



# STRATEGIC FORUM

National Defense University

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## Key Points

- ◆ Brazil's economic performance, political stability, and cultural vitality ensure that Brasilia's foreign and defense policies will help shape global as well as regional politics in the decades ahead. More than a Latin American or even Third World leader, Brazil has become an autonomous global power.
- ◆ U.S. relations with Brazil have evolved from alliance during and immediately after World War II to skeptical distance today. Distrust is exacerbated by outmoded stereotypes and hubris on both sides.
- ◆ Mutually beneficial engagement requires the United States to welcome Brazil's emergence as a global power that is culturally and politically close to the United States; and for Brazil, in turn, to realize that the United States accepts its rise and that more can be achieved working with Washington than against it.
- ◆ Three practical approaches would have a substantial, positive impact. Both countries should consult widely on global issues, strengthen personal and institutional ties, and learn to cooperate more effectively on conflict resolution, energy, and trade.

## Brazil and the United States: The Need for Strategic Engagement

by Luigi R. Einaudi

### The Power of Uniqueness

Washington's identification of Brazil with Latin America and the Third World hampers its appreciation of Brazil's power and importance to the United States. It is true that Brazil is geographically part of Latin America, and it is also true that Brazil, a founder of the Group of 77, was, with India, among the original leaders of the "Third World."

But Brazil is Brazil—as large and every bit as unique as the United States or China. Brazil, for many years the seat of the Portuguese empire, is the world's largest Portuguese-speaking country. It never had the large settled Amerindian populations that became a repressed underclass in the Andes and Mesoamerica; Brazilians today are as diverse as their North American cousins but growing faster.

Brazil's land mass is the fifth largest in the world. As in the United States, the possibility of expanding into large and relatively unpopulated territories helped to create a sense of new frontiers and optimism. Both the United States and Brazil have a dominant sense of pragmatism and a culture of solving problems and "making things work." Both have governments capable of reaching beyond their borders, but are deeply inward-looking and characterized psychologically by a sense of their own exceptional nature (and, sometimes, by the hubris born of an excessive sense of self-worth).

But if these traits make Brazil closer to the United States than to its Spanish-American neighbors, its unique culture, history, and worldview also separate it from the United States. The "automatic alliance" of the past is gone; both countries need to strengthen personal, professional, and institutional relationships that will create common ground for advancing their

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## Mainland Areas of Brazil, China, and United States



different and sometimes divergent interests as Brazil develops and carves out its own place in the world.

**Geography.** U.S. citizens think of Brazil as being Rio de Janeiro and its beautiful beaches or as the Amazon, an endless jungle traversed by the world's largest river system. During the Alliance for Progress years, Americans also became accustomed to hearing of the traditional rural isolation and poverty of Brazil's northeast. Less known are Minas Gerais, fount of Brazil's

raw materials, mining industry, and arms production, as well as the great productive states from São Paulo to the south and west, home to both advanced mechanized agriculture and industry.

Brazil's national infrastructure is deficient with regard to both its great internal distances and to the requirements of maximizing international commerce. Brazil has thousands of airports—more than any country other than the United States—but its road, rail,

and port systems lag. One study suggests that domestic transportation costs and port fees for soy, Brazil's largest single export, are double those of its major competitors.<sup>1</sup>

Brazil's population is heavily concentrated near its Atlantic coast, and is primarily urban rather than rural. Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have almost 12 and 20 million inhabitants, respectively, making Brazil the only country other than the United States and China to have two of the world's largest cities.

In 1960, President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–1961) founded a new capital city called Brasilia in the interior in lands that he described as “empty but for the jaguar’s cry.” Brasilia has expanded rapidly, and symbolizes Brazil’s desire to better integrate the nation as well as to better link it to its neighbors, the Pacific, and the world.

**Demography.** The 201 million Brazilians are a people of striking cultural and ethnic diversity. The overwhelming majority, some 92 percent, are more or less evenly divided between whites and mulattos. They draw on the descendants of African slaves and of Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, German, and Polish<sup>2</sup> immigrants, with important leavings from the Middle East. Brazil’s black population is 13 million. Other key minorities include 700,000 Amerindians and about 1.5 million persons of Japanese descent, who make up the largest Japanese population outside of Japan.

Maldistribution of income and social injustices are obvious and widely recognized. During the 1950s and 1960s, the disparities of traditional agrarian life were exacerbated by a population explosion that put great strains on public services. But population growth has fallen steadily since, and is now at an annual rate of just over 1 percent, down from a high of 3 percent. Literacy has risen to 88 percent, but primary education remains famously poor,<sup>3</sup> and an exceptionally limited secondary educational system still hampers the acquisition of modern skills and social mobility.<sup>4</sup> High levels of crime and growing drug consumption in urban areas are important additional factors retarding more rapid growth.

Less appreciated outside Brazil are the programs that have developed over the past generation to reduce

these gaps. The administration of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) expanded a *Bolsa Escola* (school allowance) program begun under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002) to develop the *Bolsa Família*, the family allowance program that has become the largest conditional cash transfer program in the world. Poor families receive cash subsidies for education, nutrition, and even gas on the sole condition that they prove their children’s school attendance. *Bolsa família* now touches 50 million people and, with a minimum wage that increased 65 percent over Lula’s 8 years, is estimated to have helped halve poverty.<sup>5</sup> Though a quarter of the population still lives in poverty, these and other measures have enabled millions to improve their lives.

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University admissions exams in practice favor the better prepared graduates of private secondary schools, thus excluding many. University education is uneven but often excellent. In the sciences, Brazil now produces half a million graduates and 10,000 Ph.D.s a year, 10 times more than two decades ago. The facilities and research of the University of São Paulo attract students from all over the world.

**Economy.** Since the 1990s, Brazil has curbed the inflation for which it had become famous. Unlike its neighbors, whose economies depend on relatively few exports, Brazil’s economy, likely to soon become the world’s seventh largest, is highly diversified and driven by a rapidly developing internal market as well as exports.<sup>6</sup>

Agriculture, particularly in São Paulo state but extending south to the productive powerhouses of Goiás, Parana, Santa Catarina, Mato Grosso do Sur, and Rio Grande, has broken radically from traditional practices and is highly mechanized. Brazil is the world’s top exporter of coffee, tobacco, orange juice, sugar, and beef.

JBS-Friboi has bought Swift and Pilgrim's Pride and passed Tyson Foods to become the world's largest meat packer. Embrapa research in tropical agriculture may soon propel Brazil from second place to first in the production of soy as well, despite the cost disadvantages imposed by poor infrastructure.<sup>7</sup> Already the world's largest exporter of protein foods, Brazil occupies a strategic position in any discussion of global food security. In fact, Brazil's potential as a food producer is limited mainly by U.S. and European protectionism.

The former state mining company, Vale do Rio Doce (privatized in 1997 and now using the simplified name Vale), has become a diversified multinational corporation operating in 6 continents as well as 16 Brazilian states. Vale is the world's largest producer of iron ore and pellets, runs second in nickel, and is a major player in logistics and the generation of hydroelectric energy. Lack of modern port facilities has long hampered faster Brazilian growth, but the government and entrepreneurs are now taking advantage of Chinese demand for raw materials to improve logistics, including the construction of one of the world's largest ports, scheduled to open in 2012.

Parallel advances have been achieved in industry. Brazil's exports include electrical equipment, automobiles, ethanol, textiles, footwear, and steel. Embraer is

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now the world's third largest producer of commercial and military aircraft, behind only Boeing and Airbus, and the world leader in regional jets.

Brazil became a World Trade Organization member in 1995. In 2009, leading trade partners were China, the United States, the European Union, and Argentina, with the United States providing the most imports (16 percent) and China the biggest export market (12 percent).

Analysts believe that Brazil's continued rapid expansion, despite the recent global economic crisis, has been significantly helped by increasing domestic demand, as a growing middle class buys material comforts previously out of reach. With inflation under control, credit, including home mortgages for the middle class, has been at the center of growth. This rise in internal demand is a major source of expectations that Brazil's economy will continue to boom.

Brazil was long known as energy-deficient because it lacked domestic oil resources. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries price increase in the 1970s starkly underscored this vulnerability. Brazil's response then laid the foundations for its strength today. First, it spurred the development of its enormous water resources. By 2008, hydroelectric power met 34 percent of the country's total energy needs. Until China fully completes the Three Gorges Dam, the Itaipu Dam on Brazil's border with Paraguay has the largest electricity generating capacity in the world. Second, the search for energy to feed Brazil's growing economy led to government-supported development of ethanol into a world-class industry. Third, Brazil has the domestic uranium reserves to fuel more than its two existing nuclear reactors, a third scheduled for 2015, and others under discussion. Finally, and most recently, major discoveries of oil in the South Atlantic have poised Brazil to become an important oil producer as well.<sup>8</sup> The national oil company, Petrobras, operates in 27 countries, is a leader in deep sea drilling technology, and is the largest corporation headquartered in the Southern Hemisphere.

The world economy is proving to be a difficult and even dangerous place. Brazil's growth has led to a sharp rise in investment abroad—a rise in Brazil's outward foreign direct investment stock from \$52 billion in 2000 to \$158 billion in 2009.<sup>9</sup> Much of this investment is concentrated in Latin America, Mozambique, and Angola, plus the developed countries. The amount compares to China's outward foreign direct investment stock in 2009 of \$230 billion. Both countries are heavily invested in resource-based enterprises, but Brazil has large investments in

offshore financial centers and negligible amounts in manufacturing, whereas China has significant investments in manufacturing and information technology.<sup>10</sup>

Brazil is not immune to difficulties brought on by international currency fluctuations and trade imbalances, and to problems of its own creation such as excessive government spending.<sup>11</sup> But its turnaround over the past generation from rampant inflation to sustained growth has transformed it from a net debtor nation into a net creditor. Economic policies have been effective and predictable. The technical skills of top government and private managers run high and deep. President Lula's administration built on the foundation laid by President Cardoso, and the initial appointments by President Dilma Rousseff foreshadow continuity that could lead to further administrative consolidation and much-needed legal and bureaucratic simplification.<sup>12</sup>

**Politics.** Brazil never had to fight for its independence. The Napoleonic Wars in Europe led the Portuguese royal family to flee to Brazil, where in 1808, they established in Rio de Janeiro the seat of the Portuguese Empire. In 1822, after King Joao VI returned to Portugal, his son, who had remained in Brazil as Regent, declared Brazil's independence and became Dom Pedro I, Emperor of Brazil.<sup>13</sup> The relative lack of violence then and later in the abolition of slavery and the establishment of the republic in 1889 has been a characteristic of Brazilian history and society.

For the past generation, Brazil has been a paradigm of stable politics and electoral democracy. President Cardoso was succeeded peacefully by President Lula, who was in turn succeeded on January 1, 2011, by Brazil's first woman president, Dilma Rousseff. The entire process was "loud, messy, and imperfect," but unabashedly democratic.<sup>14</sup> Even so, the country's regional differences, *caciquismo* (boss politics), and deep social disparities contribute to continuing and important questions about the quality of its democracy.<sup>15</sup>

Brazil's technological advance is reflected politically in the widespread use of electronic voting. Portable computers have empowered voters in even the most remote areas. Brazil's computerized voting methods, which have proven secure against tampering or technical problems,

are among the most advanced in the world. Organization of American States (OAS) electoral specialists have facilitated their successful use in many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Brazil's strength is reflected in the number of first-rate and resilient institutions that help provide both

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leadership and stability to the country. In addition to large companies such as Vale, Embraer, and Petrobras, the Getulio Vargas Foundation, the University of São Paulo, the Federal University System in general, specialized agencies such as Embrapa, and the emerging Brazilian defense industry are also major regional and international centers of research. The foreign ministry, known as *Itamaraty* after the palace in Rio de Janeiro where it was first housed, is elitist, but enjoys the reputation of being one of the most effective corps of diplomats in the world. The Superior War College has long been a center for the development of military doctrine as well as professional education.

**The Military.** Brazil's security policies under recent civilian administrations have been marked by doctrinal reorientation and gradual force modernization. For most of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the military forces were focused more on internal security and an ill-defined anticommunism than on traditional military defense. As in much of Latin America in the same period, the military sometimes took over the government directly, and military leaders occupied the presidency from 1964 to 1985. Official repression never reached the levels of the military regimes in neighboring Argentina or Chile, but Brazil's military governments effectively suppressed radical opposition and the few attempts at armed resistance.

The resulting "association between security and repression—one consequence of the military period—made

it impossible to think calmly about defense policy.”<sup>16</sup> This striking comment is not from some antiestablishment radical, but from Nelson Jobim, a former Minister of Justice under President Cardoso and later President of Brazil’s Supreme Court, who became Minister of Defense under President Lula. Jobim’s nomination, however, was less due to civilian fears of military intervention in politics than that the military needed to become a national asset if Brazil was to operate effectively in a dangerous world. Like his U.S. counterpart, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Jobim was confirmed in his position by President Rouseff, providing essential competence and continuity from one administration to its successor.

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## **Brazilian military leaders have also long considered Brazil’s development as essential to national security**

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Highlights of Brazil’s military evolution have included the creation of a Ministry of Defense in 1999, and, importantly, the development of a National Defense Strategy. This new strategy departs from the internally focused Doctrine of National Security that expressed the viewpoints of the military leaders who ruled Brazil between 1964 and 1985. A key feature is stress on domestic technological development to increase Brazil’s capacity for military deterrence.

The changed strategy does not mean that the Brazilian military no longer has internal security responsibilities.<sup>17</sup> The military services and especially the navy have a long tradition of patrolling the interior. The new strategy will build that up, moving personnel from the east coast to the interior, in parts of which the military has new arrest authorities. In 2010, military personnel cooperated with police units in efforts to clean up drug gangs in Rio’s *favelas*.<sup>18</sup>

Nor should the change be interpreted to imply that Brazil had no previous military experience abroad. A

Brazilian expeditionary force fought quite effectively alongside the U.S. Army in Italy in 1944–1945. In 1995–1998, a Brazilian general commanded the Ecuador-Peru military observer mission (MOMEPE), which brought together U.S., Argentine, and Chilean forces as well as Brazilian soldiers. When the United States withdrew its Black Hawk helicopters from MOMEPE, the Brazilian army bought its first Black Hawks and replaced the U.S. unit.<sup>19</sup> Brazilian soldiers have been prominent in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations in Angola, Mozambique, and East Timor, all remnants of the old Portuguese empire, as well as in the Congo and elsewhere. In 2004, Brazil also took command of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH). This decision, the first occasion that Brazil supported the use of force under UN Charter Chapter Seven authorities, signaled that it was ready to accept the responsibilities of leadership on difficult issues before the UN Security Council in a way not seen before.

Brazilian military leaders have also long considered Brazil’s development as essential to national security. The military provides an important government presence in the Amazon, from air transport to development and security (the Calha Norte Project) to surveillance (the Amazon Surveillance System). The need to protect and support strategic industries has also been a concern for the military. The initial decisions to subsidize the development of Brazil’s ethanol industry, for example, were made by military regimes in the 1970s.

The new National Defense Strategy brought all these strands explicitly together into a plan to enlarge, modernize, and reposition military forces and restore Brazil’s defense industry. Explaining that Brazil needed stronger defenses as part of its new responsibilities in a changing world, the strategy was announced personally by President Lula in Brasilia in 2008. Military modernization was linked explicitly to technology transfer and industrial development. “We are no longer interested in buying weapons off the shelf,” declared Roberto Mangabeira Unger, the Harvard professor turned Minister of Strategic Affairs.<sup>20</sup> Even more to the point, Brazil wants to avoid the limitations imposed by U.S. International Traffic in

Arms Regulations, which are perceived as hampering the achievement of an independent Brazilian defense industry.

Attempts to import technology to increase Brazilian industrial capacity played a part in deals on space with China and on naval vessels with the United Kingdom, and certainly played an essential role in agreements negotiated with France to help build Brazil's Angra 3 nuclear powerplant, develop satellites for use over the Amazon, and cooperate technically in the building of Brazil's planned nuclear-powered submarine, one of whose functions will be to deter possible threats to Brazil's future deep-water oil-drilling operations.<sup>21</sup>

**Foreign Policy.** Only China and Russia have longer land borders than Brazil, which abuts on all but two of South America's 12 countries. The Baron of Rio Branco, who was Foreign Minister from 1902 to 1912, gained a reputation as the father of Brazilian diplomacy for his success in negotiating treaties with the country's neighbors to formalize its boundaries. Rio Branco's pragmatic use of *uti possidetis*<sup>22</sup> distinguished Brazil from Spanish-American countries, whose approach to each other was more litigious and filled with appeals to colonial boundaries and wrongs.

With its borders settled, Brazil was satisfied to keep its neighbors at arm's length.<sup>23</sup> The major exception was Argentina, considered Brazil's South American rival. Both countries "had a lot to gain from a positive agenda but insisted for decades on an idiotic, irrational, and unproductive" relationship.<sup>24</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s, however, lengthy negotiations between the two governments led to nuclear agreements and the adoption of a "No Conflict Hypothesis" between the two countries. By 1985, the Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement served as the backdrop to Mercosur, intended as a trading bloc that also included Paraguay and Uruguay. In 2008, Brazil championed the creation of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) formalizing the ideal, recognized by Brazil's constitution, of an integrated South America.

Coming as it did at a time of messy political conditions in Venezuela and Bolivia, and severe tensions

between Colombia and Ecuador and between Colombia and Venezuela, UNASUR was also meant to constrain tensions among Brazil's neighbors. This was not a new objective for Brazilian policy. Brazil's Foreign Minister, Oswaldo Aranha, played a key role in negotiating the 1942 Rio Protocol, the treaty that ended the Ecuador-Peru War. In 1982, Brazil remained neutral in the Falklands war between Argentina and Great Britain, but loaned Argentina Brazilian-manufactured,

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## Brazilian diplomats have long believed their country deserved a rightful and leading place in the global system

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long-range observation aircraft to help deter any attack on the mainland. With the help of the United States as well as Argentina and Chile, Brazil successfully managed the Ecuador-Peru peace settlement of 1998 after the conflict had broken out again in 1994-1995. By 2009, however, a bilateral United States-Colombia base rights agreement led Brazil to use UNASUR as a forum to assert independence from the United States. Even more than Mexico's 2001 formal renunciation of Rio Treaty obligations, UNASUR and its Defense Council marked the end of the Monroe Doctrine. Referring explicitly to the United States, Minister Jobim declared that the "defense of South America should only be undertaken by South America."<sup>25</sup>

Always aware of events beyond the hemisphere, Brazilian diplomats have long believed their country deserved a rightful and leading place in the global system. Brazil was a founding member of the League of Nations but walked out in 1926 when it became clear that Germany would be admitted as a permanent Member of the Council while Brazil was excluded. Brazil was also a founding member of the United Nations, but in 1964 it helped found the Group of 77 for the purpose of increasing the joint negotiating



capacity of developing countries on major international economic issues.

Since the 1960s, some Brazilian leaders have been concerned that the United States could use the United Nations and the international system to “freeze” power relationships to its advantage and that of the other “have” powers. While the term *BRIC* (referring to Brazil, Russia, India, and China) was coined by an American financial consultant thinking in economic terms, Brazil has sought to operationalize it diplomatically. Brazil saw the BRIC as an opportunity, as a Brazilian diplomat wrote, “because the preexisting power structures did not encompass the member countries in a satisfactory manner and because the geometry of international life called for a revision of the makeup of the directing bodies that express world power.”<sup>26</sup>

In fact, BRIC members have little in common. And as Russia and China are already Permanent Members of the Security Council, it is not clear they have much to gain by shaking things up for Brazil’s benefit. Brazil’s focus on the BRIC may ultimately prove a partly illusory quest to deny the relevance of the United States. This said, Brazil’s expanding relationship with Europe, its deepening trade ties with China, its positioning as a hot emerging market, and historical connections to Africa certainly give it increased geopolitical scope. In 2009, *The Economist* reported that:

*in some ways, Brazil outclasses the other BRICs. Unlike China, it is a democracy. Unlike India, it has no insurgents, no ethnic and religious conflicts nor hostile neighbors. Unlike Russia, it exports more than oil and arms, and treats foreign investors with respect. . . . Indeed, when it comes to smart social policy and boosting consumption at home, the developing world has much more to learn from Brazil than from China.*<sup>27</sup>

Many countries now see in Brazil a global actor with which they share interests, if only to leverage engagement with third parties. In 2010, 185 countries main-

tained missions in Brasilia, exceeding Beijing’s 165 and almost matching Washington’s 190.

The evolution of world financial coordination from the G–8 to the G–20 reflects Brazil’s growing global reach. It is becoming a donor nation; its sovereign wealth funds are now in net creditor positions in the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The 2009 Pittsburgh G–20 Summit, which replaced the G–8, pledged in its Leaders’ Statement “*candid, even-handed, and balanced analysis*”—a probably gratuitous slap at prior G–8 analyses. The 2010 IMF reforms on quota rebalancing made the 10 largest shareholders the United States, Japan, the BRIC, and the four largest European countries (France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom).

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## the evolution of world financial coordination from the G–8 to the G–20 reflects Brazil’s growing global reach

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The unfreezing of world power relationships has begun. Having contributed to the new fluidity, the question becomes what ends Brazil now seeks.

### From Alliance to Skepticism

From World War II into the Cold War, Brazil saw the United States as a fundamental ally. Under President Getulio Vargas (1930–1946, 1951–1954), Brazil joined the Allied effort during World War II. A Brazilian division with its own air support joined the U.S. Army in the successful fight up the boot of Italy.

U.S.-Brazilian military relations remained unusually close for a generation after the war. Indeed, Brazilians themselves sometimes stated their foreign policy seemed based on “automatic alliance” with the United States. Brazil hosted the negotiations for the 1947 Rio Treaty, whose key Article 5—calling for collective action against an external attack on any member—set the precedent for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In 1965,

Brazilian troops participated in the occupation of the Dominican Republic, helping to legitimize what started as a unilateral U.S. intervention.

During the 1960s and 1970s, however, the sense of alliance with the United States gradually eroded. The 1964 military coup, human rights issues, trade, and nuclear concerns became sources of tension with successive U.S. administrations.

In 1975, the author, then a member of Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's Policy Planning Staff, met alone with Brazil's Foreign Minister Azeredo da Silveira to explore whether Brazil might, with its highly professional diplomacy, be prepared to take on broader responsibilities appropriate to a regional power. Silveira's answer was that an activist foreign policy would inevitably encounter "*acidentes de percurso*": accidents along the way. The United States had the wealth and power to absorb such accidents, he said; Brazil did not.<sup>28</sup>

With the passage of time and Brazil's own growth and changed international conditions, Silveira's cautious pragmatism increasingly gave way to what might be called a policy of "critical independence." The election of Jimmy Carter brought immediate clashes with Brazil over human rights and nuclear policies. In early 1977, Vice President Walter Mondale visited Brazil to oppose possible Brazilian development of nuclear weapons capabilities. Brazil's military leaders were deeply offended at the idea that the United States and other major powers could maintain nuclear arsenals, but their country could not. Brazilian diplomats played a major role in supporting the regional denuclearization of South America through the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco, and Brazil was later to ratify the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but relations with the United States were never to be the same.

U.S. opposition to Brazil's development of a nuclear weapons capability confirmed previous Brazilian fears that the United States sought to "freeze" global power relationships to its advantage, relegating Brazil to subordinate status.<sup>29</sup> Spurred by a long list of bilateral irritations and feeling that U.S. foreign policy had become bogged down in the war against terror, Brazilians became increasingly

critical of the United States. According to Raul Jungmann, "With the end of the Cold War, South America lost whatever residual importance it had had for U.S. leaders, and disappeared into a vacuum of strategic irrelevance."<sup>30</sup>

A new generation of Brazilian leaders has emerged who tend to see U.S., and generally Western, political and economic influence as a generic obstacle to Brazil's rise, and therefore as something to be checked when possible.<sup>31</sup> Sentiments of this kind fed UNASUR and the "inter-regional mechanisms" of the South-South Dialogue, India-Brazil-South Africa, and the BRIC. Unobjectionable and even positive in themselves, these initiatives often seemed accompanied by an undercurrent of anti-Americanism.

President Lula's attempt to break the impasse over Iran's nuclear program had its roots partly in past tensions with the United States over Brazil's own nuclear programs.<sup>32</sup> But it also derived from the conviction that the United States is often part of the problem and that Brazil can help achieve solutions that others, including the United States, have let slip away.

The negative reactions of the United States and other major powers to the initiatives taken with Iran by Brazil and Turkey show that global involvement for Brazil is not without costs. Brazilian policy was criticized at home and abroad for overreaching, hubris, and inadequate preparation. U.S. views of Brazil as an unreliable partner unwilling to make the difficult choices necessary

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### **whether Brazil's future policies will reflect greater caution and sensitivity to third party interests remains an open question**

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to sustain world order suddenly mirrored Brazilian views of the United States as dedicated to military adventurism by flaunting the UN Security Council on Iraq.

Whether Brazil's future policies will, like those of the United States, reflect greater caution and sensitivity to third

party interests remains an open question. But there can be no question that Brazil's global activism is here to stay. "The days when domestic weaknesses [an *acumulo de vulnerabilidades*] limited our scope of action abroad have been left behind," stated Antonio de Aguiar Patriota in his first speech as the new Foreign Minister under President Rousseff on January 2, 2011.<sup>33</sup> Brazilians cannot underestimate what is left to be done domestically, he argued, but they now expect "to engage on all major international debates."

The United States and Brazil, concludes one American observer, seem destined to keep bumping into each other all over the world.<sup>34</sup> The key requirement for both countries is therefore to give strategic shape and rationality to these otherwise random interactions.

## Prospects and Policy Recommendations

The United States has a basic national security interest in Brazil's continuing democratic and market-oriented success, which improves its will and capacity to help address pressing global problems. We are in a rapidly changing period of international relations, in which a high premium is put on skilled and effective diplomacy in order to provide a measure of management to situations that could spin out of control. We are still haunted

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**the United States and Brazil have vast overlapping interests, but a formal strategic partnership is probably out of the question**

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by nuclear weapons. In these circumstances, Brazil plays an important role. It is in the U.S. interest to find as many ways as possible not only to cooperate with Brazil, but also to engage with Brasilia as a regional and global partner in the maintenance of peace and prosperity.

A prerequisite for improved mutual engagement will be changes in perspective on both sides. Mutually beneficial engagement requires the United States to welcome

Brazil's emergence as a global power. Brazil is more than a tropical China<sup>35</sup>; it is culturally and politically close to the United States and Europe. Brazil, in turn, needs to realize that the United States accepts its rise. Brazil also needs to recognize that the United States still matters greatly to Brasilia and that more can be achieved working with Washington than against it.

The United States and Brazil have vast overlapping interests, but a formal strategic partnership is probably out of the question for both countries. In the United States, Brazil must compete for policy attention with China, India, Russia, Japan, Mexico, and several European countries. It poses no security threat to the United States. Moreover, despite Brazil's importance in multilateral organizations, particularly the UN, Brazil can be of limited practical assistance at best to the United States in its two current wars. Brazil's interests, in turn, may be fairly said to include the need to distinguish itself from the United States. Diplomatically, this means neither country can expect automatic agreement from the other. Interests differ and it may be politically necessary to highlight differences even when interests are similar. But both countries should make every effort to develop a habit of "permanent consultation" in an effort to coordinate policies, work pragmatically together where interests are common, and reduce surprises even while recognizing that specific interests and policies often may differ.

A first operational step, therefore, is for both countries to hold regular policy-level consultations, increase exchanges of information, and coordinate carefully on multilateral matters. This is much easier said than done. The list of global issues on which Brazil is becoming a major player includes conflict resolution, all aspects of energy, including nuclear matters, all types of trade, the environment, space, and the development of international law, including law of the seas and nonproliferation. To share information and ensure effective consultation on so many functional issues will require finding ways to lessen the geographic stovepiping natural to bureaucracy. The U.S. Department of State, for example, has historically organized itself into geographical bureaus responsible for relations with countries in particular regions, leaving

functional issues to offices organized globally. This organization hampers the exchange of information and consultation with countries such as Brazil, whose reach and policies go beyond their particular geographic region. One result is that multilateral affairs are still often an isolated afterthought in the U.S. Government. Are there things the United States and Brazil could do, whether bilaterally or in the World Trade Organization, that would offset some of the negative effects of the China trade on manufacturing in both their countries?<sup>36</sup> Just posing the question reveals the complexity of the task.

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## **Brazil's campaign for a permanent UN Security Council seat is anchored in a record of seeking negotiated solutions**

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U.S. efforts to consult with Brazil on global issues would be more effective if accompanied by greater U.S. acceptance of multilateral alternatives to unilateral action. Brazil's campaign for a permanent UN Security Council seat is anchored in its own history of seeking negotiated solutions. Argentina and Mexico also aspire to that seat, but Brazil's candidacy is not just an expression of its growing global reach, but of its diplomatic record as well. This writer believes the United States should support Brazil's candidacy.<sup>37</sup>

Ratification of key international treaties already pending before the U.S. Senate would also improve American standing and reduce suspicion about U.S. purposes. The failure of the United States to ratify the Convention on Law of the Sea, for example, gave a backdrop of credibility to unrealistic but politically popular concerns articulated by Defense Minister Jobim in November 2010 about a possible out-of-area "NATO threat" to Brazil's oil claims in the South Atlantic. Similarly, the failure of the United States to ratify the Inter-American Convention Against Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, while not of much immediate

operational consequence, gives ammunition to those who argue the United States is not interested in combating violence, gangs, and illegal drugs.

A necessary and parallel second step forward would be to develop a cadre of U.S. and Brazilian professionals who are comfortable working with each other. Personal, professional, and institutional ties should be considered a high priority for both countries and should not be conditioned on particular policies or immediate payoffs. Both governments should invest in executive exchange programs, particularly in Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Justice, and State. Congress, universities, and the press should also be encouraged to seek opportunities for joint ventures.

Recent bilateral relationships between the United States and Brazil are littered with partnership agreements, memoranda of understanding, working groups, and joint action plans. President George W. Bush's visit to Brazil in November 2005 led to a series of attempts to engage on a variety of issues. In March 2010, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton launched an initiative that envisions an annual meeting between the Secretary and Foreign Minister. Such efforts can bear fruit. A forum in which chief executive officers from top U.S. and Brazilian corporations meet regularly to make doing business with each other easier has evidently had some success.<sup>38</sup>

In general, however, one has the impression of two vibrant societies with more in common than either realizes, but with neither a common language nor enough persons to interpret. How many people understand the cultural differences and similarities between Brazil and the United States? To whom can a policymaker turn to learn whether the fact that harvests in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres are calendar opposites can be used to develop agricultural policies that are complementary and not merely competitive?

The democratization of foreign policy compounds these difficulties. Foreign policy has been routinely messy in the United States for a generation or more. In addition to the constitutionally prescribed foreign

policy roles of the U.S. Congress (which far exceed practices normal in most other countries), the participation of lobbies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), interest groups, individual Members of Congress, and the press generally bewilders outside observers. Brazil was once neater because its foreign policy was a national consensus monopolized by *Itamaraty* diplomatic globalists. All that is now changing. Brazil's expanded reach (more embassies in the Caribbean than the United States and more in Africa than the United Kingdom) has put new strains on both its policies and its diplomats.<sup>39</sup> With a vigorous free press behind them, Brazilian NGOs (or the Third Sector as they are often called), businessmen, and other interest groups now openly participate in the market of foreign policy ideas. Their views do not necessarily converge with those in power in Brasilia or Washington.<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, it is not clear that there are many political issues that both countries see the same way. Brazilian foreign policy officials are aware of the shortcomings and vulnerabilities of U.S. policy. Many admire American society, technology, and culture, but the war on terror and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan evoke little attention and less sympathy. Brazil gets much credit in official Washington for leading MINUSTAH, but it is not clear that the two governments are seriously engaged on the way forward.

Both countries need to take a new look at each other, recognize their mutual interest in more

of the Americas. Strengthened ties between the National Defense University and Superior War College are under discussion, as are increased reciprocal academic exchanges in the wake of the bilateral Defense Cooperation Agreement and a Security of Military Information Agreement signed in 2010 by the United States and Brazil.

Some may object that such activities require resources and that they should be considered foreign assistance. Indeed, in the financially multipolar world in which we now live, one of the most critical strategic challenges the United States faces today is to get rising powers such as Brazil to shoulder a greater share of the costs of cooperation. Burdensharing is important—so is learning how to cooperate.

The ultimate objective should be for the United States and Brazil to direct their bilateral efforts toward maximizing both regional and global cooperation, with particular emphasis on conflict resolution, energy, and trade. On assuming office, President Rousseff's new Foreign Minister stated that Brazil:

*will continue to emphasize dialogue and negotiation as the preferred method to resolve tensions and conflicts; to defend respect for international law, nonintervention, and multilateralism; to champion a world free of nuclear weapons; to fight prejudice, discrimination, and arbitrary imposition; and to reject recourse to coercion not rooted in the commitments of international brotherhood.*<sup>41</sup>

These words cannot be read simply as rhetoric rooted in the Third World trade unionism of the weak. Brazil is no longer weak. It is the only BRIC without a nuclear bomb not because it could not produce one, but because it has chosen not to, and its security doctrines are focused on protecting its borders and on deterrence, not on projecting global power. President Lula's grandstanding with Turkey in Iran damaged his country's credibility, but as Brazil's global reach matures, its multilateral skills and record of autonomy could prove

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## **Brazil's expanded reach has put new strains on both its policies and its diplomats**

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intimate relations, and make achieving them a priority. Institutions that seek to promote U.S.-Brazil dialogue deserve much greater support. The Brazil Institute at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars is one such venue, as is the Council

important assets in efforts against the risks of nuclear terrorism and nuclear proliferation.

Like Canada and only a few other countries, Brazil has a tradition of good UN citizenship. This characteristic is an important asset for the United States to find in a friend nowadays. The author believes it was no accident that Sérgio Vieira de Mello, the much admired UN peacemaker who lost his life in Iraq in 2003, was Brazilian. Brazil's generally violence-free domestic history, the absence of conflicts with neighbors, and its longstanding commitment to UN principles and peacekeeping without the imposition of force are an important reservoir for conflict resolution.<sup>42</sup>

The United States and Brazil face similar problems in their immediate neighborhoods. Notable among these is trafficking in illegal drugs and arms, which contributes to citizen insecurity, migration, and unaccustomed messiness along parts of their borders. These issues should all be included in a permanent consultation process, but Brazil's approach of "South America for South Americans" does not encourage effective cooperation with the United States on even such vital issues.

Brazil's assertion of regional power to the exclusion of the United States is similar to China's "active measures to promote Asian organizations that exclude the United States."<sup>43</sup> Initiatives such as UNASUR that exclude the United States, but which include actively anti-U.S. governments, invite uncertainty. The answer for Brazil is not to abandon UNASUR, let alone South American integration, but for both the United States and Brazil to ensure that they each develop and sustain bilateral ties with individual countries in accordance with the particular interests and needs of those countries. (Will anyone deny that Mexico is on some matters more important to the United States than Brazil?)

Both the United States and Brazil should actively support inter-American institutions like the OAS that bring both of them together with other countries of the hemisphere. Most Latin American and Caribbean countries want good relations with both the United States and Brazil, and multilateral activities are a key

way to set and observe rules for everyone. Multilateral formats also are useful to offset the asymmetries of power, which have long hampered the United States in dealing with its neighbors, and which now are beginning to bedevil Brazil as it grows more rapidly than most countries around it.

As much as both countries need it, however, improved cooperation may require them to make changes for which they are not yet ready.<sup>44</sup> Depending somewhat on their politics, many Brazilians will be dubious about cooperation with the United States as long as it continues to massively subsidize and protect key agricultural products, maintains an embargo on Cuba, is thought by important political groups to have ambitions on the Amazon or troops in South America, or fails to endorse Brazil's UN Security Council ambitions. Similarly, some in the United States will question working closely with a Brazil that they see as enjoying the luxuries of the irresponsible until it accepts greater responsibility on nuclear nonproliferation (including more UN monitoring of its facilities), distances itself from Iran, is more present on democracy and human rights issues (in the Middle East, Cuba, Iran, and Venezuela), is more active on these issues at the UN and OAS, and generally treats the United States better in its diplomacy than it has often done recently.

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## Washington and Brasilia must learn to play to each other's strengths

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Finally, the foreign policies of both the United States and Brazil are likely to be increasingly limited by internal factors in the future. In the United States, concerns over debt and weakening internal competitiveness are increasing.<sup>45</sup> Brazil has had two successive presidents whose charisma helped them to mask domestic vulnerabilities; in doing so, they handed President Rousseff the enormous challenge of institutionalizing their success. Yet the world will not go away. Neither the United States

nor Brazil is powerful enough to solve alone many of the problems directly affecting its national security.

Washington and Brasilia must learn to play to each other's strengths. Failure to work together will result in lost opportunities and damage the national interests of both countries.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Brazilian Association of Vegetable Oil Manufacturers, 2000, available at <[www.v-brazil.com/business/transportation.html](http://www.v-brazil.com/business/transportation.html)>.

<sup>2</sup> In 1906, my wife's grandparents came to the New World to flee political repression in Poland. Her grandfather settled in Lynn, Massachusetts, working at General Electric's original plant; her grandmother's sister settled in Curitiba, Parana, Brazil, second only to Chicago in population of Polish origin and today a world model for green public transportation.

<sup>3</sup> In a report on "Education in Brazil," December 9, 2010, *The Economist* reported that "recent progress merely upgrades Brazil's schools from disastrous to very bad."

<sup>4</sup> A 2009 report on global competitiveness ranks Brazil behind India, China, and Russia, suggesting that lags in education help explain difficulties in satisfying the growing demand for skilled workers. See Paulo Sotero, "Brazil's Rising Ambition in a Shifting Global Balance of Power," *Politics: 2010*, vol. 30 (Supplement 1), 77.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, "Lifting Families Out of Poverty in Brazil—Bolsa Familia Program," 2010, available at <<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/LACEXT/BRAZILEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20754490~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:322341,00.html>>.

<sup>6</sup> Financial stabilization helped differentiate Brazil from its neighbors. Claudio Frischtak has calculated that Brazil's gross domestic product (GDP) has gone from 34 percent of the GDP of South America in 1990 to 56 percent in 2008. If accurate, these astonishing numbers in themselves tell the story of Brazil's explosive growth.

<sup>7</sup> *Embrapa* is short for *Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária*, or the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation. The innovations that it pioneered and their extraordinary results are detailed in "Brazilian Agriculture: The Miracle of the Cerrado," *The Economist*, August 26, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Albert Fishlow notes the "understandable preference for counting the gains rather than recognizing the costs deriving from the sub-salt oil deposits" that are so deep that the difficulties of extraction are still unknown. See "Brazil: What's Next?" *Americas Quarterly*, Winter 2011.

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *World Investment Report, 2010*, annex II.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to UNCTAD reports on world investment, see Peter Gammeltoft, "Emerging Multinationals: Outward FDI from the BRICS countries," paper presented at the GLOBELICS 6<sup>th</sup> International Conference, September 22–24, 2008, Mexico City, Mexico.

<sup>11</sup> Bad currency bets using derivatives cost three Brazilian transnational companies several billion dollars in 2008. See UNCTAD, *World Investment Report, 2009*, 66.

<sup>12</sup> Fishlow makes clear, however, that a rosy future is not to be casually assumed. He highlights unknowns dealing with Congress, public financing, foreign policy, and the preparations to host the 2014 World Cup in soccer and the 2016 Olympic Games.

<sup>13</sup> For a balance sheet of the 77 years during which Brazil was governed by emperors under a constitutional regime, see C.H. Haring, *Empire in Brazil* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958).

<sup>14</sup> See Larry Rohter, *Brazil on the Rise* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 276.

<sup>15</sup> Corruption in Brazilian politics is sometimes so blatant as to be demoralizing. Transparency International ranks Brazil well below the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development average (but ahead of India, Russia, and China) on its corruption index.

<sup>16</sup> Nelson A. Jobim, *Segurança Internacional: Perspectivas Brasileiras* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2010), 15.

<sup>17</sup> Article 142 of Brazil's constitution still gives the military the obligation to maintain constitutional order on request.

<sup>18</sup> Ricardo Vélez Rodríguez, "Lessons from the Carioca War," *O Estado de Sao Paulo*, December 1, 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Luigi R. Einaudi, "The Ecuador-Peru Peace Process," in *Herding Cats*, ed. Chester A. Crocker, Fen O. Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), chapter 16, 405–429.

<sup>20</sup> Alexei Barrionuevo, "President of Brazil Unveils Plan to Upgrade Military," *The New York Times*, December 19, 2008.

<sup>21</sup> Brazilian elites often identify with French culture and independence, but a primary reason for Brazilian interest in a "strategic" relationship with Paris is French willingness to transfer proprietary defense technology. Even this, however, has not yet been enough to convince Brazil to choose French fighter aircraft over U.S. and Swedish competitors.

<sup>22</sup> The principle in international law is that territory remains with its possessor unless otherwise provided for by treaty: in this case, Rio Branco successfully gave the force of law to Brazil's prior territorial expansion, which had made a mockery of the 1494 Tordesillas division of lands between Spain and Portugal.

<sup>23</sup> Cynthia Arnson and Paulo Sotero, eds., *Brazil as a Regional Power: Views from the Hemisphere* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2010).

<sup>24</sup> Luis Bitencourt, private communication with author, January 4, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Agencia Estado, São Paulo, November 3, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Marcos Azambuja, "The BRIC Club, Where Good Things Do Come in Large Packages," in *Brazilian Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Ed. Fundação Liberdade e Cidadania, 2010), 33.

<sup>27</sup> "Brazil Takes Off," *The Economist*, November 12, 2009.

<sup>28</sup> Matias Spektor, *Kissinger e o Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> The original "freezing of power" formulation is that of former Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the United Nations and United States, Joao Augusto de Araujo Castro. See "The United Nations

and the Freezing of the International Power Structure,” *International Organization* 26, no. 1 (Winter 1972).

<sup>30</sup> See Raul Jungmann, “Estrategia Nacional de Defesa (END),” in Jobim, 477.

<sup>31</sup> An excellent analysis of formative experiences and strategic calculations is that of Thomaz Guedes da Costa, “Grand Strategy for Assertiveness: International Security and U.S.-Brazil Relations,” *Challenges to Security in the Hemisphere Task Force*, October–December 2009, available at <[https://www6.miami.edu/hemispheric-policy/Task\\_Force\\_Papers/Costa-Grand\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Assertiveness.pdf](https://www6.miami.edu/hemispheric-policy/Task_Force_Papers/Costa-Grand_Strategy_for_Assertiveness.pdf)>.

<sup>32</sup> Julia E. Sweig stresses Brazilian rationales in “A New Global Player: Brazil’s Far-Flung Agenda,” *Foreign Affairs*, November–December 2010, 176–178.

<sup>33</sup> Available at <[www.itaraty.gov.br](http://www.itaraty.gov.br)>.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Hakim, “U.S.-Brazil Relations: Expect More Conflict,” *Infolatam*, October 25, 2010.

<sup>35</sup> The image of a tropical China is that of the great Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, *New World in the Tropics: The Culture of Modern Brazil* (New York: Knopf, 1959), 257 ff.

<sup>36</sup> Sotero notes the uncertain impact of Brazil-China trade, 78–79.

<sup>37</sup> The United States publicly supports India’s accession to the United Nations (UN) Security Council while remaining silent about Brazil’s aspirations. India, like Brazil, is a functioning democracy. Unlike Brazil, however, India is a non–Non-Proliferation Treaty nuclear power and has none of Brazil’s commitment to international law. See Barbara Crosette, “The Elephant in the Room,” *Foreign Policy*, January–February 2010, 29–30, which characterizes India as a scofflaw from nuclear proliferation to multilateral trade to climate change.

<sup>38</sup> An Economic Partnership Dialogue, launched in 2007, still meets regularly and covers issues such as investment, development cooperation, social inclusion, infrastructure, civil aviation, import safety, and telecommunications. Other bilateral sallies include combating racial discrimination, science and technology, economic policy, development cooperation in Africa and Haiti, empowering women economically and socially, food security, UN Security Council reform, nonproliferation, disarmament, and defending democratic institutions in Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, and Honduras. A biofuels agreement meant to increase cooperation on ethanol wound up focused more on developing biofuels capacity in Central America and the Caribbean and Africa.

<sup>39</sup> Rubens Ricupero, “The Main Lineaments of Brazil’s Current Foreign Policy,” *Brazilian Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Ed. Fundação Liberdade e Cidadania, 2010), 7–17.

<sup>40</sup> Even more complex interactions sometimes occur. Some U.S. corporations in Brazil have ties with civil society organizations addressing social and environmental change through corporate social responsibility programs. The U.S. human rights emphasis under

Jimmy Carter, which irritated many Brazilians, has been described as a source of “energy” for domestic human rights activists and the Brazilian Bar Association.

<sup>41</sup> Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, speech of January 2, 2011, 29. Compare President Barack Obama’s April 2009 articulation in Prague of the U.S. goal to “seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”

<sup>42</sup> Brazil’s renunciation, with its neighbors Argentina and Chile, of weapons of mass destruction demonstrates that Latin American can set an example for other parts of the world in this critical area.

<sup>43</sup> Phillip C. Saunders, *China’s Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers, and Tools*, Institute for National Strategic Studies Occasional Paper 4 (Washington, DC: NDU Press, October 2006), 1. See also “U.S. Influence at Risk in Asia without More Active Role in Regional Organizations,” Council on Foreign Relations Report, November 4, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> The author is indebted to Peter Hakim for this caution and the examples that follow.

<sup>45</sup> Richard N. Haass et al., “Reviving U.S. Power Abroad from Within,” Council on Foreign Relations, December 30, 2010, available at <[www.cfr.org/publication/23701/reviving\\_us\\_power\\_abroad\\_from\\_within.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/23701/reviving_us_power_abroad_from_within.html)>.

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