



EU-Brazil Relations in a Time of Crisis: An Assessment of the Fifth EU-Brazil Summit

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“We have strategic partners, now we need a strategy”

Herman van Rompuy, September 2010¹

Abstract: This paper analyses the results of the 2011 EU-Brazil Summit within the context of the Eurozone crisis, the developments in the Middle East and the emergence of Brazil as a major player on the world stage. It does so through a discourse analysis of the Summit’s conclusion on issues of global, regional and bilateral relevance. The paper argues that developments within the framework of the Strategic Partnership have left a lot to be desired on a practical level, and argues that the reasons for its original inception were mostly related to political objectives rather than strong functional considerations. The paper is divided into three parts. The first reviews the history of the Strategic Partnership; the second seeks to explain the concept and incentives for the 2007 agreement; finally, the third part sheds light on the events surrounding the 2011 Summit and draws conclusions regarding its outcome.

Resumo:

Este artigo analisa os resultados da Cúpula Brasil-UE de 2011 dentro do contexto da crise na zona do Euro, dos acontecimentos no Oriente Médio e da ascensão do Brasil. Os argumentos são desenvolvidos a partir da análise de discurso das conclusões da cúpula acerca de temas globais, regionais e bilaterais. O artigo argumenta que os avanços no quadro da Parceria Estratégica deixaram muito a desejar em questões práticas e deduz que as razões para sua criação estão mais relacionadas à projeção política e à retórica que às considerações funcionais. O artigo está dividido em três partes. A primeira trata da história da parceria estratégica; a segunda busca explicar o conceito e os incentivos para o acordo de 2007; e a última leva à luz os eventos que cercaram a cúpula de 2011 e apresenta algumas conclusões acerca de seus resultados.

¹ Message in preparation to Europe Council. See EU External Relations: “We have partners now we need a strategy” (European Council, 2010a).

Introduction

Amidst worries for the survival of the Eurozone, the bailout of Greece and the prospects of a widespread downturn in the state of the European economies, the EU, represented by European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton, and European Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht, held its first bilateral meeting with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff.² What was in fact the Fifth EU-Brazil Summit meeting, held in October 4th in Brussels, constitutes an intrinsic component of the EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership (SP), launched in 2007. The 2011 meeting held particular interest, as Europe's financial woes dominated the Union's external relations agenda, whilst Rousseff emerged as the main voice behind the proposal that the BRICS, IBSA and G20 groups, in which Brazil participates, should assume a stronger role in the resolution of the crisis in Europe.

This paper aims to analyse the results of the Summit and assess the prospects for the future development of EU-Brazil relations, whilst first providing an overview of the current state of the strategic partnership. The paper argues that whilst mechanisms for a stronger EU-Brazil partnership have been established, the preoccupations of both actors with the changing balance of power in a transforming world order does not allow for the summits to reflect deeply on critical issues. As a result, the meetings have resulted in the issuing of rhetorical policy statements rather than the production of political decisions with a view towards concrete action.

Brazil-EU Relations

In spite of the ongoing crisis of the euro, today the EU is still Brazil's main trading partner, accounting for 22.2 per cent of its total trade and US \$29.796bn. of its trade balance surplus.³ More than that, despite the growing financial relevance of China in Latin America and the traditional economic influence of the US, the EU as a whole remains the most important source of investment in Brazil.⁴ Nevertheless, behind the current state of the EU-Brazil dialogue lies a history of commercial disagreements and political controversies that defined this relationship during a great part of the last half-century.

The launching of the European integration process, marked by the signing of the Treaty of Rome (1958) and the establishment of the European Economic Community, were received by the Brazilian political elite with great concern. Agricultural producers in particular feared that barriers would be raised against Brazilian exports to Europe, one of their most important markets.⁵ During the 1950s, Brazilian foreign policy, like that of

² Dilma Rousseff began her term on January 2011 with a term of four years. She was a key figure in former president Lula da Silva's cabinet; Lula himself campaigned for her election.

³ Data provided by the Ministry of Development, Industry and International Trade. Available at: <<http://www.mdic.gov.br/sitio/interna.php?area=58&menu=2477&refr=576>>

⁴ Data provided by the Brazilian Central Bank. Available at: <<http://www.bcb.com.br/rex/ied/port/ingressos/htms/index3.asp?idpai=INVEDIR>>

⁵ At the time the main economic activity in Brazil still revolved around coffee exports.

most of the Latin American countries, was largely guided by its commercial interests. In this sense, the announcement that the European Community had decided to move towards an integrated market represented an enormous challenge and was central in defining the parameters of dialogue between Brazil and the EEC. According to Lessa:

The creation of a single market opened space for a rupture of great proportions in the core of the European system of bilateral relations towards Brazil: it produced an axis of conflict that until then did not exist [...] centred around the management of commercial issues, especially access to markets and tariff differentiations. In this long period, one cannot talk about political cooperation, as Latin America in general constituted a blind spot in European international priorities (Lessa 2009a, 6).

Whilst Lessa's analysis may be valid, this period was not wholly unfavourable for EU-Brazil relations. When political tensions with the US arose, as during the Brazilian military rule (1964-1985), these led to tendencies towards an alignment with Europe and other poles of power (Spektor, 2004). Under Ernesto Geisel (1974-1979), for instance, Brazil and Germany established an agreement for the joint development of nuclear technology and for a Brazilian nuclear power capacity; in fact, the construction of a national nuclear plant in Rio de Janeiro was only made possible because of the assistance of Germany⁶ (Bandeira, 1994). It may also be argued that the oil crisis (1973) led Brazil and Europe to engage in a renewed debate about the international economic order, which resulted in reinstating Europe as the main source of foreign investments. The EEC thus replaced the US as Brazil's main commercial partner (Silva, 2011).

During the past 30 years, the agenda has evolved along two different axes: the bilateral and the interregional. Whilst dialogue with specific European countries accelerated at a rapid rate, diplomatic relations with the European Community remained relatively limited. The return of democracy in Brazil (1985) and the agreement on the Single European Act in the EEC (1986) represented new opportunities for cooperation, but until the signing of the strategic partnership in 2007, relations between Brazil and the EU were relatively superficial. From 1995 onwards, they came under a Framework Agreement with a limited focus on specific areas, namely science and technology, investments and industrial property (a major concern on the EU side)⁷. An official Joint Committee was also established. Whilst the Committee held meetings every two years,

⁶ In 1974, the provision of enriched uranium was denied by the US Commission for Atomic Energy, which then was highly critical of the Brazilian disrespect for Human Rights. Brazil then looked for other partners and, in 1975, signed with Germany the Agreement of Cooperation for the Pacific Use of Nuclear Energy. This agreement predicted the construction of a network of eight thermonuclear plants and a plant specifically for enriching uranium (Bandeira, 1994).

⁷ The agreement followed a previous Agreement for Cooperation, signed in 1982. During this period some documents were signed by both sides regarding economic and commercial matters, but all of them very limited in political terms, dealing only with investments, loans or scientific/technological cooperation.

but few practical decisions were made and no core policy statement was delivered (Lazarou and Fonseca, 2011).

In the 1990s, the creation of Mercosur⁸ also served as a lever for the rapprochement between Brazil and the EU. During this decade, the institutional dialogue between the two regions made significant advancements, but was still limited to the commercial arena. In 1999, another multilateral initiative strengthened the relationship: the first High Level Summit of the European Union-Latin America and Caribbean Heads of State (EU-LAC). However, the golden days of interregionalism were short-lived. The Mercosur crisis —caused by the re-emergence of fiscal barriers and serious commercial disputes amongst its members— and the challenging eastern enlargement process in the EU rapidly changed the focus of both regions, leaving those channels of communication on the sidelines.⁹

The transformations brought about by the advent of the 21st century created opportunities for an agreement on a deeper partnership. Together, the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Doha round of negotiations under the aegis of the WTO and the urgency for measures against climate change —all emerging topics for discussions and controversies— influenced security, economic and environmental agendas respectively. Those decisive events reshaped the international system and created space for stronger collaboration between actors with common goals, amongst them the EU and Brazil. Nevertheless, Brazil only began to be recognised as a regional power and a likely partner for the EU in the mid-2000s.¹⁰ Its large territory (5th in size the world), significant population (close to 200 million people) and impressive —not to mention growing— GDP (Brazil has the 6th largest economy in the world, with a GDP of approximately US\$ 2tr.), alongside its abundant natural resources and potential for industrialisation, led to Brazil receiving more serious attention from Europe and other established powers as a global interlocutor (Lessa, 2009c).¹¹

⁸ Common Market of the South Cone, composed by Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Despite the name, Mercosur has still not become a common market, and is still facing troubles even in maintaining its customs union (Saraiva, 2010).

⁹ Brazilian financial problems in 1999, when a rigorous exchange rate policy was abandoned and the Real was devalued by 35% in relation to the *Peso Argentino*, followed by the worst economic and political crisis in Argentinean recent history (2001), contributed to a reformulation of policies towards Mercosur. Instead of more integration, the four countries opted for fewer rules and began to accuse each other of protectionist measures. Uruguay and Paraguay, two small partners, were the most affected. Two different approaches emerged: the first arguing for more flexibility and the implementing of a “two-speed Mercosur”, in which some industrial sectors would receive fiscal incentives. The other defended a temporary suspension of the common external tariff, which would represent a marked curtailment of the integration process. Some of the crisis symptoms persisted. Following the inauguration of CASA (South American Nations Community) – renamed Unasur (South American Nations Union) - analysts believe that there is a great chance that the continents integration may bypass Mercosur (Camargo, 2006).

¹⁰ This becomes clear if we consider that until 2006 there had been no visit by the President of the European Commission to Brazil (the last time was in 1960) whilst a Brazilian president had his first official visit to the EC only in 2007, which demonstrates the limited importance that until very recently Brazil played in the European Union agenda.

¹¹ Demographic information provided by the census survey released by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2010. Available at:

The election of Lula da Silva (2003-2010) was also a motor for change. His strong South-South foreign policy orientation and his emphasis on the need for reorganisation of multilateral fora opened up space for cooperation with the EU. Europe was seen as a potential partner for Brazilian demands for reform at the UN, but also as an important part of the triangular cooperation strategy that Brazil fostered with African and Latin American countries. The political background of Lula's new foreign policy agenda is conceptualised by Vigevani and Cepaluni (2007) as "autonomy through diversification", which the authors define as

[...] adherence to international principles and norms by means of south-south alliances, including regional ones, and agreements with non-traditional partners (China, Asia-Pacific, Africa, Eastern Europe, Middle East and others), because it is believed that it reduces the asymmetry in foreign relations with powerful countries and increases the national negotiation capacity¹² (Vigevani and Cepaluni, 2007: 283).

In other words, despite not representing a major shift in the Brazilian foreign policy paradigm, the Labour Party's (PT) ascension to power was responsible for a change in specific objectives. Whilst Brazil preserved its traditional goal of using foreign policy as a tool for economic development and political autonomy (Lima, 1990), it now would pursue that goal using a different strategy: diversification. In Lula's agenda Europe had a decisive political and economic role but, in contrast to previous years, when the Old Continent was seen as a donor, the new government saw the Union as an associate and co-sponsor in global initiatives. As a result, the establishment of the strategic partnership was welcomed by Brazilian policy-makers as the recognition of Brazil's new weight in the international arena.

Perhaps inevitably, this enthusiasm was not shared by other countries in the region, where Brazil's newly created "special relationship" with the EU was seen as harmful for regional and interregional initiatives. A number of Brazil's neighbouring states, such as Argentina, felt that the Strategic Partnership would exclude them from the "high politics" debates (Silva, 2011). Particularly amongst Mercosur partners, there was an apprehension that Brazil might turn its back on its regional agenda or adapt it to international demands, further complicating the already turbulent South American integration process (Saraiva, 2010). Fears emerged that Brazil would eventually use Mercosur merely for rhetorical purposes to back its global aspirations, rather than truly engage in the regional political arrangements (Lessa, 2009c; Fride, 2007, Hoffmann and Leidel, 2007; Silva, 2011). Finally, the Argentinean political elite feared that through the Strategic Partnership Brazil would become a "spokesperson" for the whole region in the eyes of the Europeans. For Buenos Aires, which has historically viewed Brasilia as a

http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/presidencia/noticias/noticia_visualiza.php?id_noticia=1766. Economic data, such as the GDP ranking, depicted by the IMF's World Economic Outlook Database. Available at: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/02/weodata/index.aspx>

¹² Free translation from the original in Portuguese.

competitor, this prospect would increase Brazil's relative power in the region, and potentially hurt Argentinean interests.

From the European perspective Brazil bears many economic and political traits which are sought for in a partner. It is a country rich in natural resources, an influential actor in climate change talks and a leader in renewable and conventional energy production, with a growing internal market and an important supply of raw materials. Brazil is also a consolidated democracy, with a leading role in South America and a multilateral agenda which, arguably, does not fall far from the EU's own views on global governance and international institutions. This opinion is largely expressed by the European Commission in its communication to the Council and the Parliament arguing in favour of the establishment of the strategic partnership:

The time has come to look at Brazil as a strategic partner as well as a major Latin American economic actor and regional leader [...] Over the last few years Brazil has emerged as a champion of the developing world in the UN and at the WTO. The EU and Brazil share core values and interests, including respect for the rule of law and human rights, concern about climate change and the pursuit of economic growth and social justice at home and abroad. Brazil is a vital ally for the EU in addressing these and other challenges in international fora (European Commission, 2007: 1)

Nonetheless, numerous EU documents indicate that Brussels is also aware of the challenges that Brazil still has to face before becoming a fully developed country.¹³ As the official motto of Dilma Rousseff, the current Brazilian president, laconically puts it, "a rich country is a country with no poverty",¹⁴ and Brazil's persisting social inequalities still leave a lot to be expected on this front, in spite of recent improvements. The potential benefits that processes of learning from the EU could offer in this context are explicitly stated in a 2007 Communication from the Commission which reads:

Brazil still has challenges to address: acute income inequalities remain a real handicap and are one of the Government's main targets for action, particularly through its 'Bolsa Familia' programme and a key area for co-operation and dialogue with the EU. [...] Exchanges of good practices on regional cohesion is an area where the EU would like to see closer co-operation with Brazil (European Commission, 2007: 3)

Beyond that, Brazil is viewed as a leading and representative voice amongst emerging countries, as it struggles to define common interests, not only with its South American counterparts, but also with South Africa, India (within IBSA), China and Russia (in the BRICS group). This role became particularly pronounced in Brazilian foreign policy

¹³ See for example: European Commission, 2007.

¹⁴ <http://www.brasil.gov.br/noticias/arquivos/2011/02/10/governo-lanca-nova-logomarca-com-slogan-pais-rico-e-pais-sem-pobreza>

during the Lula years (Vigevani and Cepaluni, 2007). In the words of the European authorities:

A quasi-continent in its own right, Brazil's demographic weight and economic development make it a natural leader in South America and a key player in Latin America. Brazil is now actively pursuing this role in the Mercosur framework and is at the forefront of the drive to promote the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) (European Commission 2007: 1)

In spite of the growing consensus on Brazil's rising power status, the partnership did not come about unobstructed. Some EU governments, and specifically Germany and Spain, expressed serious concerns over the "special status" about to be granted to Brazil. Prime Minister Zapatero's cabinet feared that the partnership would reduce Spanish influence on the EU-Latin-America agenda, whilst adding more weight to Portugal. Germany's criticisms were related to the timing of the partnership proposal, which coincided with a moment of critical debates and negotiations regarding the approval of the Lisbon Treaty, a treaty which —amongst other things— aimed to redesign the EU's profile as a global actor and, consequently, its mode of relating to other regions (Lessa, 2009c).

Partly due to the strong and consistent efforts of the Portuguese Presidency to achieve the agreement, those disagreements were overcome. The strategic partnership was finally signed in an inaugural High-Level Summit held in Lisbon, on July 7th, 2007.

Strategic Partnership

The introduction of the term "strategic partnership" in the International Relations vernacular is relatively new. Since the beginning of the 1990s the use of more traditional concepts such as "alliance" and "cooperation" has gradually been substituted by the term "strategic partnership", even if its definition still remains unclear. According to Felix Peña, "Sometimes concepts that have a high media impact but that are hard to pinpoint in a concrete manner are used. One of such concepts is that of "strategic partnership"¹⁵ (Peña, 2010) The concept has been used frequently and without much debate in other areas, but, in the field of foreign policy and international cooperation, the lack of a clear definition seems to suggest that the term is used to denote a largely rhetorical instrument. It brings state meetings and joint declarations into the spotlight, even if substantial output and practical impact are limited (Blanco, 2011).

Scholars and policy-makers have interpreted the concept of strategic partnership in two different ways. Whilst the former interpret it as a central part of a political game, in which discourses make a significant difference, the latter place emphasis on the practical impact of such agreements, pointing out their capacity to transform —or not—

¹⁵ Free translation from the original in Spanish.

the substance of bilateral relations. Albeit an agreement built on the idea of a special, important or necessary relationship, the strategic partnership is now also part of a “spectacularised diplomacy”, focused on ‘grand projects’ having uncertain results (Lessa, 2010b). In this way “the strategic partnership is not an expression of an agenda bilaterally constructed over political convergence and economic projects, but it is a label for toasts in State visits in which international conventions are concluded”¹⁶ (Lessa, 2010b: 100). In a world of emerging powers “the Strategic Partnership is a discursive tool that restructures what has traditionally been seen in terms of bilateral diplomacy between relevant powers, in a way which is more consistent with a scenario of emerging multipolarity” (Lazarou and Fonseca 2011: 25).

In the context of the EU, the concept appeared for the first time in the European Security Strategy (ESS) in 2003. In this document, the EU emphasised the importance of high level debates with specific countries, in order to achieve foreign policy objectives. Highlighting the need for international cooperation the Commission called for the pursuit of the EU’s objectives “both through multilateral cooperation in international organisations and through partnerships with key actors” (ESS, 2003, 13). The initial list presented in the ESS only included the US (as an irreplaceable partner), Russia (geostrategically vital) and Japan, China, Canada and India as one group.

In recent years, the analysis and relevance of the strategic partnership as an instrument has been the object of considerable debate (Grevi, 2008; Biscop and Renard, 2009; Renard, 2010a, 2010b; Balfour, 2010, Schmidt, 2010; Vasconcelos, 2010; Lessa, 2010b). Two —essentially contradictory— views have emerged. Whilst some (eg. Grevi, 2008) defend the use of the concept - even if it has no clear political definition - others (eg. Renard 2010a; 2010b) argue that the proliferation of strategic partnerships without a formal consensus about the term’s meaning creates an expectation gap and blurs the important distinction between true partners and more circumstantial alliances.

According to Grevi (2008), the strategic partnership “is a trademark of the ‘EU way’ of doing business with other players, and corresponds to the reality of ever-growing areas of cooperation and interdependence” (Grevi, 2008, 147). In this sense, the formalisation of bilateral relations has been relatively successful, creating the conditions for the EU to play a more decisive role in the mechanisms of global governance. Therefore, “[...] strategic partnerships could be regarded as an updated version of the EU’s efforts to ‘domesticate’ international relations, transforming crude power balances into rule-based relationships” (Grevi, 2008: 158). The argument is that multilateralism can be achieved through bilateralism. By framing relations within norm-based bilateral dialogues, the EU stands a better chance of influencing the interests and actions of the other countries in multilateral settings. Sharing this view, Vasconcelos adds that:

¹⁶ Translation from the original in Portuguese.

The EU is not a superpower and it is unrealistic to expect that it could be cast in the role of chief facilitator. But perhaps it is through smaller, more gradual steps and the development of bilateral relations, and giving these a multilateral dimension, that the EU can make a difference (Vasconcelos, 2010: 67).

Grevi adds that flexibility and adaptability are key words for a working strategic partnership is to bear fruit and to help enhance the EU's 'actorness'. Viewed from this angle, the lack of a unique definition of the concept is not a problem; on the contrary, it is a necessary condition.

In a less positive evaluation, a second group of scholars focuses on the EU's incapacity to formulate a clear foreign policy towards the set of countries with which it has celebrated strategic partnerships. Biscop and Renard (2009) attribute the problem directly to the vagueness of the concept itself: "Apart from various annual meetings, it is not clear what strategic partnership entails. Which common objectives and joint actions are to be pursued, in which policy areas? At the moment, merely having a partnership appears more important than its content (Biscop and Renard, 2009). According to the authors, a clear definition of the term and a more selective and, most importantly, substantive use of this framework for guiding EU relations is needed.

It has been noted that, when the EU introduces this type of agreement with a third country it explicitly elevates the relative importance of its partner, both globally and in relation to the others in the region. In this sense, the proliferation of SPs also holds negative consequences, as it may create a sense of being neglected and overshadowed in those who are not labelled as "strategic". In Latin America, SPs may be viewed as external instruments which appoint regional hegemon. Argentina's reaction to the EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership is a good example of how bilateral partnerships can harm regional dialogues. To avoid this kind of issues, the EU has been advised to show more caution in the selection of its partners and in its *a priori* assessment of the regional and global impacts of these choices (see for example Biscop and Renard, 2009).

From a more policy-oriented point of view, the strategic partnership represents the elevation of bilateral dialogue to its highest and, perhaps, broadest level. "High level dialogue" thus pertains not only to the discussion of a wide range of bilateral initiatives, but also to cooperation on issues of regional, interregional and global interest. In that sense, it may be said to represent a commitment to a common, albeit partial, vision of the world and of the future. According to Ambassador Edileuza Reis, former Director of the European Department in the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, at the time, responsible for negotiations over the Strategic Partnership agreement, comments:

The Strategic Partnership is not a panacea [...] it represents the disposition of two major partners, with consolidated interests, to look for new forms of cooperation

based on mutual respect and the recognition of the growing importance of both actors in the conformation of a multipolar international order¹⁷ (Reis, 2009: 14).

Whilst the exact meaning of the term “strategic partnership” remains a matter of debate amongst scholars, it is generally agreed that this aspect of EU external relations is part of the third of three different “generations” of EU agreements (Gratius, 2011a). The first was established by the European Economic Community (EEC) during the Cold War, prioritising Western partners, namely the United States and Canada, and a tactical ally, Japan. The second, emerging in the 1990s soon after the creation of the European Union, manifested an emerging interest in regional blocs. During this period, relations with Brazil and other developing countries were subordinated to the inter-regional dialogue, due to four distinct factors:

(1) the EU’s belief in its capacity to become a global actor based on its own model and resources; (2) optimism about the future of inter-regional negotiations; (3) the political and economic instability that characterised Brazil until the beginning of the 2000s; and (4) the absence of foresight regarding the upcoming multipolar global order (Lazarou and Fonseca, 2011: 15).

Finally, the third generation included a larger number of countries, reflecting awareness of significant transformations in the international order, including the emergence of a multipolar system with several rising powers. The launch of stronger ties with Brazil took place within this political context, as the EU sought to diversify its ties, strengthen its position in global governance and enhance its commercial prospects.

Currently, the EU holds strategic partnership agreements with Brazil, Japan, the US, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, India, South Africa, Canada and China. In his 2010 State of the Union speech, Durão Barroso explained the importance of the partnerships: “In our globalized world, the relationships we build with strategic partners determine our prosperity. To be effective on the international stage, we need the weight of the European Union. Size matters, now more than ever” (Barroso, 2010). Whilst reinforcing the importance of these partnerships for the EU’s global role, Barroso did not go as far as to define the selection criteria established by the Union to decide with whom it should foster a strategic partnership and with whom it shouldn’t. Assessing this issue, Eugênia Barthelmeß, a diplomat with a long experience in the Brazilian mission to the European Union, affirms that the strategic partnerships may be perceived as a “singular bilateral privileged political relationship that the EU establishes with each of the members of a certain group of third countries, *defined by the centrality of the role they play in the international scenario*”¹⁸ (Barthelmeß, 2008, own emphasis). Helpful as this explanation might be, it still fails to justify why Mexico and South Korea are strategic partners, but Indonesia and Australia are not.

¹⁷ Free translation from the original in Portuguese.

¹⁸ Free translation from the original in Portuguese.

This is a problem that persists even in the official documents. For Renard (2010), some partners are considered ‘natural allies’ (the case of the US), and others are simply too important to ignore (China and Russia). As for Brazil, the reason may be less clear. During the 5th EU-Brazil summit, Barroso declared that “Brazil is more than a strategic partner —Brazil is a like-minded country with which we want to work together on issues of global concern such as sustainable development, climate change and our G20 agenda” (European Commission, 2011).

Pragmatism is also a characteristic of the partnership agreements. Whilst the European Commission emphasises the political relevance of third countries and declares that the cornerstone of agreements with these countries is “to see the Union play the role in global affairs that matches its economic weight” (Barroso, 2010), it has been argued — based on an analysis of trade relations between the EU and its strategic partners— that what matters the most for the European authorities is the economic potential of the agreements (Lessa, 2009a). At the time of signature, the EU was the main commercial partner of almost all of the ten “strategic partner” countries.¹⁹

Finally, it is also relatively evident that the heterogeneity amongst the EU’s partners and the variable geometry of the relations established with them creates a scenario in which the “strategic” character of the EU’s agreements is not the same in each case. Whilst for some analysts this represents no problem, as long as it adds value to the bilateral dialogue (eg. Gratius, 2011a), others avoid “one size fits all” concepts for fear of jeopardising relations (eg. Biscop and Renard, 2009; Renard, 2010).

This relates to the identity of the EU itself as a strategic partner. Research shows that in the case of India, Brazil and South Africa, for instance, policy-makers are not so clear about what the EU stands for (Olivier and Fioramonti, 2010). The Lisbon Treaty gave more power to the Commission, which replaced the Council as the main voice of the EU in the dialogue concerning these partnerships. However, the EU needs to speak with one voice in a larger number of issues to be seen as a true actor in the international system. According to Schmidt: “[...] the attractiveness of the EU to external partners has diminished considerably due to this mismatch between the EU’s normative power expectations and internal capabilities but also due to diminished role expectations abroad” (Schmidt, 2010: 9).

Strong and effective strategic partnerships may help cure the declining image of the EU. From more pessimistic viewpoints, however, the concept has been so poorly used by policy-makers (from both the EU and Brazil) that in many cases it now represents no more than pure rhetoric²⁰ (Almeida, 2009).

¹⁹ With the exception of Canada (which has a special agreement with the US through NAFTA) and Japan (which also has a traditional link with the US). In both these cases the EU ranks as the second commercial partner.

²⁰ “Year after year, summit after summit, the strategic partnerships proved to be ‘empty boxes’ with no particular meaning” (Renard, 2010, 18).

Annual Summits: a transforming agenda?

Much has been written explaining why Brazil so eagerly endorsed the Strategic Partnership proposed by the EU (Lessa, 2019a; Lessa, 2019c; Barthelmess, 2008; Reis, 2009). Perhaps the best explanation would be the relevance of the strategic partnership for Lula's vision of Brazil's global insertion and its positioning on the map of global players. Frustrated with its failure to obtain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and in a constant quest for forums in which it could raise its voice and be heard, Brazil welcomed the annual bilateral Summits, and the widely disseminated resulting Joint Statements, as yet another means for its projection in Europe and globally.

The annual High-Level Summits foreseen in the Partnership are a mechanism that institutionalises the special dialogue. They bring together not only the political elites, but also specific workgroups and representatives of the business communities. These other meetings take place on the sidelines of the state Summits. Input from all these levels is taken into consideration in the formulation of agreements, such as the Common Action Plan.

For analytical purposes, the topics discussed within the framework of the strategic partnership may be divided in three levels: "multilateral/global challenges", "the regional agenda" and "bilateral concerns". This division reflects the several interests shared by the EU and Brazil, but also their different perspectives towards the partnership. An overview of the joint statements of the five Summits that have taken place so far reveals that, at the global level the recurrent issues were: the reform of the UN Security Council, the consequences of the financial crisis along with a formulation of multilateral mechanisms to avoid future debt crises, and policy coordination in the area of climate change. The addition of regional issues has been the result of demands from the Brazilian side, with the aim of including strategies for the strengthening of ties between the EU and Mercosur in the Partnership.²¹ Interestingly, in this sense, Brazilian foreign policy has used the Strategic Partnership with the EU as an instrument for its regional policy. The bilateral agenda has been devoted to controversies about migration policies and coordination of action to combat organised crime (Hoffmann, 2010).

Until recently, Brazil had been consistent in using the High-Level Dialogue as a forum in which to promote its interests and goals such as a more flexible migration regime for Brazilians emigrating to Europe, more favourable terms for EU-Mercosur trade, a joint

²¹ According to Hoffmann (2009), the Brazilian government wanted to include references to the EU-Mercosur dialogue in the SP's objectives as a gesture of good will to its Mercosur neighbours. Pushing for the renegotiation of the agreement on tariff liberalisation, Brazil hoped to reduce its neighbors' fear (especially that of the Argentinean government) that South American integration was losing relevance in the Brazilian foreign policy agenda and that the EU would overlook Mercosur in order to advance in Brazil-EU relations. The EU regards the SP as complementary to EU-Mercosur relations.

EU-Brazil position on climate change and sustainable development, and the support of major EU players for a more active Brazilian role in global affairs. The Brazilian goal also seems to have been to gradually move from issues of “lower politics” to “high politics” issues. Thus, for example, the second annual meeting, held in Rio de Janeiro in 2008, principally served to establish some general guidelines and to elaborate the more general areas of the Common Action Plan, such as cooperation in the areas of culture, education, energy, transports and visa, science, technology, the information society, economy, and environment (European Council, 2008). A year later, during the Stockholm Summit, “harder” issues, such as climate change and the menacing financial crisis became the centre of the bilateral dialogue. With the UNFCCC meeting in Copenhagen approaching, both sides were keen to formulate a comprehensive proposition. On this occasion, the strategic partnership was used as the political trigger for the drafting of a proposed agreement for the COP 15. Likewise, both sides proposed that the dialogue focus on initiatives regarding the financial crisis and its social consequences, which were already an issue of mutual concern at the time (European Council, 2009).

The 2010 summit, held in Brasilia during the last year of President Lula’s mandate, was perhaps the most interesting in terms of the evolving Brazilian foreign policy behaviour and the rebalancing of power between the two actors. The Summit was marked by the reopening of the EU-Mercosur negotiations, which had come to a standstill as early as 2004, and by the renewed commitment to the EU/Latin America & Caribbean (EU-LAC) dialogue. It is noteworthy that 2010 was a year in which the promotion of regional cooperation was high on the Brazilian foreign policy agenda,²² which would explain the prioritisation of the interregional agenda in the Summit.²³ The 2010 meeting is also intriguing in terms of Brazil’s projection of power, in the form of criticisms and objections towards the EU. This was particularly pronounced in the area of migration and agricultural subsidies. Brazil criticised the EU for its protectionist reactions to the crisis, which, the Brazilian government argued, went against the spirit of the strategic partnership (Uchoa, 2010). With regards to migration, the Brazilian government expressed deep concerns over the treatment and living standards of Brazilian nationals living in the EU, especially in the United Kingdom. Brazil raised objections to some of the measures adopted by the EU, particularly the Return Directive, which was perceived as harmful for bilateral relations (European Council, 2010b).

A more positive implication of the narrowing of the power gap between the two parties were the advances made in the triangular EU-Brazil-Africa cooperation for development

²² In 2010 Brazil was the pro-tempore president of Mercosur.

²³ During the opening speech of the XXVI Mercosur’s Parliament Session in 2010, Celso Amorim, Brazilian foreign minister at the time, affirmed that regional integration was Lula’s most important foreign policy goal and that the EU and Mercosur were close to reaching an agreement in the area of trade liberalisation. In his words: “[...] the most recent negotiation round between Mercosur and European Union has been concluded. Mercosur has given signs of its intention to conclude a balanced and wide-ranging agreement, taking into consideration the asymmetries between the two sides. [...] It has been a long time since the negotiations were held in such an optimistic environment [...]” (Amorim, 2010).

and effective aid. The recognition of Brazil as an emerging donor in the Joint statement also served as a consolidation of Brazil's new, more powerful position in the international stage.

The 2011 EU-Brazil Summit: A Shift in the Balance or an Elephant in the Room?

The 5th EU-Brazil Summit, held in Brussels on October 4th, was the first in which Brazil was represented by its new president, Dilma Rousseff, and the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Antonio Patriota. With the Eurozone crisis having reached a peak, and with the Greek bailout occupying the EU agenda, it would only be natural to expect increased and specific attention to the matter—not least, because the Brazilian President had repeatedly advocated that emerging economies, such as Brazil, India and China should actively contribute to Europe's recovery (Valor, 2011; Exman, 2011; Santos, 2011). Surprisingly, however, the topic was overlooked in the joint statement. In fact, the only mention to economic cooperation relevant to the crisis was that 'Brazil and the EU decide to coordinate efforts with a view to contributing to the reform of the world's financial architecture so as to prevent financial crises in the future [...]' (European Council, 2011, 13).

This silence is noteworthy and demonstrates that the EU may not be prepared to readjust the balance of the strategic partnership and concede to the role of the "weaker" of the two parties, albeit merely in terms of economic growth. In recent years Brazil has managed to control its financial debts, increase its national reserves and go through the crisis relatively easily, at times even being cited as a model for its sound economic policies. In this sense, Brazil – along with the other BRIC countries – might be able to play an active role in helping the EU overcome the crisis. This would most probably require a reform of the international monetary system to match BRIC demands for more participation. At the same time, within the EU there is a belief that 'a reform of the international financial system will entail a reduction in European influence. Whilst a reform might be the rational thing to do if one looks at the economic figures worldwide, it is still not realistic' (Gratius, 2011c). The marked absence of the issue from the joint statement may reflect this reserve and the EU's conviction—for the time being— '[...] that BRICS should not have a protagonist role in Europe's crisis [because] their participation will become part of the problem rather than of the solution' (Gratius, 2011c).

From this standpoint, the 5th Summit did not differ dramatically from the previous four, in spite of the unspoken, yet clear, change in relative economic power. The central themes remained more or less the same and the EU-Brazil approach to the strategic partnership focused more on rhetoric and functional projects, such as triangular aid, than on practical political measures. Brazil, in turn, was reluctant to enhance the agenda to include more sensitive issues. The discussion thus focused on the following topics:

i. Global issues

(1) The statements reveal that proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, failed States, and terrorism, were regarded as the central challenges on the international security agenda. Notably, Brazil agreed to include the list formulated in the European Security Strategy (2003) and decided to make progress on discussions regarding a possible cooperation within the EU Common Security and Defence Policy missions. Nevertheless, after assuming different positions on the Libyan and Syrian crises, evolution in cooperation between Brazil and the EU in the field of security seems improbable, at least for now. Along with its BRICS partners, Brazil did not support the intervention in Libya, criticised the adoption of unilateral sanctions against al Assad's regime, and condemned a number of EU governments, especially the UK and France, for choosing military deployment as the first option (Herz and Florentino, 2011). Brazil argued that the "responsibility to protect" rhetoric has been used as a "smoke screen for regime change in Libya" (Edwards, 2012), and proposed a new principle for UN interventions - "responsibility while protecting".²⁴

Catherine Ashton's visit to Brazil on February 2012, might have resolved part of the disagreements.²⁵ Whilst defending strong measures to stop the use of violence by the Syrian government against the population, Ashton affirmed that: "the responsibility of the international community is to use whatever means —and I do not mean military means— to persuade the country that it is in their interest to go down this route [of non-violence] (Ashton, 2012). However briefly stated, this reservation may be regarded as a relative victory of the Brazilian diplomacy. More than that, it can be the principle on which an international security dialogue may be founded, but it will take more than Ashton's rhetoric to foster this central aspect of the strategic partnership.

(2) In 2010 the European Commission put together a detailed diagnosis of a different kind of threats. This document became the EU Internal Security Strategy in Action (2010) and, besides uncovering a number of security problems that all European countries currently face on the domestic level, it presented measures that may be taken in common to confront them. The list contained organised crime, cybercrime, border security, disasters and terrorism (both as an internal and external threat). In these areas, whilst the EU recognises the efforts of the Brazilian government to curb the flow of

²⁴ Responsibility whilst protecting is a concept proposed by Dilma Rousseff in the opening speech of the 66th UN General Assembly. According to the Brazilian view, the interventions undertaken by the UN Security Council in order to prevent genocides, largely legitimised by the "responsibility to protect" logic, should be reformulated. Brazil circulated a paper in which it proposed two key changes: more specific criteria for such interventions (including the ideas of last resort, proportionality and balancing) and a mechanism to monitor and review the practices in the field, (Rousseff, 2011; Patriota, 2011). The proposal was welcomed by the UN secretary-general, Ban Ki-moon (Ki-moon, 2012) and by the former Australian foreign minister, Gareth Evans (Evans, 2011)

²⁵ During this visit, Ms. Ashton met with Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota. According to the relevant press release, one of the main topics of their meeting was the crisis in Syria. Ashton supported Brazilian concerns about humanitarian interventions but warned that other countries should not use this to block multilateral actions.

drugs and weapons to Europe, it still perceives its partner country as a central actor in matters of transnational crime. Thus, at the Summit, the EU pushed for agreements on police and anti-money laundering cooperation.

This issue is not especially new in the strategic partnership agenda, but the emphasis given to it by the EU illustrates the growing influence that internal security has on its international presence, creating opportunities and challenges for bilateral relations with strategic partners. Whilst the Brazilian government affirmed that it welcomes technical collaboration and exchange of good practices between security professionals, it expressed worry about the impact that harsher border control policies might have on the treatment of migrants. This relates directly to the next topic.

(3) Brazil has been working consistently to decriminalise unauthorised migration to the EU and to guarantee the rights of nationals living abroad. Yet, in the latest Summit there was little progress in this area. The only achievement for the Brazilian side was the inclusion of a recognition of the “positive role of migration as a factor of human and economic exchange in countries of both origin and destination” (European Council, 2011, 25). Beyond that, the statement merely consisted of the reproduction of general principles and policy guidelines. Due to the financial crisis in Europe and the rapid development of the Brazilian economy, the job market in the EU has been less attractive and the number of Brazilians deported or involuntarily extradited has decreased. However, crisis aside, migration is likely to continue being an area of conflict in the future.

(4) Talks over climate change were carried out in two directions. Firstly, both sides recognised the importance of supporting the June 2012 Rio+20 Conference. In this spirit, the EU and Brazil agreed to work:

[...] towards an ambitious and comprehensive outcome to combat climate change engaging all countries through a balanced effort that respects common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities within the framework of the UNFCCC with a view to holding the increase in global average temperature below 2 °C above preindustrial levels (European Council, 2011, 20).

In the aftermath of the UNFCCC meeting in Durban (COP 17), expectations for a wide-ranging agreement during Rio+20 are noticeably low. Nevertheless, the strategic partnership has been important in strengthening the global debate about environmental protection. Currently, Brazil and the EU’s motivations and interests in the area of environmental policy and climate change create more divergence rather than convergence. Yet, the increasing flexibility and spirit of compromise between the parties creates optimism for future talks.

(5) The WTO Doha Round was once again a matter of concern. Both parties agree that protectionism must be restricted and a balanced conclusion must be reached, but the

issues of agricultural subsidies and patent protection still prevent them from reaching a common position. In the joint declaration, Brazil and the EU gave special attention to intellectual property, which constitute a main element of dispute:

[...] both sides are committed to continue the dialogue on the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights, in order to build a consensual view on the role of intellectual property for the promotion of innovation and to tackle the common challenge of fighting piracy and counterfeiting in their territories (European Council, 2011, 13).

At this moment of global economic crisis, the impending threat of protectionism makes any kind of arrangement very difficult to achieve. The EU faces the highest unemployment rates in years and rejects any discussion regarding the reduction of agricultural subsidies, which would create challenges in this sector and, most probably, a loss of jobs and high political costs. These are the same issues that block a free trade agreement between Mercosur and the EU; they are likely to remain for a long time.

(6) Once again, energy was an important topic of debate. The Brazilian government voiced demands for a more transparent energy market, especially for biofuels. The partners declared that cheap and renewable energy are central conditions for a sustainable development and that the research on energy alternatives must, therefore, be a goal of the partnership. However, the EU remains very critical of the effects of Brazilian ethanol. According to the Commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard, when analysing the impact of this kind of energy for the environment, factors such as the consequences for other cultures, deforestation and reproduction of poverty should be taken into consideration (EurActiv, 2012). In this sense, the summit did not mark an improvement. The demand for renewable and clean energy creates common ground for the partnership, but specific objectives —such as the removal of trade barriers for Brazilian ethanol in Europe— are still very far from being achieved.

(7) In terms of specific foreign policy issues, the statement remained unsurprisingly vague. Whilst the revolutions in northern Africa and in the Middle East and especially the critical developments in Libya and Syria were of great concern during the Summit, the diverging positions held by Brazil and the EU on the matter merely resulted in a relatively superficial declaration. According to European leaders, Brazil is developing a paradoxical foreign policy agenda. On the one hand, it strongly defends human rights. On the other, however, its rigid emphasis on sovereignty and non-interference leads it to block most UN resolutions that demand proactive actions, at times even affecting their legitimacy.²⁶ As Brazil continues to evolve into a global actor, this may provoke further disagreements between the two partners, as the EU puts more pressure on Brazil to assume more responsibility.

²⁶ After Germany failed to support the intervention in Libya, Chancellor Merkel became an exception amongst EU leaders, softening its criticism of Brazilian posture (Peterke, 2011).

ii. Regional interests

In 2010 formal negotiations for an EU-Mercosur Association Agreement were relaunched but soon veiled in pessimism, as a number of European countries, including France, expressed objections to the terms proposed. Acknowledging these developments, the EU-Brazil summit declaration renewed the interest in continuing to work towards the conclusion of a comprehensive EU-Mercosur agreement (European Council, 2011, 23).

Brazilian diplomacy has been pushing hard for more progress in the Association Agreement and has gained the support of several members of the European Parliament and sectors of the European industry in this (de la Torre, 2011). Since 2010, there have been seven interparliamentary meetings on this issue, but with little success. The potential agreement is one of high importance to both parties. Mercosur's GDP growth exceeded 5 per cent over the last seven years, reaching 1,800bn. euros, more than South Korea, India or Russia all of which are important EU strategic partners. At the same time, EU investments in Mercosur amount to 165bn. euros, more than its investments in Russia, China and India combined (European Commission, 2011). Those numbers speak for themselves, revealing that the association agreement is not just a political demand, but also an economic opportunity, yet one that collides with protectionist fears. The Eurozone crisis will probably postpone any debate about trade liberalisation in the near future.

iii. Bilateral issues

In the bilateral agenda, the most important issue was EU investment in Brazil. The declaration welcomed the signature of a 500m.euro loan between the European Investment Bank and Brazil's Development Bank (BNDES). Three bills of intentions were also presented: one on measures to improve tourism between the EU and Brazil; the second on space policies and civil space technology cooperation; and the third on innovation and shared learning. The joint statement also endorsed the agreement on short-term tourist visa for Brazilians entering the EU.

Issues such as civil society relations and academic mobility were, as usual, highlighted and relevant agreements were commended. In the same period, Rousseff announced the creation of a hundred thousand scholarships within the framework of academic mobility in cooperation with the EU²⁷. This may be interpreted as an answer to the necessity for more cooperation in the areas of scientific research and technology innovation, in which the strategic partnership has been relatively successful. It also derives from the

²⁷ For more information "Ciências Sem Fronteiras" (*Sciences without Borders*), see: <http://capes.gov.br/bolsas/bolsas-no-exterior/ciencia-sem-fronteiras>

perception that a partnership will only last if it deeply involves people and creates processes of socialisation.

Finally, the importance given to parliamentary interaction is also noteworthy. In 2009, the Brazil-EU Parliamentary Group was created in the Brazilian congress to foster direct parliamentary relations. In preparation for the 2011 Summit, the European Parliament sent a mission to Brazil with the purpose to interact with the group and consolidate joint interests and demands. From both sides, parliamentary interaction is regarded as an element contributing to the democratic, legitimate and popular nature of the partnership.

Conclusion

Following more than four decades of diplomatic relations, established as early as 1960, Brazil and the EU have endorsed the 2007 Strategic Partnership as the optimum mechanism with the potential to enhance bilateral interests and relations. Yet whether that is the case and, even more interestingly, whether this potential remains unaltered by the recent global economic developments, remains a question to be answered.

Evidently, the Strategic Partnership —particularly at the time of its inception— holds potential benefits for both sides. From the EU's perspective, Brazil is an important regional power and a potential interlocutor for future economic agreements and political dialogue in the region. At the same time, the High Level Dialogue, which the agreement establishes, constitutes a political discursive space in which the EU can reinforce important commercial ties with Brazil and make advancements in the field of international cooperation, whilst projecting its normative power through the promotion of “European” norms and values within the partnership. As the EU regards itself as a “civilian power”, that wants to change the system through the promotion of the norms (Manners, 2002), the partnership can be used as an exercise in the diffusion and advocacy of the principles of multilateral cooperation, the primacy of diplomacy, the peaceful mediation of conflicts, the promotion of human rights and the rule of law.

For Brazil, the partnership serves two key foreign policy goals: global projection and an enhanced autonomy through the diversification of external ties. In terms of its establishment as a significant actor in the international arena, the inclusion in the limited and selective list of EU partners represents a “seal of quality” for the country's recent emergence as an economic and potentially political power. Being recognised on the same level as the US or China holds a great significance for the Brazilian political elites. It also creates expectations that its demand for a reform of global institutions, and particularly the UN Security Council, may be supported by the European Union. At the same time, the partnership with the EU constitutes only a part of the extensive network of partners and multilateral initiatives, which have characterised Brazilian foreign

policy in the recent years²⁸. Thus, whilst the 2007 agreement has created a new, closer relationship between the EU and Brazil, this relationship is not one of dependence for Brazil, as it is balanced out by the wide array of external relations that Brazil has engaged in. It is this balance that guarantees partner support but also autonomy for the rising Brazil.

As far as the future of the Partnership and its treatment is concerned, a lot will depend on the unfolding of the Eurozone crisis. Already, as demonstrated in part by the 5th EU-Brazil Summit, the crisis has become an issue of global concern and thus a part of the bilateral agenda, albeit implicitly so for the time being. The financial crisis has largely deconstructed the traditional image of “normative power Europe”, affecting new powers’ perceptions of the EU as a model for regional integration. (Lazarou, 2012). It has also had an impact on the relative power balance between the EU and its emerging partners, including Brazil. Brazilian policy-makers view the Eurozone crisis as the reflection of current global transformations, which not only impact the economic arena, but which are also resulting in shifts of power from traditional poles to new centres, namely Latin America and Asia (Lazarou, 2012). In this sense, the EU has to face the fact that Brazil has developed a South-South agenda of cooperation, in which the role of the EU has changed. Whilst the strategic partnership foresees assistance for many development projects in Brazil, in reality what we are increasingly witnessing is more space for triangular cooperation for aid in least developed countries, with both Brazil and the EU in donor roles.²⁹

The transition from the Lula government, under which the partnership was signed, to the administration of Dilma Rousseff, may also create new spaces for joint action. Whilst political power in Brazil remains with the Labour Party, the subtle yet important differences between the two administrations’ foreign policy orientation will, without doubt, be reflected in the next Summit. Particularly in the field of human rights, the new President has already demonstrated less tolerance towards abuses, steering away from authoritarian regimes and even criticising some of its partners, like Cuba and Venezuela. However, during the events that came to be known as the “Arab Spring”, Brazil was reluctant, avoiding a clear statement in favour of the revolutionary movements, whilst not aligning itself with the rulers. This position, aligned though it was with the other BRICS and Germany, came under strong criticism by a number of European countries. The cultivation of the concept of “responsibility while protecting” which emerged in the aftermath of those criticisms, and which endorses a number of concerns previously put forth by the EU, may create common ground between the EU and Brazil and occupy an important place in the 2012 bilateral agenda.

²⁸ See for example the Strategic Partnerships with Turkey and Norway, and the emphasis on the institutionalisation of multilateral groups such as BRICS and IBSA in Brazilian foreign policy rhetoric and practice in the last decade.

²⁹ According to Edileuza Reis, “The truly strategic meaning of the Brazil-European Union Partnership is reflected in the capacity of working with solidarity toward the poorer and excluded for the construction of a fairer and better world” (Reis, 2009, 31)

For the time being, as a political partner, the EU is not the sole priority for the Brazilian government. However, in the increasingly politicised areas of trade and investment, it keeps the lead and has bargaining leverage. It does not seem that this scenario will change any time soon, even as Brazil looks to advance its commitment to a reformed world, enhancing its ties with emerging powers and strengthening the South American integration projects (Gratius, 2011b). Therefore, for the time being, both sides should focus on the matters in which they already have a common stand and perceive each other as potential partners, whilst resolving the frictions of competition. In this sense, a bilateral free trade agreement, common energy development programs and climate change policies would become more feasible.

During the Lisbon Summit of 2007, when the strategic partnership was launched, President Lula affirmed that:

[...] we are elevating our relationship to the high of its potentialities and we are projecting a common vision for a transforming world. [...] The great challenge that we face is the one of putting in practice those values, with concrete or, at least, coordinated responses. This should be the use of our dialogue³⁰ (Lula da Silva apud Reis, 2009, 14).

Judging by the 2011 meeting in Brussels, there is still a long way to go for this statement to hold true. During the last five years, Brazil and EU have been talking a lot of low politics and making advances mainly in the sphere of technical assistance, but there is no clear road-map for cooperation on the main issues presented in the partnership agreement. The decision of both parts to join their action on the Euro crisis and, potentially, in the discussions on intervention and the Arab spring, will have a decisive impact on whether and at what pace rhetoric turns into practice.

³⁰ Translation from the original in Portuguese.

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