

*Brazil's Foreign Policy and Asymmetrical Partnership with China and Japan,
2003-2015*

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The Asia-Pacific Conference on Security and International Relations 2016
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

In this paper I will briefly present by a qualitative analysis the main achievements of Brazilian Foreign Policy in partnering with both Asian states, as well as challenges to in choosing China as a main partner in Asia. Brazil is among the seven largest economies in the world and Asia has always been a priority in its foreign policy agenda in the twenty-first century. Therefore, Japan as the third largest economy and China as the second largest economy in the world, have reinforced Brazilian interest in strengthening further diplomatic ties with both actors in question. Besides, due to China's growth during the last years, Brazilian foreign policy agenda has also been shaped by such transformations, shedding light upon Sino-Brazilian relations in a global multilateral manner (South-South Cooperation), whereas Japan- Brazilian relations have remained under a hemispherical bilateral ties basis.

Thus, Brazil has tried to solve an important question which relates to how to strengthen political partnership with Japan and diplomatic ties, at a time when China has perceived Brazil's domestic political crisis as an opportunity to secure natural resources and raw materials transference for its development project, in exchange for amounts of Foreign Assistance aiming at securitization and channeling of resources. I argue that Brazil remains weak to impose conditions on the bilateral relations, worsened by domestic political crisis initiated in 2013, allied with lack of strong domestic policies to regulate more expressively the bilateral relations towards China and Japan.

Keywords: Brazil Foreign Policy, China, Japan, South-South Cooperation, North-South Cooperation

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Introduction

Changes occasioned in the post-Cold War period and the world financial crisis, as well as the emergence of new actors in the international context, has generated new standards of political-economy asymmetries that diverge from the traditional approach. Brazil, for instance, has been both a partner and recipient emerging country of development assistance from both Asian powerful countries, China and Japan. More than ever, the cooperation assistance in the present century has not only focused on economic aspects and access to markets alone but also at political aspects of it, equally aiming at shaping the international order, regimes and institutions in accordance with developing nations interests.

Allied to the fact Brazil's government under the President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva firmly promoted the common cooperation agenda between the nations of the South (developing countries), Brazil's foreign policy conduct, targets and objectives suffered a dramatic change, altering its course from the traditional axis Europe-The United States, towards nations of Africa, Middle-East and East-Asia. Brazil and China in this sense, are both among the top emerging/developing economies in the twenty-first century promoting South-South Strategic Partnership under a mutual benefit rhetoric, and on the other, Japan has also pursued to rethink its international insertion by fostering a Global Partnership with Brazil, under South-South partnership (trilateral cooperation).

Thus, Japan as the third biggest economy and China as the global second largest economy (The World Bank 2016)¹, has reinforced Brazilian interest in strengthening further diplomatic ties with both actors in question. Besides, due to a prominent growth of China during the last years, Brazilian foreign policy agenda has also been shaped by such transformations, shedding light upon Sino-Brazilian relations in a global multilateral manner (South-South Cooperation), whereas Japan-Brazilian relations have remained mostly under a hemispherical bilateral tie basis (Uehara & Casaroes 2013, p.76-78).

Therefore, Japan, as one of the main donors of ODA (Official Development Assistance) to Brazil under a concept of traditional partnership and, whose the second largest Japanese community abroad is established since the beginning of the twentieth century, has also firmed important joint agreements with Brazil during the past years. This has demonstrated substantial cooperation through JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency); in addition, a relevant factor is that the membership in the G4 group of countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil 2011)² has as well proven political importance in the relationship between both countries. Moreover, cooperation in innovation, technology and science is of high priority on the bilateral agenda.

On the other side, China has remarkably become one of the most important donors of Foreign Assistance to Brazil in the last decade, under a concept of a new strategic partnership through the so-called South-South Cooperation³. Therefore, China has

¹ Updated information retrieved from The World Bank annual indicator 2016. Accessed in 2016/03/15.

² G4 is an informal group of nations established in 2004 and is formed by Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan. Together these actors aim at being assigned permanent seats at the Security Council of the United Nations. Accessed on 2016/03/15.

³ South-South Cooperation emerged formally in the post-Second World War II context, when international cooperation for development began to play a key role as an instrument of foreign policy of developing countries, both for the internationalization

been regarded as a great partner because of its political, economic, financial and military powers in the international community. Moreover, the cooperative ties is also reinforced by the relationship under the membership in informal forums and institutions such as the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) group, G20 group, BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India, and China), and institutions such as NDB – BRICS (New Development Bank BRICS)⁴ and AIIB (Asian Infrastructure and Investments Bank)⁵.

However, Brazil's attachment to China's political-economic cooperation initiatives in particular since the beginning of the year 2000s under the concept of win-win cooperation, has provoked a divergence of opinions towards this new dilemma among Brazil's civil society and decision makers. It is in one hand, how to offset its political-economy interests by partnering with both active and political competing Asian states and how to increase material resources vital for Brazil's interests for development and, on the other hand, how to minimize emerging security initiatives posed by China's increasing presence and interests in Latin America. On the other side, I argue that Brazil remained relatively weak to stipulate conditions on the bilateral relations, worsened by internal political crisis initiated in 2013, allied with a lack of clear internal policies to regulate more expressively the bilateral relations towards China and Japan.

In special, the increasing interest of Chinese Foreign Assistance in core sectors of Brazil's society in a short period of the last 13 years, appears to be one of emerging international/external factors that deserve attention of Brazilian policy makers, as to assist Brazil to evenly balance its relations not solely towards China, but also with Japan.

Literature Review

During the period in question, there was a considerable change in the way Brazil managed international relations. Formerly dominated by a traditional relationship concept between developing and developed countries, from the beginning of 2003 onwards, Brazil firmly sought to construct an alternative channel to defend its national interests, and no longer be subordinated and restricted entirely to the United States of America or other developed countries of Europe.

Altemani (2011) points that Japan is seeking a new relationship format that overcomes the basic prevalent pattern of exchange of raw materials for manufactured products. The new format aims at an interaction between capital, technology, natural

of its governance practices and for the projection of their models of capitalism. Therefore, in terms of international development, the South-South Cooperation was firstly celebrated in the Bandung Conference in 1955, and more than a substitution, it was seen as an alternative to the North-South Cooperation due to policies that are perceived to generate more horizontal relations, less asymmetry and based on solidarity among developing countries (Milani and Carvalho, 2013:11-12).

⁴ China, Brazil, India, Russia and South Africa on July 15, 2014, established the Bank with a purpose of catalyzing means for continual development projects and infrastructure inside BRICS members and third developing and emerging nations, aggregating the actual endeavors of regional and multilateral economic and commercial institutions for worldwide expansion and development (NDB BRICS 2015). Accessed on 2016/05/18

⁵ The AIIB was regarded "to support economic integration and interrelation in the region" and "cooperate with actual multilateral development financial institutions". Leaders from 22 member countries signed the October 2014 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to institute the AIIB and Beijing was chosen as the host city for the Bank headquarters (AIIB 2015) Accessed on 2016/05/18

resources, and also the market, which corresponds to a partnership for development globally.

Oliveira and Lessa (2006), highlight that emergent powers hold possibilities of action that should be approached. In contrast to bipolarity, in which two superpowers maintained preponderance of force over other countries, the changing multipolar system is likely to be turning to three equal powers (the United States, China/Japan and the European Union), and other regional actors with relative capacity (Brazil, India and South Africa). Japan was also a priority in the Brazilian targets during 2003 to 2015, and in contrast to the strategy towards China, Brazil sought to strengthen a relationship with Japan based on mutual interests of capacity generation, by technological expertise training that could enable Brazil to reinforce its position intra and extra-regionally; and in the case of Japan, expand its image in the region and secure natural resources for its economy. Both countries began to act jointly under the South-South Cooperation strategy, transferring and providing technological cooperation to third developing countries.

Carranco (2011) claims that apart from the obvious benefits Brazil received from the motivational veil of human security developed by Japan in projects in Brazil, it in reality appears to generate a channel to secure the availability of natural resources and raw materials to ensure Japan's needs. Moreover, this has led Brazil to export minerals, especially iron, which has represented 40% of Brazil exports to Japan. Uehara (2013) on the contrary shows the positive effects of the Japanese ODA's effort to Brazil. He argues it should also be said that in addition to the greater relative importance of Brazil outside the Asian region for technical assistance, Japanese contributions have shown dynamism and scope, encompassing various fields (medical, technological, environmental, industrial, and so on). It is worth noting that Japan's assistance has surpassed the bilateral interests as project actions to other countries in the form of programs called trilateral or triangular.

Masiero and Ogasavara (2011) bring to our attention that currently, relations between Brazil and Japan are in danger of being eclipsed by the rapid Chinese expansion in the Latin American continent, which, at present, restructures the regional areas as well as global one. In this context, it is possible to see an intensification of Sino- Brazilian diplomacy. Therefore, from 2003 to 2015, Brazil and China demonstrated convergence in interests, strategy and foreign policy guidelines. Both countries similarly presented foreign policy as instruments of national policy for development, conferring to development issues a character of national security. It is interesting, in the case of China and Brazil, that beyond the same international questions, these countries were equally experiencing internal transformations and the quest for a better image or international credibility (Oliveira 2012:85-91).

To a certain extent, scholars argue the parameters of Latin America-China cooperation have been widened from natural resources based to high technology investments. Despite a slow pace, in recent years, China and Brazil have begun cooperation for the use of atomic energy allegedly for peaceful objectives and also in outer space, conducting joint research on the programs such as earth resources exploration-satellite techniques. On the other hand, others contest this idea of benefits only, by arguing that China creates a challenge to Latin America regarding the strategy of economic development and the promotion of industrial structure.

Consequently, not only friendly dialogues and consultations are needed, but also related corrections and policy-making are a must.

Haibin (2015) asserts that certainly, Chinese Foreign Assistance/Development Cooperation will be of great support for countries from Latin America in the pursuance of development, including Brazil. However, China sends a clear message that even though the relationship is commodity-based or resource secured, it expects that receiving countries develop their industrial capacity.

On one hand, all the authors presented in a very interesting manner how Japan could acquire benefits by partnering with Brazil, the latter being a relevant natural resources supplier and triangular cooperation partner, and how Brazil could promote development domestically along with the promotion of its international image with a traditional partner. Also, literature and research on China-Brazil relations highlight the changing roles caused by China's growth in economy and politics in recent years; thus, authors substantially demonstrated China's motivations to seek new partnerships in Latin America, at the same time as Brazil demonstrated intentions to benefit from partnering with China as an emergent actor, by the promotion of South-South Cooperation to strengthen their political and economy agenda internationally.

On the other hand, my focus in this present paper on Brazil's side, as a receiver country of Official Development Assistance (Japan) and Foreign Assistance (China), during a relative stable period from 2003 to 2012 and also the midst of political instability, 2013 to 2015. Thus I will continue from the point where Brazil's balance of priorities is taken into account, to understand ways Brazil has seen the increasingly partnering with China as a strategy, and also Japan's great attempts to renew its old ties with Brazil during the period of 2003 to 2015, supported by its long history of cooperation.

Moreover, due to the importance is given to Japan and China as relevant Asian partners in the Brazilian foreign policy agenda, I will perform a comparative case study to understand the political aspects of China's Foreign Assistance and Japan's Official Development Assistance to Brazil; as well as their cooperation objectives and interests towards the latter during the last decade.

Methodology and methods

This paper will be written through a qualitative method. I opted to utilize this method taking into consideration that it is related to comprehension and interpretation of certain events from a holistic perspective; moreover, it is an exploratory method not aiming at acquiring numbers and statistical results, but insights to provide better decision making process concerning the problem of this investigation. This method is suitable for this particular research in the sense that it creates a broader and flexible analysis channel to understand the behaviors and strategies applied by the Brazilian government towards cooperation and partnership with China and Japan.

Therefore, data from official sources (state leaders discourse, cooperation agreements, minutes of leaders meetings, press releases), publications from research institutes and correlated literature will be utilized. In addition, the problem investigation will be carried out by utilizing a categorization developed by Van Der Veen (2011) in his

work titled “*Ideas, Interests and Foreign Aid*” published by Cambridge University Press, from which I will depart my analysis utilizing the combination of three theoretical backgrounds such as Neorealism (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001), World Systems (Fiori, 2009; Wallerstein 2006), Engage-but-Hedge concept of states behavior in International Relations (Tessman and Wolfe 2011; Hoo, 2016) to explain the object of this research.

Discussion

Official Development Assistance and Foreign Assistance/Development Cooperation still cause some confusion relating to a proper definition, but many would assert that they might be understood as almost the same term. Currently, discussions have been held to rethink and differentiate the concepts. In general terms, some authors consider that whereas North-South development assistance is guided by the philosophical principle of philanthropy and altruism. South-South Cooperation (SSC) is on the contrary oriented by the principles of mutual benefits (Sachin Saturvedi, 2012:23, cited in Melo e Souza 2014:12) and some declared pragmatism.

According to Aragusuku (2011), Japan has recently changed from its ODA strategy, formerly dedicated to promoting Japan’s image internationally through economic power, to a discourse devoted the promotion of human security. In the previous decade, Japan has indeed pursued the development of its international role to fulfill its geopolitical interests along with a certain degree of apparent altruism. Thus, even though Asia is still its focus of action, because of China’s increasing presence in Latin America in the last years, Japan has also acknowledged the importance of renewing contacts with the West.

Broadly speaking, authors such as Bräutigam (2011) argue that China’s Foreign Assistance/Development Cooperation is also characterized by incorporating zero-interest loans and its concessionality, grants and low fixed rates concessional loans. Moreover, in contrast to Japan, in which JICA is the responsible agency for ODA management, in China, the matter is entirely coordinated by the Ministry of Commerce. Moreover, China appears to prefer to operationalize its foreign assistance by direct government-to-government relations, because it regards foreign assistance/development cooperation as one of the most and relevant strategies of the country abroad.

Regarding geopolitics, China seems to reject the terms coined by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries, claiming to possess its interpretation of the international system. Such terms are widely known as emergent powers, (new) donors and (emerging) foreign assistance, and instead it has promoted itself as a developing country with a market economy, partner and development cooperation or partnership with mutual benefits (win-win). Consequently the BRICS countries, especially Brazil, have sought to pursue the south-south cooperation with a win-win understanding, and in this sense, for reasons to be considered in the following sections, it appears Brazil remains closer to China’s concept of international cooperation to a certain extent, despite the fact it still maintains a discourse that both developing (China) and developed (Japan) countries are essential partners to Brazil’s international engagement, regardless of their positions in the international community.

Flemes (2010) asserts that Brazil has lived in a complex position in world politics that has pushed it to construct global alliances, having to cope with the condition of a center/periphery actor in the current world order and as a regional propeller in international politics. Therefore, as a pivotal middle power, Brazil is seen as such because of its international behavior rather than its material capabilities or power.

Brazil's strategy is of seeking an autonomous and new liberal-developmental foreign policy agenda aimed wholly at promoting the country's image internationally. Experts appear to believe that such efforts have indeed generated relatively good results, and its engagement as an emerging economy (under BRICS influence umbrella, mostly thanks to China) allied to social development causes during the President Lula's mandate, provided substantial political voice power to Brazil. This can be perceived from the year 2005, for instance, when Brazil achieved a prominent position globally by accomplishing economic growth and social inclusion.

However, from 2011, during the term of office of President Dilma Rousseff, Brazil started to demonstrate some internal institutional weakness and contradictions. Factors such as not rethinking its government priorities since the former government period, shown by the absence of consideration of the pressure for changes from the international system (world crisis), as well as not pondering the new demands of civil society in promoting no dialogue with it, appears to have played a significant role in worsening the asymmetry of Brazil regarding its international strategic partnerships with Asia, for instance.

In other words, due to the lack of a clear plan to guide its foreign affairs regarding the demands of public policies in this period has impacted the country's international bargaining power considerably. The result was the domestic political and economic crisis starting in mid-2012, as well the reduction of material resources capability in international negotiation. In other words, this can be translated into generating "specific legislation to define the objectives, scope, mechanisms, competences and process of development cooperation" (Suyama et al., 2016:30).

The impact caused by not presenting a revision of its choices to orientate its foreign policy, mostly with China, besides being fully committed to concentrating all efforts in the promotion of its international image as an emerging country, appears to have also had implications for its relations with Japan. It is possible to perceive at the same time that the behavior adopted by Brazil government in the condition of a middle-power presents some dilemmas. That is to say, its interest in partnering with China contradicts its strategic hedging behavior when considering the substantial interest of partnership with Japan under South-South trilateral cooperation. Taking into account either economic or geopolitical power interest, Brazil advocates acting with caution to become less dependent on a materially powerful China⁶, which has created divided opinions in the Brazilian society.

Consequently, Japan in particular has reacted as to strengthen its presence and secure its interests with Brazil amidst China's growing cooperation and partnership agreements in the region, including the military ones. Therefore, to analyze ODA/FA

⁶ Brazil is pursuing a strategy of latent multi-institutionalization, which is reflected in its omnidirectional presence on the stage of global alliances, when all of them are at a low degree of institutionalization (Flemes, 2010:421-422).

as a political tool for securitizing a country's material needs, the explanation for such competition and the position of Brazil as both a recipient-partner and a strategic hedging country, can be analyzed through the lens of the categorization given by Van Der Veen (2011):

<i>Aid Frames</i>	Objectives of bilateral cooperation
Security	Increasing the donor country's own physical security (support allies, oppose Communism, etc).
Power and influence	Pursue power: Increasing the donor country's own power internationally through increasing leverage vis-à-vis others, winning allies and prestige
Wealth and economic self-interest	Defending one's own economic position, both by augmenting one's own presence on the economies targeted for aid and helping one's own export sectors
Enlightened self-interest	Supplying of global common goods such as peace, stability, environment protection and others
Reputation self-affirmation	Creating a certain image in international relations and also improving one's own reputation internationally
Obligation and duty	Coping with certain feelings of historical obligation towards other countries and regions (more common in former colonial powers but can be present in other countries as well)
Humanitarianism	A perceived need of contributing to the well-being of poor societies worldwide

Figure 1 – Aid Frames⁷

Security, Power and Influence

According to official documents⁸, exchange of defense and military personnel aimed at training Brazilians in Chinese military schools has been conducted successfully during recent years. As already mentioned, China understands military cooperation to be part of the budget of its Foreign Assistance for development cooperation.

Chenoy et al (2016:208), adds that BRICS group, in this analysis –Brazil and China, claim a distinct approach of development model, criticizing traditional types of foreign assistance, arguing for a wider concept of foreign Assistance/Development Cooperation that included peacekeeping, business and trade. A possible consequence for other third developing countries, in this sense, is the current rapid paradigm shift in development cooperation. Moreover, military cooperation between both countries includes technological cooperation, ballistic missiles, remote censoring, cyber warfare and advanced communications and protection of natural resources⁹. Horta (2007) also asserts that since the beginning of the previous decade, China's central government has utilized the People's Liberation Army as a channel to achieve favorable political and economic relations abroad. In the last years, Brazilian colonels and also junior officers from the armed forces have been sent to China for military and language

⁷ Source: Van Der Veen (2011), page 10,45,57.

⁸ Related official documents can be found at Ministry of Defense of Brazil website. Accessed in 2016/07/28

⁹ See Horta (2015:13)

training¹⁰. Conversely, very few Chinese military staff has been sent to Brazil, allegedly because of ideological reasons.

Brazil has also been reported to have acquired substantial knowledge through cooperating with China in defense matters, especially in rocket development technology, an area which its military scientists have found difficult to master¹¹.

According to a neorealist explanation, Brazil has agreed to a certain extent to bandwagon with China; on one hand because of the pragmatic intentions of increasing its arms industry and generation of capital, and on the other hand because of the perception of opportunities to reshape the rules and regimes of the international system (global governance¹²), allegedly constructed by rich nations from the north. However, Brazil has also perceived risks in believing solely in China's good intentions. Mearsheimer (2001) highlights that the biggest impediments to cooperative behavior according to the neorealist approach, are the relative gains and fear of security traps. States will always be subject to possible desertion, culminating in one side benefiting more, especially in the case of military cooperation, which can alter the status quo of powers.

Date	Type	Purpose	Lender	Amount
Dec.2007	Energy	Gasene pipeline	CDB	US\$750M
Jun.2008	Other	Coal plant	CDB	US\$356M
May 2009	Energy	Oil field development	CDB	US\$10B
April 2015	Energy	Bilateral Coop. Agreement	CDB	US\$3.5
April 2015	Infrastructure	Soy processing industrial line	CDB	US\$1.2
May 2015	Energy	Bilateral Coop. Agreement	China Exim Bank	US\$3.2
May 2015	Energy	Bilateral Coop. Agreement	CDB	US\$1.5
May 2015	Others (export)	Sale of E-195 aircraft	China Exim Bank	US\$1.3

Figure 2- Chinese Finance to Brazil by Sector¹³

At this point, sectors of the Brazilian society, such as academics and diplomats, have observed such cooperation initiatives on Brazil's part with precaution. In this sense, Brazil has also applied the strategic hedging pattern of behavior, neither wanting to fully comply with China's indirect military presence in the region, provoke any political confrontation with the United States, nor with China itself, due to the significant political and economic loss it would cause. From this perspective, Japan has been a relevant partner in engaging with Brazilian interests. The pragmatic behavior adopted by Brazilian decision makers has to do with political choices more than ever. In other words, it is quite impossible not to benefit from opportunities given by China's economic and military expansion beyond Asia, as well as impossible to ignore Japanese-Brazilian long technical cooperation history.

¹⁰ According to Horta (2007:3) from the year 2003 through 2007, Minister of National Defense of Brazil, Francisco Roberto de Albuquerque, and the Chief of the Defense Forces made visits to China to cope with the increase defense cooperation.

¹¹ See Horta (2015:14)

¹² Explanation given by Professor Albuquerque (2013:86-87) in which the political dimensions of the strategic partnership is often neglected, but it is possible to identify them in discourses of both countries' leaders.

¹³ Source: Gallagher, Kevin P. and Margaret Myers (2014) "China-Latin America Finance Database," Washington: Inter-American Dialogue: http://www.thedialogue.org/map_list/. Accessed on 2016/06/10

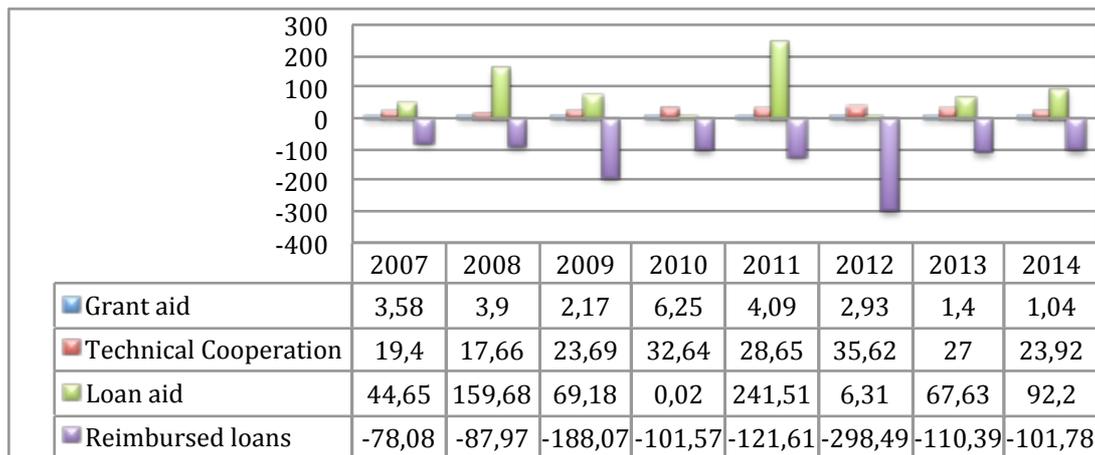


Figure 3 - Japanese ODA Amounts to Brazil (US\$ Million)¹⁴

In this sense, Goh (as cited in Hoo, 2016) describes strategic hedging as a mix of strategies proposed to maintain a strategic distance from a circumstance where states cannot settle on more clear options, such as balancing, impartiality or bandwagoning. Accordingly, it suggests a vital middle-position that abstains from favoring one side. Thus, Brazil seems to be working based on an indirect balancing between the two, China and Japan. The primary role played by the Chinese central government in supporting Brazil with financial cooperation in the sectors of infrastructure, oil, agriculture and energy appears to be part of a strategy of increasing security and defense in the region. In this sense, China has been able to secure resources for its development, and on the other, Brazil has increased its production infrastructure and products exports. However, critics are still skeptical about the adverse impacts on Brazil's future international political and economic insertion and development, should it remain considerably tied to China's leadership among emerging economies.

By utilizing Fiori (2009) explanations to analyze such facts through the world systems Theory, it can be said that in view of the strategies adopted by China, along with the compliance demonstrated by Brazil in promoting joint alliances allegedly in the cause of developing nations (South-South), both countries are dissatisfied and willing to increase power and wealth, for countries generally aim at improving their position in the international system, not leading however, to more a symmetrical market relations. This can also explain why Brazil has believed China to be an important partner in the search for resources for its national development. On the other hand, Japan is also present in the strategic agenda of Brazil. The strategic hedging behavior of the latter can be seen in the partnership conduct with Japan through a long history of technical cooperation and investments. Compared to the Japanese side, bilateral ODA cooperation has shown that Japanese projects in Brazil have collaborated on issues involving for human security and areas such as sanitation, disaster prevention and environmental protection. The figure 3 above indicates loans that were reimbursed (negative values mean repayment of loans), prevailing grants and technical cooperation. Japan, like China, has now prioritized investments and the public sector has played an active role for this purpose. Moreover, through technical cooperation schemes, Brazil and Japan designed a joint cooperation mechanism to be applied in

¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan – MOFA. ODA by country (Data compilation) retrieved on 2016/10/20 from: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/index.html>

other developing countries, through the South-South cooperation model (strategic hedging behavior or balance with China).

China or Japan positing a discourse of attaining human development and expansion of presence in international affairs in other regions such as Latin America is something that we can perceive from the presented literature. In the case of Brazil, it has collaborated with China and Japan to exchange material resources and technology; at the same time, political decision-making in terms of asymmetry in its foreign policy agenda has become of increasing concern to Brazil. Cornetet (2014:25) argues that from the year 2013, factors linked to internal instability, such as the dramatic decrease of GDP growth from 3% to -3.8, and lack of a more dynamic foreign policy agenda to protect the country's development interests, reduced Brazil's negotiations capacity internationally, and during the same period, the effects of the world crisis led Brazil to continue to rely on Asia as a channel to support its economy, albeit without considerable success in comparative terms. This also confirms that China once again was preferred as a partner to invest in Brazil, aiming at immediate economic returns. Japan was, in this sense, deliberately not receiving proper attention, probably also due to party ideological reasons on Brazil's side, although some small degree of cooperation was still present. Oliveira (as cited in Suyama, 2016:41) also confirms that the descending trend in Brazil's GDP during Rousseff's government, was due to commodity prices decrease allied to international financial crisis effect. In this sense the weakening of economic growth is partly attributed to the slowdown in Chinese demands. The situation became worse by the growing public disapproval level of the President reflected by the protests in 2013.

Conclusion

After presenting the main key factors involving Brazil-China-Japan in the previous sections, it is possible to notice that Brazil appears to be seeking to secure defense interests and material resources by partnering with both countries. In the first two categories, security and power/influence, Brazil is apparently applying the concept of bandwagoning by affirming its political interests in partnering with China, either in the pursuance of a reshaped global governance that includes the interests of the South, attraction of investments, or because of its ambitions to increase trade in defense apparatus.

However, Brazil has also presented a behavior that could be categorized as strategic hedging in its recent commitments with Japan, including the recent interest in defense cooperation (seen as a high priority for a country's political agenda). Therefore, according to the data presented, Brazil has accepted cooperation on military and defense matters with both countries, although with a certain degree of caution. It is, still, complex to define whom Brazil is strategically hedging against. I believe domestic actors in Brazil appear not to be entirely convinced of China's intentions when it comes to power expansion in Latin America due to its relatively new presence, nor does Brazil want to provoke any future misunderstandings with its traditional partner, the United States. Japan is in this sense an interesting strategic country Brazil can rely on, and has done so.

As also presented, both Japan and China's interests in Brazil are clearly related to wealth and economic self-interest due to the latter's regional power influence and

abundant natural resources. Moreover, in the case of China's objectives, it appears to be fully and pragmatically committed to it. Japan, on the other hand, as an older partner seeking to renew its role internationally to a more active one, seems to feel some degree of obligation and duty because of Japanese descendants in Brazil, which also relates to the provision of humanitarian projects to the country (allegedly also aimed at transferring knowledge through the trilateral cooperation). In this category, Brazil sees no objection at a time when it has sought to generate resources for development through more technological exchanges, investments, and markets for its national products. Thus, Brazil as a member of the BRICS group, has to find a way in order to secure its development growth path as an emergent-middle power country, which in other words has to do with dealing with domestic political and structural challenges in the medium-term (Gu et al, 2016:6).

Moreover, it confirms that there should be a permanent channel for accountability and democratic participation in the definition of the foreign policy agenda of the country. In this case, it would help to provide a better balance between choices of how to conduct such partnerships with China and Japan, or possibly generate a lesser asymmetry. The analysis through World-Systems Theory also found that both China's Strategic Partnership and Japan new Global Partnership have clear objectives: the expansion of wealth/ economic self-interests and security. Although Brazil is currently in a political, economic and institutional crisis, information from official sources indicates that Brazil seems to be interested in developing not only further economic ties (investments and export), but also defensive ones.

Brazil's government appears to have made the right choice in allocating its preferences of partnership to Asia. However, it is important that the country clearly defines a national development plan with more involvement from civil society, be active and dynamic in defending its national interests, paying attention as well to international demands. In prioritizing one side to the detriment of another, has shown that it will lead the government to poor decisions, lack of alternatives and further losses that affect the whole country. It is also important to summarize that Brazil's decision-making process has been to a certain extent influenced by the coalition government allied to the Worker's Party ideological interests, not properly taking into consideration how to conduct the partnership involving emerging economies such as China, and thus defend Brazil's interests.

As the analysis demonstrated, Brazil should seek its interests in a more propositional manner, so that to fill the gaps between the growing Chinese political and economic cooperation and obtainment of real political and economic mutual benefits. Both Asian economies are relevant and complementary to Brazil interests; therefore, the asymmetry here presented, has more to do with the fact that it generated implications due to lack of clear policies from Brazil as a middle-power, specifically to regulate the strategic partnership and development cooperation with both powerful countries such as China and Japan; thus it does not relate the traditional concept of asymmetry involving donor/recipient countries of development cooperation.

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