

A Brazilian Backed NATO

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Introduction

Ever since the Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the world has become increasingly bipolar; a geopolitical situation in which, in the future, nations will be defined as those that supported the United States and the West or those that favored the Russian Federation narrative. Since the inception of this conflict, Brazil has tiptoed carefully around its political implications, in accordance with its historical neutrality. Although Brazil did make an exception during World War II when it joined the Allied powers in August 1942, the country has usually seen itself as neutral on the global political stage.

As nations such as the People's Republic of China strengthen their ties with Russia, the US must look to strengthen ties with allies, even if it may seem out of reach. Furthermore, the US must seek out new alliances with countries such as Brazil, who broke its neutrality to tip the scale in favor of the Allied powers during World War II. In an increasingly two-sided geopolitical landscape, the US needs to be able to cooperate and leverage new allies and partners.

The homogeneous nature of Brazil, with a population of over 200 million people, abundant natural resources, and the second largest air force and aeronautical industry in the western hemisphere, presents a unique opportunity as an untapped potential partner as it shares similar values and history with the US. The US should seek out ways to persuade Brazil to join us in our journey to tip the geopolitical scale in favor of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and create alliances with nations that value freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

Historical Context

Demographics. Many people are not aware of the historical similarities between the United States and Brazil. Throughout their history, both nations have enjoyed a dominant role over their closest neighbors and are home to over 300 million and 200 million people respectively. Additionally, both the US and Brazil have been home to diverse nations of indigenous peoples and several European colonies, and both have imported slaves from Africa. Furthermore, both nations have attracted immigrants with diverse ethnic backgrounds since their inception. The two nations have faced challenges due to this diversity, although in different forms. For example, the US had a civil war and the Jim Crow era, while Brazil was the last nation in the

Americas to abolish slavery in 1888. Brazil also experienced a phase when immigration laws aimed for *branqueamento* or “whitening” of the population.

Due to their European colonial roots, the two nations still maintain a strong majority of people who claim to be Christian. However, the forms of Christianity vary due to the differences of the countries that colonized them. In 2022, Statista reported that 73 percent of Americans claimed to be Christian, and an even higher number was reported for Brazil.¹ Most Brazilians, over 50 percent, claimed to be Catholic while the majority in the US claimed to be Protestant.² Nevertheless, these religious values have led to the development of similar laws in each nation, and the moral and value systems of these republics—commonly referred to as democracies—remain strikingly close.

Governmental systems. Both ethnic fragmentation and religious backgrounds have led the US and Brazil to have similar governments and governmental processes as well. Both nations operate under a federal system with three similar branches of government—executive, legislative and judicial—and both value the concept of checks and balances within the branches. However, there are differences in their political systems, including the role of government and the degree of power allotted to each branch. For example, compared to US presidents, Brazilian presidents have historically exercised greater power within a weaker system of checks and balances to limit their power. Although this point is sometimes debated amongst political scientists, Brazil’s presidents usually do not have to face a united opposition in its parliament, called the Brazilian National Congress, such as the two-party system of the US. Even though Brazil had 29 registered parties as of 2023, disputes in the National Congress center around three political blocks, pro-government, opposition, and centrists, with positions varying depending on the issue.³ Still, both nations use a system based on the division of power, both at the federal level as well as within their respective states and regions. Perhaps the most similarity amongst both governmental systems is the presence of a constitution reflecting the value of democracy and the rule of law.

One key difference between the US and Brazil can be clearly seen in their values of individualism and governmental intervention. The US has a long-standing belief in limited government and individualism, while Brazil has traditionally had a more interventionist government with many government-led economic development initiatives. Although the US does have social welfare programs, perhaps even more extensive than Brazil, the US has veered away from having many nationally owned corporations. Brazil, on the other hand, owns corporations such as Eletrobras and Petrobras, two state-sponsored corporations that drive the electric, utility, oil, and gas economies in Brazil. The only national corporations remotely comparable to

these in the US, although arguably not as impactful nationwide, are companies such as Amtrak or the Tennessee Valley Authority.

Yet, despite intricate differences in the details, even among the similarities such as US's common law system versus Brazil's civil law system, other factors have had greater effects on the relationship between the two nations. For example, the direct relationship between the two nations during the Cold War influenced Brazil's current stance in the world.

Historical connections. Due to US influence in NATO, a discussion regarding Brazil and NATO could not begin without a thorough understanding of the legacy of the complex bilateral relationship between Brazil and the US. This relationship dates back to the Monroe Doctrine, first declared by US President James Monroe during his seventh annual message to Congress in 1823, in which he demanded that the European powers of the time respect the Western Hemisphere as the US's sphere of interest.⁴ Although this doctrine was originally welcomed in the Western Hemisphere, the actions that sprung from this doctrine over time have grown to be some of the most controversial acts of the US and brought about a feeling of inferiority among many Central and South American nations. For example, US support of Mexican President Benito Juárez was likely welcomed during Mexico's revolt against Emperor Maximilian in 1865, while the interventions in the Dominican Republic in 1904, Nicaragua in 1911, Haiti in 1915, and Cuba in 1962 were much more controversial.⁵ These events, along with others not directly related to Brazil, have had a major influence on the way Brazil viewed the US, albeit they did not stop Brazil from joining the Allies in World War II. Unfortunately, the history between the US and Brazil during the Cold War turned even more sour, due to the direct support the US provided for Brazil's military coup in 1964. US support of a military dictatorship in Brazil, to ensure capitalism prevailed over communism at the expense of human rights during the Cold War, has led Brazil to remain neutral when dealing with controversial international political conflicts. This article will explore ideas that might help the US break Brazil away from Russian and Chinese influence and realign Brazil with their neighbors in the Western Hemisphere, who share its values.

Contemporary Conflicts and Brazil

War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.

—John Stuart Mill

Just recently, Brazil and the US went through perhaps their most politically aligned period of history, when presidents Bolsonaro and Trump were their respective presidents. Although their domestic policies were similar, the rationale behind this closeness was largely due to the two leaders' willingness to involve their militaries in the relationship. Many nations share educational and climate goals, but the sharing of military resources and capabilities tends to increase the closeness of the relationship. However, the gains attained during this relationship seem to have slowed down quite a bit due to new political leadership now in power in both countries. Recently, President Lula Inácio da Silva, known as "Lula," has openly demonstrated his criticism of current global American leadership. Brazil's, perhaps valid, claims of invasion without probable cause in the recent history of the US invasion of Iraq in the search for weapons of mass destruction seem to come with the expectation that the world will see them as a nation with no prior wrongdoing. On the contrary, Brazil shares a similar history with the United States in two major areas, the exploitation and genocide of indigenous populations and its history of slavery and inequality for Afro-Brazilians. Perhaps even more relevant is the lack of acknowledgment that as a geopolitical influencer, Brazil cannot compare itself to a hegemonic power such as the US. Furthermore, Brazilians were not also blindsided by an attack of such as 9/11. Instead, Brazil's biggest impact during the twenty-first century, on a global scale militarily, has been its assistance to Haiti alongside the United Nations from 2004 to 2017.

Brazil's new leadership seems to like comparing the US invasion of Iraq to that of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, yet the US never had intentions of making Iraq its own. At the May 2023 meeting of the G7 (an organization of leaders from some of the world's largest economies: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the US) in Hiroshima, Japan, President Lula stated "*Tenho repetido quase à exaustão que é preciso falar da paz. Nenhuma solução será duradoura se não for baseada no diálogo. Precisamos trabalhar para criar o espaço para negociações*" (I have repeated almost exhaustively that we need to talk about peace. No solution will be lasting if it is not based on dialogue. We need to work to create the space for negotiations).⁶

Yet, from a western perspective, it is very difficult to think of entering negotiations with Russia after their invasion of what had been recognized internationally as a sovereign country since 1991. Although it is arguable that 1991 was not that long ago, the same argument can be applied to Brazil, as it was only in 1986 when Brazil's current democratic framework took control. For Ukraine to accept such a negotiation would be the equivalent of Bolivia invading Brazil's state of Acre (the two nations have been disputing the state of Acre for slightly longer than a year), or perhaps a better comparison, France, a permanent member of the United

Nations Security Council (UNSC), with formidable armed forces, invading Brazil's state of Amapá to reclaim part of it as French Guiana, and then for a neutral state like India to argue that Brazil should stop defending its territory and negotiate with a foreign invader because of some historical claims to those regions.

Despite the republic's youth and its experimentation with dictatorship and authoritarianism, Brazil has sought a permanent seat on the UNSC for at least the last decade. This ambition for global recognition dates to the times of the League of Nations after WWI, when Brazil was one of the first nonpermanent members to join. Although the current UNSC may seem outdated due to its post-World War II framework, it will not likely give in to pleas from nations such as Brazil and India in their quest for a permanent seat. At the 2023 G7 meeting in Japan, President Lula stated "*Por que o Conselho de Segurança não discute? Porque os que se envolvem na briga são membros. Então, não tem ninguém para discutir paz, porque estão todos envolvidos. São os membros do conselho que vendem armas, são os membros que fazem guerra. É preciso mudar a lógica de funcionamento das Nações Unidas*" (Why doesn't the Security Council discuss it? Because those who get involved in the fight are members. So, there is no one to discuss peace because everyone is involved. It is the council members who sell weapons, it is the members who wage war. It is necessary to change the operating logic of the United Nations).⁷ Indeed, these UN members are naturally drawn to conflicts given their military influence in the world, but they are not the only forces causing war in the world. The Rwandan Genocide of 1994, the Cambodian Genocide of 1975–1979, Guatemalan Civil War in 1960–1996, the Mozambican Civil War of 1977–1992 are just some examples of conflicts that did not directly involve any members of the UNSC.

Why Should the US Not Write Off Brazil?

Brazil has incredible economic weight when it comes to trade with the US. In 2022, Brazil was ranked no. 9 top trading partner with the US, with export sales valued near \$53.6B, according to the US Department of Commerce.⁸ Known as the home of the lungs of the world due to the Amazon rainforest, the potential for natural resources in Brazil is remarkably higher than any other place on Earth. However, the full potential of Brazil does not stop at business and commerce opportunities between the two nations; the South American giant has much more to offer than the US might realize.

Both the US Air and Space Forces (USAF and USSF respectively) may lead the way to stronger ties with Brazil through the aircraft and spacecraft industry. Embraer, Brazil's industrial leader in aeronautics, has quite the international reputation for building aircraft. What's more, according to the number of total combat aircraft in its inventory, the Brazilian Air Force is the second largest in the western

hemisphere. According to the World Directory of Modern Military Aircraft, the US, France, and Brazil are the Brazilian Air Force's primary suppliers, while other nations such as Italy, Russia, Spain, and Sweden are considered secondary suppliers.⁹ Thus, the Brazilian air and space industries, specifically in a military context, offer great potential for stronger ties with the US. According to trade.gov, Brazil is one of six countries in the world that manufactures commercial jets.¹⁰ In 2017, Boeing attempted to acquire Embraer for an estimated \$4.7B due to its internationally renowned reputation as an aircraft manufacturer. The deal collapsed owing in part to the pandemic and commercial airline travel coming to a near halt at that time. Nevertheless, the interest of an American defense industry supplier the size of Boeing demonstrates the great potential of its Brazilian counterpart. Additionally, Brazil is a regional superpower in South America. Geographically, it borders all but two of the South American nations, has the most powerful air force in the region, and maintains relatively good relationships with all its neighbors except for, occasionally, Venezuela.

Historically, the US Army had bases and airports in Brazil used to project airpower into North Africa during World War II, the US Navy has recently maintained a presence in Brazil, and joint military exercises between the US Army and the Brazilian Army have occurred as recently as 2021 (Operation Culminating). The US Air Force Academy and the Brazilian Air Force Academy maintain a close relationship in which cadets and officers are exchanged to help educate future leaders in their respective air forces.¹¹ Rather than be forgotten, this history should be further leveraged. Although Brazil would likely not accept another US base in the region, a closer military alliance with Brazil would legitimize US presence in the region. Additionally, even though at first glance Brazil has a military that is seemingly lagging in modern arms races, its capabilities should not be dismissed in a global conflict.

With a conventional global military conflict potentially on the horizon (it can be argued it already started with Russia's invasion of Ukraine), the US must prepare to win a conventional war. Such wars historically have been won not only by employing the best warriors and weaponry, but by having a robust production capability as well. An alliance with Brazil, the seventh most populous nation in the world (according to the CIA World Factbook), together with its natural resources and demonstrated military discipline and grit, and military academies on par with US professional military education, would provide a substantial force multiplier for US and allied aircraft production capability and, perhaps more importantly, personnel, and represents a fundamental investment for the United States.¹²

Furthermore, with the Chinese navy building bases in the Atlantic Ocean near Africa, an alliance with the Brazilian Navy may also prove useful in the southern

Atlantic as well. Brazil's membership in BRICS (the emerging economies group consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and its arguably better relationship with African nations like Angola and Mozambique may also help US armed forces in Southern Africa. Although many consider BRICS as a direct enemy, at least economically, the US must aim to convince Brazil, one of the few true republics in the BRICS alliance, to swing its influence towards the West, where its culture and belief system best aligns. Such attempts from other BRICS member nations have already occurred, such as China's recent courting of France, one of the US's best allies.¹³ Thus, the US should not hesitate to strengthen its alliance with Brazil to counter the division that exists within NATO on issues such as Ukraine.

Additionally, due to Brazil's neutral stance since the end of the Cold War, Brazil has been afforded an inside look into some Russian military programs. In 1994, Russia signed a contract to provide Brazil its first Iгла anti-aircraft missile system, followed by three more sales.¹⁴ In 1997, Brazil established a High-Level Cooperation Committee with Russia, which led to better cooperation in technical-scientific fields, to include nuclear and space.¹⁵ In 2003, Russia offered to help Brazil with its rocketry expertise to investigate causes to the (*Veículo Lançador de Satélites*) VLS-1 satellite launch vehicle that had recently exploded. This assistance culminated with the signing of an agreement to transfer military technology that led to several changes to the VLS vehicles and its supporting launch tower.¹⁶ The following year, a conglomerate of Russian companies opened a company in Brazil to launch satellites from the same launch center and successfully launched a VLS vehicle in 2008. The Brazilian insight into the Russian missile, nuclear, and space fields could provide valuable intelligence to the US and help the US deter future creation of Russian-backed launch centers in South America.

Why Would Brazil Budge from Neutrality?

Brazil seeking global recognition and an alliance with NATO, led by the USAF and USSF, presents a premiere opportunity to make this happen. With a national capability that is more advanced than other NATO allies, one can easily argue that the Brazilian Air Force would contribute greatly to the alliance. If NATO makes the unprecedented move to incorporate a South Atlantic nation such as Brazil, it will not only help to establish Brazil as a global power and bring new relevance to its military weight in the Southern Hemisphere, but it will also fortify NATO's popularity among world leaders still sitting on the fence regarding the conflict in Ukraine. Furthermore, it would also be in Brazil's best interests to not have to face an authoritarian world if the West and most democracies and republics collapse (an otherwise extreme assumption if not for articles such as

Dr. Sergey Karaganov’s “There Is No Choice: Russia Will Have to Launch a Nuclear Strike on Europe”).¹⁷ Most likely, India and Japan may become Brazil’s strongest allies if global power shifts towards authoritarian leaders, even though Brazil’s culture aligns mainly with Western values. Although it may be in its favor economically to play both sides as a neutral state, the further Brazil aligns with democratic values, the better its influence in world politics will become, by choosing to follow its democratic values over short-term business opportunities with non-Western states. This is a challenging decision, but in the past, when push comes to shove, Brazil has sided with its moral and ethical democratic underpinnings as a nation, as it did in World War II.

How to Get There? Article 6 Applies below the Tropic of Cancer

This article proposes that NATO continue to make changes to its organizational structure to better posture itself for future success in the face of challenges from authoritarian governments. One critical pivot point would be to safeguard the entirety of the Atlantic Ocean, versus just the North Atlantic, with the inclusion of nations such as Brazil. NATO can achieve this by revising Article 6 of its charter, which limits all actions to above the Tropic of Cancer. Article 6 currently states that for the purpose of Article 5, an armed attack includes any attack

on the territory of any of the Parties in Europe or North America, on the Algerian Departments of France . . . Turkey or on the Islands under the jurisdiction of any of the Parties in the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer; on the forces, vessels, or aircraft of any of the Parties, when in or over these territories or any other area in Europe in which occupation forces of any of the Parties were stationed on the date when the Treaty entered into force or the Mediterranean Sea or the North Atlantic area north of the Tropic of Cancer.¹⁸

However, if the article above was modified or revised to include protection for NATO allies including their territories south of the Tropic of Cancer, it would increase NATO’s influence while also opening the door to allow nations such as Brazil to join. Additionally, nations such as the United Kingdom and France, two of the more influential partners among NATO, would likely welcome this modification to Article 6 due to their overseas territories.

Other Players: India, Colombia, and France

If a nation such as the US intends to court Brazil to join NATO, we must consider the impact on other nations. Although such a large geopolitical shift would have impacts across the globe, BRICS member countries in particular should be considered, as the power of the BRICS alliance would shift considerably, as well as

the power balance in South America. Additionally, traditional empires like France could be encouraged to act south of the Tropic of Cancer, which could upset the African and South American nations with which it has historically had conflicts.

After courting the Indian Prime Minister in June of 2023, President Biden made it abundantly clear that he would pursue BRICS nations aggressively by aiming to strengthen bilateral agreements with each individual member nation. Despite differences on the handling of human rights within the US and India, the White House rolled out the red carpet to reinforce its backing of the most populous democracy in the world. Almost all topics were discussed in the meeting, and the promotion of democratic values clearly prevailed over the differences between the two very different nations. Although India is arguably less like the US than Brazil, the meeting demonstrated the US's pivot to prioritize specific values such as democracy over other differences such as human rights and domestic nationalism. This presents great opportunities to the bilateral possibilities between two nations with arguably much more in common, the US and Brazil.

Brazil joining NATO would immediately impact Colombia if that nation did not join as well. Colombia and the US share perhaps the most intricate relationship, especially among air forces, in South America. Like Brazil, Colombia shares many of the same values and would bring another Pacific Ocean border nation into the fold of NATO. If the White House can look beyond human rights challenges in India and seek stronger bilateral agreements, it should also be prepared to do the same in South America, with respect to Brazil and Colombia. However, this could cause criticism among their own people and their neighbors in South America, but both nations should ask themselves if they are willing to face the authoritarian structure of a new world order if Western democracies were to fall in the next Cold War.

European nations such as France may initially argue against nations like Brazil joining NATO due to their perceived differences on human rights and their management of the Amazon. However, by encompassing their territories south of the Tropic of Cancer under the NATO umbrella, they would probably be more willing to entertain the idea, especially since France already represents a large portion of South America, thus technically already belonging to the European Union. Thus, one may argue that such regions in the world are already included in Northern Hemisphere geopolitical discussions.

Lastly, existing NATO nations have also voted recently for the inclusion of nations like Finland into NATO, which takes away any argument against the expansion of NATO during a time of conflict.

Conclusion

The US should revise its policy in the nearly 200-year-old Monroe Doctrine by including alliances with countries such as Brazil, along with other allies of merit. Thus, the US could gain Brazil's allegiance in terms of military cooperation, along with many other nations in South America, while also presenting Brazil to the world as an international actor. Nations such as Brazil already have influence in Europe, and it is time for them to join these nations in an alliance. Scholars with business experience may see that the ability to remain neutral and partake in opportunities from both sides has its advantages, but if Brazil continues to remain neutral it may never be fully welcomed by the international world as the leader it so desperately seeks to become.

By joining NATO, Brazil becomes a major player in maintaining world peace and gains valuable credibility with Europe. By inviting and supporting Brazil's incorporation into NATO, the US gains international credibility from a long-standing neutral actor and the potential for bilateral cooperation from one of the world's largest nations. Additionally, the world benefits by strengthening an alliance that is at the forefront of combatting nations oppressing freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. While this major shift in world politics poses a great challenge, one can only hope that this shift occurs before it is too late for those who value democracy and free will. □

Notes

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