



Brazil

Assessment: Good

Trend: ↔

Capital: Brasilia

Type of Government: Federative Republic

Head of Government: President Fernando

Henrique Cardoso (since 1 January 1995)

Minister of Foreign Affairs: Celso Lafer

Population: 174,468,575

Human Development Index Ranking 2002: 73

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Brazil has a **good** but uneven record of support for democracy abroad. The promotion and protection of democracy has gradually become a core objective of Brazil's foreign policy and multilateral diplomacy since the restoration of democracy in 1985. Nevertheless, Brazil has had to balance its commitment to democracy with its commitment to the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states.

Under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003), a more proactive stance towards the defense of democracy abroad has been incorporated into Brazilian foreign policy, especially but not exclusively in South America. Brazil has used its leverage and leadership to further the cause of democracy in multilateral institutions such as the Organization of American States (OAS), the Southern Cone Common Market (Mercosur) and the Rio Group. However, this principled approach to foreign policy has not become fully institutionalized, in part because of the continuing, competing commitment to the more traditional principle of national sovereignty. A key test of Brazil's commitment to democracy abroad will be how it responds to threats to democracy using new mechanisms such as the OAS Inter-American Democratic Charter, adopted in 2001, and the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

FOREIGN RELATIONS BACKGROUND

Brazilian foreign policy has evolved significantly during the past two decades, displaying both continuity and change. There is a strong correlation between the re-democratization of Brazil and the promotion of democracy and protection of human rights as core features of its foreign policy, both of which are now enshrined in the 1988 Constitution. However, Brazil's foreign policy remains marked by a continuing, steadfast belief in the principles of national sovereignty and noninterference in the affairs of other states. And while new leaders, such as President Cardoso, have strengthened Brazil's commitment to the promotion of democracy, traditional elites and power groups, such as the military and the diplomatic bureaucracy, have retained significant influence in defining the country's national interests and shaping its foreign policy with little input from parliament or civil society. In addition, economic and trade interests tend to dominate Brazil's foreign policy, though again, under President Cardoso, democracy promotion has gained greater prominence.

As the largest economy, population and landmass in South America, Brazil has positioned itself as a regional diplomatic power, strengthening its role within regional institutions such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Rio Group.¹ As a regional hegemon, Brazil has acquired an increasingly independent and assertive voice in international affairs. It has been particularly instrumental in strengthening 'democracy clauses' in regional institutions. Indeed, any effective response to a democratic crisis depends, to a great extent, on Brazil taking a leadership role in -- or, at least, lending its tacit consent to -- activating regional mechanisms for the collective defense of democracy, especially in the context of Mercosur and the Rio Group.



President Cardoso, who served as Foreign Minister from 1992 to 1993 before his election to the presidency, has been credited with solidifying democracy and political stability in Brazil, as well as with reforming the state and restructuring the economy. He has been the principal advocate of using Brazil's economic leverage to advance democracy, especially, but not exclusively, in Latin America and the Caribbean.² For example, regional integration has become as much a political endeavor as an economic imperative, as evidenced by the adoption of a strong democracy clause in the Mercosur customs union. His activism in foreign policy has given rise to what analysts have described as 'presidential diplomacy,'³ a trend that may or may not endure beyond his second and final term in office. The elections of October 2002 are thus likely to be decisive in determining the permanence of democracy promotion in Brazil's foreign policy.

Despite the evolution in Brazil's foreign policy towards greater commitments to the principles of democracy, at times Brazil's defense of democracy abroad has been hemmed in by its traditional adherence to the principle of national sovereignty. The more subtle threats to democracy, such as flawed elections and insidious erosions of democratic governance, are those that are most likely to exacerbate the tension between these two guiding principles. Brazil's cautious pragmatism has, at times, inhibited effective multilateral responses to these sorts of crises of democratic governance.

RESPONSE TO OVERTHROW OF DEMOCRATICALLY-ELECTED GOVERNMENTS

Brazil has responded swiftly to overt interruptions of democracy in neighboring countries like Guatemala and Ecuador, although its record in responding to more subtle threats to democracy is more mixed. Overall, since the mid-1990s Brazil has been moving gradually towards greater activism, with the 1996 crisis in Paraguay constituting a turning point in this evolution.

In response to the coup d'état in Haiti in September 1991, Brazil lent its support to the initiatives taken by the OAS Permanent Council in the context of the mechanisms of Resolution 1080. Furthermore, Brazil endorsed a 1991 Rio Group statement condemning the coup and entrusting the United Nations (UN) with its resolution. However, Brazil expressed reservations about the use of force to restore democracy in Haiti because of the encroachment on Haiti's national sovereignty that

such an action would entail. As a member of the UN Security Council in 1994, Brazil abstained from voting on the resolutions regarding Haiti.⁴

In the case of the *autogolpe* (self-coup) by President Alberto Fujimori in Peru in April 1992, Brazil argued that a strict application of the sanctions mechanisms of Resolution 1080 would further destabilize Peru and lead to further deterioration in its ability to overcome its internal economic and security situation. Brazil's cautious stance probably inhibited the effective use of the OAS mechanisms, sending mixed signals to President Fujimori.

Brazil responded more decisively to President Serrano's attempted coup in Guatemala in May 1993. Brazil consented to the OAS immediately invoking Resolution 1080 to condemn the alteration of constitutional rule, and to sending a fact-finding mission to Guatemala. Brazil clearly announced that it would not allow a derailment of the peace process in which it had been involved as a member of the Support Group to the Contadora process. While in the case of Peru, Brazil was principally concerned for the stability of the country, in Guatemala, it was anxious to protect Guatemala's fragile democratic transition and to prevent Serrano from endangering the peace process.

Brazilian diplomacy was particularly effective in resolving the constitutional crisis in Paraguay in April 1996. While Haiti, Peru and Guatemala may not have been considered in Brazil's immediate sphere of influence, the Paraguayan crisis threatened its interests more directly and undermined the credibility of Mercosur. Although Brazil found the recourse to Resolution 1080 problematic because a coup had not actually occurred, Brazil agreed with the broad interpretation of other governments at the OAS of defining the crisis as an interruption of the democratic institutional process.

Prior to the onset of the crisis, during a secret trip of President Wasmosy to Brasilia on 20 April, President Cardoso pledged Brazil's support for Wasmosy's decision to dismiss General Oviedo. Shortly thereafter, Brazil's Deputy Foreign Minister traveled to Asuncion to demonstrate Brazil's support to Wasmosy.⁵ Cardoso repeatedly assured Wasmosy that its Mercosur partners opposed Oviedo's direct challenge to constitutional rule, and that they would not tolerate a disruption of democracy in a member state. On April 22, following a statement by the Brazilian Ambassador, the Brazilian government issued a communiqué noting its profound concern regarding the events in Paraguay, which they characterized as constituting 'a serious menace to



democratic institutions and the constitutional order.' It expressed the Brazilian government's 'total support' for Wasmosy, warning that any rupture in the constitutional and democratic order would 'gravely compromise the cooperation between Brazil and Paraguay in all of its aspects.' Brazil significantly raised the stakes of a potential disruption of the democratization process, thus altering the domestic actors' perceptions and positions.

Similarly, Brazil reacted swiftly to the re-emergence of political turmoil in Paraguay following the assassination of Vice President Argaña in March 1999. As in 1996, President Cardoso and the Brazilian Ambassador played a key role in resolving the crisis, urging President Raúl Cubas to resign as the Senate proceeded to impeach him. By the end of March, the crisis was resolved as Luis González Macchi was sworn in as president. Cubas left for Brazil and Oviedo for Argentina, where they each received asylum. Although granting Cubas asylum strained relations with Paraguay, Brazil argued that such an act would help reduce tensions. Troubles continued, however, after Oviedo clandestinely left Argentina and attempted another coup attempt in May 2000. Oviedo then fled to Brazil, where he was arrested. Brazil's judiciary, however, rejected Paraguay's petition to extradite Oviedo to stand trial.

Brazil strongly objected to the irregular overthrow of Ecuadorian President Jamil Mahuad on 22 January 2000 and, in a communiqué, warned against the disruption of democratic principles and constitutional rule.⁶ In a separate Mercosur communiqué, Brazil and fellow member countries condemned the coup and called for the preservation of the rule of law and the upholding of the constitutional process. Furthermore, the Rio Group, of which Brazil is a member, expressed its grave concern and denounced 'any attempt to disrupt constitutional order and democratic institutions.' International pressure probably influenced the armed forces' decision to facilitate the return of civilian rule.

Brazil reacted promptly to the attempted coup d'état in Venezuela in April 2002, both through bilateral and multilateral channels. On 12 April, immediately after the crisis erupted, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a communiqué expressing its concern, 'lamenting the rupture of constitutional order' and calling for a rapid 'return to democratic normalcy.'⁷ In the afternoon of the same day, President Cardoso issued a statement in which he declared that the government of Brazil would not

recognize Venezuela's *de facto* government unless and until new elections were held. Cardoso closely monitored the developments in Venezuela, and engaged in intense diplomatic negotiations to identify a common position among Latin American countries.⁸ He instructed his Foreign Minister, Celso Lafer, to address the Venezuela crisis in the context of the 'democratic clause' of the Rio Group, which happened to be meeting at the same time the coup was unfolding. The Rio Group governments reacted strongly to the attempted coup in Venezuela issuing a joint statement on 12 April, which firmly condemned the 'interruption of constitutional order' and called for the 'normalization of democratic institutions'.⁹ The Brazilian government clearly indicated that the rupture of the constitutional order would jeopardize Venezuela's participation in regional institutions and the process of regional integration.

RESPONSE TO MANIPULATION OF ELECTORAL PROCESSES

Brazil has been ambivalent in its response to flawed elections in other countries. In such cases, Brazil's concern for the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs has tended to override its commitment to promoting democracy, including free and fair elections, in the region. Brazil has shown increasing willingness to resort to regional mechanisms for collective action when democracy is under stress, but it has also urged caution against their abuse and misuse.

The controversial presidential elections in Peru in April 2000, and the subsequent institutional crisis, illustrate the challenges to Brazilian diplomacy posed by its dual commitments to national sovereignty and the promotion of democracy. The elections in April and May 2000 in Peru were clearly flawed, and recognized as such by the OAS, which ultimately suspended its electoral observation mission. However, the ambiguous nature of the situation in Peru did not represent a 'sudden and irregular interruption' of democracy, but rather a more insidious assault on the rule of law and constitutional democracy.¹⁰ Consistent with its attachment to the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other sovereign states, Brazil resisted collective action under the mechanisms of Resolution 1080. Despite continued efforts by the United States to impose sanctions on Peru, only Costa Rica was willing to back the use of Resolution 1080. At the OAS General Assembly in Windsor, Ontario, in early June 2000, representatives of



Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela argued that Resolution 1080 did not apply to the Peruvian situation. Brazil followed a policy of cautious pragmatism, aimed at not ostracizing Peru. While it recognized Fujimori as the legitimate president for a third consecutive term, and even invited him to the first Summit of South American Presidents convened by Cardoso in late August 2000, it also called for greater political pluralism and institutional reforms in Peru.¹¹

PROMOTION OF INTERNATIONAL DEMOCRACY

Brazil has played an active role in the democracy promotion efforts of key regional institutions such as the OAS, Mercosur, and the Rio Group. It has also been a strong voice for democracy promotion efforts at the Ibero-American Summits, and has been a signatory to the most important UN and OAS international treaties on human rights.

Brazil has played a particularly critical role in strengthening regional mechanisms for collective action. For example, Brazil was instrumental in securing the inclusion of 'democracy promotion and protection clauses' in the OAS bylaws in 1991, 1992 and 2001.¹² In addition, Brazil has assumed the leadership role of Mercosur, and supported the inclusion of a 'democracy clause' into the organization's charter in June 1996, as a partial response to the Paraguayan crisis. Brazil's leadership role in enforcing Mercosur's collective action mechanisms has been critical to their effectiveness, although the strength of Mercosur itself will determine whether its democracy clause continues to deter future democratic crises.

Brazil has also assumed a leadership role in the Rio Group, created in 1986 in Rio de Janeiro. Since 1995, the Rio Group has adopted a series of declarations to promote and protect democracy, albeit mostly on a re-active basis.¹³ However, while President Cardoso insists that nations can not hide behind a shield of sovereignty, he has also repeatedly cautioned against any infringements on national sovereignty.

Brazil has been a strong proponent of the inclusion of democracy promotion in the agenda of the Ibero-American Summits, a forum established in 1991. The consolidation of democratic governance was the main focus of the Summit in Santiago and Viña del Mar, Chile, in November 1996 (following the events in Paraguay earlier that year). Similarly,

Brazil has been the driving force behind the creation of the Summit of South American Presidents, which held its first meeting in Brazil in September-October 2000. At that meeting, it was decided that participation in future summits would hinge upon respect for democratic institutions and the preservation of the rule of law. South American presidents agreed to hold consultations in the event of a threat to democracy.¹⁴

Brazil has consistently supported UN efforts in the fields of conflict management, post-conflict reconstruction, and the strengthening of democracy. During its tenure on the UN Security Council in 1998-99, Brazil was especially concerned with securing peace in Angola and promoting the independence of a democratic East Timor.¹⁵ Brazil has also developed a modest foreign aid program managed by the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC), which occasionally provides technical assistance to developing countries in areas such as administrative reform and state modernization.

POLICY TOWARDS ENTRENCHED DICTATORSHIPS

Brazil's relations with entrenched dictatorships are characterized by cautious pragmatism. In the past, Brazil has been an active member of the Group of 77, and remains an observer in the Non Aligned Movement (NAM), whose democratic credentials are, at best, feeble.

Its relations with Cuba, the only authoritarian regime in Latin America, are characterized by a policy of constructive engagement, paralleling those of most Latin American and European countries.¹⁶ Diplomatic relations with Cuba resumed in 1986 after having been halted in 1964 by Brazil's military regime. Brazil and Cuba concluded a series of economic cooperation agreements in 1998 and 1999, following a 1998 visit to Cuba by the Brazilian Foreign Minister. Today Cuba is one of the main recipients of ABC technical cooperation. Brazil has historically abstained from officially condemning the violation of human rights in countries such as Cuba, China or Iran, and in both 2000 and 2002 abstained from voting on the UN Human Rights Commission resolutions condemning human rights violations in Cuba. It has also generally endorsed the UN General Assembly's repeated calls for an end to the U.S. economic blockade on Cuba.



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- ¹ A fact recently acknowledged by US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, in his Remarks at the Annual Conference of the Council of the Americas. Washington DC, United States. 6 May 2002.
- ² Cardoso, Fernando Henrique. "Democracy as a Starting Point." Journal of Democracy 12:1 (2001): 5-14; and Cardoso, Fernando Henrique. "Brazil and a New South America" Valor 30 Aug. 2000.
- ³ Danese, Sérgio. Diplomacia Presidencial. (Rio de Janeiro: Topbooks, 1999; and Goertzel, Ted. Fernando Henrique Cardoso: Reinventing Democracy in Brazil Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999. In November 2000, Brazil hosted the second assembly of the *World Movement for Democracy*, an initiative launched in 1999 and sponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). It has also hosted the *World Social Forum* in Porto Alegre in 2001 and 2002. In recognition of his contribution to the furthering of democracy, President Cardoso has been designated to lead the *Club of Madrid* as of 1 January 2003, a recently established network of former presidents and heads of states committed to promote and protect democracy around the world coordinated by the Madrid-based Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE).
- ⁴ United States. State Dept. Voting Practices in the United Nations, 1994, Report to Congress Submitted Pursuant to Public Law. Washington DC: US Department of State. 31 March 1995.
- ⁵ For a detailed account of the Paraguayan crisis, see: Valenzuela, Arturo. The Collective Defense of Democracy. Lessons from the Paraguayan Crisis of 1996. New York: Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, 1999; and Valenzuela, Arturo. "Paraguay: The Coup That Didn't Happen." Journal of Democracy 8:1 (1997).
- ⁶ "Insurrección en Ecuador: La OEA respalda a Mahuad, fuerte condena de EE.UU." Clarín, 22 Jan. 2002.
- ⁷ Zimmerman, Patricia. "Itamaraty diz que Brasil está preocupado com situação da Venezuela." Folha do Brasil Online. 12 April 2002.
- ⁸ Grabois, Ana Paula. "FHC diz que Venezuela deve ter novas eleições." Folha do Brasil Online. 12 April 2002.
- ⁹ The Rio Group statement on the situation in Venezuela can be obtained at: <www.grupoderio.go.cr> See also: Ortiz, Fiona. "Latam Leaders Express Concern, Discuss Venezuela" Reuter. 12 April 2002; "Chavez Ouster Criticized at Summit." The Associated Press. 12 April 2002.
- ¹⁰ Analysts compared the situation emerging from Peru's 2000 presidential elections to that of the Dominican Republic in 1994, making Peru ripe for a 'Balaguer solution' to Peru's political crisis. After a fraudulent re-election in 1994, the US government and the OAS pressured President Joaquín Balaguer into an agreement that shortened his term to 18 months in office and forced new elections.
- ¹¹ "Interview of Foreign Minister Luiz Felipe Lampreia." Correio Braziliense 1 June 2000.
- ¹² Farer, Tom, ed., Beyond Sovereignty: Collectively Defending Democracy in the Americas Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996; and Tickner, Arlene, et al., Sistema Interamericano y Democracia: Antecedentes Históricos y Tendencias Futuras. Washington DC: OAS UPD. November 2000.
- ¹³ These declarations include the *Quito Statement* of 1995, the *Asuncion Statement* and the *Statement Regarding the Maintenance of Democracy* of 1997, and the *Democratic Commitment of Cartagena* of 2000.
- ¹⁴ Statement by Ambassador Luiz Felipe Pampreia, Minister of Foreign Relations of Brazil at the General Debate of the 55th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York, United States, 12 Sep. 2000.
- ¹⁵ Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations, Brazil in the Security Council 1998-99. (2000).
- ¹⁶ Hoffman, Bert. "Continuidad y cambio en la nueva política exterior de Brasil: El caso de Cuba." Síntesis 31 (1999).