

## **BRAZIL INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN STRATEGIC OUTBREAK ON SOCIO- HISTORICAL BACKGROUND\***

*Elodie Brun<sup>1</sup>*

“Somos primos de verdade”, President Lula declared during a diplomatic trip to Lebanon in 2003 (ANBA, 5/12/03)<sup>i</sup>. Such an expression may seem striking to anyone who is familiar with the Mediterranean region and its global context. The following paper questions the perception of European Union (EU) dominance in the Mediterranean region amidst the outbreak of new actors and emerging states. Thus far, Brazil has drawn less attention, but the connection between this South American giant and its non-European Mediterranean partners shall not be overlooked<sup>ii</sup>. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s election as president on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 gave Brazil an unprecedented international boost. Brazilian governments have always presented international ambitions that have been hindered by economic ups and downs<sup>iii</sup>.

Now counted among the world’s ten leading economies and boasting 8.5 million km<sup>2</sup> and 192 million inhabitants in 2008, Brazil is considered an emerging power<sup>iv</sup>. Lula’s government has also developed an extremely active diplomacy, starting strong in creating the commercial G-20 within the World Trade Organization (WTO)<sup>v</sup>. Brazil’s international strategy aims to increase the country’s visibility, make its positions heard by the traditional powers, and hence legitimize its ambitions to participate in multilateral arenas. Furthermore, foreign policy appears as a means of development in Brazil, one of the most unequal states in the world. Subsequently, Brazilian diplomatic activism does not bypass the countries skirting the Mediterranean Sea.

Brazilian diplomacy does not have a global Mediterranean approach of the region, because those countries are dealt with as different geographical areas by

---

<sup>1</sup> PhD Candidate at Sciences-Po Paris (Supervisor: Prof. Guillaume Devin) and working on “South American relations with developing countries (Africa, Asia and the Middle East)”. elodie.brun@gmail.com

Itamaraty<sup>vi</sup>. They are split between divisions dedicated to Africa, the Middle East and Europe<sup>vii</sup>. However, Arab countries are often included together with those from the Arabic peninsula in official work papers. For the purpose of this analysis, a geographical logic will also be adopted, including the following partners: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, the Palestinian territories, Tunisia and Turkey. Henceforth, how should the Brazilian emergence on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean be understood and analysed? First, there is no denying that bounds between Brazil and this part of the Mediterranean region are nothing new. Nevertheless, a real boost has occurred at the turn of the century, for economic as well as diplomatic motivations.

#### **A revived socio-historical legacy**

Brazil developed links with non-European Mediterranean countries long ago, first through migration. Over 12 million Syro-Lebanese descendants currently live in Brazil, comprising the largest Arab community outside of the Middle East. The number of Syro-Lebanese descendants living in Brazil is even larger than the population numbers of their origin countries! Brazil also hosts the second largest Latin American Jewish community, following Argentina and representing 120,000 people<sup>viii</sup>. Syro-Lebanese descendants are active members of Brazilian society, especially within political spheres, and President Lula always recalls this fact in his travels to those Mediterranean countries.

Brazil's political and diplomatic relations with Mediterranean countries date back to 1858 and an agreement signed with the Ottoman Empire<sup>ix</sup>. Brazil and Egypt, in particular, initiated relations during the British protectorate era. Emperor Don Pedro II, an admirer of Arab culture, travelled to the region in 1871 and 1876. Since the 1950s, Brazil has recognized and set up diplomatic relations with all newly independent states (MAJZOUB, 2001)<sup>x</sup>.

Relationships between Brazil and its Arab partners accelerated following the first oil crisis. Though Brazil assented to the partition of Palestine in its vote for UN Resolution 181 in November 1947, its oil dependency later encouraged a more pro-Arab

orientation<sup>xi</sup>. Arab pressures affected Brazil's 'equidistance' policy after 1973. Brazil needed to import quantities of oil to ensure its internal development, within its program of import substitution industrialization. For example, 40% of Brazil's imported oil in 1980 came from Iraq (FARES, 2007). As a consequence, the Palestine Liberation Organization (POL) opened an office in Brazil in 1975, and in November of the same year, Brazil voted at the General Assembly of the United Nations for a resolution assimilating Zionism as a form of racism. Since taking interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Brazil has defended the implementation of the UN Resolution 242 (1967), voted into action following the Six-Day War (SANTOS, 2003). As also proven by the visit of President Figueiredo to Algeria in November 1983, Brazilian presence in the Mediterranean region challenges the vision of an almost exclusive historical European presence, although it still remains relatively limited.

Nevertheless, relations between Brazil and non-European Mediterranean countries weakened following the decrease of oil prices, the return of democracy and the emergence of economic crisis in Brazil, and subsequent diminished Brazilian efforts for diplomacy. For instance, the office of the Arab League was closed down, an air route between São Paulo and Beirut was cancelled three years after its launch in 1995 for lack of demand, and a programmed visit of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) to the Palestinian territories was postponed without any outcome (MAJZOUB, 2001; ANBA, 17/02/04). The former leader Cardoso acknowledges it in his memories: "The Middle East that was important during the military governments, was losing relevance, given the high degree of conflict established in the region and our lack of means to intervene constructively" (CARDOSO, 2006, p.612). During his two mandates, Brazil moved further and further away from the Mediterranean countries. Closing embassies and coming back to a cautious rhetoric concerning the Middle East, the nation was approaching a certain alignment on Northern American positions at the Security Council (MESSARI, 2006).

Yet, historical events are not entirely dichotomous; to some extent, an evolution had started to dawn by the end of the nineties. Itamaraty organized a conference on the Arab world in Brasilia in 2000. Likewise, relations with Turkey remained relatively

constant though few developed. In September 1999, the Brazilian embassy established in Tunis in 1961 was closed for financial reasons and then reactivated in July 2001. The Tunisian Foreign Minister Habib Ben Yahia came to Brazil the next year to sign two agreements in the field of cooperation<sup>xii</sup>. Those documents will be used as a foundation for future projects developed between the two countries. Even if inconsistent, any legacy becomes important when countries decide to boost their relations, as has been the case since 2003.

### **Taking the offensive: the arrival of President Lula**

During his inaugural address, President Lula announced a new deal concerning foreign policy, a change that resulted partly in the reinforcement of the South-South diplomacy. Concerning Middle Eastern and North African countries, Brazilian diplomacy drew attention at two key moments. In 2003 he made his first-ever diplomatic tour in the region, and 2005 organized the first Southern America – Arab countries Summit (known as ASPA) in Brasilia. Since 2008, Brazil has shown stronger effort to get back in contact with the region, and these efforts are noted more particularly through the mutual diplomatic visits of the Israeli, Palestinian, and Brazilian leaders between the end of 2009 and beginning of 2010. On the whole, the Brazilian president has visited eight non-European Mediterranean countries and received in return six of his counterparts. No Brazilian travel of such a scale took place under Fernando Henrique Cardoso's mandate<sup>xiii</sup>. Except for Algeria, Egypt and Lebanon, all of President Lula's diplomatic visits have been firsts in Brazilian history<sup>xiv</sup>. The Middle Eastern diplomatic tour during December 2003 had an important impact, representing the first official venue of a Brazilian head of state in the region in 127 years. Moreover, at the end of 2002, Brazil was admitted as observatory from the Council to the Arab League, and Lula da Silva became the first Brazilian head of state invited to address a speech at its tribune in December 2003. In return, the Arab League reopened its mission in Brasilia in April 2007 (ANBA, 24/04/07). So, there is definitely a real political will from Brazil to strengthen its presence in the Mediterranean region.

It is nevertheless necessary to clarify that this region is not a priority objective in Brazilian South-South diplomacy. President Lula devoted more time to South America and Sub-Saharan Africa<sup>xv</sup>. Official development assistance is a telling example. Brazil has appeared as one of the new donors in the field of international cooperation, though its contributions remain far smaller than those of China (SCHLAGER, 2007). Brazil's orientation is clear: Africa represents more than half of its activities. According to a report from the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (ABC) published in 2007, Cape Verde (with 19.52%), Guinea-Bissau (with 18.06%), and Mozambique (17.15%) are the main beneficiaries of development assistance, versus only 1.51% for Morocco, 0.83% for Tunisia, 0.22% for Algeria and 0.07% for Egypt. Lebanon gets 1.37% of the assistance for Asia (mainly attributed to Timor-Leste) (ABC, 2007). On-going projects apply to a wide range of items, including medical activities (Algeria), agriculture (Algeria, Tunisia), and professional trainings (Algeria, Morocco) (ABC, 2009). As mentioned in the introduction, the Mediterranean region does not exist as itself in the eyes of Brazilian diplomacy, as proven by the fact that it both participates in the ASPA (South America-Arab countries) process and ASA (Africa-South America) process.

Held in Brasilia in May 2005, the ASPA Summit shapes the background to Brazil's relations with Arab countries<sup>xvi</sup>. It was set up on President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's initiative and epitomizes the most important international event that was presided jointly by the Brazilian head of the state and its Algerian counterpart Abdelaziz Bouteflika. It was the first meeting in history to gather states from these two regions and strive for their rapprochement. Regular monitoring meetings enabled continuous contact between these countries and broadened their mutual knowledge. Though a multilateral organization, its achievements are materialized on a bilateral level. In the social sphere for instance, Brazil presented its *Bolsa Família*<sup>xvii</sup> program during the first thematic ASPA meeting held at the head office of the Arab League in 2007.

Agreements with Egypt and Lebanon have since been signed (ANBA, 30/04/07a, 17/08/07, 12/03/09). Other partners like Morocco and the Palestinian territories have since expressed interest in exchange with Brazil (ANBA, 30/04/07b, 2/03/10).

Relationships are not homogenous among those countries. Egypt represents a special interlocutor as it is the Arab country with the biggest population, a long and reputable diplomatic tradition, and a key role in the Arab world. Brazilian diplomats regard Egypt as a kind of “equivalent” counterpart. Surprisingly, Turkey, another emerging nation, did not overtake Brazilian relations, though it has been catching up since 2008. From political rapprochement to collaborative projects, a variety of motivations guide diplomacy. In the case of Brazil’s diplomacy with non-European Mediterranean countries, these motivations are generated both by a trade logic and a diplomatic ambition.

#### **A still unexploited economic potential**

Links between Brazil and the Mediterranean region stem from an economic necessity. Foreign policy is fully part of the Brazilian strategy for development, as it partly bets on an economy drawn by exportations, till the internal market gets stronger. Moreover, trade is a good first step to establish contacts between countries that do not know each other very well politically. President Lula always brings business men on his diplomatic trips (Le Figaro, 4/12/03). In December 2003, he travelled to the Middle East with around fifty entrepreneurs. The ASPA Summit in Brasilia also appeared as an opportunity to boost interregional trade. Outside the meeting, Brazil consequently organized a fair gathering around 1,200 entrepreneurs - 250 from Arab countries, 300 from South America and 650 from Brazil (Le Nouvel Observateur, 05/05).

The incentives to interregional trade development also take other forms. Within the Mercosur, two projects aiming at liberalizing trade of goods are under negotiation with Morocco (2004) and Turkey (2008)<sup>xviii</sup>. The Agreement with Egypt, under discussions since 2004, was signed in 2010. In addition, the Brazilian government has organized many commercial missions in non-European Mediterranean countries (ANBA, 12/04/10, 15/04/10b). The latest mission took place in April 2010 in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iran, and was organized by the Ministry of Development, Industry and External Trade (MDIC). Eighty-six Brazilian entrepreneurs took part in this event.

The outcome of this diplomatic effort was a dramatic increase of trade, though the upsurge was not solely due to political visits. Trade between Brazil and Arab countries (including the Middle East) increased by 167% between 2003 and 2009 (ANBA, 25/03/10). Likewise, the trade volume between Brazil and Turkey skyrocketed by 192% between 2003 and 2008 to reach US\$ 1.2 billion (Itamaraty bulletin n°211, 2010). With Israel, Brazilian trade increased from US\$ 440 million to US\$ 1.6 billion during the same period. Southern- and Eastern-Mediterranean countries played a large role in diversifying Brazil's trade partners.

Primary Brazilian multinational companies have their own international strategy but also benefit from the diplomatic efforts deployed by Lula's government. Hence the joint-venture between the Brazilian company Randon and the Algerian Cevital for the installation of an assembly line for vehicles (ANBA, 10/02/06). The same Brazilian company has just signed a similar agreement with its Egyptian counterpart Egypt Power (ANBA, 14/04/10a). Other companies are already settling on this market, taking part in the rise of Brazilian visibility in the region. For instance, the Norberto Odebrecht S.A. participates in the enlargement of the international airport of Tripoli and in the construction of the third beltway around the Libyan capital (ANBA, 17/02/09).

However, the economic importance of the non-European Mediterranean countries still remains relatively slight. The trade potential between Brazil and member states of the Arab League was estimated to reach US\$ 60 billion in 2008 but only reached US\$ 19 billion (COSTA, 2008). Brazilian exports to the member states of the Arab League represented only 4.9% of the 2008 international sales of Brazilian products, and the imports from those partners represented 6.1% of Brazil's global imports<sup>xix</sup>. Moreover, from the Arab League, Brazil's main trade partners are Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, not the Mediterranean countries. The world financial and economic crisis impacted those relations; even if Brazilian exports have increased from US\$ 9.4 to US\$ 9.8 billion, imports from member states of the Arab League have decreased from around US\$ 10 to US\$ 5 billion. This drop can more particularly be explained by the decrease of oil prices, given that oil represents almost 80% of Brazilian imports from countries of the Arab League<sup>xx</sup>.

Brazilian exports are also very condensed: meat and auxiliary products represent 28% of the 2008 total exports, and sugar and confectionery 18%<sup>xxi</sup>. So, the agricultural question is crucial in Brazil's commercial strategy towards Arab countries. Brazil is sometimes depicted as the world's farm: in addition to its Amazonian forest, it ranks third worldwide for its agriculture and first for its ethanol production, cane sugar, coffee, tropical fruits, and beef herd. Forty per cent of chicken sold in the world comes from Brazil (ANBA, 4/03/10). The food processing industry represents 32% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 38% of its exports, and 28% of its employment in 2005 (KIMITO, 2005). For their part, Southern- and Eastern-Mediterranean countries are often showing a strong shortfall in agricultural products (ABIS, NARDONE, 2009). Brazilian food exports to Arab countries have increased by 25.1% in early 2010 from the first semester in 2009 and compared to a general 15% increase of the sector (ANBA, 14/04/10b). Between 2000 and 2005, Brazilian food exports to Egypt and Algeria boomed by 239% and 825%, respectively! Consequently, Brazil now dominates some sectors in those countries, namely, representing 99.83% of Egyptian purchases of sugar and 91% of imported meat in this country. Egypt has become the second main buyer of sugar and beef already from 2002 (ANBA, 6/11/03), hence the diplomatic importance this country is granted.

The agricultural issues between Brazil and Mediterranean countries are not limited to trade. Brazil seeks indeed to develop cooperation projects in this field in order to improve its own production. The Brazilian Institute for food research, Embrapa, plays a key role in this purpose, as it is in charge of all Brazilian breakthroughs in this sector. It not only takes part in training individuals from partner countries, but also sets up exchanges aiming at diversifying its own research and studies. For instance, Embrapa signed an agreement with Syria to import animals that would adapt to the semiarid territory of Brazilian Nordeste (ANBA, 12/11/03). Accordingly, a project of wheat seed exchanges with Tunisia was launched in the end of November 2008 (Bulletin of Embrapa, 6/11/08). Brazil is not currently a big wheat producer because the cereal is poorly adapted to Brazilian climate and soils.

Brazil and Mediterranean countries are not mutual priorities to each other, and President Lula has attempted to improve this situation. Choosing economy might be a good start, but, as Brazilian researcher Nizar Messari stresses, entering Middle Eastern issues remains a challenge (MESSARI, 2005).

### **A new arbitrator in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?**

Brazil's international emergence and visibility have resulted from strong diplomatic activism, including the interest shown in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that proves Brazil's readiness to take responsibilities on the international scene. This orientation may also be a key to understand why Egypt raised more interest than Turkey<sup>xxii</sup>. According to Carlos Santana, Brazil before Lula did not consider itself as a power able to bring any decisive contribution in the Middle East (SANTANA, 2005). On the contrary, at the time of his inaugural address, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva declared that his objective would be change through dialogue and negotiation. Brazil appears then as a new alternative advocating peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The South American giant claims that no resolution to the conflict would be possible without political concession and, consequently, offers to help in negotiations. It draws on an experimented and reconciliatory diplomacy. British academic Andrew Hurrell portrays Brazilian strategy as *soft balancing*, putting the emphasis on cooperation, dialogue and collaboration with all international partners (HURRELL, 2006).

Moreover, the Brazilian administration points out its socio-historical links with the Middle East to legitimize its rapprochement and give it credibility, as both communities live together pacifically and tolerantly in Brazilian territory. President Lula has declared: "Our diversity allows us to promote dialogue between civilizations" (Arabies, 04/06). Historically, Brazil has always defined its positions following the resolutions voted at the UN, resolution 242 of 1967 being its reference. Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was personally involved in the question, since he met Shimon Peres in Israel in 1993, and Yasser Arafat in Tunisia the next year, as president of the Worker's Party.

The current Brazilian government aligns with the diplomatic tradition of its country by linking itself to the decisions taken at the multilateral level. However,

something new lies in its will to take a larger part in the peace negotiations (Itamaraty bulletin n°627, n°724, 2008; n°10, n°24, n°41, 2009; n°119, n°130, 2010). With this aim, Brazil defends both Israel's right to live in peace in internationally recognized borders and the establishment of an independent, democratic and economically viable Palestinian state in the Territories occupied since 1967. Concerning Palestinian refugees, Brazil is in favour of creating a financial compensation system and advocates Jerusalem being shared between the parties. Brazil refuses to define the conflict in the Middle East as an issue of religion or civilization, but considers it rather as a mix of nationalism and economic factors<sup>xxiii</sup>. A quote from the Brazilian Minister of External Relations, Celso Amorim, embodies clearly the Brazilian position:

I think it is natural that Brazil has interest in participating in the questions linked to the Middle-East, because they concern world peace. And if they concern peace in the world, we are of course also concerned. Not to mention the number of Arab descendants living in Brazil. We are not to appear with a brand new solution for the Middle-East issue. All possible solutions have already been proposed. What is necessary is the political will to implement them. In our position we would like to contribute to dialogue. I think that a country such as Brazil can easily achieve this. Owing to our own history or to the history Brazil has with this region. Owing to the respect Brazil internationally inspires. We do not want to make it alone, but by getting together with other actors. (...) The truth is that limiting dialogue to the 'Quartet' has not been successful. So, I believe it is necessary to have more representativeness in the international community (ANBA, 30/12/09).

Moreover, Brazil is not affected by historical nor political connotations like those of the United States or the European Union and even benefits from a rather good image in the Middle East (ACHCAR, 2005; ANBA, 12/02/10, 17/03/10). Indeed, few are the countries that do not have any strategic interest in the region.

Nevertheless, this positive image is not always reflected at the internal level. Brazilian foreign policy towards Arab countries was one of the points in Lula's government's diplomacy that endured the sharpest criticism by the opposition like the Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) (MESSARI, 2006, ALBUQUERQUE,

2007). It was namely reproached for too obviously showing its preference for Palestinians to the detriment of relations with Israel. De facto, during his trip in December 2003, the Brazilian president did not go to Israel. The Brasilia Declaration closing the 2005 ASPA Summit also stood up for the Palestinian cause, even giving rise to remarks from the Embassy of Israel in Brasilia. Following the Summit, Minister Celso Amorim was quickly sent to the scene on 28 May 2005 to reassert the traditional Brazilian position. President Lula summarizes his position himself: “I was born in Brazilian politics defending the Palestinian state, but never did I deny the necessity of the state of Israel either”<sup>xxiv</sup>. Therein lies the very strength of Brazilian diplomacy: it does not conceal its slight favour toward Palestinians and does so without appearing anti-Israeli. The question concerning the longevity of this difficult balancing position remains but Itamaraty is famous for historically finding balances. For the time being, Brazil sets out to maintain good relationships with all different parties. Hence many bilateral visits with Israel and a cooperation agreement in the field of research and development that both countries signed in February 2007. During the same year, Mercosur also ratified an agreement for trade liberalization with Israel, which came into force in Brazil at the end of April 2010<sup>xxv</sup>. As another confirmation for this friendly bilateral relationship, the Israeli President has proposed helping Brazil in the organization of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio (El País, 17/11/09). Also, Brazil recently agreed to recognize the existence of a Palestinian State along the 1967 borders, showing a will to pursue its strategy (Itamaraty Bulletin n°707, 2010).

Lately, Brazil’s emergence in this Middle Eastern conflict seems a sudden development, but rather, is probably the only outcome of a long process of involvement since President Lula came into power. As early as 2004, Brazil showed its intention by creating a position of Special Ambassador for the Middle East at Itamaraty, as well as a representation office in Ramallah. Minister Celso Amorim went to Israel and through the Palestinian territories in 2005, 2008, 2009 and 2010<sup>xxvi</sup>. In 2005, Brazil, together with its Indian and South-African partners, informed the Quartet<sup>xxvii</sup> of their wish to get more involved. Symbolically, the three countries composing the IBSA Dialogue Forum announced the joint funding for the creation of a sport centre in Ramallah, and its

construction began in April 2009. Brazil is also a part of the very conferences on this file: Paris and Annapolis in 2007 and Egypt in 2009 (ANBA, 26/07/04, 24/01/07)<sup>xxviii</sup>.

Another facet of the Brazilian activism is the aid to the Palestinians, as relative as it might be. Brazil has hosted 108 Palestinian refugees in 2007 in collaboration with the UN (ANBA, 10/10/07). It has also donated several times as major crises occurred in the Palestinian territories: donation of US\$ 500.000 in 2006, shipment of medicine in December 2008, 14 tons of medicine and 8 tons of food for the Gaza Strip in January 2009, project of donation of US\$ 10 million approved by the parliament in March 2010 (Itamaraty bulletin n°726, 2008; n°4, 2009; ANBA, 12/03/10).

Finally, official visits that have occurred since November 2009 are the crowning achievement of background work developed by Brazil for several years in order to appear as a potential contact in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Within nine days, Israeli and Palestinian leaders went to Brazil and both thanked Brazilian willingness to get involved in the negotiations<sup>xxix</sup>. Reciprocally, President Lula travelled to the Middle East in April 2010<sup>xxx</sup>, thereby confirming the region's new status in international foreign affairs. Brazil is moreover establishing closer and closer relationships with other essential partners in the Israeli-Palestinian case, such as Egypt. It is also forming closer ties with Jordan, visited in April 2010, and Syria, where Minister Celso Amorim was sent following the meetings held during the presidential visit (ANBA, 18/03/10). The main idea remains the same: bring all the parties together to negotiate around a common table, from the (more) moderate to the (more) radical (including, according to some in Brazil, the Hamas).

Brazil gave one more boost to its insertion in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by organizing a meeting between the Palestinian representative for Foreign Affairs and the member states of IBSA during the Brasilia Summit on 15 April 2010 (Itamaraty bulletin n° 197, 2010; ANBA, 11/04/10, 15/04/10a)<sup>xxxi</sup>. This Dialogue Forum had, up to that time, only expressed its will to participate further in this sensitive issue. Organizing the meeting aimed to show that emerging nations were from then on ready to give a concrete expression of their involvement in the international scene. Traditional

partners of the Mediterranean region will most certainly need to count with these new political forces.

Nevertheless, Brazil had not yet organized meetings or officially coordinated negotiations between both sides. And yet, it has been often stressed that the personality of the Brazilian President Lula had been important for the international visibility of his country, particularly his political career (as a union activist under the military dictatorship) as well as his negotiator skills (Infolatam, 29/04/10)<sup>xxxii</sup>. A new extremely interesting perspective is then opening up, as the attitude of the current Brazilian leader will enable an assessment of how long-lasting and durable the diplomatic efforts undertaken since 2003 have been.

### **Conclusion**

Brazilian strategy towards non-European Mediterranean countries seems to bear fruit: an increase in trade and an improvement of Brazil's international visibility. This rapprochement does not necessarily correspond to a foreign policy priority, but it does belong to a broader global strategy. Within such a framework, this approximation makes sense and reveals its whole importance, along with a certain capacity of developing countries to assert their point of view. Brazilian diplomacy is still the cornerstone of a strategy aiming to achieve recognition and participation in the evolutions of the international scene.

Here the focus has been placed on the Brazilian outbreak on the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea, but the fact that other South American states have also gotten closer to this region should be highlighted as well. First, the visits of Arab, Turkish and Israeli leaders in Brazil always occur within the framework of a round trip in Latin America. Moreover, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has also developed a strong diplomatic activism, particularly towards the oil exporting countries Libya and Algeria. The Bolivarian leader also regularly addresses Israeli-Palestinian issues, defending the Palestinian cause more firmly. Argentinean President Cristina Kirchner also visited Tunisia, Egypt and Libya in November 2008. Partnerships for

non-European Mediterranean countries are broadening and diversifying and Latin America participates in that evolution.

#### REFERENCES:

- ABIS, Sébastien, NARDONE, Jessica. “Le Brésil: future ferme du monde arabe?”. *Futuribles* (Paris), n°356, October 2009, pp.13-29.
- ACHCAR, Paul. “Imagem e formação de opinião no mundo árabe: visões do Brasil et da América do Sul” In: ARAUJO, Heloísa Vihena de (Ed.). *Diálogo América do Sul-Países Árabes*. Brasília: FUNAG, 2005, pp.293-329.
- AGÊNCIA BRASILEIRA DE COOPERACÃO (ABC-Brasília). *South- South Cooperation Activities Carried Out by Brazil*. Report, July 2007, 106 p.
- AGÊNCIA BRASILEIRA DE COOPERACÃO. *La coopération technique du Brésil en Afrique*. Report, 2009, 98 p.
- ALBUQUERQUE, José Augusto Guilhon. “O governo Lula em face dos desafios sistêmicos de uma ordem internacional em transição – 2003-2006”. *Política externa* (São Paulo), 16(1), June-August 2007, pp.33-44.
- CARDOSO, Henrique Fernando. *A arte da política. A história que vivi*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização brasileira, 2006, 699 p.
- COSTA, Denise Cristina Custódio da. *A influência do islamismo nas relações comerciais entre o Brasil e os países árabes*. Working paper, University FAAP (São Paulo), 2008, 75 p.
- FARES, Seme Taleb. “O pragmatismo do petróleo, as relações entre o Brasil e Iraque”. *Revista brasileira de política internacional*, 50(2), 2007, pp.129-145.
- HURRELL, Andrew. Hegemony. “Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-Be Great Powers?”. *International Affairs*, n°I, 2006, pp.1-19.
- KIMITO, Cláudia Ishitani. *Parceria estratégica Brasil-China: convergências, divergências e perspectivas*. Master degree working paper, Diplomatic institute of Rio Branco (Brasília), 2005.
- MAJZOUB, Ismail. *Relações entre o Brasil e o Mundo Árabe: construção e perspectivas*. Brasília: FUNAG, 2001, 412 p.

MESSARI, Nizar. “O Brasil e o mundo árabe” In: LESSA, Antônio Carlos, ALTEMANI, Henrique (Ed.). *Relações Internacionais do Brasil: temas e agendas*. Vol. 1, São Paulo: Saraiva, 2006, pp.243-263.

MESSARI, Nizar. “Prioridades do mundo árabe” In: ARAUJO, Heloísa Vihena de (Ed.). *Diálogo América do Sul-Países Árabes*. Brasília: FUNAG, 2005, pp.351-383.

SANTANA, Carlos Ribeiro. *O Brasil e o conflito árabe-israelense-palestino (1947 a 2005)*. Master Degree working paper, Universidade de Brasília, 2005, 151 p.

SANTOS, Norma Breda Dos. “As posições brasileiras nas Nações unidas com relação ao Oriente Médio (1945-2002): equidistância, pragmatismo e realism”. *Cena Internacional* (Brasília), 5(2), 2003, pp.5-22.

SCHLAGER, Catrina. *Challenges for International Development Cooperation: the case of Brazil*. Working paper of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES-Germany), n°3, March 2007, 12 p.

*Dreaming with BRICs: The Path to 2050*. Working paper, n°99, Goldman Sachs, 1<sup>st</sup> October 2003.

#### **OFFICIAL BULLETINS:**

“Parceria permitirá intercâmbio de material genético de trigo com a Tunísia”, *Bulletin of Embrapa* (Brasília), 6 November 2008.

“Enfrentamentos em Gaza”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°627*, 6 November 2008.

“Situação na Faixa de Gaza”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°724*, 27 December 2008.

“Assistência Humanitária à Palestina”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°726*, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008.

“Envio de ajuda humanitária à Faixa de Gaza”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°4*, 8 January 2009.

“Situação dos Direitos Humanos na Faixa de Gaza”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°10*, 12 January 2009.

“Cessar-fogo unilateral em Gaza”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°24*, 17 January 2009.

“Violência na Faixa de Gaza”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°41*, 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2009.

**“Construção de novas moradias em assentamentos israelenses em Jerusalém Oriental e na Cisjordânia”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°119*, 12 March 2010.**

**“Atentado contra Israel”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°130*, 19 March 2010.**

**Reunião de Ministros do IBAS com o Chanceler da Autoridade Nacional Palestina - Brasília, 15 de abril de 2010”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°197*, 14 April 2010.**

**“Visita ao Brasil do Ministro dos Negócios Estrangeiros da Turquia, Ahmet Davutoğlu – Brasília, 16 de abril de 2010”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°211*, 15 April 2010.**

**“Reconhecimento do Estado Palestino nas Fronteiras de 1967”, *Itamaraty Bulletin n°707*, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2010.**

#### **NEWSPAPER:**

**“Árabes querem investir em novo terminal marítimo no Brasil, diz importador egípcio de açúcar”, *ANBA*, 6 November 2003.**

**“Embrapa fecha convênio com a Síria para pesquisar rebanhos de caprinos e ovinos do Nordeste”, *ANBA*, 12 November 2003.**

**“‘Somos primos de verdade’, diz Lula a empresários no Líbano”, *ANBA*, 5 December 2003.**

**“Presidentes do Líbano e do Brasil reúnem-se hoje e assinam acordos nas áreas comercial e de energia”, *ANBA*, 17 February 2004.**

**“Brasil vai ajudar projetos ambientais no sul do Líbano”, *ANBA*, 26 July 2004.**

**“Lula e Bouteflika convocam empresários a buscar parcerias”, *ANBA*, 10 February 2006.**

**“Brasil faz doação para a Palestina”, *ANBA*, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2006.**

---

\* I am very thankful to Vanessa Coursol and Adam Stubits for their help.

<sup>i</sup> The expression refers to how the Lebanese people sometimes call the Brazilians.

NB: ANBA is the Arab-Brazilian News Agency, headquartered in São Paulo and launched in 2003.

<sup>ii</sup> European refers to EU member states, hence why Turkey is not included.

- <sup>iii</sup> Indeed, Brazil was candidate to a permanent seat at the League of Nations. Brazil even retired from the organization when other countries refused its candidacy.
- <sup>iv</sup> The notion of ‘emergence’ comes from financial studies before arriving in political sciences. (Goldman Sachs, 2003).
- <sup>v</sup> The commercial G-20 is not to be confused with the financial G-20 created in 1999 and that became famous in the wake of the international crisis in 2008.
- <sup>vi</sup> Other name given to the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations.
- <sup>vii</sup> [http://www.mre.gov.br/portugues/ministerio/estrutura/organograma\\_mre.pdf](http://www.mre.gov.br/portugues/ministerio/estrutura/organograma_mre.pdf) (20/04/2010).
- <sup>viii</sup> These figures are not officially confirmed but are the most often quoted.
- <sup>ix</sup> <http://www2.mre.gov.br/dai/bilaterais.htm> (10/04/2010).
- <sup>x</sup> 1940s: Lebanon, Syria, Egypt; 1950s: Iraq, Tunisia, 1960s: Morocco, Algeria, Libya.
- <sup>xi</sup> Brazil recognized Israel in 1949 and diplomatic exchanges happened only three years later because of Brazilian reticence of Israel presence in Jerusalem, less according to Arab states than to the Vatican. The 1947 vote is a good example of alignment on the US. Until 1973, Brazil adopted an attitude of ‘equidistance’ to avoid importing the conflict at home (Santana, 2005).
- <sup>xii</sup> See <http://www2.mre.gov.br/eventos/marco02.htm> (29/04/2010).
- <sup>xiii</sup> Main visits :
- 3-10 December 2003: Lula’s tour to Arab countries: Syria (3-4), Lebanon (4-5), United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi-6, Dubai-6-7), Egypt (8-9), Libya (9-10)
  - 16 February 2004: Lebanese President, Emile Lahoud, in Brasilia
  - 25-26 November 2004: Rey of Morocco, Mohammed VI in Brazil
  - 12-13 May 2005: President of Algeria, Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Brasilia (ASPAs Summit)
  - 8-9 February 2006: visit of President Lula to Algeria
  - **21-23 May 2009: visit of President Lula to Turkey**
  - **1<sup>st</sup> July 2009: trip of President Lula to Libya (African Union Summit)**
  - 11-15 November 2009: President of Israel, Shimon Peres in Brazil
  - 24 November 2009: President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmud Abbas in Brazil
  - 16-18 March 2010: visit of President Lula to the Middle East: Israel (15-16), Palestinian territories (16-17) et Jordan (17-18)
  - 22 April 2010: President of Lebanon, Michel Sleiman in Brazil
  - 30 June – 2 July 2010: Syrian President, Bachar Al-Assad in Brazil
- <sup>xiv</sup> Emperor Don Pedro II travelled to Lebanon (private visits) in 1871 and 1876 and President Figueiredo to Algeria during the first African tour of a Brazilian head of state. (Majzoub, 2001)
- <sup>xv</sup> On the whole, Lula has traveled 13 times to Africa between 2003 and 2010.
- <sup>xvi</sup> A second Summit was held in Doha, Qatar in 2009.
- Israel and Turkey do not participate as it is the Arab League the Mediterranean coordinator.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Social program that aims at helping the poorest families against some commitments: sending children to school and vaccinating them. This program benefits to 11 million families in Brazil.
- <sup>xviii</sup> <http://www.mre.gov.py/dependencias/tratados/mercosur/registro%20mercosur/mercosurprincipal.htm> (13/03/2010).
- <sup>xix</sup> <http://www.desenvolvimento.gov.br/sitio/interna/interna.php?area=5&menu=2033&refr=576> (29/04/2010).
- <sup>xx</sup> [http://www.ccab.com.br/site/bc\\_an\\_arabes.php](http://www.ccab.com.br/site/bc_an_arabes.php) (29/04/2010).
- <sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid.* Ores follow with 16%. The three of them represent 62% of Brazilian exports.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Similarly, the intensification of relations with Turkey may be link to similar positions on the Iranian issue.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Information given to me by Itamaraty.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva at the end of the first ASPA Summit, Brasilia, 11 May 2005.
- <sup>xxv</sup> <http://www.mre.gov.py/dependencias/tratados/mercosur/registro%20mercosur/mercosurprincipal.htm> (13/03/2010).
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Also in 2010, he was not authorized to enter the Gaza Strip.

---

<sup>xxvii</sup> Mediation group for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is composed of Russia, the EU, the UN and the US.

<sup>xxviii</sup> IBSA is a group composed by India, Brazil and South Africa aiming at coordinating their positions and strengthening their relations.

The Brazilian government is also very active concerning Lebanon. It participated in the Stockholm donors Conference in 2006 and implemented various projects of cooperation.

<sup>xxix</sup> For the first time in 40 years, an Israeli President, Shimon Peres, came to Brazil in November 2009. He was almost followed by the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmud Abbas, the same month. The later has already been in Brazil in May 2005 during the I ASPA Summit.

In November again Brazil received the Iranian President, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, peak of a very intense diplomatic activity.

<sup>xxx</sup> Lula's travel to the Middle East: Israel (15-16), Palestinian territories (16-17) and Jordan (17-18).

<sup>xxxi</sup> **In September 2009, the three countries met a joint declaration at the Human rights Council to deplore the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. In April 2010, the IBSA Fund promised to implement new projects in these Territories.**

<sup>xxxii</sup> Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was elected the most influential personality of the year by *Time*.

## **RESUMO**

O Brasil tem desenvolvido uma diplomacia ativa até os chamados países do Sul durante os governos de Lula. Os Estados mediterrânicos não europeus também receberam atenção por varias razões: históricas, comerciais mas também estratégicas como parte do projeto brasileiro de emergência ao nível mundial. Em particular, o governo brasileiro faz ouvir sua voz sobre o conflito israelo-palestino, o que ajuda sua projeção internacional.

## **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

Diplomacia brasileira Sul-Sul; países mediterrânicos; conflito israelo-palestino.

## **ABSTRACT**

Brazil under Lula presidency has developed an active diplomacy towards developing countries. Non-European Mediterranean states do not escape from the Brazilian strategy. This article aims at showing the new dynamism in political and economical links between Brazil and that region. Moreover, South-South relations help the Brazilian government to express its position on international issues, as this is the case for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## **KEYWORDS**

South-South Brazilian diplomacy; Mediterranean countries; Israeli-Palestinian conflict.