

The End of the Cold War and the Third World

New perspectives on regional conflict

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10 Brazilian assessments of the end of the Cold War

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This chapter deals with the reception in Brazil, of the end of the Cold War. It shows that Brazilian estimates of international relations in and around 1989 mixed some gloom and much expectation about the future, but betrayed very little of the triumphalism that was common in other quarters of Latin America. It also argues that Brazilian readings of change in the international system at that time help explain why and how the global Cold War shaped modern Brazil and it suggests that the terms of the debate in Brazil about the end of the Cold War sit at the heart of the strategic concepts governing the country's behavior in the era of unipolarity that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall.¹

Brazil was never a major hot spot in the global narrative of the Cold War. The Soviet Union and the Soviet worldview never represented a feasible alternative for Brazil's development, and the relationship between the Brazilian Communist Party and Moscow had been strained since the mid-1930s. Unlike other parts of the Western hemisphere – most noticeably Cuba and Central America – Brazil's world was never truly bipolar. Strategic debates inside the country, throughout the period that coincides with the Cold War, evolved around how close or how distant to be, politically and diplomatically, from the US. But, whenever local leaders chose strategies of distancing, their move did not imply a swing towards the Soviet camp. For all the drama that marked the historical clashes between the Right and the Left inside the country, the argument sometimes prevalent in Washington that "If Brazil were to be lost it would not be another Cuba. It would be another China" was always unwarranted.²

Yet, the global Cold War mattered enormously to Brazil. Part of the story was political: global ideological confrontation limited policy space at home, skewing the balance of power among local elites towards the military and the ideological Right. Under the banner of anti-Communism, successive governing regimes chased, imprisoned, exiled and killed opponents representing indigenous forms of socialism or Communism – both before the Second World War and after. And, while no Brazilian leader truly feared Soviet intervention or foreign-sponsored guerrilla activity in the country, concern for national security against perceived threats from the indigenous

Left, and its manifold transnational ties, underpinned a powerful system of state-led repression and authoritarianism from the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s and then, again, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s. By the same token, those in opposition to successive administrations oftentimes framed their own vision in terms of the global struggle between capitalism and socialism. The Brazilian Left saw itself as part and parcel of a wider international network of activists bound together by the common experience of repression and exile. For those Brazilian university professors fleeing to Salvador Allende's Chile for asylum; for students imprisoned in the aftermath of major protests in Rio de Janeiro in 1968; and for those who lost their loved ones as a result of political polarization and violence, the Cold War was not only real, but one of the single, most powerful, international constraints shaping political life in Brazil.

But politics was only part of the story. Equally powerful was the connection between the Cold War and Brazil's political economy. The global struggle set the international parameters under which successive Brazilian generations built their own model of conservative, state-led, modernization. The institutional pillars for global economic management in the West – free trade and private sources of investment, the Bretton Woods agencies, the power of the US dollar and the authority of the US Treasury, the financial regulations emanating from private bodies originated in the leading economies – set the framework within which Brazil transitioned from backward, rural, economy in the 1940s to fast-industrializing, urbanized, top ten, economy in the world at the end of the Cold War.

For all of its inequalities and perversities, Brazil's economic development throughout this period was simply remarkable. Surely the country did not achieve this by adhering fully to the rules emanating from Washington. On the contrary, to a large extent the policy mix it adopted did not fit in neatly with US priorities. In this period Brazil built up tariff walls and subsidies to protect and foster indigenous capitalist enterprise; it conditioned international investment to rules that propped up local capitalists; it focused its industrial policies not for export, but for the internal market; its officials picked up "strategic" sectors for massive investment with only partial care for merit and competitiveness; its state-owned enterprises proliferated and dominated the national economy; and successive administrations tried hard to secure technology transfers to develop indigenous technological capacity in nuclear power, weapons and the space and aircraft sectors. But successive Brazilian leaders could get away with violating and adapting so many of the rules of the game because the environment of the Cold War was permissive enough to allow such experimentation. As declassified documents show, political/security considerations in the US secured support in Washington's acceptance for Brazil's economic management. Also, "embedded liberalism" – the practice of highly regulated capitalism that was common from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s – helped legitimize Brazil's strategy at home and abroad.³

To some extent, however, the tight constraints and divisions typical of the Cold War began to recede in Brazil years before 1989. At least in the eyes of many Brazilians, the Cold War had come to an end sometime in the 1970s. This was a period when the tiny revolutionary Left lost momentum and greater social participation in public life pushed the ruling military out of power, slowly but surely. Also, as Brazil began to clash with the US over human rights abuses and nuclear proliferation in the mid-1970s, the domestic impact was national cohesion rather than division along ideological lines. When those purged and exiled in the 1960s returned, under a new amnesty law in 1979, nobody feared the reopening of previous ideological wounds. Increasingly, as the 1980s progressed, most Brazilians worried about rampant inflation and the pace of democracy's restoration rather than the Left/Right divide. The hardening of the global Cold War in the 1980s remained distant for most Brazilians, even if Latin America remained one of the major theatres for the international struggle. The rise of a workers party and a social democratic party in the 1980s brought back onto the scene notions of social justice and fairness, coupled with a staunch critique of Brazilian-style capitalism. But, for all the waves that these arguments did generate, fears of radicalization, typical of the early 1960s, were on the wane.

One month after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Brazilians elected their first president for over two decades in what was the first election, ever, by universal suffrage (prior to that election only literate citizens could vote). Yes, the presidential race pitting Fernando Collor de Mello against Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was reminiscent of the old battles between the Right and the Left. But the two candidates had come of age in the late 1970s and embodied a post-Cold War attitude to the world. In seeking a mandate, they emphasized their commitment to curbing social inequality, modernizing government practices and taming inflation. For those attending campaign rallies, on either side, the dominant dynamics were domestic, and the connections between what was going on at home and major transformation abroad were both vague and unobvious.

The fall of the Berlin wall was heralded in much of Latin America with an enormous sense of optimism. As the major regional countries began to move towards greater political liberalization or even democracy, the general tenor was one of positive expectation about the future. The most cursory glance at the commentary in the Brazilian press at the time will show that the feeling of liberation reverberated there too. But at least among strategists there was none of the triumphalism that set the tone elsewhere.

Brazilian leaders reacted to the events of 1989 with a good dose of apprehension. Going through the existing evidence it is possible to identify at least two recurring themes: Brazilian concern that US vindication in the global struggle would push Washington into ever more forceful, intrusive, policies worldwide; and fear that the neoliberal agenda, that

so challenged Brazil's traditional development model, would now further limit policy options. Even if many in Brazil welcomed the end of the Soviet empire, the ruling elites felt ill at ease with the notion of a global order marked by the overwhelming power of an unrivalled US.

There is no doubt that the global Cold War "closed down" Latin America. By integrating the region into the US-alliance system more strongly than it had been before, the Cold War caused the rewriting of the rules of the game in the region and the imposition of stricter limits on what Latin Americans could do. This was a hegemonic system formalized through military alliance, military training and transfers, trade and investment, aid, and a network of regional institutions. But coexisting with these elements were other forces pushing in the opposite direction. The Cold War diverted US attention from the region – or from parts of the region – and, by and large, US preoccupations with the region remained both intermittent and selective. Brazilian leaders, for long periods during the Cold War, never felt that anyone in Washington was watching too closely or seeking to control too tightly. On the contrary, from a Brazilian perspective, the trajectory had been one of growing voice and power in dealings with the US because there were massive cracks in the US alliance system, because Washington had too many pressing concerns in other parts of the world, and because Brazil had become too big economically and demographically to be pushed around.

While fear of US dominance had been very real in the 1940s and early 1950, by the mid-1960s the pattern of US hegemony in the region could not be characterized by a tight imperial system in any detectable way. This is not to say that the US was indifferent to developments in Brazil – after all, the country was the single largest beneficiary of "Alliance for Progress" funding. It is also useful to remember the various counterinsurgency activities and the genuine concerns in Washington about the rise of the Left and student protest in the country under Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon. Nor is it true to say that the US was not powerful or influential in Brazil. Rather, it suggests that, for all the problems inherent to the international system of the Cold War, over time Brazil enjoyed ample room for maneuver.

Starting in the early 1960s, Brazil went into Third-Worldist mode – albeit partially and never forcefully. Brazilians sought to establish contacts with states in the Communist Bloc and began to support the loosening of Portuguese control over African colonies. Brazil also launched mildly revisionist initiatives that were far more assertive than previous practice, although not radical at all when compared to that of other large, developing, countries at that time, such as Egypt, India or Indonesia. The general orientation was not necessarily anti-US, but was, surely, one geared towards greater de-alignment from Washington. In this period Brazilian diplomats co-founded UNCTAD and pushed for the notion of collective economic security; Brazil refused to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty; it began to

support the decolonization movement, loudly, for the first time; it argued at the UN for a transference of 1 percent of global military expenditure to the promotion of global economic development; it kept observer status at the Non-Aligned Movement (although it never joined it, making its support conditional and fluctuating); it canvassed for UN Charter reform to increase its say on key committees; it joined Third-World pledges for a New International Economic Order; it abandoned its support for Israel and South Africa; it extended its territorial waters from 3 to 200 miles against US protest; it fought against international norms for environmental protection; and it rejected population control measures advocated by the IMF, the World Bank and the UN.

Within this, the international system of the 1960s and 1970s was relatively flexible for Brazil. There is ample evidence from this period showing that many in the country believed the Cold War had actually come to an end. By the time we get to *détente*, there were several contradictions in Brazilian readings. Negative views of *détente* coexisted with the more positive ones. Some saw *détente* as a superpower coalition to "freeze up" the structures of the international system and prevent rising states from the postcolonial world from emerging. According to this view, *détente* was a neocolonial project. But others thought that Brazil could efficiently exploit the "cracks in the grand Western alliance," namely the new foreign policy interests of Western Europe and Japan, to its own advantage. In their eyes, greater contact with these "new centers of power" would help Brazil "diversify its existing dependence on the US." Viewed from this standpoint, *détente* had great, and largely positive, strategic significance because it reduced the ability of the US to push and shove Brazil on a range of issues. Even if Brazil had no choice but to live in a US-led world, the rules and norms governing that world would have to be negotiated rather than imposed. The expectation here was that *détente* should provide a key to blunt and hedge US power, while also making it legitimate to clash with Washington's preferences more overtly.

The point here is that in the 1970s Brazilian leaders saw and portrayed the international system as a place of limited but real opportunities rather than one of insurmountable constraints. Within such a system, the argument went, countries like Brazil differed from, and had better prospects than, weak, backward, Third World states:

Those uncharacteristic states will possibly never transcend their condition as objects of History. Some, however, have the conditions, due to their territorial extension, their demographic importance and their historic vocation, to progress towards higher grounds of autonomy and self-determination. Such countries will be able to reach the condition of subjects and escape the fatality of being mere passive spectators, manipulated in accordance to the conveniences of the Grand

Alliance [between the United States and the industrialised world]. The existing cleavages among and within the countries of the alliance can be used by the key-countries of the developing world, with great margin of autonomy, to conduct foreign policies based on the national interest. Brazil is typical of the category of countries that cannot be turned into satellites.⁴

In this view the distinctive mark of *détente* was the flexibility that stemmed from the fact that the interests and goals of those at the top of the US-led world diverged. Now it was the emerging states, like Brazil, that, in their dealings with the industrialized West, could play a dividing game, with the attendant consequence of reinforcing their own room for maneuver on their way up the ladder of international stratification. Their "margin of autonomy" had increased. From a Brazilian standpoint, then, if great-power concert in the early 1960s had signaled with the tightening up of controls over what emerging states could aspire to achieve, *détente* and its many contradictions ten years later opened up a window of opportunity. A position paper prepared for a presidential inauguration in Brasilia in 1974 reads:

The fundamental interests of the alliance [in fighting Communism] will impose certain limits on Brazilian diplomacy: but the great mobility and fluidity inside the alliance will allow for a foreign policy that is sovereign, authentic and imaginative.⁵

Increasingly, then, Brazil learned to live with the Cold War in ways its leaders thought served their own interests well. While fervently anti-Communist, the Brazilian leadership emphasized notions of autonomy and the utility of Third World coalitions, while critiquing the dominant norms emanating from the West. Brazil systematically turned down US proposals to act as a regional sheriff in South America even when Brazilian generals were fighting their own regional Cold War. Adherence to liberal norms and principles was conditional and partial – the triad of representative democracy, Anglo-Saxon capitalism, and free markets never took root, with the country moving towards limited democracy (or outright authoritarianism), state-led capitalism, and protectionism instead.

Autonomy became such an important force for shaping Brazilian policy that, at the height of right-wing military domination in Brasilia, there were generals supporting the Marxist-inspired MPLA in Angola against clear US preferences. The choice there was to remain very much on the fringes of – but not totally outside – the US-led Western formation.

So, part of Brazil's answer to the problems of living under the shadow of a hegemonic US, during the Cold War, was to carefully select fights and areas of attrition, while also signaling that it was not prepared to accept and embrace all US preferences. The key was to negotiate Brazil's

adherence to the US-led order, which leaders in the country never saw as a creation of their own. The Brazilian foreign minister in 1976 expressed this view thus:

With no other country in the world are our relations so close as they are with the United States ... Paradoxically, however, it is our relations with the US that is the source of some of the most constant concerns of our government. The issue is that ... ideological coincidence does not suffice to solve specific bilateral problems or even to make good friends and allies to assess international problems in the same fashion. The disparities of political and economic power between the US and Brazil are sources of constant reciprocal incomprehension, aggravated by the sentiment, somewhat immature, of moral superiority that is still very present in the American behaviour.⁶

But by the late 1970s Brazil's relatively positive views of the Cold War had begun to sour. Seeking to reverse the public mood, post-Vietnam and post-Watergate, President Carter launched intensive diplomatic campaigns for non-proliferation and human rights, and, half-way through the presidential campaign, Brazil was singled out as a target state for change. In a speech in Chicago, Carter called Kissinger's policy of engagement with Brazil a "slap on the face of the American people." Carter's revisionist drive, for all its inconsistencies, was unusually strong. For those at the receiving end, be they Soviets or Brazilians, the un-negotiated push was both baffling and offensive. Upon taking office, it was clear that the Carter administration had not thought through a policy for Brazil. But the White House was fast to pressurize Brazil to fall into line. The new administration's goal was to arrest Brazilian capacity to obtain weapons-grade nuclear materials and to speed up the collapse of the dictatorial regime.

Seen from Brazil, if the relationship with Carter's US was bad, the arrival of President Reagan on the scene made things worse. Reagan's arrival in power marked a move towards US resurgence in the Third World that had begun to occur in the latter part of the Carter administration. Essential in the US equation was the decision to increase the pace and range of containment, while also tackling the emergence of radical nationalist movements across the periphery. Effecting change in the Third World was not to be achieved through direct involvement or through key countries, although proxy wars remained on the scene. But a characteristic tool in this period was the channeling of US support for guerrilla fighters and counter-revolutionaries, non-state actors that could fight the Cold War without necessitating a direct US presence on the ground. Outside of the equation was concern for the North-South agenda and its ramifications.

As far as strategic concepts went, the time for engagement with regional powers was over. Such shifts in US priorities made it more difficult for the

White House to sustain any form of engagement with Brazil. In turn, Brazilian leaders saw events abroad as fundamentally threatening to the relatively benign external environment which they had grown used to. Furthermore, while a severe economic crisis inside Brazil curtailed its ability to pursue an activist policy abroad, the progress of political liberalization made for an increasingly divided polity at home. These factors made the leadership increasingly risk-averse, and led to introversion and distancing as the dominant strategies to deal with the US.

Brazilian estimates in the early days of the first Reagan administration were, therefore, full of gloom. The leadership expected difficulties with the North-South agenda and with Africa (but also with the Middle East and Eastern Europe, where Brazilian trade was beginning to gather momentum). In the Americas, the Brazilians predicted that the new administration would push for hegemonic reassertion "compress[ing] certain spaces ... previously opened up by Brazil."⁷ The hemisphere was closing under an hegemonic grip once again. As the commander of the Brazilian School of Naval War put it a few years later, Reagan would seek to "facilitate the exercise of US hegemony ... not necessarily stop Soviet expansionism."⁸

The gloom, however, did not necessarily translate into fear. Predictions in Brazil foresaw that South America would remain largely tangential to Reagan's grand strategy. Furthermore, the turbulent Carter years had proven that toughness paid off and the most relevant documents pertaining to that period suggest that the expectation in Brasilia was that it would be possible to escape future US pressures once again if Brazil toughened its own stance.⁹

The problem, of course, was that Washington did not simply put pressure on Brazilian preferences. It also had expectations about what Brazil might contribute. While the Reagan administration did not seek to turn Brazil into a regional policeman, or a partner in managing order in the hemisphere, it used the services of Vernon Walters, the early proponent of bilateral rapprochement in the late 1960s, to ask for Brazilian support against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, an operation that also included El Salvador, Guatemala and, in South America, Argentina.¹⁰ President Figueiredo rebuffed the overtures.¹¹ Brazil also rejected a Pentagon plan for a South Atlantic Treaty Organisation bringing together Brazil, Argentina and South Africa. Officials in Brasilia feared that the US would try to dominate the new arrangement and turn it into a launching pad for hegemony in the South.

In turn, the US rejected Brazilian attempts at brokering a meeting, in 1981, between the Angolan foreign minister and US Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Chester Crocker.¹² In 1982, Reagan and General Figueiredo saw each other for quick, protocol, visits and failed to reach any agreement on the Malvinas/Falkland islands dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom.¹³ By late 1982, Washington had come to grips with the limits of what was achievable through diplomacy with Brazil.

Although key documents telling this part of the story are still unavailable for research, there are indications that relevant figures in the US administration had run out of patience. Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Thomas Enders, told the Brazilians that he would no longer ask Brazil for assistance in Latin America, that he would not again bring up the issue of the Falklands, nor deal with trade and economic matters. Perhaps, he suggested, the two sides should limit their discussion to trying to set up military-industrial joint ventures, the "most viable [area for cooperation] in the present circumstances."¹⁴ Indeed, it was in the field of military cooperation that Washington and Brasilia saw some progress. In 1980 the post of Brazilian military attaché to Washington (which had been suspended in 1977) was restored. A year later the two countries announced a joint program of seminars and bilateral visits with a view to exchanging information on their respective military doctrines.¹⁵ In 1984 they signed a memorandum for high-tech military transfers.¹⁶ In October 1981, Vice President Bush was instrumental in suspending a multimillion-dollar fine that Brazil was in danger of facing for purchasing enriched uranium elsewhere.¹⁷ And Bush also played a role in having the US government accept new Brazilian export subsidies, in violation of the 1978 agreement to scrap them.¹⁸ But, as an article in *Foreign Affairs* put it in 1982, this was "the case of the missing relationship."¹⁹

As the diplomatic relationship decayed, a deeper set of structural changes transformed the environment inhabited by the two countries. Globalization, technology and the revival of the liberal creed in places as disparate as London, Beijing, Santiago de Chile, and Washington added up to the most serious challenge to face contemporary Brazil. The Brazilian leadership's perception of the world was one where national sovereignty and autonomy worked as the best filters against pressures originating in the external environment. From the early days of the Reagan administration the Brazilians thought they were being forced on the defensive – by the mid-1980s they were sure about it.²⁰ Change now threatened the very survival of the world in which Brazil, as a modern nation, had come of age.

For many in Brazil, at least at first, the transformation was not obviously structural. Early assessments by strategists suggested this was less a shift in the logic of capitalism and more a program carried out by the US with a view to expanding US power, influence and prestige worldwide. The problem was that, if the Cold War period had witnessed enormous economic transformation in Brazil, now Washington's requirements for neo-liberal reform challenged Brazil's ability to remain "autonomous" all the more. During the Cold War Brazil had not bought the US economic model at face value, but it had exploited it in its own favor instead. The developmental model successive administrations embraced in the second half of the twentieth century, rested on an international setting that, for

all its problems, was relatively benign and open to some degree of experimentation. Neoliberalism threatened to bring that setting to an end. "The disparity of relative power between the two countries ... makes the relationship essentially unbalanced, risking to turn any form of inter-dependence, even if by accident, into dependence." Interdependence with the US would only make the relationship, already "failing and frustrating," worse. If the two societies were to interact without the shield of autonomy, then the way would be paved for an "incalculable array of emotional reactions" on both sides.²¹ Foreign minister Ramiro Saraiva Guerreiro put it thus:

The American strategy seems to be one that creates ties in various sensitive areas in ways that, if the exercise succeeds, such intimacy would end up influencing Brazilian foreign policy in the direction of alignment with the United States.²²

Notions of complex interdependence were anathema to Brazil's conception of international relations and nowhere to be seen in official discourse. Instead, this was a US plan to:

Confront the Brazilian government with such volume of proposals and initiatives ... that it is very difficult for us to process them in an ordered fashion and in accordance with our own priorities; exploit the possibilities of dividing the Brazilian negotiating front ... [But] Brazil's most important bargaining chip is to ... stimulate the use of diplomatic channels as a way to maintain the indispensable coordination and the discipline necessary to the good management of relations with the United States ... Preventing the exaggerated intensity of contacts from distorting in the execution of [our] foreign policy by associating it excessively to American goals.²³

Without a model to adopt, the Brazilian choice was one that emphasized greater distancing from the US. The problem was, of course, that in the 1980s the US became all the more important to Brazil. The management of foreign debt – perhaps Brazil's greatest foreign-policy challenge in the 1980s – depended heavily on the US Treasury, Washington-based agencies, or US-dominated private committees. Between 1980 and 1987, the American share of Brazilian exports increased from 17.4 percent to 29.2 percent. Between 1985 and 1987, the US accounted for 40 percent of Brazil's trade surplus. That Brazilians saw this as dependency was only reinforced by the fact that their exports to the US market were now dominated by manufactured goods (72 percent in 1985 as against 29 percent in 1972), where difficult negotiations over protectionism were bound to be toughest and most frustrating. Soon conflict surfaced over Brazil's computer industry too. And even if Reagan's military attention in the hemisphere was largely confined to Central America (from Nicaragua to

Grenada to Panama), it was clear that US grip on the region now was tighter than it had been in previous administrations.²⁴

As a result, when the Cold War came to an end many in Brasilia worried. Soon the debate became polarized between two alternative positions. One argued that the international system had become a place of mounting pressures and constraints, where space for Brazil was limited but secure if the country learned to adapt to its new surrounding realities. The other saw that unipolarity and US hegemony were unsustainable in the long run, and that Brazil should, therefore, stick to the strategic concepts of autonomy that had proven successful in the past.

After his election in late 1989, President Collor de Mello framed much of his foreign policy priorities in terms of adapting to unipolarity, complying with the new rules of the game and trying to resist those elements in the new order that were anathema to Brazilian strategic concepts. The transformation here was enormous: massive privatizations, the end of state-led industrialization, the redrawing of monetary policy to fight hyperinflation, the return of the military to the barracks, the end of the secret nuclear program, the abandonment of protectionism, and the most significant attempt made by Brazil to mend its relationship with the US. But in the face of events in Europe in 1989 Brazilians did not take to the streets. High officials from all shades of the political spectrum were suspicious of the emerging world order and kept clear of any triumphalism.

To some extent at least the foreign policy debate in Brazil at the end of the Cold War can be seen as a conversation between two Celso: foreign ministers Celso Lafer (1992; 2001–2002) and Celso Amorim (1993–1995; 2003–2011). For Lafer, the Cold War had been problematic but not necessarily pernicious. "In the interstices opened by the Cold War, underdeveloped countries (...) had the opportunity to search for their own paths with the view to affirm their international presence."²⁵ In his view, global deterrence had opened up room for economic development issues to climb up to the very top of the international agenda, creating space for countries like Brazil to push for their own preferences in international forums. Suddenly, the very terms of the agenda were being transformed. In and around 1989, the sense was one of deeper, more disturbing, new threats. Transnational problems like narcotics, migration, and the environment, or the new trade agenda, based on intellectual property, energy, informatics, telecommunication and biotechnology, caught Brazil unguarded and were seen as major challenges to traditional ways of conducting international relations.²⁶ The question driving Brazilian foreign policy would, therefore, cease to be "how to obtain greater degrees of autonomy" and would become "how best to secure some degree of autonomy in the face of unrivalled US power and liberal hegemony in the marketplace of ideas." The task, in Lafer's words, was "not ... to passively accept and accommodate to the new international order ... but find new opportunity niches" within a more constraining system. So,

there was no capitulation or subservience to the new system. But the sense was clear that "the power resources of the Third World to alter the current international stratification seem to be far smaller than we previously thought."²⁷

In turn, Amorim took a stance that was more critical of the direction of change. "American hegemony has reached such a high point that not only does the US reach its foreign policy objectives, but these sometimes become the dominant concepts of order and justice in international relations."²⁸ Such a state of things, he concluded, was unsustainable. A new order was bound to emerge, and the 1990s should be seen as "a ritual of passage between two structures." He never said exactly what the second structure would be, but there is a sense, recurrent in his writing, that resisting and securing autonomy will in the end pay off: "liberal capitalism is far from having answers to the numerous problems that make up the global agenda today."²⁹ Coupled with this there was a more optimistic reading of what could be achieved. "The conservative utopia that dominated after the collapse of the Soviet Union proved to be fragile (...) political and military unipolarity (...) has been unable to solve conflicts in various parts of the world." On this view the problem lay in the fact that unipolarity in the field of hardcore power had to coexist with growing multipolarity in the global economy.

It is intrinsically contradictory to speak about unipolarity when new economic great powers pop up on the scene with uncontested vigour ... The simultaneous existence of political unipolarity with economic multipolarity does not seem logical or historically accurate, nor is it a realist hypothesis upon which the organization of the international system can rest.³⁰

The logical conclusion here was that Brazil should not follow the way of other countries in Latin America that jumped on the US bandwagon (like Chile, Mexico and Argentina), but, rather, seek inspiration from the likes of Russia and China, which had adopted an "independent line." To achieve this, Amorim concluded, it was paramount to strengthen the Brazilian state and to keep pursuing "autonomy" from the wider capitalist system and from US pressure. Much later, as he returned as foreign minister under President Lula in 2003, Amorim would go on to work on the assumption that coalitions of large developing countries could provide an answer to the problems of unipolarity. What is important to highlight here is how much of the rationale driving Brazil in the more recent period flows from the dilemmas the Brazilian leadership confronted at the end of the Cold War.

One other crucial dimension of the end of the Cold War in Brazil is the country's move to the South American region. This is an area where conceptual change had been taking place since the late 1970s but had

gathered dramatic momentum in the aftermath of 1989. By the end of the Cold War, Brazil was undertaking a major reassessment of its policies towards its neighbors. The old-time acrimony and rivalry with Argentina had come to an end, and, for the first time, grand strategy was now rooted in notions of regional integration. The new, unprecedented, goal here was an ambitious project to build a South American alliance centered around increased security and mutual trust between Brazil and Argentina. The move was, to a large extent, triggered less by ideas than by sheer material transformation: as the 1980s progressed Brazil became increasingly powerful vis-à-vis its neighbors. By the end of the Cold War it accounted for approximately 30 percent of regional GDP; by the year 2000 it accounted for over half the wealth and the population of South America.

The existing literature on regionalism shows that regions are social constructs contingent on the perceptions of key players inside and outside the region. The notion of "region" is often politically contested among major players, who set out to define regional borders with a view to advancing their own interests and values. Brazil's readings of its own region's boundaries are a case in point. Starting just after the fall of the Berlin Wall arguments began to circulate within the foreign ministry that questioned the utility of defining Brazil's region as "Latin America." Part of the problem was Mexico – both as a source of division as it moved towards the US and as a source of financial instability. In Brazilian eyes, Mexico had chosen to adapt to the end of the Cold War by relinquishing an independent foreign policy and a "national project" for economic and social development. As Brazilian leaders saw it, Mexico had "sold out," challenging Brazilian notions of "self-reliance" in the face of increasing levels of globalization and interdependence. Historically, Brazil and Mexico have not had particularly close diplomatic relations but available documents show the very deep impression that Mexico's turn to the US, in the early 1990s, left in the minds of Brazilians. If Brazil was to succeed in its new international environment, then the region could be a useful construct to manage the transition to unipolarity. In redressing the regional space, Brazilian leaders were both seeking greater protection and increasing their relative power in a changing global environment.

There were two major ideas that coexisted about the region in late 1989 and the early 1990s. The first one held that regional integration in South America may have worked as a shield. The argument was most sophisticated with reference to nuclear proliferation and trade: from this perspective, the longer-term goals behind Brazil's regional policy were to mitigate US pressures, control neoliberal globalization and protect the national economy against external shocks. Note that here the emphasis was on regionalism as a tool to facilitate national, not shared goals. As a response to Carter's proliferation push the Brazilians since the late 1970s had begun to develop the argument that it was in Brazil's interest to close rank with

Argentina in resisting US pressures, and perhaps consider a major nuclear agreement with Buenos Aires.³¹ In the mid-1980s they had been willing and able to move forward. By the end of the Cold War they thought a close coalition with Argentina – even if Argentina was severely weakened after a disastrous dictatorship and a conventional war against a NATO power – was the safest conduit to preserve Brazil's national autonomy in the new global order. The same went for trade: to a significant degree Mercosur, a regional integration agreement formalized in 1994, was a response to President George H. W. Bush's proposal for a free trade area for the Americas that same year.

The second major idea went in a different direction by highlighting that the region could be an important source of power accretion to Brazil. Being an increasingly powerful economy in the region since the early 1980s, Brazil could use the regional grouping to shape regional politics, manage disagreement within the region, and leverage its influence and bargaining power with the industrialized world. It is difficult to come by explicit references to this vision because the tenor of discourse tends to highlight Brazilian weaknesses and frailties. Not until the 2000s was there an explicit recognition that

even a country as big as Brazil is a small country in a world like this ... we do not have the capacity to speak alone ... I believe that Brazil does not have full existence without being united [with South America].³²

The underlying logic that saw the region as a launch pad for Brazil dates back to the days immediately after the end of the Cold War.

Yet, Brazil's regional behavior, right after the global revolutions of 1989, should not be seen as a mere attempt to undercut US influence: when it comes to regional management, Brazilians are always aware of the imperative to keep Washington engaged in the debate rather than alienate it. Take, for instance, the creation of the Rio Group in the 1980s – from Brasilia's standpoint this was an initiative to provide Brazil with a venue to defuse potential US interventions, ensuring that its interests were not overridden, and assist with the building of security cooperation. But the emphasis was on a multilayered system where close consultation with the US remained crucial, as it does to this day.

Brazil was relatively tangential to the global narrative of the Cold War. And yet, that global struggle shaped its politics, its political economy, and its foreign policy strategies for several decades. Life at home was deeply affected by what was going out in the wider world. The dramatic changes of 1989 had a profound impact in Brazil, even if they were indirect and came through several layers of perceptions, institutions and dynamics that were predominantly domestic. What we gain from studying Brazil in and around 1989 is a sobering awareness of the Cold War's powerful grip on societies that sat at a distance from its major battlefields.

Notes

- 1 This chapter offers a preliminary assessment of Brazilian estimates of the end of the Cold War, on the back of existing evidence. Most documents pertaining to this period remain closed for research or are very scarce. This is why in writing this chapter I have drawn extensively on a collection of personal archives and oral histories belonging to high-ranking diplomats that have been deposited at Fundação Getulio Vargas in Rio de Janeiro in the past few years. Most of these files are now undergoing sanitation and organization before being opened for public research and the interviews are classified until release. When these materials become available for research they will be available, online, at www.fgv.br/cpdoc.
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- 5 Silveira, Política Externa Brasileira: Seus Parâmetros Internacionais, mimeo secreto, Rio de Janeiro, 16 January 1974.
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- 7 MRE a Silveira, secreto, Brasília, 12 November 1980, ns.1860, 1862, and 1863, AAS 1979.08.02.
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- 10 Veja, 25 February 1981, pp. 28–9; Veja, 4 March 1981, p. 26. Armony, Argentina, the United States.
- 11 MRE a Silveira, secreto, Brasília, 28 August 1981, n. 1295, AAS 1979.03.19; MRE a Silveira, Brasília, 14 October 1981, n.1548, AAS 1979.03.19. See also Paulo Kramer, "Diálogo de surdos: as relações Brasil-Estados Unidos," *Política e Estratégia*, 3 (1), Jan-Mar, 1985.
- 12 MRE a Silveira, secreto exclusivo, Brasília, 5 November 1981, n.1660, AAS 1979.09.11.
- 13 Figueiredo a Reagan, unofficial translation, Brasília, 4 May 1982, AAS 1982.01.21. REF Esposito thesis.
- 14 Silveira a MRE, secreto urgentíssimo, Washington, 1 November 1982, n. 3475, AAS 1982.10.23.
- 15 Estado de São Paulo, 19 April 1981.
- 16 For memo see *Gazeta Mercantil*, 7 February 1984.
- 17 Washington Post, "Bush, in Brazil, Announces Nuclear Cooperation Effort," A24, 17 October 1981.
- 18 Silveira a MRE, secreto urgentíssimo, Washington, 22 October 1981, n. 3685, AAS 1979.03.19.
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- 20 Silveira a MRE, secreto exclusivo urgentíssimo, Washington, 15 February 1983, n. 499, AAS 1979.03.19.; Silveira a MRE, secreto exclusivo, Washington, 18

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- 21 Silveira a MRE, secreto exclusivo, Washington, 17 February 1983, n. 524, AAS 1979.03.19.
- 22 Guerreiro a Figueiredo, Informação secreta para o Sr. Presidente da República, Brasília, 21 February 1983, n. 55, AAS 1979.03.19.
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- 27 Celso Lafer, "Reflexoes sobre a insercao do Brasil no contexto internacional," *Contexto Internacional*, 11, Jan.-Jun. 1990, pp. 33-43.
- 28 Celso Amorim, "O Brasil e a ordem internacional pos-Golfo," *Contexto Internacional*, 13, 1, Jan.-Jun. 1991, pp. 25-34.
- 29 Piece reprinted in Celso Amorim, "Os frageis pilares da nova ordem," in Renato Baumann, org., *O Brasil e a Economia Global* (Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1996).
- 30 Celso Amorim, "Os frageis pilares da nova ordem," in Renato Baumann, org., *O Brasil e a Economia Global*.
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- 32 Celso Amorim, speech at the III Meeting of South American Foreign ministers, Santiago, Chile, 24 November 2006.