Brazil in Africa: Achievements and Challenges

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Brazil's footprint in Africa has intensified dramatically in recent years, not only in terms of trade and investment, but also in terms of development cooperation and political alliance building. This has largely resulted from Lula da Silva's presidency, which maintained a strong determination to unite the voices of the global South. Its cause has benefited from more conducive domestic conditions on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as from a ripening international framework marked by the economic decline of the developed world. The contemporary drivers behind Brazil's foreign policy shift toward Africa include a broad political goal of contributing to a greater say of the global South in the new world order in the making, a narrower political goal of securing a key position within this emerging international architecture and lastly a more pragmatic goal of promoting the expansion of Brazil's economic interests in Africa.

Brazil has initiated a concerted soft power offensive in Africa in pursuit of the first two goals, which has been spearheaded by the dramatic intensification of its development cooperation commitments. To further its business in the continent, Brasilia is putting in place a logistical platform rooted in financial support at home and a proactive economic diplomacy offensive. However, the necessary domestic institutional adjustment has not followed the recent rapid expansion of Brazil's economic and development cooperation footprint in Africa. This has generated challenges to the sustainability of this pace of engagement.

This paper offers a brief overview of Brazil-Africa relations, the central role of history in Brasilia's contemporary Africa discourse and an analysis of the main drivers behind this rapprochement with the continent. It argues that although Brazil has successfully managed to position itself as a reliable development partner for Africa in a very short time, alarming signs of institutional overstretch and contradictions threaten the sustainability of this project. The continuation of its success depends on Brasilia's capacity to adjust its structures and ensure coherence between its normative rhetoric and practices of its agents in the continent.

BRIEF HISTORY OF RELATIONS

Much like Russia and China, Brazil's Africa discourse at present places a strong emphasis on historical ties. Brazil's friendship credentials, however, are not rooted in the battleground of the independence struggle; its ties with Africa go further back and much deeper. Not only was Brazil built upon the sweat and blood of slaves brought from western Africa throughout colonial and imperial eras, but the heritage of these slaves imprinted strong African nuances in modern Brazil. To this day, the African dimension remains very robust and apparent in Brazil, namely through its genetic, cultural (such as folklore, music, religion, literature and cuisine) and linguistic legacy.

Although Africa has been a constant element throughout Brazil's history, the links between them declined significantly after the abolition of slavery in 1888. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Africa figured very low in Brazil's foreign policy agenda. It surfaced briefly in the late 1950s in the framework of independence processes in the continent, and in the early 1960s under the presidencies of Janio Quadros and Joao Goulart, when Brazil opened diplomatic representations in eight African countries. This rapprochement, however, suddenly came to a halt by the military dictatorship that commenced in 1964. Throughout the rest of the decade, Brasilia's Africa policy was driven by its allegiance to Portugal (that against all odds kept its colonial grip over its African 'overseas provinces') and South Africa's apartheid regime, as the two countries accounted for most of its commercial exchanges with the continent.

The independence of Portuguese speaking African countries in the 1970s and the increasing economic allure of independent Africa led to a gradual shift, with 'Itamaraty' (Brazil's Ministry of External Relations) progressively adopting an anti-colonial and anti-apartheid stance. The steady democratisation of Brazil in the late 1980s led to the gradual liberalisation and stabilisation of its domestic economy throughout the 1990s, although it remained very inward looking. The improved macroeconomic situation of Brazil in the early 2000s coincided with Africa's economic revival, and this converging framework set the stage for the resurfacing of Africa in Brazil's foreign policy over the past decade. The quantum leap forward, however, largely resulted from the vision of Lula da Silva's presidency (2003-2010).

Although Brasilia maintained diplomatic relations with all African countries represented in the UN, Brazil had a relatively light diplomatic footprint in the continent when Lula came to power. Brazil has since then doubled the number of embassies in Africa, from 18 to 37, and African embassies in Brasilia have increased from 16 to 34.[1] During his two administrations, President Lula made a total of 28 visits (bilateral and multilateral) to the African continent, covering a total of 21 countries.[2] His successor, Dilma Russeff, has thus far visited five African countries over the past three years and has two more visits planned for 2013.

Brazil's new Africa discourse initiated by Lula draws heavily on the solidarity dimension rooted in the historical debt and cultural and ethnic ties with the continent. A closer analysis, however, reveals that the drivers behind this rapprochement are in reality much more pragmatic — namely political and economic.

THE POLITICAL DRIVERS

The warming up towards Africa in the 2000s in reality forms part of a broad foreign policy shift inside Itamaraty. The alliance with the US dominated Brazil's foreign policy paradigm until the late 1990s, cutting across the different regimes.[3] Some rival narratives nonetheless persisted within Itamaraty's bureaucracy that favoured a more independent foreign policy and argued for the diversification of partnerships. This line of thought gained traction in three different periods in Brazil's modern history: 1961-1964 (Jânio Quadros/João Goulart), 1974-1979 (Ernesto Geisel) and 2003-present (Lula da Silva/Dilma Rousseff).[4] In all three periods, the general aim was to counterbalance the dominant role of the US in Brazil's foreign policy. Itamaraty attempted to strengthen relations with other developing countries through the expansion of bilateral, regional and multilateral exchanges at various levels. However, the international framework and domestic context impaired Brasilia's efforts in its first two attempts.

1 Andre Souza, 'Brazilian Development Cooperation' (presentation, BRICS Academic Forum, Durban, South Africa, 12 March, 2013).

2 Secretariat of Diplomatic Planning, Ministry of External Relations, *Visitas Internacionais do Presidente Lula e Visitas ao Brasil de Chefes de Estado e de Chefes de Governo 2003-2010* (Brasilia, 2010), http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/temas/balanco-de-politica-externa-2003-2010/visitas-internacionais-do-presidente-lula-e-visitas-ao-brasil-de-chefes-de-estado-e-de-chefes-de-governo-2003-a-2010.

3 Carlos Milani, 'Brazilian Foreign Policy in Africa: Actors, Agendas and South-South Cooperation' (public lecture, Jan Smuts House, SAIIA, Johannesburg, South Africa, 27 February, 2013).

4 Patricia Soares Leite, *O Brasil e a Cooperação Sul-Sul em Três Momentos de Politica Externa: Os Governos de Jânio Quadros/João Goulart, Ernesto Geisel e Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva* (Brasilia: FUNAG, 2011).

Internal and international conditions became more favourable when Lula came to power.[5] Brazil had become a thriving democracy, boasting a stable and rising economy that was lifting millions out of poverty and enhancing Brazil's credibility abroad. The onset of the world economic crisis further eroded the dominance of the developed world and opened an unprecedented window of opportunity for the southern hemisphere to have a greater say in the international arena.

This framework finally brought to an end the enduring predominance of the US alliance paradigm in Brazil's foreign policy. Without underrating relations with developed countries, Lula's government placed a clear focus on the southern hemisphere, starting with its neighbours (South America, Mercosur) and the regional geometries that link Brazil to other parts of the global South (CPLP-Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries; IBSA; BRICS; ASA-America do Sul-Africa Summit; South Atlantic), which soon became the new dominant paradigm in Itamaraty.[6]

Brazil's rapprochement with the African continent over the past decade evolved within this significant foreign policy shift. By fostering strategic alliances with the developing world, Brazil aims to first promote the global South agenda within the current transformation of the international system into a more inclusive and equitable architecture. In the words of Lula: 'A new global political and economic geography will only be possible if actors with similar interests chose direct dialogue and joint action in international fora'. [7] Second, Brasília aims to boost its international stature internationally to better reflect its demographic and economic weight. Africa may not yet stand as an important stakeholder in the southern hemisphere, but it surely represents a key constituency. This is of critical importance for Brazil's pursuit of its international political agenda that includes a permanent seat in the UN Security Council.

THE ECONOMIC DRIVERS

Brazil's economic interests in the African continent are equally strong. The emergence of a more stable and dynamic Africa in the 2000s coincided with the globalisation of Brazilian economy. The geological, climatic, economic and social similarities between Brazil and Africa present endless opportunities for Brazilian investors. These include Brazilian technology and expertise in infrastructure construction, tropical agriculture and agribusiness, biofuels, hydrocarbons exploration, mining and telecommunications. The exponential growth in Brazil-Africa trade and investment flows over the past decade clearly reflects this.

Trade

Brazil-Africa trade has expanded nearly seven fold over the past 12 years, having surged from $4.3 billion to $26.5 billion from 2000 to 2012. Although Africa still accounts for only a small part of Brazil imports (6.8 percent in 2011) and exports (4.8 percent in 2011),[8] Africa's stake in Brazil's foreign trade overall increased steadily from 3.9 percent to 5.7 percent between 2000 and 2012. Bilateral trade has the potential to expand further in the near future, particularly when taking into account the complementarities mentioned above.[9]

5 Ibid, 11.

6 Carlos Milani, 'Brazilian Foreign Policy in Africa: Actors, Agendas and South-South Cooperation' (public lecture, Jan Smuts House, SAIIA, Johannesburg, South Africa, 27 February, 2013).

7 Lula da Silva, 'Opening Speech at the Africa-South America Summit, Abuja-Nigeria, 30 November' in Ministry of External Relations, *Discursos Selecionados do Presidente Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva 2006* (Brasilia: FUNAG, 2008), 65.

8 Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade, SECEX, *Balança Comercial Brasileira Dados Consolidados, 2011*, http://www.desenvolvimento.gov.br/arquivos/dwnl_1331125742.pdf, 7 and 17.

9 For all figures in this paragraph (unless otherwise stated): MDICE-SECEX, *Intercâmbio Commercial Brasileiro: Paises e Blocos Económicos 2012* http://www.desenvolvimento.gov.br/sitio/interna/interna.php?area=5&menu=576.

A closer look at bilateral trade flows highlights a number of distinctive features. Since the late 1990s, trade balance has presented a persistent healthy surplus for Africa as a whole. In 2012, bilateral trade registered a deficit of -$2.05 billion for Brasilia. This is largely explained by Brazil-Nigeria trade flows, its largest trade partner in the continent, with which it has a trade deficit of -$6.95 billion, a result of heavy of oil imports. Brazil has a surplus with most other countries. Another telling feature is that Brazil-Africa trade is very concentrated in a handful of countries. In 2012, four countries alone accounted for nearly 60 percent of Brazil-Africa trade: Nigeria ($9.1 billion), Egypt ($3 billion), South Africa ($2.6 billion) and Angola ($1.2 billion).[10] Brazil's exports to the continent are relatively balanced by aggregated value: 42 percent manufactured, 27 percent semi-manufactured, 31 percent basic.[11] As for imports, there is a high concentration on natural resources: 66 percent fuels (oil, natural gas and liquefied natural gas — mostly originating from Nigeria) and 34 percent raw materials. [12]

Although this may at first sight resemble China's trade with Africa, the logic behind this differs greatly. Brazil has a rich endowment of mineral resources and consequently does not have many energy security concerns. Brazil's imports oil from Africa (Nigeria) primarily because Africa's oil is more suitable for the existing refinery complex in Brazil (heavy grades). Oil imports from Africa will likely diminish when Brazil completes the new refineries and the conversion of the old ones to suit the oil coming from the massive pre-salt oil reservoirs (light grades).

Investment

Brazil only became a significant source of overseas foreign direct investment (OFDI) in the 2000s. Its FDI stock expanded from $50 billion in 2001 to $181 billion in 2010.[13] Even though the number of Brazilian MNCs investing overseas has steadily increased over the past decade, OFDI stock remains highly concentrated in a small number of companies. The top four companies (Itau-Unibanco, banking; Vale, mining; Odebrecht, construction; Petrobras, hydrocarbons) account for 78 percent of Brazil's OFDI stock. Brazilian OFDI stock in the primary sector rose substantially in recent years, from two percent in 2008 to three percent in 2010, totaling nearly $57 billion. The lion's share is mining and quarrying ($49.6 billion), mainly driven by Vale's foreign assets, followed by hydrocarbons ($6.8 billion) mostly under Petrobras.[14] Not surprisingly, a significant share of these investments target Latin America and Africa.

Much like China's, Brazil's OFDI into Africa targets strategic sectors such as mining, energy and infrastructure. However, Brazil's OFDI differs quite a lot in terms of motivations, structure and policies. As mentioned before, domestic demand does not drive Brazil investments. Brazil is becoming a major oil producer (owing to its newly found pre-salt hydrocarbons reservoirs) and sits on largely unexplored rich mineral deposits (such as iron ore, phosphates and nickel). Brazilian resources MNEs are driven by market and profit considerations, and they perceive developing regions as an expanding ground for their operations rather than pursuing a strategy to secure resources. Moreover, unlike Chinese resources companies, Brazilian ones are not fully state owned enterprises. Although Petrobras and Vale have a para-statal background, they were partly privatised in the 1990s. Even though Brasilia kept stakes in both companies (a majority sharehold in Petrobras and a smaller stake in Vale), these are now also accountable to their private shareholders, meaning that, unlike China, Brasilia has to reconcile national interests with corporate considerations.

10 Ibid.
11 Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade - SECEX, *Balança Comercial Brasileira Dados Consolidados, 2011*, http://www.desenvolvimento.gov.br/arquivos/dwnl_1331125742.pdf, 7 and 17.
12 Ibid.
13 Milton Campanario, Eva Stal and Marcelo da Silva, 'Outward FDI from Brazil and its Policy Context,' *Columbia FDI Profiles* (May 2012), 12.
14 These figures are according to the Brazilian Central Bank (ibid., 10-13.)

At the same time, Brasilia has yet to develop a comprehensive institutional policy to support OFDI.[15] Although the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES in its Portuguese acronym) has a couple of credit lines (export credit facilities) in place to stimulate Brazilian companies' investments overseas (offering low interest rates), they are not easily accessible to SMEs.[16] This state of affairs may, however, change in the short term, since OFDI is increasingly seen as a critical instrument to improve the competiveness of Brazilian companies. Brazil is currently discussing the creation of an Export Import Bank to encourage foreign trade and investment and a state owned investment fund (sovereign wealth fund — higher risk tolerance than national banks) to invest some of Brazil's foreign exchange reserves in cross border mergers and acquisitions and greenfield projects in response to new investment opportunities.[17]

In sum, if on the one hand the internationalisation strategies of Brazilian MNEs are much more detached from politics in Brasilia, on the other hand they enjoy much less financial and diplomatic support from their government than, for instance, their Chinese counterparts. Still, they have a number of similarities regarding their business style in Africa. The largest Brazilian mining projects in the continent (Vale's investments in Guinea and Mozambique) also knit together mining exploration with supporting infrastructure (namely railways and ports), with Vale partnering up preferentially with Brazilian construction companies (namely Odebrecht). Unlike their Chinese counterparts, Brazilian construction enterprises are fully private. They do, however, rely to some extent on BNDES and Banco do Brazil credit facilities for their operations abroad. Similar to China, Brazilian credit lines to African countries target mostly infrastructure development and are tied to procurement of services and equipment in Brazil. However, Brazilian companies hire most of the labour force locally (Odebrecht is the largest private employer in Angola), invest in capacity building and often hire them for operations in other parts of the continent.[18] Although Brasilia does not make use of the Chinese model of infrastructure for resources loans, it favours resources revenue as guarantee for its credit lines. Brazil has had this guarantee system running with Angola since 2004 (five credit lines worth $5.2 billion) and has considered applying this same guarantee formula to its credit lines to Mozambique (coal revenue) and Ghana (cocoa, oil) to circumvent risk in countries with low credit ratings.[19]

The majority of Brazilian investment in the continent is channelled by the large oil and mining corporations (Vale and Petrobras) and the construction companies (Odebrecht, Andrade Gutierrez and Camargo Correa). Most of these companies have had operations in Africa since the late 1970s, but mostly only in Portuguese speaking countries until the past decade. Their operations now spread across south, west and north Africa, with Angola and South Africa as the largest OFDI recipients.[20] The footprint of Brazilian SMEs in the continent remains very sparse, but is growing thanks to Brazil's economic diplomacy.[21]

Although Brazil-Africa trade and investment flows have made remarkable progress over the past decade and future prospects seem very promising, a number of serious challenges exist. One involves communication across the Atlantic (air, maritime and telecommunications). Specific to the African side, other challenges include infrastructure bottlenecks, unattractive investment environment (incentives and protection), unstable regulatory frameworks, inefficient institutional framework (the red tape and heavy bureaucracy) and scarcity of qualified labour.[22] On the Brazilian side, these include the poor efficiency of institutional, logistic, diplomatic and financial support and oftentimes the poor corporate social responsibility practices of its companies.

15 Pio Pena Filho, 'O Investimento do Brasil em Africa' (public lecture, Second Brazil-Africa Forum, Fortaleza, Brazil, 9 May, 2012).
16 Interview with employee at the International Department of the BNDES, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 23 May, 2012.
17 Milton Campanario, Eva Stal and Marcelo da Silva, 8.
18 Interview with employee, Vale-Mozambique, Maputo, Mozambique, 20 February, 2012
19 Interview with employee at the BNDES- international Department, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 23 May, 2012.
20 World Bank, *Brazil and Sub-Saharan Africa: South-South Partnering for Growth* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2012), http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFRICAEXT/Resources/africa-brazil-bridging-final.pdf, 82- 83.
21 Interview with employee at the Department of Trade and Investment Promotion, Ministry of External Relations, Brasilia, Brazil, 16 May, 2012.
22 Interview with a representative of the Brazil Entrepreneurs Association of Angola, Luanda, Angola, 18 February, 2013

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Brazil is still a receiving country and its history as a cooperation provider is relatively recent. Nevertheless, development cooperation has quickly become a key feature in Brazil's efforts to promote the South-South cause. Lula's second administration (2006-2010) greatly boosted and refined development cooperation as a strategic instrument to push forward Brazil's foreign policy agenda.[23]

Brazilian cooperation for international development includes various modalities: humanitarian assistance, scholarships for foreigners, technical cooperation and contributions to international organisations. According to a 2010 study by the Institute for Economic Applied Research (IPEA) and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC in its Portuguese acronym), the cumulative value of Brazilian development cooperation resources reached 2.9 billion Reais (equivalent to $1.7 billion) between 2005 and 2009. The bulk of these resources went to contributions to international organisations, regional banks and peacekeeping operations (76 percent), followed by scholarships to foreign students (10 percent — mostly directed at Latin America and Portuguese speaking countries), humanitarian aid (five percent, — mostly into Latin America followed by Africa) and technical cooperation (nine per cent — with Africa as a major beneficiary).[24] Despite its relatively low financial allocation,[25] the impact of technical cooperation goes much beyond these figures. Through this instrument, rooted on solidarity diplomacy, Brazil makes its knowledge and experience available to other developing countries aiming to promote their economic and social development.[26]

Clearly Lula's administration saw technical cooperation as a strategic soft power tool. This explains the substantial increase of the ABC budget in the second term of Lula's presidency, which tripled between 2005 and 2009.[27] Brazilian technical cooperation, run by the ABC under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is strongly rooted in South-South solidarity principles and on its own development experience grounded on democratisation, economic growth and equalitarian distribution of wealth.[28] According to official Brazilian records, its technical cooperation subscribes to the following set of principles: knowledge transfer, capacity building, use of local labour, project design based on local specificities, no conditionality, respect for sovereignty and drive by demand.[29] Brazilian diplomats also emphasise the different nature of its cooperation vis-à-vis traditional donors, stating that it does not provide aid but rather offers a partnership rooted in mutual benefit and peer-learning embedded in the spirit of horizontal cooperation, and that it ultimately aims to plant the seeds for autonomous development. [30]

The ABC currently has technical projects in 81 countries around the world (36 in Africa). Its cooperation relies on the deployment of its own development solutions, which found in Africa a fertile terrain owing to the many similarities in terms of structural conditions and challenges — 'for each African problem, there is a Brazilian solution'.[31]

The lion's share of Brazilian technical assistance goes to training and capacity building (90 percent done bilaterally and the remainder multilaterally). Africa is the main recipient of technical assistance, in particular the Portuguese speaking countries (Mozambique is currently the single largest recipient)[32] owing to historic and cultural ties. ABC's cooperation focuses mainly on five areas: skills development (in partnership with

23 Interview with the director of Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (ABC), Brasilia, Brazil, 17 May, 2012.

24 IPEA and ABC, *Cooperação Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento Internacional: 2005-2009* (Brasilia: Instituto de Pesquisa Economica Aplicada and Agencia Brasileira de Cooperação, 2010), http://www.ipea.gov.br/portal/images/stories/PDFs/Book_Cooperao_Brasileira.pdf, 21.

25 The figure for Brazilian technical cooperation is based on the budget allocated for the ABC, but in reality it is much higher as the agency draws heavily on human and financial resources paid for by other ministries (namely agriculture and health) to pursue its projects, making it difficult to account for the real total cost.

26 IPEA and ABC, *Cooperação Brasileira para o Desenvolvimento Internacional: 2005-2009*, 32.

27 Ibid, 34.

28 Interview with the director of Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (ABC), Brasilia, Brazil, 17 May, 2012.

29 Ministry of External Relations, http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/temas/cooperacao-tecnica.

30 Ibid.

31 Interview with an ABC representative, Maputo, Mozambique, 16 February, 2012

32 Interview with an ABC Department of Bilateral Relations representative, Brasília, Brazil, 15 May, 2012.

SENAI, the national service for industrial learning); education (reproduction of successful programmes such as *bolsa escola* or *alfabetização solidária*); public health (in partnership with the ministry of Health and Fundação Oswaldo Cruz — FIOCRUZ, prevention and control of HIV, malaria and other tropical diseases, technological transfer and medication production); agriculture (in association with EMBRAPA, focusing on biofuels projects and tropical agriculture); social development (fostering the state's role in promoting social development and fighting inequalities by adapting Brazilian successful programmes such as *bolsa familia* and *fome zero*).

In addition to bilateral and multilateral components, Brazilian technical cooperation also has an important trilateral dimension. Trilateral cooperation projects stem from Brazil's experience as a recipient and aims to give continuity to this valuable legacy. Therefore, most of traditional donors that partner up with Brazil to pursue cooperation projects in other developing states had previously engaged in technical cooperation in Brazil. In general, the developed country provides the financing and Brazil provides the expertise and technology to run the project. This arrangement allows Brazil to circumvent the limitations of its financial capacity. The main developed partners in this regard include Japan, the US, and Germany. Trilateral projects also involve multilateral organisations (the World Bank, UNDP) and sub-national institutions (such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in PROSAVANA in Mozambique). [33]

Brazil's technical cooperation with Africa has come a very long way in a very short time, mostly due to Lula de Silva's enthusiasm. However, this progress has led to some dysfunctional challenges that Brazil must address for its technical cooperation to prosper. Firstly, the massive expansion of cooperation projects in a short period of time has not only created severe capacity overstretch (human and financial resources)[34] but also considerable institutional fragmentation, poor central planning and coordination among all agents involved (ABC, BNDES, SOEs and various ministries).[35] This produces overlaps and prevents synergies, undermines evaluation of costs and benefits and leads to ad-hoc projects that present serious long term planning challenges. [36] Second, Brazil still lacks a Cooperation Law (currently in discussion, but progressing very slowly) necessary to clarify the authority line, legitimise the use of public funds and regulate the funding of cooperation projects — this is the main reason why Brazil's cooperation still lacks a financial component, which has proven extremely impairing.[37] Third, Brazil needs to address the increasing pressure to include civil society in this process, in order to make it more democratic and transparent as these funds originate from tax payers in a country that still faces a lot of economic and social challenges.[38] Fourth, the ownership of the recipient country is in some cases questionable (flow is unidirectional) and this represents a direct threat to Brazil's credentials as a South-South partner in the future.[39] Lastly, the institutional structure lacks a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to assess the impact of its cooperation.[40] This is critical for correcting inefficiencies, avoiding waste of resources and ensuring the expected results, and key for gaining full domestic legitimacy as well as credibility abroad.

33 Interview with an ABC Department of Trilateral Cooperation representative, Brasilia, Brazil, 15 May, 2012.
34 Interview at the BRICS Policy Centre Director, Durban, South Africa, 12 March, 2013.
35 Andre Souza, 'Brazilian Development Cooperation' (presentation, BRICS Academic Forum, Durban, South Africa, 12 March, 2013).
36 Ibid.
37 Interview with the director of the BRICS Policy Centre, Durban, South Africa, 12 March, 2013.
38 Paulo Esteves, 'The BRICS and the Reshaping of International Development Policy' (public lecture, Jan Smuts House, SAIIA, Johannesburg, South Africa, 19 March, 2013).
39 Ibid.
40 Interview with a professor from the University of Brasília, IR Department, Brasília, Brazil, 17 May, 2012.

CONCLUSION

Mostly owing to Lula da Silva's vigorous impulse, Brazil is increasingly regarded as a reliable development partner in (and outside) Africa. Even though it has a much smaller scale engagement in the continent than other emerging countries like China, Brazil enjoys a very comfortable position sustained by a number of critical comparative advantages that promise more efficient solutions for African development problems. In addition to the advantage of a greater cultural and linguistic proximity, significant geographical affinities give Brazil an edge, especially when it comes to agriculture cooperation. Brazil's cooperation practices in the continent have substantiated its normative discourse with concrete actions in a very short period of time, which has greatly enhanced its prestige in the region. Brazil has generally received less criticism regarding the way it engages with the continent, namely from traditional donors that seem to perceive Brazil as a more palatable form of South-South cooperation.

The solidarity argument, however, does not exclude other aspirations. Brazil's economic engagement in the continent has become much more consequential over the years, with its trade and investment now reaching far beyond the Lusophone boundaries. Yet, as companies expand their operations in the continent, some tensions have begun to show. Much like China, the profit driven orientations of the private sector pose a threat to Brazil's image as the champion of the South-South cause despite Brasilia's coordinating efforts.

As Brazil's engagement with Africa deepens, it is likely that more friction between the various agents and actors as well as between norms and practices will emerge. The strain has already become apparent within the cooperation mechanism. Making justice to her outstanding reputation as a technocrat, Rousseff seems aware of the challenges and Brasilia has begun the process of readjusting the existing institutional structure. It does not involve a downscaling of Brazil-Africa relations, but a mere lowering of intensity while the reformulation proceeds. Yet the question remains whether Brazil will manage to uphold its South-South solidarity principles while expanding its economic footprint in the continent. ■