одређене погрешне представе о агробизнису и да се идентификују кључна питања и екстерналије које захтевају пажњу.

Кључне речи: ПОЉОПРИВРЕДА, ЈАВНЕ ПОЛИТИКЕ, ХЕТЕРОГЕНИЧНОСТ, ОДРЖИВОСТ, ПРОДУКТИВНОСТ

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DILEMMAS AND CHALLENGES FOR THE AMAZON BIOME

Abstract: The Amazon represents a socio-environmental complexity whose resolution of the tensions that exist necessarily involves multilateral actions. Its biome is shared by several countries that have different standards regarding this relationship with nature. On the other hand, internal actions in each country, from the border, through the urban network and the implementation of infrastructure, pose challenges for governments to meet the population's desires without intensely affecting the Amazonian environment. Thus, one of the paths has been the expansion of protected areas and territories, and the creation of Indigenous lands or reserves as a way of ensuring the conservation of forests and the way of life of traditional populations way of life that have a harmonious relationship with nature, counting, for this, with the financial support of Northern countries. They also have a strong interest in environmental conservation in the face of advances in livestock farming, monoculture, and extreme climate changes.

Keywords: BORDER, URBAN NETWORK, ENVIROMENTAL CONSERVATION, AMAZON

Introduction

The aim of this article is to present an overview of the Pan-Amazon from two perspectives centered on the dilemmas and challenges faced by the region. We must consider its large border, which covers nine countries: Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname, Venezuela, and French Guiana. These countries share the largest area of tropical forest in the world. Consequently, they bear a significant responsibility for the global environmental fate, as well for Indigenous peoples and natural resources (NOGUEIRA, 2007).

The Amazon is an extensive and complex biome, and its delimitation is particularly challenging due to the various criteria that can be used to define it. According to Nogueira (2007), excluding French Guiana, since it is not an effective part of the Amazon Cooperation Treaty (ACTO), is already sufficient to alter the statistics. In Brazil, the inclusion or exclusion of the western region of the state of Maranhão also has a significant impact. In Venezuela, some authors propose including part of the Orinoco River basin. These boundaries are established and adjusted by conventions, often influenced by political interests. This leads to misalignment in terms of extent and population, resulting in a different definition of the Amazon depending on the criteria used.

Regarding the hydrographic region, the Amazon covers 6,925,674 km². In Brazil alone, it spans 3,869,953 km², occupying 42% of the national surface. It encompasses multiple countries from its sources in the Peruvian Andes to the Atlantic Ocean north of Brazil, covering the territories of Brazil (63%), Peru (17%), Bolivia (11%), Colombia (5.8%), Ecuador (2.2%), Venezuela (0.8%), and Guyana (0.2%). There are 294 municipalities within the Amazon domain, with notable capitals including Manaus (AM), Rio Branco (AC), Porto Velho (RO), Boa Vista (RR), Macapá (AP) (BRASIL DAS ÁGUAS, 2023).

With its largest portion in Brazilian territory, the influence and importance of cities are highlighted, particularly Manaus (AM), noted as the city with the largest population in the Western Amazon, followed by Belém (PA) in the Eastern Amazon. The regional capitals serve as significant nodes in circulation networks, facilitating exchanges and flows that extend beyond the Amazon region. In this context, it is important to highlight that the historical process of occupation and formation of the circulation network in the Amazon has unfolded in diverse ways. This process explains the demographic concentrations, regional nodes, and articulations that exist, underscoring changes that have occurred over the decades, as noted by Corrêa (1987) and Tavares (2011). This composition of the urban network occurs in a

dispersed yet concentrated manner-dispersed in terms of the distances between urban centers, and concentrated in that a large portion of the population is concentrated in a few urban centers. This paradigm is historically constructed but remains more pronounced in the Western Amazon, characterized by less presence of road networks and a greater influence of the hydrographic network (LIMA, 2014; BERNARDINO et al., 2023).

The Amazon region exhibits a diverse population, characterized by a variety of social groups including riverside communities, Indigenous peoples, rubber tappers, extractors, quilombolas, urban groups, and migrants who reside along rivers and highways. There is a notable concentration of these groups in urban spaces, as emphasized by surveys conducted by IBGE (2022).

It is crucial to consider urban populations, exemplified by the city of Manaus with its 2,063,689 inhabitants, who comprise more than half of the total population of the state of Amazonas, the largest state in Brazil with 3,941,613 inhabitants according to IBGE (2022). With demographic growth comes an increased demand for services, infrastructure, and connectivity between places. These modern societal demands often drive conflicts and lead to territorial tensions. Connectivity with fixed objects and the flows they generate can cause clashes among the diverse social groups inhabiting the Amazon region. It is important to note that while the Amazon includes specific areas with low population density, it is occupied, and its territories are delimited by those who live on rivers, floodplains, and land. However, the elements used for habitation differ significantly from those typically found in urban settings¹.

In the contemporary period, conflicts, and tensions in the territorial area of the Amazon are primarily concentrated in the southern portion of the state. Here, ongoing transformations driven by the advance of pioneering settlement fronts focused on space appropriation for production or land speculation, are particularly notable. These dynamics characterize the changes occurring within this pioneering frontier (CASTRO DE JESUS et al., 2023a; OLIVEIRA NETO, 2024). One indicator of pioneering fronts in the Amazon is the presence of legal or illegal corporations engaged in logging and processing wood from the Amazon rainforest.

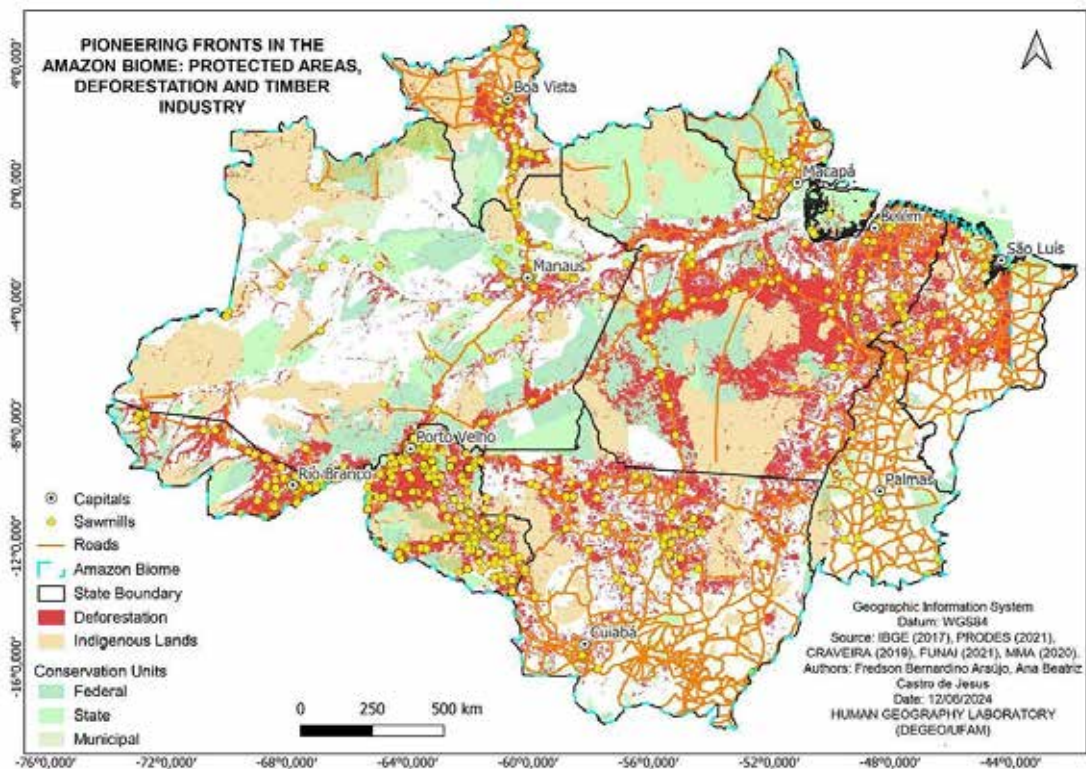
Craveira and Bernardino (2024) highlight that within the dynamic of active pioneer fronts, Conservation Units (UC) and Indigenous Lands (TI) are prominent. These areas face increasing pressure from deforestation processes, illustrating aspects of territorial tensions that make it possible to understand the ongoing process of pioneer fronts in the region (Fig. 1).

It is important to note that the establishment of protected areas and Indigenous lands as measures to combat deforestation has formed mosaics of protected territories, primarily instituted by the State, including federal and state governments (NOGUEIRA; OLIVEIRA NETO, 2017). However, even inhabitants of ILs cannot

¹ On this issue, see the text by Cruz (2007) on the territorialities of fishermen on the Solimões River and the fishing territory (haul).

consider their way of life fully protected, as they face pressure from deforestation. The Karipuna, for instance, Indigenous land² has already experienced significant territory loss due to deforestation along its edges (CRAVEIRA and BERNARDINO, 2024).

Figure 1. Pioneering fronts in the Amazon Biome



Org: Fredson Bernardino and Ana Beatriz Castro, 2024.

It is worth noting that monitoring in the Amazon region poses significant challenges, exacerbated by pressures such as land grabbing, invasions, land regularization, and mining. These issues are particularly prevalent in areas with high intensity of pioneering fronts, such as Southern Amazonas (REZERA, 2005; SILVA et al., 2021). Therefore, besides considering natural resources, one must not overlook the existing occupation prior to the implementation of "large projects" aimed at infrastructure development.

² Karipuna Indigenous Land (TIKA), located in the municipalities of Porto Velho and Nova Mamoré, in Rondônia (RO).

Amazonian border arch

According to Foucher (1991), the establishment of borders between national states is primarily mediated through factors such as negotiation between countries, arbitration by a third party, imposition through military occupation or settlement by population, and through war where territory may be appropriated by the victorious country. On the other hand, the forms of border interaction present different typologies, as classified by Cuisier-Raynal (2001): Margin, characterized by national dominance; Buffer Zone, where tensions, military presence, or settlement challenges exist; Fronts, involving military or civil occupation processes; Capillary, characterized by spontaneous, local interactions without direct involvement from the respective countries; Synapse, marked by extensive border interaction, often supported by bilateral agreements to foster this dynamic.

Brazil has a border extending over 15,000 kilometers including the border with the Overseas Department of French Guiana, an exclusive space between Brazil and the European Union. The Amazon portion of Brazil's border stretches approximately 10,000 kilometers, beginning at the Oiapoque River on the border with French Guiana and tracing the perimeter of the Amazon rainforest to the southern tip of the state of Rondônia. This dividing line was established in different periods of Brazilian history: colonial (1500-1822), imperial (1822-1889) and republican (1889-present).

The border with French Guiana, spanning 730 kilometers, was defined during the republican period through arbitration conducted by the Republic of Switzerland, with the Oiapoque River established as the basis for delineation. There are two cities: Oiapoque (Brazil), with 27,000 inhabitants, and Saint Georges de l'Oyapoque, with 5,000 inhabitants, which exhibit a dynamic of integration facilitated by the international bridge, despite strict controls on the entry of Brazilian citizens. In this area, frequent surveillance is conducted to prevent illegal gold mining by Brazilian miners in the rivers of the region, highlighted by Wanderley (2019).

The border with Venezuela, spanning 1,495 kilometers, was established during the Brazilian imperial period through negotiations between the two countries (Lia Machado, 1989). Along this border, there is a Brazilian city named Pacaraima, with a population of 20,000, and another Venezuelan city named Santa Elena de Uairén, with approximately 30,000 inhabitants. These cities are located approximately 15 kilometers apart, but there is a frequent and complementary commercial dynamic between their inhabitants, who trade various products with each other. This border experienced a significant humanitarian crisis when a large influx of migrants from Venezuela sought refuge in Brazil starting from 2015, making it the primary escape route for Venezuelans. Between 2015 and 2019, Brazil received approximately 178,000 applications for asylum or temporary residence, according to UNHCR.

The border with Colombia spans 1,644 kilometers and was defined through negotiations between the countries during the republican period. Along this entire border, there are at least three points where populations from both countries interact: La Pedrera (Colombia) and Vila Bittencourt (Brazil), Tarapacá (Colombia) and Ipiranga (Brazil). These are small communities primarily occupied by military forces, equipped with military airports for defense and territorial control operations. The final point of contact is one of the most dynamic along the Amazon rainforest border, encompassing the cities of Tabatinga (Brazil), with approximately 66,000 inhabitants, and Leticia (Colombia), with 50,000 inhabitants. Both cities have distinct infrastructures supporting their respective national states, including large airports, ports, federal agency offices, bank branches, hospitals, universities, and a robust border trade dynamic. They are integrated into the same urban network with coordinated public transport systems.

The Javari River is the main border line between Brazil and Peru. There are approximately 1,000 kilometers separating the countries in a region where the main border contact point is between the cities of Benjamin Constant (Brazil), with 44,000 inhabitants, and Islandia (Peru), with 5,000 inhabitants, both located at the mouth of the river. From the mouth to the upper course of the river, the region is inhabited by populations of various ethnicities. From the source of the Javari River to the end of the border line, there are another 1,300 kilometers, encompassing the State of Acre, totaling 2,300 kilometers negotiated during the Brazilian imperial period. In this state, there are points of contact between cities such as Assis Brasil (Brazil), with 10,000 inhabitants, and Iñapari (Peru), with 4,000 inhabitants. This border serves as Brazil's starting point for connectivity with the Pacific Ocean via a highway that extends to the port of Ilo, Peru.

The consolidation of Brazil's border with Bolivia, spanning 3,120 kilometers, occurred in several stages: during the colonial period, approximately 1,400 kilometers along the Guaporé and Mamoré rivers were negotiated between Portugal and Spain; in the imperial period, approximately 1,120 kilometers were defined in the southern portion; the final segment of about 600 kilometers along the border with the state of Acre was negotiated during the rubber exploration period, when thousands of Brazilian migrants occupied Bolivian territories for rubber extraction.

It is important to note that along these 10,000 kilometers of border in the Amazon region, there are dozens of indigenous ethnic groups that are present on both sides of the border, as their territories already existed before the National States. They are the Waiãpi, the Yanomami, the Tukano, the Dessana, the Tikuna, the Marubo, the Ashaninka and other peoples, who live off the forest, fishing, hunting, and suffer constant threats of invasion of their lands by timber, fish, gold traders or cattle ranchers.

Infrastructure in the Amazon

The projects installed in the Amazon during the 1970s were called “large projects” due to their characteristic of requiring a fixed amount of capital in the order of billions of dollars, extra-regional recruitment of thousands of workers, creating their own city to house the employees, called company-town, move millions of cubic meters of land, whether in the extraction of minerals or in the construction of hydroelectric plants, in short, they mobilize a huge amount of inputs and require high-capacity means of transport.

The ideology driving all territorial policies for the Amazon until the late 1980s was rooted in nationalism, national security, and integration—a classic geopolitical approach. This ideology prioritized the construction of massive highways to connect the region to the country’s core, often overlooking economic goals and flow density. The aim was to establish the Brazilian State’s presence in the country’s remote areas, with transportation routes serving as the primary means to achieve physical integration. Another spatial strategy implemented was the initiation of numerous colonization projects, which encouraged thousands of people to migrate to the Amazon region to settle and cultivate the land. Defense support also expanded with the creation of military commands, brigades, and platoons, altering local dynamics wherever they were established. In addition to stimulating the exploitation of all possible natural resources: soil, subsoil, and rivers.

In the 1990s, two instruments were created by the Brazilian State aimed at establishing the protection and surveillance of the Amazon territory based on a technological monitoring system called the Amazon Protection System and the Amazon Surveillance System – Sipam/Sivam³. Through these mechanisms, the Brazilian government controls the illegal exploitation of wood and ores, supported by personnel with technical qualifications to interpret satellite images, manage transmission mechanisms, and provide immediate information to the command center.

Hydroelectric plants, beyond their basic energy-generating function, involve sophisticated technical aspects related to civil construction and the entire operation of energy generation control. This includes turbines, computational and transmission systems, and extensive networks of towers. These plants serve large energy-consuming agglomerations, and major cities, and integrate into the national electrical system, supplying energy to densely populated regions. Manaus and Boa Vista⁴, historically dependent on thermoelectric generation, now receive energy from Tucuruí via a transmission line over two thousand kilometers long.

3 Amazon Protection System/Amazon Surveillance System; Available in: <https://tinyurl.com/2vbn5fzbz>; accessed on July 25, 2024.

4 Expected completion of the energy network between Manaus and Boa Vista in 2018; Available in: <https://tinyurl.com/2ksx3fkv>, accessed on July 25, 2024.

The most notable geographic objects of the early 21st century, whose territorial dimension is expressed in the form of protected areas of the Amazon, such as Conservation Units, Extractive Reserves, Quilombola Territories, and Indigenous Lands. Until the mid-1980s, the number of areas created throughout the 20th century, destined for conservation units, totaled just over 124 thousand km² and in the last twenty-five years this value reached 619 thousand km², an exponential growth. Despite this, impasses and tensions are created with these new territorial cuts imposed by the Federal and State governments in areas of several municipalities, causing a debate on the management of these territories at the municipal level (Nogueira, Oliveira Neto, 2017).

The Amazon: environmental policies and contemporary perspectives on extreme events

The Amazon is recognized as the world's largest tropical forest, playing a significant role in Brazilian environmental policies, albeit amidst controversy. Since the economic cycles from rubber exploitation in the late nineteenth century to modern commodity production by agribusiness and widespread neo-extractivism, concern for preserving the Amazon gained international prominence in the 1970s. This was spurred by the construction of the Transamazonian Highway and colonization projects that led to high rates of deforestation, often supported by significant financing from the World Bank (HÉBETTE, 2004; CASTRO, 2007; PORTO-GONÇALVES, 2017).

In the 1980s, to address the environmental impacts of the region's development, an agreement was reached with the World Bank leading to the establishment of the Brazilian Institute of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources (IBAMA). This marked a governmental initiative to improve the management of the Amazon's natural resources. The Pilot Program for the Protection of Tropical Forests in Brazil (PPG7) was initiated in 1992, coinciding with the ECO-92 conference, emphasizing conservationist themes from its outset. It is a pioneering initiative that relied on international funding to promote sustainable development in the region (MELLO, 2006; BORGES, 2012; BORGES 2018).

Since the 2000s, the Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon (PPCDAm)⁵ has successfully reduced deforestation rates in the region. However, environmental policies in the Amazon have always grappled with the challenge of balancing conservation with economic development (Mello, 2006). In recent years, the relaxation of environmental standards and reduced inspection have contributed to increased deforestation and fires in this biome (CAPOBIANCO, 2017; SILVA, 2023).

5 More information can be obtained at <http://combateadodesmatamento.mma.gov.br/>, accessed on July 25, 2024.

Extreme events and the Pan-Amazon

Extreme weather events have become more frequent and intense in the Pan-Amazon region, impacting biodiversity, local communities, urban and rural populations, and the economies of the countries that share this rainforest. Other extreme phenomena such as droughts, heavy precipitation, floods, and tidal changes pose various challenges for the populations in the region, underscoring the vulnerability of social groups to climate change.

The Pan-Amazon, spanning nine countries in South America, plays a crucial role in regulating the hydrological cycle and absorbing carbon dioxide in this region of the planet. However, deforestation and environmental degradation compromise this capacity, exacerbating the impacts of extreme events. Prolonged droughts, for example, reduce river levels, affecting navigation, fishing, and water supplies. Floods, on the other hand, lead to landslides, infrastructure destruction, substantial agricultural losses, and hinder land transportation in remote areas, affecting the supply of entire cities.

Forest fires, often triggered by deforestation and unsustainable agricultural practices, have devastated extensive forested areas, releasing significant amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, and exacerbating global warming. Managing these extreme events requires an integrated and collaborative approach among Amazonian countries, focusing policies that promote climate resilience, environmental conservation, and sustainable development. In this context, it is noteworthy that the fragility of environmental policies, coupled with the progress of economic dynamics in the region, has led to extensive transformation of the forest, inflicting damage on local and regional ecosystems, as well as the populations that depend on the cycles of forests and rivers for their subsistence (NEPSTAD, 1999).

The Amazon Fund as a tropical forest conservation policy

The Amazon Fund⁶ is a crucial initiative for the conservation of the Amazon rainforest. Established by the Brazilian government in August 1st 2008 (Decree No. 6.527), as part of Brazil's commitment to preserving the Amazon and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, in a new round of bilateral agreements with various institutions, with a resource managed by the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), by receiving voluntary donations from governments, institutions and companies, both national and international. Its main goal is to finance projects that combat deforestation and promote sustainability in the Amazon region.

6 More information can be obtained at <https://www.fundoamazonia.gov.br/pt/home/>, accessed on July 25, 2024.

The main objectives of the Amazon Fund are: i) reduction of deforestation; ii) conservation and sustainable use of forests; iii) institutional strengthening. The sources of funding are donations from foreign governments, especially Norway and Germany. These countries have been the largest contributors, recognizing the global importance of the Amazon in climate regulation and biodiversity. Brazil's state-owned mixed-economy oil exploration company, Petrobrás, also made donations to the Fund

Created to address complex environmental problems affecting the Amazon, this policy has become one of the main financing tools for conservation and sustainable development projects in the region, supporting initiatives aimed at reducing deforestation, strengthening local communities, promoting sustainable productive activities, and improving environmental management.

The management of the Amazon Fund has been the subject of political and institutional disputes. Since its creation, the fund has been administered by BNDES, with strategic guidance from the Amazon Fund Steering Committee (COFA). However, tensions arose in 2019, when the Brazilian government, under the administration of Jair Bolsonaro, proposed changes to the governance of this funding, including greater influence by the federal government in the allocation of resources⁷. These proposals raised concerns among the main donors, Norway and Germany, which suspended their contributions, citing increased deforestation and a lack of transparency in the management of resources. The disputes reflect a broader dilemma between environmental preservation and economic development, exacerbated by policies that favor agricultural expansion and mineral exploration in the Amazon.

The main public policies and environmental laws of the Pan-Amazon countries

The Pan-Amazon region encompasses countries that have their own environmental policies and laws aimed at protecting the Amazon forest and biome, as well as promoting sustainable development. We therefore present a summary of these standards aimed at environmental management in all countries of the greater Amazon region:

Brazil

- 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution: Article 225 of the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution establishes that everyone has the right to an ecologically balanced environment, which is a common good for the people and essential for the quality

7 Information available in the article: <https://tinyurl.com/zh5cf9cu>. Accessed on July 25, 2024.

of life. The article assigns to the Government and the community the duty to defend and preserve the environment for present and future generations. Article 225 includes points such as:

- Promoting environmental education at all levels of education and raising public awareness for environmental preservation;
 - The unavailability of vacant lands or lands collected by States, due to discriminatory actions, necessary to protect natural ecosystems;
 - The obligation of inspection and control, by the Public Authorities, of activities that are potential polluters, carried out by private individuals or by the State itself.
- National Environmental Policy (Law no. 6.938/1981): Established the National Environmental System (SISNAMA) and the National Environmental Council (CONAMA);
 - National System of Conservation Units (SNUC) (Law nº 9.985/2000): Establishes the categories of conservation units and their rules of creation and management;
 - Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon (PPCDAm): Government program to reduce deforestation in the Legal Amazon.
 - Forest Code (Law no. 12.651/2012): Regulates land use and establishes permanent preservation areas and legal reserves;

Bolivia

- Environmental Law (Law nº 1.333/1992): Establishes the basis for environmental protection, conservation of natural resources and pollution control;
- State Political Constitution (2009): Includes provisions on the protection of nature and the rights of Mother Earth;
- Mother Earth Rights Law (Law nº 71/2010): Recognizes nature as a subject of rights, establishing a framework for environmental protection based on the rights of Mother Earth;
- Landmark Law on Mother Earth and Integral Development for Good Living (Law No. 300/2012): Promotes a model of sustainable development, integrating environmental protection with social and economic well-being.

Peru

- General Environmental Law (Law no. 28611/2005): Establishes the legal framework for environmental protection and sustainable management of natural resources;
- Forestry and Wildlife Law (Law nº 29763/2011): Regulates the conservation and sustainable use of forests and wildlife, promoting participatory and inclusive management;

- Law of Protected Natural Areas (Law n° 26834/1997): Defines the creation, categorization, and management of protected natural areas;
- National Environmental Action Plan (PLANAA)⁸: Government strategy to address environmental challenges, including reducing deforestation and promoting sustainable development.

Colombia

- National Code of Renewable Natural Resources and Environmental Protection (Decree-Ley no. 2811/1974): Legal framework for the protection and sustainable use of natural resources;
- General Environmental Law (Law n° 99/1993): Creates the Ministry of the Environment and defines the National Environmental System (SINA);
- National Development Plan (PND)⁹: Includes goals for the conservation of biodiversity and the reduction of deforestation in the Colombian Amazon;

Ecuador

- Constitution of Ecuador (2008): Recognizes the rights of nature and establishes the responsibility of the state to protect the environment;
- Organic Environmental Code (COA) (2017)¹⁰: Consolidates and updates environmental legislation, promoting sustainable management of natural resources;
- The Equator Principles¹¹: Guides actions for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Guyana¹²

- Environmental Protection Act (1996): Establishes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and regulates environmental management;
- Forest Conservation Law (1953): Regulates the management and conservation of forests.

8 Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/33dwrxc9>. Accessed on July 25, 2024.

9 Available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yckad6p8>. Accessed on July 25, 2024.

10 Available at <https://tinyurl.com/bdzmkhns>. Accessed on July 25, 2024.

11 Available at: https://equator-principles.com/app/uploads/EP4_Spanish.pdf. Accessed on July 25, 2024.

12 Guyana's set of environmental laws can be found at this link: <https://tinyurl.com/5zea7ych>. Accessed on July 25, 2024.

French Guyana

- Déclaration Environnementale – PGRI de Guyane: Consists of plans and programs that bring together documents necessary for environmental assessment, in compliance with articles L122-4 to L122-17 of the Environmental Code (Code de l'environnement)¹³;

- Natura 2000 Network: Part of the European network of protected areas, French Guiana has several areas designated for the conservation of natural habitats and endangered species;

- Guiana Amazon Park: Created in 2007, it is one of the largest protected areas in France, with the aim of conserving biodiversity and promoting the sustainable development of local communities;

- Plan de Gestion Forestière¹⁴: Forest management program that regulates the sustainable exploitation of forests, ensuring the preservation of ecosystems;

Suriname

- National Action Adaptation Plan (NAP)¹⁵: Establishes strategies to increase the country's resilience to climate change;

- National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan Suriname (NBSAP Project)¹⁶: Aims at the conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable use of biological resources, promoting the integration of biodiversity policies into economic sectors;

Venezuela

- Organic Environmental Law (1976)¹⁷: Establishes the basis for environmental policy in Venezuela, promoting the conservation of natural resources and sustainable management of the environment;

- National Spatial Planning Plan¹⁸: Planning instrument that guides the sustainable use of the territory, including the management of natural resources and environmental protection;

In this transnational region, transformations and a new panorama are observed in the contemporary period. This is marked by the presence of multiple territorial divisions with delineations and usage restrictions aimed at conserving biodiversity and respecting the social and communal dynamics of Indigenous populations.

13 Available at <https://tinyurl.com/3yaeeftp>. Accessed on July 25, 2024.

14 Further information can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/49fz8rwz>. Accessed on July 25, 2024.

15 Available at: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/NAP-Suriname-2020.pdf>. Accessed on: 25 Jul 2024.

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18 Available at: <http://sigta.minec.gob.ve/sigta/planes.php>. Accessed on: July 25, 2024.

Despite advances in conservation through these established territorial boundaries across the region, encompassing all countries that host parts of this biome, active pioneer fronts moving into the Amazon interior remain a persistent threat in the 21st century.

Final considerations

The Pan-Amazon region presents contemporary challenges that require greater care for nature and the social groups that live within it. It is necessary to develop infrastructure, resources and actions aimed at reducing the various environmental impacts, especially in cities, as well as fostering local economic activities to boost the economy and generate income for society.

Moreover, this region exhibits internal dynamism and is intertwined with global economic dynamics. As an integral part of a dynamic society, it reconfigures axes and establishes new meanings and values within the region, altering patterns of settlement and the flow of goods, people, and information. This triggers tensions and socio-environmental conflicts, constituting one of the hallmarks, especially of the Brazilian Amazon in the current period. Although it has protected territories, the region is under pressure from nations and economic actors who see in this vast geography the possibility of obtaining dominance, profit, and power.

Brazil, as an important geopolitical actor in South America, plays a key role in several economic development, territorial and environmental integration agendas. Like other countries, it faces the challenge of reconciling agendas and promoting full living conditions for the society that lives in this region.



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ДИЛЕМЕ И ИЗАЗОВИ ЗА АМАЗОНСКИ БИОМ

Апстракт: Амазон представља социо-еколошки комплекс чије решавање постојећих тензија нужно укључује мултилатералне акције. Његов биом дели неколико земаља које имају различите стандарде у погледу овог односа са природом. С друге стране, унутрашње акције у свакој земљи, од границе, преко урбане мреже и имплементације инфраструктуре, представљају изазове за владе да испуне жеље становништва без интензивног утицаја на животну средину Амазоније. Тако је један од путева био ширење заштићених подручја и територија, те стварање аутохтоних земаља или резервата као начина да се осигура очување шума и традиционалног начина живота становништва који има складан однос са природом, рачунајући финансијску подршку северних земаља. Они такође имају снажан интерес за очување животне средине суочени са напретком у сточарству, монокултури и екстремним климатским променама.

Кључне речи: ГРАНИЦА, УРБАНА МРЕЖА, ОЧУВАЊЕ ЖИВОТНЕ СРЕДИНЕ, АМАЗОН

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FAMILY FARMING AND FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN CONTEMPORARY BRAZIL

Abstract: Stimulating family farming is crucial for promoting food security and sustainable rural development in Brazil, especially due to the productive orientation of the dominant agricultural model following a different trend that is focused on the export of commodities for international trade. This study seeks to highlight elements that link family farming to agri-food sovereignty and sustainability in Brazil. To achieve the proposed objective, a methodology involving an interdisciplinary approach is used, including economic, social and environmental analyzes and some data from secondary sources on government incentives for family farming via PRONAF and those allocated by Rural Credit to employer agriculture. It is concluded that family farming stands out in the sustainable food supply for the domestic market, and the country's recognition of its promotion from the 1990s onwards was an important milestone in encouraging agroecology. Recent data show that there is a lack of stable and increasing maintenance of resource allocation for this social segment, which is an important factor, but not the only one to guarantee greater food sovereignty.

Keywords: FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, FAMILY FARMING, FOOD SECURITY, AGROECLOGY

Introduction

In Brazil, family farming plays a central role in promoting food sovereignty, whose importance increases especially in the current context of new social and economic challenges and the intensification of environmental emergencies. Food sovereignty as a principle was originally postulated by the international La Via Campesina movement at the World Forum on Food Sovereignty held in Cuba in 2001 (Brandenburg, Bezerra; Giordani, 2016). The notion of food sovereignty transcends the food security approach and refers to the right of people to define their own policies and strategies for the production, distribution and consumption of food, respecting their cultures and traditions. Linked to this concept is the right of each people to decide their own agricultural policies and define food, protect and regulate domestic markets in order to achieve development goals with national agricultural production and sustainability (LCV, 2015).

In fact, the concepts of sovereignty and food security are recent, however agriculture as a socio-cultural practice dates back around 10,000 years. The diversity and richness of this ancestral knowledge are especially relevant in Brazil and throughout Latin America, as they are home to a variety of biomes interconnected with culturally diverse human groups (Brandenburg, Bezerra; Giordani, 2016). Such knowledge, in addition to preserving cultural traditions, offers viable and effective solutions for sustainable agriculture. In the theoretical field, the debate is expanding that agriculture of the future must be both sustainable and productive enough to feed the growing population with quality. To this end, a new approach to agriculture and agricultural development is required, which prioritizes aspects linked to the conservation of natural resources from traditional local agriculture, and at the same time modern ecological knowledge and methods are explored (Gliessman, 2013, 56). For the author, agroecology should be emphasized as it would be capable of promoting integration between natural and agricultural ecosystems, sustainability and social equity.

Although the Brazilian territory presents a great diversity of socioeconomic-environmental-cultural regions, a threat is perceived in terms of biodiversity and harmful implications for agri-food sustainability due to the increasing introduction of chemical inputs into the agricultural production system. There is an incentive to the hegemonic agro-export model, which is important for generating surpluses in the trade balance, but encourages the intensive use of natural resources, in addition to the increasing use of pesticides that can harm the environment and the health of local populations. Furthermore, this trend reduces the ability to produce food sustainably, violating the principles of food sovereignty. This is not only due to direct damage caused to agricultural areas, but also due to cross-contamination, resulting from the type and form of application of pesticides that end up contaminating sustainable agriculture production territories.

As a result, commercial agriculture for a large part of social segments presents itself as a contested model, due to the productive technology adopted, and because it worsens the concentration of land and resources in the hands of large agricultural producers, and corporations, aggravating social inequalities and harmfully affecting human health due to food contamination. Organizations that bring together a significant portion of family farming, social movements (MST), indigenous people, non-governmental and environmental organizations and conscious consumers are the main social actors who contest this model and call for healthy food, social justice, territorial rights and environmental preservation.

In Brazil, at the same time that the existence of structural heterogeneity is recognized, both between groups of farmers and between regions of the country (Fornazier & Vieira Filho, 2013), the participation of each productive segment in total production is diverse, and resulting especially from subsidies that particularly privilege groups that are involved in production for foreign trade. Historically, there seems to be a vocation in Brazil for large production aimed at exports and throughout the entire trajectory of agricultural development in Brazil, the dominance of the agro-export model is noticeable. The large geographical extension, the presence of agricultural land and government incentives have reinforced this trend especially since the mid-1960s, being made possible by the broad subsidies offered by the financial market following the creation of the National Rural Credit System (SNCR). This process resulted in a greater concentration of land and income in the countryside and, despite promoting an increase in the quantity of food offered, it has had a negative impact on the environment and has an impact on food quality. The consolidation of the modernization of agriculture in Brazil had the main known impacts at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, in which specific research denoted: i) the existence of erosion in Paraná; ii) the Adolfo Lutz Institute found the presence of organochlorines in the milk of pregnant women in São Paulo; iii) the Institute of Food Technology (Ital, SP) identified pesticide residues in dairy products, sausages and other industrialized products; in the analysis of vegetables and fruits, toxic residues were identified in a large number of samples (Costa, 2017).

In the 1980s, the crisis in the Brazilian economy was noticeable due to the drop in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and unemployment that devastated the country. There was also an external debt crisis that increased even more as a result of the rise in oil prices in the 1970s, and the solution found by the government was to stimulate commercial agriculture with the aim of generating surpluses in the trade balance. At the end of the 1990s, Brazil once again sought solutions to the external debt crisis and weak economic growth. The choice was to stimulate agriculture by promoting exchange rate devaluation in 1999, which stimulated exports. This process resulted in the reprimarization of the export agenda, exactly at a time when the process of deindustrialization of the Brazilian economy intensified.

Despite the recurring incentives for commercial agriculture, a paradox can be observed in the country, since the large agricultural production capacity occurs concomitantly with high levels of food insecurity. The main causes are structural, and in the recent period adverse shocks have been worsening food insecurity: i) the Covid 19 pandemic and, ii) the emergence of extreme weather factors. It is worth remembering that food insecurity in its most extreme form is hunger, whose genesis in Brazil lies in the historical-political process of the formation of our society. Based on the denunciation made by Josué de Castro, a pioneer in the systematized approach to hunger as a product of underdevelopment, in his book "Geography of Hunger – The Brazilian dilemma: bread or steel", published in 1946, began a discussion about the real food problem that was plaguing the country and which concerned an event of a social and not a natural nature. Therefore, hunger is the result of men's actions, their choices and the economic development they bring to their countries (Aranha, 2010).

In turn, family farming in Brazil is responsible for a significant portion of the production of food consumed internally. According to the 2017 Agricultural Census from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), family farming represents approximately 77% of rural establishments and accounts for around 23% of the gross value of agricultural production. Family farming is made up of social actors responsible for supplying basic foods for the domestic market, such as beans, corn, cassava, milk, vegetables, which make up the basic diet of the Brazilian population.

Given this situation, this study proposes to bring to light elements that link family farming to food sovereignty in Brazil, show some recent data on monetary incentives allocated to commercial and family farming in order to understand a dichotomy in which there is a prioritization of agriculture focused on for the foreign market. From now on, it is worth stating that the areas where family farming operates are mainly in sustainable food production, being primarily oriented towards the internal consumption of a growing population and, to meet institutional purchases from programs created by the federal government, especially after the 2000s.

The first section defines and discusses the links between sustainable food systems and food sovereignty, the second section presents the specificity of Brazilian family farming, promotion via Pronaf and government programs and, in the end, final considerations are presented.

Sustainable food systems, sovereignty and agroecology

The food sovereignty highlights autonomy and local control over food systems. The challenges of the transition to fair, sustainable and healthy food systems cannot be restricted to proposals focused solely on the areas of production and marketing

or consumption, as these only offer partial solutions, as they do not consider the conditions of inequalities in food systems (Maluf; Burlandy, 2022). On the contrary, proposals based on a more “systemic” perspective allow reconfiguring and acting directly on the determinants of inequalities as they include processes and types of knowledge that are politically and socially constructed in the analysis (Maluf, Burlandy, 2022). For the authors, “systemic interventions” make it possible to simultaneously change the modes of production and consumption of food in an integrated way, potentially affecting the three pandemics that make up the global syndemic: obesity, malnutrition and climate change.

Another recent theoretical approach, which emphasizes a holistic approach that considers local and regional contexts, derives from ecological economics, geography and rural sociology and concerns City-Region Food Systems (SACR). SACR, due to its integrative operational method, has the capacity to contribute to tackling complex challenges such as climate change, water availability and poverty (Blay-Palmer., Santini., Dubbeling., Renting., Taguchi & Giordano, 2020). A sustainable and resilient city-region food system aims to improve sustainability at all levels and sectors: expands access to food, generates decent employment and income, increases the region’s resilience, fosters urban and rural links, promotes the ecosystem and management of natural resources, supports participatory governance (Blay-Palmer., Santini., Dubbeling., Renting., Taguchi & Giordano, 2020).

The local sustainable food systems can strengthen social cohesion and promote community development by emphasizing the importance of traditional agricultural practices and local identity (Goodman, D.; Dupuis, EM; Goodman, M. K, 2012). In this work, the authors address alternative food networks, which comprise a wide range of initiatives and practices, such as family farmers’ markets, community-supported agriculture programs such as (CSAs), food cooperatives that in many countries are represented by practice of solidarity economy and other alternative movements. Therefore, these innovative and creative forms are constructed due to the lack of prevention and planning of national states.

Altieri, one of the greatest advocates of agroecology, shows that peasant agriculture throughout the world is going through a process of systematic impoverishment, on the one hand there is a population increase and on the other, rural properties reduce their physical size. “(...) the environment is degrading and, per capita, food production has stagnated or is declining. In view of the deepening food crisis, an important measure in rural development programs should be to prevent the collapse of peasant agriculture, making it more sustainable and productive. Such transformation can only occur if projects realize the potential of agroecology contributions and incorporate them into development strategies” (Altieri, 2009 p.109).

Thus, encouraging agroecology in family farming is one of the most important reactions to commercial agriculture. This is because it constitutes a sovereign practice and has not been corrupted / affected by the modernization imposed by

large foreign companies upstream. Despite being an old movement, advocates of agroecology understand that natural resources are less and less abundant as they were in the distant past, which is why they are concerned with producing while reducing the use of scarce materials such as water. Agroecology is a science that rescues traditional agricultural knowledge neglected by modern agriculture, and seeks to systematize and validate it so that it can be reapplied on new scientific bases (Assis & Romeiro, 2005). Agroecology proposes alternatives to minimize the artificialization of the natural environment by agriculture, for which it presents a series of principles and methodologies to study, analyze, direct, design and evaluate agroecosystems (Assis, 2006).

As a result, the lack of prevention and planning itself constitutes limits for the development of healthy foods, and this is requiring innovative and creative ways in the global world.

It must be ensured that for agriculture to meet the dual challenge of being sustainable and productive, which becomes possible from a new approach to agricultural development, which builds on resource conservation aspects of traditional local agriculture, whilst, at the same time, modern ecological knowledge and methods are explored (Gliessman, 2013). Agroecology allows the knowledge and methodology to develop agriculture that is environmentally consistent, highly productive and economically viable (Gliessman, 2013), and modern agriculture is unsustainable because it deteriorates the conditions that make it possible (Gliessman, 2013). The argument for the “effectiveness” of the conventional model is a narrative of the interests of the chemical industry, technology and financial investors (Costa, 2017).

The agroecology has a critical view of current agricultural processes, as it contributes to overcoming the socio-environmental problems inherent to agriculture, particularly its negative externalities that are not taken into account in the calculation of the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP), but that society as a whole pays for them (Costa, 2017). The agroecological approach considers a holistic investigation and analysis in which agricultural ecosystems are the fundamental units of study and these systems include mineral cycles, energy transformation, biological processes, and socioeconomic relations (Altieri, 1989). In agroecology, the concept of agroecological transition is central, as it provides the scientific and methodological bases for the promotion of sustainable agricultural styles, having as one of its central axes the production of food in adequate quantities and of high biological quality, for all society (Caporal & Costabeber, 2015).

The agroecology is the action-oriented approach to engaging in this process of change, where the science of ecology links to the practice of agriculture and together the two join forces with social movements in our food systems seeking food justice, democracy food, food autonomy, and food sovereignty (Caporal & Costabeber, 2015). An agroecosystem is ecological and social, and truly transformative changes to our food and agricultural systems are based on social (and political) changes, so

changes should not be restricted to the system, but to society as a whole.

Sustainable agriculture is fundamental to achieving sustainability, however, it is not a sufficient condition and, if the idea is to make it truly sustainable, then it needs to include all aspects of food production, distribution and consumption (Gliessman, 2013). Therefore, it must evolve towards a more comprehensive concept that goes beyond the agricultural production unit, it must consider the many and complex social and economic conditions that affect productive units and agricultural communities, and agroecology provides the bases that they allow the expansion of the focus of analysis and intervention by including food systems as a whole (Gliessman, 2013).

Family farming and the promotion of food and nutritional security in Brazil

The family farming contributes decisively to promoting food and nutritional security, generating income in the countryside and local economies, preserving traditional foods and agrobiodiversity. In 2014, the “International Year of Family Farming” was launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, with the aim of highlighting the global importance of family farming and small producers, considering their recognized capacity to reduce hunger and promote food security (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2014). Family farmers are responsible for producing 1/3 of the food produced on a global scale (FAO, 2022). In Brazil, despite the theoretical discussion involving this social category dating back to a previous period, it was only in the mid-1990s that the Family farming was recognized by the federal government as an important segment for promoting rural development (Schneider, 2010; Grisa & Schneider, 2015), guaranteeing the allocation of financial resources for its productive promotion.

Thus, despite the recognized importance of family farming for promoting food sovereignty and rural development, specific public policies for this social segment are recent. Recomposing historically, we will see that policies for the development of Brazilian agriculture had a general character until the end of the 1970s, through the National Rural Credit System (SNCR). There was a perception of lower risk associated with large-scale activities and a belief in greater efficiency in the use of financial resources made available by the credit system (Silva & Souza, 2020). Therefore, employer agriculture concentrated the majority of financial resources due to the greater guarantees for the payment of financing granted and, due to the government policy that privileged export agriculture, considering its ability to generate surpluses in the trade balance.

Therefore, despite the importance of family farming for the domestic food supply, until the second half of the 1990s, the country did not have any type of

public policy, with national coverage, for this important productive segment. In 1995, the National Program for Strengthening Family Agriculture (PRONAF) was created, whose main lines of the program consist of PRONAF-M credit, intended for infrastructure and services, and PRONAF-C credit, intended for funding and investment. Abramovay and Veiga (1999) show that the existence of a credit policy aimed at family farming finds its justification in what economists call market failure. From this perspective, the contribution of this sector to occupation and income generation in the countryside would be limited by the absence of infrastructural conditions to value its work, and by the difficulties that the banking sector imposes on a segment that imposes risks, as it has a precarious base patrimonial and unable to offer compensation

In order to make investments in infrastructure using PRONAF resources, the project must meet three guidelines: (i) act in accordance with the demands formulated by family farmers and/or their organizations; (ii) decentralize personnel and work processes, bringing them as close as possible to local realities; and (iii) concentrate efforts on finding comprehensive answers for production systems typical of family farming (Abramovay & Veiga, 1999). PRONAF-M aims to promote investments based on commitments negotiated between beneficiaries, municipal and state authorities, and civil society, enabling: a) the implementation, expansion, modernization, rationalization and relocation of infrastructure necessary to strengthen agriculture family; and b) the expansion and coverage of support services, such as agricultural research and technical assistance and rural extension.

The Pronaf C, which is intended for credit for costs and investments, began to admit family farmers who employed up to two permanent employees, which generated two relevant consequences: the first is that farmers with the capacity to offer to banks become candidates for PRONAF credit, real guarantees and counterparts, and which will tend to absorb a significant part of the resources, mainly investment. The second is that the participation of employer unions in the local implementation of PRONAF increases (Abramovay & Veiga, 1999).

If care is taken to ensure that resources allocated to PRONAF C are not granted to employer farmers or self-employed professionals who have areas of less than four rural modules, one of its main rules is that 80% of family income must come from agriculture, thus reducing the chances of resources being diverted from farmers to landowners who do not produce. The authors emphasize that most of the resources are destined for states and municipalities where family farming has greater economic strength, and which have greater agro-industrial integration (Abramovay & Veiga, 1999). If, through PRONAF-C, the number of farmers able to increase their income based on agro-industrial integration is increased, its objectives, in this regard, will be fulfilled. (Abramovay & Veiga, 1999, p. 31). The main changes to PRONAF occurred from 1999 onwards, when beneficiary farmers were divided into distinct groups, based mainly on annual gross income, with the intention of better meeting the reality of each group, such as agroecology, and for specific groups (women, young people and fishermen), and other institutional changes enabling a greater number

of family farmers to have access to the program.

The Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) was converted into the Special Secretariat for Family Agriculture and Agrarian Development of the Civil House of the Presidency of the Republic (Sead) in 2016, being extinguished in 2019 and recreated in 2023. Currently, the MDA specifies nine subprograms, which can be financed via PRONAF with specific destinations, as, explained in BOX 1.

BOX 1.

Pronaf Costing: Financing of cost items related to the agricultural or livestock activity carried out.

Pronaf Agroindústria: financing for family farmers and rural producers, individuals and legal entities, and cooperatives for investment in processing, storage, processing and marketing of agricultural, extractive, artisanal and forestry products; and to support the exploration of rural tourism.

Pronaf Mulher: financing for female farmers who are members of a family production unit covered by Pronaf, regardless of marital status.

Pronaf ABC+ Agroecology: financing for family farmers and rural producers, individuals, for investment in agroecological or organic production systems, including costs related to the implementation and maintenance of the enterprise.

Pronaf ABC+ Bioeconomy: financing for family farmers and rural producers, individuals, for investment in the use of renewable energy technologies, environmental technologies, water storage, small hydroenergy plants, forestry and the adoption of conservation practices and correction of soil acidity and fertility, aiming at its recovery and improvement of production capacity.

Pronaf Mais Alimentos: financing for family farmers and rural producers, individuals, for investment in their production structure and services, aiming to increase productivity and increase family income.

Pronaf Jovem: financing for family farmers and rural producers, individuals, for investment in production activities, as long as beneficiaries are over 16 years old and under 29 years old, among other requirements.

Pronaf Microcredit (Group "B"): financing for family farmers and rural producers, individuals, who have obtained a gross family income of up to R\$ 23 thousand, in the 12 months of normal production that preceded the request for the Declaration of Aptitude to PRONAF (DAP).

Pronaf Quotas-Partes: financing for the payment of quotas-parts by Pronaf beneficiaries associated with rural production cooperatives; and application by the cooperative in working capital, funding, investment or financial restructuring.

It should also be noted that only municipalities that have the Municipal Rural Development Plan (PMDR), (official document of the municipality, which should help obtain the necessary resources for the implementation of actions aimed at strengthening family farming), approved by the Municipal Council for Rural Development (CMDR), are able to request financing via PRONAF. Caixa Econômica Federal is the financial agent responsible for transferring resources to municipalities. The creation of PRONAF resulted in the need for other differentiated policies for rural development, as well as the creation of the Ministry of Agrarian Development (MDA) in 1999, and within this scope the creation of the Secretariat of Family Agriculture (SAF) in 2001 (Grisa ;Schneider, 2015).

Between the years 2015 and 2023, the financial resources allocated via Rural Credit to agribusiness and PRONAF to promote family farming can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Financial resources allocated via rural credit and Pronaf (2014-2023).

Harvest (year)	Costing and marketing (R\$ billion)	Investment (R\$ billion)	Rural credit / total (R\$ billion)	Variation (%)	Pronaf / total (R\$ billion)
2014/2015	112	44.1	156.1	14.8	s/a
2015/2016	149.5	38.2	187.7	20	28.9
2016/2017	149.8	34	183.8	-two	53.61
2017/2018	150.25	38.15	188.4	2.5	30
2018/2019	151.1	40	194.37	3	17.45
2019/2020	169.33	53.42	222.75	14.6	31.22
2020/2021	179.38	56.93	236.31	6.1	33
2021/2022	177.78	73.44	251.22	6.3	39.34
2022/2023	246.28	94.6	340.88	36	24.4

Source: MAPA

According to Table 1, it is possible to note that there was a growing and sustained evolution of financial resources for rural credit in the period under analysis, with only the 2016/2017 harvest showing a slight drop of two percentage points in relation to the previous harvest. The 2022/2023 harvest presented the most significant accumulated variation in rural credit (+36%). The data on the allocation of resources to family farming, in addition to being significantly lower, also presents strong instability as large inflections are observed, like the 2017/2018 harvest, resulting from attempts to promote fiscal adjustment by the Temer government. The 2018/2019 harvest was the one that received the smallest volume of financial resources from PRONAF in the last ten years. Despite this, this drop was not followed when considering the resources allocated via rural credit to commercial agriculture, which

in the same harvest increased (14.6%) in relation to the previous harvest.

If the idea is to encourage sustainable agriculture represented by family farming, then the promotion must be increasing and continued, to especially guarantee the encouragement of agroecology in family farming, as seen previously. This is because it is one of the most important reactions to commercial agriculture, as it is a practice that has not been affected by the modernization imposed by large companies upstream. The agroecological movement recognizes that natural resources are no longer as abundant as they were in the distant past, which is why it is concerned with producing while reducing the use of scarce materials such as water. Agroecology is a science that rescues traditional agricultural knowledge neglected by modern agriculture, and seeks to systematize and validate it so that it can be (re)applied on new (scientific) bases (ASSIS & ROMEIRO, 2005). Agroecology proposes alternatives to minimize the artificialization of the natural environment by agriculture, for which it presents a series of principles and methodologies to study, analyze, direct, design and evaluate agroecosystems (ASSIS, 2006). Agroecology is identified with a practice that has not been affected by the modernization imposed by large companies upstream, and is therefore non-conservative, in essence, being preservative by privileging sustainable technologies.

The lack of prevention and planning requires more and more innovative and creative ways in the global world. Altieri shows that peasant agriculture around the world is going through a process of systematic impoverishment, on the one hand there is a population increase and on the other, rural properties reduce their physical size. "(...) the environment is degrading and, per capita, food production has stagnated or is declining. In the face of this crisis, which has been deepening, an important measure in rural development programs should be to avoid the collapse of peasant agriculture, making it more sustainable and productive. Such transformation can only occur if projects realize the potential of agroecology contributions and incorporate them into development strategies" (Altieri, 2009 p.109).

According to Nierdele and Marques, the importance that the agroecological movement has assumed in Brazil has led to the institutionalization of the implementation of the organic compliance system. This represents a new institutionality and creates hope for greater development of agroecology and markets for agroecological and organic foods in Brazil (Nierdele & Marques, 2016). The authors describe the four fundamental milestones in the process of institutionalizing organic food production in Brazil: "In December 2003, law n° 10,831 established the need for certification of organ production, the qualitative aspects of organic animal and vegetable production. Then, normative instruction n° 19, of May 28, 2009, defined technical and organizational determinations to comply with the previous law. Finally, in January 2011, a new regulation defined the three quality assurance mechanisms: social control in direct sales without certification; Certification by external audit. Participatory guarantee systems, although not fully accepted by different types and marketing channels, are still the most used by farmers, as they have lower costs, for example in relation to external auditing (Nierdele & Marques, 2016).

Together with almost two hundred countries, through the UN Sustainable Development Agenda (ADS), Brazil committed to eradicating the problem of hunger by 2030, with sustainability and resilience and to this end, expanded a set of public policies to strengthen the family farming. In the recent period, in 2012, the National Policy for Agroecology and Organic Production (PNAPO) was created, instrumentalized in 2013, by the National Plan for Agroecology and Organic Production (I Planapo) updated and revised in 2016 (II Planapo) (Nierdele; Sabourin; Schmitt; Ávila; Assis, 2019). For the authors, these policies act to expand efforts to establish dialogue between civil society and the various levels of government (union, federated states, municipalities and territories), giving rise to various dynamics of institutionalization of agroecology.

The promotion of spaces for dialogue between different movements, social organizations, academics and public managers is an important path towards consolidating agroecology in the country and, the National Agroecology Meetings (ENAS), for example, are linked to several other movements, one of which is the Brazilian Forum for Solidarity Economy (FBES) (Nierdele; Sabourin; Schmitt; Ávila; Petersen; Assis, 2019). The importance of this perspective arises from the need to guarantee access to knowledge on sustainable agricultural practices and knowledge exchange. And the result of this and many other articulations contribute to Brazil's prominent position in the international context, in the construction of public policies for agroecology.

Final considerations

Throughout the work it was seen that family farming needs increasing and regular incentives to guarantee food security and sovereignty, especially in the Brazilian case where the hegemonic model is commercial agriculture. It is concluded that family farming stands out in the sustainable food supply for the domestic market, and its recognition and promotion via PRONAF by public authorities in the mid-1990s was an important milestone in the expansion of sustainable food production and agroecology. It is worth emphasizing that the agroecological movement in Brazil has transformative potential at different levels, being developed mainly by family farming. However, data from recent years show that there is a lack of stable and increasing maintenance of resource allocation for this social segment, which is central – but not the only reason – to guarantee greater sovereignty and food security.

The Contemporary environmental challenges require holistic and integrative approaches in such a way that the Sustainable Food Systems approach provides effective theoretical elements to understand the theme of this study in a broad analytical scope. It appears that encouraging family farming through the channeling of financial, technical and rural extension resources, in addition to being crucial for food sovereignty, also contributes to social justice and the reduction of socio-environmental conflicts in the country.



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ПОРОДИЧНА ПОЉОПРИВРЕДА И ПРЕХРАМБЕНИ СУВЕРЕНИТЕТ У САВРЕМЕНОМ БРАЗИЛУ

Апстракт: Подстицање породичне пољопривреде је кључно за промовисање безбедности хране и одрживог руралног развоја у Бразилу, посебно због продуктивне оријентације доминантног пољопривредног модела који прати другачији тренд који је фокусиран на извоз робе за међународну трговину. Ова студија настоји да истакне елементе који повезују породичну пољопривреду са пољопривредно-прехрамбеним суверенитетом и одрживошћу у Бразилу. Да би се постигао предложени циљ, коришћена је методологија која укључује интердисциплинарни приступ, укључујући економске, социјалне и еколошке анализе и неке податке из секундарних извора о владиним подстицајима за породичне фарме преко ПРОНАФ-а. Закључено је да се породична пољопривреда истиче у одрживом снабдевању домаћег тржишта храном, а признање његове промоције од 1990-их па надаље представљало је важну прекретницу у подстицању агроекологије. Последњи подаци показују да недостаје стабилно и све веће одржавање алокације ресурса за овај друштвени сегмент, који је важан фактор, али не и једини који гарантује већи прехрамбени суверенитет.

Кључне речи: ПРЕХРАМБЕНИ СУВЕРЕНИТЕТ, ПОРОДИЧНА ПОЉОПРИВРЕДА, БЕЗБЕДНОСТ ХРАНА, АГРОЕКОЛОГИЈА

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Радови под редним бројевима 1, 2. и 4. могу имати највише 40.000 карактера

са размацама, укључујући фусноте и ендноте, не узимајући у обзир наслов и сажетке на српском и енглеском језику и списак референци.

Радови под редним бројевима 3. и 5. могу имати највише 25.000 карактера са размацама, укључујући фусноте и ендноте, не узимајући у обзир наслов и сажетке на српском и енглеском језику и списак референци.

Радови под редним бројевима 6. и 7. Могу имати највише 10.000 карактера са размацама, укључујући фусноте и ендноте.

Изузетно, ако Уредништво процени научну, стручну или информативну оправданост, рад може бити и обимнији.

Стандарди за припрему рада

- Рад мора да садржи: 1) податке о аутору или коауторима, 2) наслов 3) апстракт и кључне речи на српском језику, односно енглеском језику ако је њиме написан, 4) текст, 5) најмање два међунаслова, 6) литературу и 7) податке о аутору или коауторима, наслов, сажетак и кључне речи на енглеском језику, ако је написан на српском језику, односно податке о аутору или коауторима, наслов, сажетак и кључне речи на српском језику, ако је написан на енглеском језику и 8) фотографије аутора и коаутора у JPG формату и биографије до 15 редова, које обавезно садрже, после имена и презимена, годину рођења у заградама.

- Рад може да садржи: поднаслов, илустрације (тебеле, графиконе, шеме, фотографије, цртеже и сл.), фусноте, ендноте, вебографију и остале изворе.

- Рад мора да буде припремљен у програму Microsoft Word, формат странице A4, све маргине 2,54 центиметра, врста слова Times New Roman, величина слова (Font size) 12, једноструки проред (Line spacing: Single).

- Подаци о аутору или коауторима: име и презиме јединог или првог аутора (прва страница, први ред, леви блок - Align); пун назив институције у којој ради (други ред, без прореда, леви блок); седиште институције у којој је ради (трећи ред, без прореда, леви блок); по истом начелу следе подаци о коауторима; уз име аутора и сваког коаутора ставља се звездица¹ која упућује на могући контакт са њима.

Иза следи једнокорачна белина (Enter).

- Наслов рада пише се великим а, евентуални, поднаслов малим словима (и наслов и поднаслов: средина (Center), без прореда ако су у више редова). Наслов и поднаслови пишу се црним словима (Bold).

Иза следи једнокорачна белина (Enter).

- Апстракт садржи од 150 до 200 речи и пише се иза одреднице Апстракт (Bold) која почиње новим редом (First line 12.7), а иза ње стављају се две тачке (:).

* Контакт: e-mail

После две тачке прво слово је велико, а текст је Regular.

Кључне речи садрже од 5 до 10 речи или синтагми иза одреднице Кључне речи (Bold) која почиње новим редом (First line 12.7), иза ње стављају се две тачке (:), пишу се великим словима, текст је Regular, а свака кључна реч је од других раздвојена запетом, са тачком на крају наведених кључних речи.

Иза следи једнокорачна белина (Enter).

- Текст у целини пише се Regular, са изравнатим маргинама (Justify), започиње новим редом (First line 12.7), као и сваки следећи пасус у тексту, без прореда (Line spacing: Single).

- Међунаслови су не обележавају редним бројевима и пишу се на средини (Center) црним словима (Bold). Међунаслови су од претходног и текста који следи одвојени једнокорачним белинама (Enter).

- У фуснотама се дају краћа објашњења делова основног текста (до пет редова), а у енднотама (на крају текста, пре литературе) шире експликације (до 20 редова) које се односе на одређени део основног текста. Фусноте и ендноте почињу новим редом (First line 12.7) и пишу се величином слова (Font size) 10, без прореда (Line spacing: Single).

- Илустрације (тебеле, графикони, шеме, фотографије, цртежи и сл.) дају се одвојени од претходног текста једнокорачном белином (Enter) и имају обавезан потпис који је од илустрација одвојен истом таквом белином. Потпис садржи врсту илустрације са редним бројем, написану курзивом (Italic), следе две тачке (:) иза којих се пише објашњење илустрације (Regular) са великим словом на почетку. Илустрација и потпис дају се на средини (Center). И иза потписа следи једнокорачна белина (Enter). Пример:

Табела 1: Објашњење табле

- Директни и индиректни цитатати, укључујући аутоцитате, дужи од једног реда, визуелно се издвајају једнокорачном белином од претходног и текста који следи (Enter), као и ширењем бочних маргина за 0,6 центиметара. Примери директног и индиректног цитата:

„Директан цитат почиње новим редом (First line 12.7), обавезно садржи наводнике, који су написани по правопису српског, односно енглеског језика. У тексту написаном на српском језику наводници се пишу на следећи начин: „цитирани текст”, накако другачије (нпр. „цитирани текст,, или »цитирани текст« и сл.). (Извор директног цитата)

Индиректни цитат подразумева коришћење у тексту одређеног података, идеје, става, мишљења, предвиђања итд. који није дословно преузет, али не

представља резултат самосталног истраживачког рада (ко)аутора текста. Такође почиње новим редом, али се не користе наводници. (Извор индиректног цитата)

- Извори директних и индиректних цитата дају се у загради на крају цитата, после наводника, код директних, и тачке, код индиректних цитата, на писму публикације из којих су цитати коришћени. Потун библиографски податак публикације из које је директан или индиректан цитат коришћен даје се у литератури, вебографији или осталим изворима на крају рада. Примери:

(Презиме, година: страница/е)

(Презиме, Иницијал/и имена. година: страница/е) када се у литератури појављују два иста презимена

(Презиме, Иницијал/и имена. и презиме, Иницијал/и имена. година: страница/е) када се у литератури појављују коаутори са истим презименима

(Презиме и други, година: страница/е) када је више од два аутора

(Презиме, година: страница/е; Презиме, година: страница/е; Презиме, година: страница/е; итд.) код индиректних цитата којима се сажимају подаци, идеје, ставови, мишљења, предвиђања итд. више од једног аутора

(Презиме, година: веб-адреса)

(Презиме, Назив дневних или периодичних новина, година/број: страница/е) код осталих извора

(Назив документа, година: страна) код осталих извора.

(Исто: страница/е) код директних и индиректних цитата из истог извора који следе један за другим

- У литератури, која се пише малим словима са великим почетним словом – Литература, и две тачке без белине (:), црним словима и курзивом (**Bold** и *Italic*), на средиини (*Center*), са једнокорачним белинама од последње реченице у тексту и од прве библиографске јединице (*Enter*), наводе се искључиво публикације – књиге, часописи, зборници радова – које су директно или индиректно цитиране у раду. Литература садржи потпуне библиографске податке о свакој коришћеној публикацији на језику и писму на којима је објављена. Редослед публикација даје се по азбученом реду презимена јединог или првог аутора, са редним бројем испред сваке публикације.

Пример библиографских података о књигама које се наводе у литератури:

Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун назив књиге (*Italic*); Место издања: Издавач.

Презиме Име и Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун назив књиге (*Italic*); Место издања: Издавач.

Презиме Име, Презиме Име и Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун назив књиге (*Italic*); Место издања: Издавач.

Пример библиографских података о часописима који се наводе у литератури:

Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун наслов текста; Назив часописа (*Italic*), вол. римски број, бр. арапски број; Место издања: Издавач; стр: почетна – завршна објављеног текста.

Презиме Име и Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун наслов текста; Назив часописа (*Italic*), вол. римски број, бр. арапски број; Место издања: Издавач; стр: почетна – завршна објављеног текста.

Презиме Име, Презиме Име и Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун наслов текста; Назив часописа (*Italic*), вол. римски број, бр. арапски број; Место издања: Издавач; стр: почетна – завршна објављеног текста.

Пример библиографских података о зборницима радова који се наводе у литератури:

Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун наслов текста. У: ур. или пр. Презиме/на, Иницијал/и имена. Пун назив зборника радова (*Italic*); Место издања: Издавач; стр: почетна – завршна објављеног текста.

Презиме Име и Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун наслов текста. У: ур. или пр. Презиме/на, Иницијал/и имена. Пун назив зборника радова (*Italic*); Место издања: Издавач; стр: почетна – завршна објављеног текста.

Презиме Име, Презиме Име и Презиме Име (година објављивања): Пун наслов текста. У: ур. или пр. Презиме/на, Иницијал/и имена. Пун назив зборника радова (*Italic*); Место издања: Издавач; стр: почетна – завршна објављеног текста.

- У (евентуалној) вебографији, која се пише малим словима са великим почетним словом – Вебографија, и две тачке без белине (:), црним словима и курзивом (**Bold** и *Italic*), на средиини (**Center**), са једноструким белинама од последње библиографске јединице у литератури и од прве библиографске јединице у вебографији (**Enter**), наводе се искључиво електронски објављене публикације – књиге, часописи, зборници и текстови на веб-порталима или веб-сајтовима – које су директно или индиректно цитиране у раду. Редослед публикација даје се по азбученом реду презимена јединог или првог аутора, са редним бројем испред сваке електронски објављене публикације на језику и писму на којима је објављена.

Примери библиографских података о електронским публикацијама које се наводе у вебографији:

Презиме Име, Пун наслов текста (*Italic*); веб-адреса (приступљено: дан, месец, година)

Пун наслов текста (*Italic*); веб-адреса (приступљено: дан, месец, година)

- У (евентуалним) осталим изворима, који се пишу малим словима са великим почетним словом – Остали извори, и две тачке без белине (:), црним словима и курзивом (**Bold** и *Italic*), на средиини (*Center*), са једноструким белинама од последње библиографске јединице у литератури, односно (евентуалној) вебографији и од прве библиографске јединице осталим изворима (*Enter*), наводе се искључиво остале публикације – документи, дневне и периодичне новине и сл.) – које су директно или индиректно цитиране у раду. Редослед публикација даје се по азбученом реду назива публикације, са редним бројем испред сваке, на језику и писму на којима је објављена.

Примери библиографских података о публикацијама које се наводе у осталим изворима:

Презиме Име (година): Пун наслов текста; Назив дневних или периодичних новина (*Italic*), бр. арапски број; Место: Издавач; стр. арапски број.

Пун наслов документа (година); Место: Издавач; стр. арапски број.

- Ако је рад написан на српском језику и ћириличном писму, после литературе (евентуално вебографије, односно осталих извора) завршава се именима (ко)аутора и афилијацијама, насловом и, евентуалним, поднасловом рада, апстрактот и кључним речима на енглеском језику и латиничном писму по истом упутству за српски језик. За Апстракт се користи израз – *Abstract*, а за кључне речи – *Keywords*.

Ако је рад написан на енглеском језику и латиничном писму, после литературе (евентуално вебографије, односно осталих извора) завршава се именима (ко)аутора, афилијацијама, апстрактот и кључним речима на српском језику и ћириличном писму по овом упутству.



ЧАСОПИС ЗА ДРУШТВЕНЕ НАУКЕ

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Ч Л А Н Ц И

Освалдо Марсико

ПОСЛЕДЊА КОЛОНИЈА ЈУЖНЕ АМЕРИКЕ:
СПОР ОКО СУВЕРЕНИТЕТА НАД МАЛВИНИМА
ИЗМЕЂУ АРГЕНТИНЕ И УЈЕДИЊЕНОГ КРАЉЕВСТВА

Мукунд В. Нарвенкар

ЗАШТИТА ИНДИЈСКЕ ПОМОРСКЕ БЕЗБЕДНОСТИ:
ИЗАЗОВИ И СТРАТЕГИЈЕ

Југанк Наик

ИНДИЈСКО НЕДАВНО ПРЕСЕДАВАЊЕ Г20:
НОВЕ ПАРАДИГМЕ У КУЛТУРНОЈ ДИПЛОМАТИЈИ

Владимир Ристановић, Андреа Бучалина Матић, Горан Лалић

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УПРАВЉАЊЕ ОТПАДОМ КАО
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ЛАТИНСКА АМЕРИКА И КАРИБИ НАКОН СТИЦАЊА НЕЗАВИСНОСТИ
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