

# BRAZIL AND THE SHAPING OF A COOPERATIVE MULTIPOLAR ORDER

## REFLECTIONS ON THE EMERGING WORLD ORDER AND KISSINGER'S *WORLD ORDER*

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SINCE the beginning of the twenty-first century, a series of events have created the widespread perception that a new world order is being shaped. The “unipolar moment”—as defined by Charles Krauthammer in 1990 in a *Foreign Affairs* article, and then revisited by him in an essay that appeared in *The National Interest* in 2002—has come to an end. Currently no country, no matter how powerful, is in a position to single-handedly determine international outcomes.

Recent experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan have illustrated these circumstances unambiguously. The 2008 global economic crisis that began also revealed the need for improved coordination on financial matters among a wider group of stakeholders.

While there is no universal concept of world order, I would like to highlight two fundamental elements as identified by Henry Kissinger in his thoughtful new book *World Order* (2014). He defines them as

a set of commonly accepted rules that define the limits of permissible action, and a balance of power that enforces restraint when rules break down, preventing one political unit from subjugating all others.

Some elements of the new order taking shape can be seen in the emergence of the BRICS—which in a short span of time evolved from a Goldman Sachs acronym to an articulated group that held its first summit in 2009;

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United Nations headquarters

just five years later, its members agreed to establish a new development bank, as well as a contingent reserve arrangement facility.

At the same time, the challenge represented by climate change reflects—perhaps better than any other contemporary topic—the need for a world order centered on cooperation. Due to its transboundary nature, this inherently requires concerted solutions. No single country in isolation can avoid its effects or individually

produce lasting solutions in this realm. Climate change—and sustainable development more broadly—reminds us that, in the twenty-first century, there is no salvation without cooperation.

Although Kissinger's book does not address those particular issues in great detail, it does underscore the fact of an emerging multipolar order. This emergence is quite palpable, even if the poles are asymmetrical—given the significant differences among them in terms of population, territory, GDP, military expenditure, and diplomatic clout, among other elements. For Brazil, in particular, this is a seminal moment: for the first time in history, Brazilians can play a structuring role in the building and evolution of a new world order.

As we analyze the changes taking place in the contemporary international environment, it is worth looking back at other moments in history in which world orders also underwent paradigmatic shifts, such as the Congress of Vienna, which took place 200 years ago, and World War I, which began a century later. This is precisely what Kissinger's book examines in great detail; it is also what participants in a session of the Salzburg Global Seminar, which I attended in late

August 2014, were asked to do, with an eye on thinking through lessons and insights applicable to our world today.

In the nineteenth century, the Congress of Vienna marked the replacement of Napoleon's hegemonic project by the emergence of a multipolar European order, with the clear objective of preventing any one European country from individually embarking on unilaterally defined ambitions. To that end, diplomats at Vienna created the Concert of Europe—a system of checks and balances that sought to find equilibrium between power and legitimacy. As Kissinger reminds us, those efforts helped to ensure a high degree of stability in Europe for almost a hundred years.

The year 1914, in turn, represented the final erosion of that system. The world order established in the early nineteenth century had been stretched to its limits; it had been put through increasingly intractable tests by rising waves of nationalism, regional conflicts, and economic crises.

The Concert of Europe clearly could no longer address the challenges and the realignments among the important players of the time. By failing to adapt to new circumstances, opting rather

to leave things as they were, world leaders “sleepwalked” into a conflict of devastating proportions—to use the expression made famous by historian Christopher Clark.

While today many of the challenges that we face are radically different, it has become clear that the current transition from unipolarity to multipolarity requires adjustments in the prevailing mechanisms for ensuring satisfactory cooperation in the realm of peace and security. But are world leaders and other stakeholders seriously preparing themselves to confront this reality?

Institutionally, the international community finds itself in a comparatively promising position at present: the devastation wrought by two World Wars, and the tensions associated with the threat of the outbreak of a third during the Cold War, resulted in the establishment of a vigorous multilateral system—centered on the United Nations Charter—which established parameters for cooperation in a wide range of fields, from non-proliferation to the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Moreover, beyond peace and security, the international community has been able to bring about signifi-

cant change and adaptation in the multilateral framework for cooperation on a variety of areas—from finance to human rights to sustainable development. The replacement of the G7 by the G20, the establishment of the Human Rights Council, and the follow-up in the General Assembly to the outcomes achieved at the Rio+20 Summit, can be cited as examples of this capacity to adapt.

When it comes to international peace and security, however, the international community has been less successful in updating current frameworks. The current system is being tested not only by new challenges—such as extremist non State actors, terrorism, the threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or failing State institutions—but also by ineffective responses to these problems by major players.

Indeed, in the absence of a new concerted effort to address the new environment, certain notions of exceptionalism and old-fashioned competition for spheres of influence could spell increasing dysfunctionality for the existing system.

#### THE U.S. AND CHINA

As the world's foremost military power for the foreseeable future, the United States has an undeniable role to play in the

construction of a new, more inclusive order that promotes enhanced international cooperation and greater respect for international law. In this regard, U.S. President Barack Obama's speech at the United States Military Academy at West Point in May 2014 addressed the relation between American “exceptionalism” and international law, stating that “what makes us exceptional is not flouting international norms and the rule of law; it's our willingness to affirm them through our actions.”

On the other hand, there are voices that remain skeptical with respect to America's full endorsement of multilateralism. For example, the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, recently pointed out in an interview with David Rothkopf, the CEO of *Foreign Policy* magazine, that the United States, despite its status, “doesn't deliver on its international commitment to multilateralism.”

The United States played a defining role in building the post-World War II multilateral system, and—as Kissinger reminds us in the very first paragraph of *World Order*—it managed to bring back into the community of nations even its enemies, fomenting cooperation

in many areas. The suggestion by Hugh White, in his perceptive book *The China Choice: Why We Should Share Power* (2012), that the United States ought to approach China about a serious discussion on how to create a stable system of cooperation in the Far East and the Pacific, seems especially appropriate in this context. It is possible, in my view, to argue in favor of an even more ambitious agenda, by suggesting that the two main economic and military powers of the moment seriously engage in a joint examination of ways to render the multilateral system of collective security more effective and in tune with the times.

China will soon overtake the United States in terms of GDP; and it will continue to be an increasingly determinant player in the dynamics that will ultimately shape the twenty-first-century world order—especially as its economic strength translates into political power and international leadership. It is reasonable to expect that China would have, in this regard, a special interest in helping to achieve a new international order with more functional coordinating mechanisms.

The United States and China are not the only countries that must address the challenges inherent to the establishment of a cooperative

multipolar international order for the twenty-first century. Other obvious candidates are the remaining BRICS countries, including those who are not permanent members of the Security Council—namely Brazil, India and South Africa. But this is evidently not an exhaustive list.

### BRAZIL'S RISING

Let us briefly examine where Brazil stood at the two historic crossroads referred to in this essay. In 1814 Brazil had yet to become an independent country. It found itself, in fact, in the singular position of being the seat of the Portuguese Crown, which had fled the Napoleonic invasion of 1808. The Brazilian population was estimated to have been around 4.5 million. The Brazilian economy was in a transition period: on the one hand, mining—its main economic activity during the eighteenth century—had been declining and was approaching its demise; on the other hand, the arrival of the Portuguese court brought with it the opening of Brazilian ports to “friendly nations”—which resulted in the opportunity to trade directly with other countries, the establishment of the nation’s first national bank, and the beginnings of industrial activity.

The nineteenth century was pivotal to the construction of Brazilian

identity. Brazil gained its independence in 1822. Unlike its neighbors, however, it became a monarchy led by the son of the Portuguese king—who had, incidentally, married a Habsburg—and the nation aligned itself with the Holy Alliance. Empress Leopoldina, the wife of Emperor Pedro I, corresponded regularly with Austria’s Prince Metternich, and the court in Rio de Janeiro was considered the most obvious supporter of the Concert of Europe in the New World.

Before the end of the nineteenth century, two important developments took place in Brazil in rapid succession: the 1888 abolition of slavery, and the 1889 Proclamation of the Republic. Significantly, during the turn of the century and the early 1900s, Brazil achieved the peaceful demarcation of its borders through diplomatic means—a process finalized by 1903, and for which Baron do Rio Branco, the mentor of Brazilian diplomacy, played a defining role.

In 1914 the Brazilian population was approximately 24 million; the economy was highly dependent on coffee production, with a GDP of \$18 billion. By then, under the influence of Baron do Rio Branco, Brazil had distanced itself from Europe and forged closer ties with

the United States, as E. Bradford Burns describes in his classic book *The Unwritten Alliance: Rio-Branco and Brazilian-American Relations* (1966). Still, the new republic of the early 1900s could hardly be considered to have been more than a peripheral actor in world affairs.

As the world’s seventh largest economy and fifth largest population, Brazil today occupies a starkly different position. Over the past 12 years, under presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, 40 million Brazilians have been brought out of poverty. Perhaps even more significantly, the recent improvements in Brazil’s Human Development Index have taken place in a fully democratic environment.

These positive domestic developments have been accompanied by a more prominent regional and global role. Brazil has been one of the main champions of both South and Latin American integration, exercising a leadership role in establishing important regional platforms for cooperation, including the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

In fact, President Lula, after taking office in 2003, inaugurated

one of the most creative periods in the history of Brazilian foreign policy, in which then-Foreign Minister Celso Amorim—currently Brazil’s minister of defense—played a key role.

This creativity can also be witnessed in the establishment and strengthening of coordination

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and cooperation mechanisms on a cross-regional scale—such as IBAS (among Brazil, India and South Africa) and the Summits of South American-Arab Countries and South American-African Countries (known by its Portuguese acronyms as ASPA and ASA, respectively). President Rousseff continued and consolidated this process, as reflected in her presence at the ASPA and ASA Summits in Lima and Malabo. Brazil’s commitment to Africa was further demonstrated by President Rousseff’s participation in the African Union’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

**B**razil is today one of only a handful of countries that enjoys diplomatic relations with all other UN Member States and its two Observer States, the Vatican and Palestine. The country’s diplomatic presence abroad greatly increased over the past 12 years, with a total of 227 foreign postings, including embassies, consulates, and permanent missions to international organizations.

It is no exaggeration to affirm that Brazil has become an influential actor with respect to nearly every subject inscribed in the international agenda. I will name just a few: the Rio+20 Summit and subsequent post-2015 sustainable development discussions at the United Nations; participation in peacekeeping operations (with particular emphasis on MINUSTAH, in Haiti, which is under Brazilian military command); the concept of ‘Responsibility *while* Protecting,’ which was elaborated in 2011 as a response to unilateral interpretations of the ‘Responsibility to Protect;’ and the joint initiative with Germany to uphold the right to privacy in the digital age.

**M**ore broadly, Brazil has been a strong advocate for more inclusive forms of governance in all areas. In the financial sphere, Brazil has spearheaded

efforts to reform the voting quotas of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. In 2005 Brazil was one of the main supporters of the creation of a stronger institutional framework to address human rights issues—the UN Human Rights Council. A leading role was also played by Brazil in translating the vision at the origin of the concept of sustainable development into concrete parameters for international cooperation, including in institutional terms.

On peace and security matters, Brazil was one of the early supporters of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), over which I had the honor of presiding during 2014. The PBC can be inscribed within a comprehensive concept of peace, with a focus on a broad spectrum of issues including institutional development, security sector reform, and social and economic progress.

Brazil’s call for the reform of the UN Security Council reflects this advocacy for more representative and legitimate international institutions, in tune with current geopolitical realities. The influence Brazil has gained over the past decades is not, however, balanced across all fields. Its role

can perhaps be perceived more clearly on matters pertaining to economic and social development than peace and security issues. The election of two distinguished Brazilian officials to head the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Trade Organization is illustrative of this pattern.

Domestic considerations—particularly public opinion—are increasingly relevant in defining priorities,

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as foreign policy ceases to be the exclusive domain of governments. In the case of Brazil, while there seems to be a national consensus regarding the benefits of a more active role on economic issues—including trade and finance—a comparable attitude regarding matters of peace and security is still in the making.



Nevertheless, it is possible to say that Brazil brings to the table a strong commitment to multilateralism and to the resolution of conflicts through diplomacy—including as one of the two longest-serving non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. Many UN Member States—including Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan—that coordinate regularly on Security Council reform, believe that 2015, when the Organization celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, will be a crucial year for achieving concrete results in this regard.

#### **GRIDLOCK OR COOPERATION?**

A defining feature of multipolarity is that no pole can impose outcomes on its own in the international arena. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, for the international system to be effective—in areas ranging from the economy and the environment to human rights and peace and security—it will have to be the work of many and the product of negotiations, dialogue, and diplomacy. Unless the international community moves toward enhanced and improved multilateralism, humanity will face a state of gridlock that could lead to situations of systemic failure.

To return to Kissinger's definition, I believe it is possible

to affirm that the international community already has in place one of the constituent elements of a cooperative multipolar order: rules that establish the limits of permissible action, constituted by the set of international legal obligations currently in place, with the UN Charter at its core. The second aspect mentioned in his definition—namely, the balance of power to enforce restraint—is perhaps one that will require new understandings, to be reached in a constructive and inclusive spirit.

The international community has been able to respond to change in several fields, and there is no reason why it should not be capable of cooperating more effectively and democratically in matters related to peace. As Franco-Lebanese author Amin Maalouf very eloquently put it in his inspiring book, *A Disordered World: Setting A New Course for the Twenty-first Century* (2011):

in one way or another all the people on earth are in the same storm. Rich and poor, arrogant or downtrodden, occupiers or occupied.

It is in our common interest, therefore, to build a system that is more cooperative and in a better position to promote development and peace for all. ●