

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ORDER

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM BRAZIL'S G20 PRESIDENCY?

Opportunities for Strategic North-South Cooperation
Amidst Geopolitical Turmoil

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January 2024



Brazil is back to an active engagement in multilateral cooperation, but facing difficult geopolitical divides. The G20 presidency in 2024 will put to the test how successfully Brazil can execute its policy of “active non-alignment” and bridge different interests.



Sustainable development, fighting hunger and poverty, and reforming global governance mark the priorities of the G20 presidency, for which Brazil is a strong advocate.



If the right strategic priorities are set, the G20 agenda could boost partnerships between Europe and Brazil, e.g. regarding finance mechanisms for energy transition and climate protection.

Content

	EDITORS' INTRODUCTION	2
1	BRAZIL'S FOREIGN POLICY IN CONTEXT	3
2	FOCUS AREAS OF THE BRAZILIAN G20 PRESIDENCY	4
3	POTENTIAL FOR CLOSER ALLIANCES WITH EUROPE	8
	References	10

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

Brazil assumed the one-year Presidency of the G20 group of states on 1 December 2023. Since it last held the position, in 2008, the G20 format has expanded and the geopolitical landscape has shifted. Furthermore, Brazil has undergone drastic political changes domestically. Coincidentally though, as in 2008 it is a government led by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva that will host the G20 in 2024 and set its agenda.

Given Lula's experience and standing, expectations are high. After four years of quasi-isolationism under his predecessor Jair Bolsonaro, Lula has promised that "Brazil is back" on the world stage to tackle global challenges. Leaders from all parts of the world have welcomed the return of Lula and Brazil. So, the G20 Presidency represents a decisive moment for the country to prove that its international engagement can indeed make a difference. Amidst a world in turmoil and rising tensions among the G20 member states, can leadership by a country like Brazil, with its »active non-alignment«, actually provide solutions? Will the country be able to act as a bridge between the G7 and BRICS? And by doing so, give even more weight to voices from Latin America and the Global South as a whole in the G20?

In order to better understand the capabilities and limits of Brazil as a broker in the international arena in 2024, this analysis examines three central questions: (1) How is Brazil situated in the international system and what has changed during the government's first year? (2) What are the international expectations concerning Brazil's contribution to the international system during its Presidency of the G20? And (3), how can the Presidency of the G20 contribute to creating closer alliances with Europe on relevant issues on the common agenda, and what possible partnerships could be implemented?

1

BRAZIL'S FOREIGN POLICY IN CONTEXT

Brazil has played a key role in international politics since the end of the military dictatorship, taking the lead in regional integration projects such as Mercosur, Unasur and CELAC, in the United Nations system, and in groups such as the G20 and BRICS. Jair Bolsonaro's government (2019–2022) was a rupture in the democratization process and in Brazil's patterns of international insertion and foreign policy. Bolsonaro's foreign policy was strongly influenced by his authoritarian and conservative agenda in social terms, and neoliberal in economic terms. Brazil's foreign policy under Bolsonaro – where political leaders and Congress were highly influential in “intermestic processes”, i.e. matters that are profound and inseparable both internationally and domestically – broke with the historical precedent, where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the «Itamaraty») took the lead, and the President played an active role based on “presidential diplomacy” (Ribeiro Hoffmann, forthcoming).

With the election of Lula in October 2022, the expectation is that Brazilian foreign policy will go back to previous patterns, but the domestic and the international contexts of Lula's third mandate are quite different from his previous terms. Then, international economic situation was comparatively favorable, and there was a perception of Brazil transitioning from a peripheral to an “emerging” power. This contributed to the consolidation of leadership in international politics mentioned above (Milani, Pinheiro, and Lima, 2017). Despite prioritizing South-South cooperation and questioning the arrangements of international institutions such as the UN Security Council and challenging the conditionalities of development cooperation and the Bretton Woods institutions, the foreign policy of Lula's first two governments (Lula 1 and 2) was one of constructive engagement. In the current context, the geopolitical scenario includes the war in Ukraine and now also the Israel/Palestine conflict. China has gone from being a South-South partner of the BRICS to a global power in an increasingly bipolar system, and therefore in hegemonic dispute with the United States, or even with part of the West (although this is not a monolithic bloc).

The concept of «permacrisis» has been used to characterize this period, in the sense of «a prolonged period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a se-

ries of catastrophic events»,¹ since the global financial crisis that started in 2008, and including the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change.

Despite these challenges, the foreign policy of Lula's third government seeks to revive the «active and haughty» («ativa e altiva») profile defined by his former foreign minister and current chief advisor, Celso Amorim, including resuming participation and leadership in global and regional multilateral institutions. As Lula said during the September 2023 G20 Summit in India:

We're going to chair the G20 next year; in 2025, we're going to chair the BRICS and (also in 2025) we're going to hold COP30 in Belém. These are three mega-events that will give Brazil a different visibility than it has had in recent years. Brazil will once again make the world respect us for the seriousness with which we treat people and the seriousness with which we treat the climate issue.

Presidência da República, 2023a, own translation

¹ See Collins Dictionary, available at: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/permacrisis> (last access: 25.11.2023). See also Shariatmadari, David (2022). A Year of «Permaccrisis». *Collins Language Lovers Blog*. 01.11.2022. Available at: <https://blog.collinsdictionary.com/language-lovers/a-year-of-permacrisis/> (last access: 25.11.2023).

2

FOCUS AREAS OF THE BRAZILIAN G20 PRESIDENCY

International expectations about Brazil's contribution seem to be high; the country has historically maintained close ties and cooperation with countries of the Global North and South, particularly in Latin America and the BRICS, and Lula has been seeking to restore and revitalize these relations after the distancing under Bolsonaro. The proposal to function as a bridge between these groups, including mediating international security conflicts, is discussed in academic literature and political circles, as implied in the strategy of seeking „autonomy via active non-alignment“ proposed for Latin American countries by Jorge Heine et al. (2020):

A policy of active non-alignment on the part of Latin America means more than taking an equidistant position from Washington and Beijing. It also means recognizing that there is a wide and unknown world beyond traditional diplomacy, that Asia is the main growth pole in the world today, and that vast areas of the world have remained off our radar. These include much of Africa and Central Asia, whose population and economic growth projections for the coming decades offer enormous possibilities, which we ignore at our cost. Despite our differences, we share with Europe the need to build a space of active non-alignment to avoid being crushed by the confrontations between the superpowers. The parameters, norms, and resources of this world no longer come only from the North Atlantic countries, as was the case for much of the twentieth century, but also from the new emerging powers, led by the BRICS, but also by other countries in Asia and Africa that are breaking new ground and setting new standards.

Translated from Heine et al., 2020

However, history moves at a rapid pace, and as far as Brazil is concerned, the attempts to mediate the Ukraine and Israel/Palestine crises have not had positive results. It can be questioned whether Lula's strategy is viable in a context of continuing ideological polarization and democratic crisis, as the elections of Javier Milei in Argentina and Geert Wilders in the Netherlands indicate. Perhaps what matters is not whether the countries influencing the norms are from the South or the North, but if they are democracies: democracies in which economic, social, and cultural rights (and perhaps even rights of nature) matter.

So, what are Brazil's own expectations concerning its contribution to the international system during its Presidency of the G20? Firstly, from the point of view of Brazil's reinsertion into the multilateral system, G20 cooperation is seen as facilitating international cooperation in the current situation of crises and uncertainties in the global order. However, international cooperation carried out by groups with varying scope and membership (such as the G20 and BRICS) can accentuate the polarization and fragmentation of the multilateral system within the United Nations. For this reason, the G20 should not be an end in itself, creating or perpetuating an 'elite' in international politics, an open facilitator of consensus. To this end decisions and recommendations should be guided by multilateral principles, as defined in John Ruggie's seminal text (1992), under general principles of conduct based on indivisibility, non-discrimination and diffuse reciprocity.

The G20 has shifted from a principally technical forum dealing with specific economic and financial issues such as the Asian crisis of 1997 and the global crisis of 2008, to become a forum with a broader scope. In addition to the »finance track«, which deals with strategic macroeconomic issues and is led by member countries' finance ministers and central bank heads, it includes the »sherpa track« led by the personal emissaries of G20 leaders, who oversee negotiations, discuss the points that form the summit's agenda and coordinate most of the work.² The shift reflects progress towards a more holistic perspective on cooperation within the G20, but necessarily makes the group more inclusive. A central challenge for Brazil in optimizing the role of the G20 in strengthening the multilateral system will be its ability to mediate the interests of the G7 countries with those of the BRICS countries. Although Brazil is a founding member of the BRICS, this institution has changed radically as a result of three factors: 1) the rise of China, which should be seen in the current context more as a hegemonic power than a country of the Global South; 2) the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and Russia's consequent isolation; 3) the enlargement of the BRICS to include Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, announced in the Joint Declaration of the

² See Kirton 2016 and the website of the Brazilian G20 presidency, <https://www.g20.org/en> (last access: 22.12.2023).

15th BRICS Summit, held in August 2023.³ Even if these countries end up not joining the BRICS, such as Argentina under newly elected President Milei, it still represents a novel and relevant geopolitical development with an influence on participation in the G20.

In practical terms, Brazil hopes to achieve consensus on a joint declaration at the end of its Presidency that includes its priorities, which were announced at a press conference of the Secretariat of Social Communication (SECOM) of the Presidency of the Republic on 22 November 2023: **fighting hunger, poverty and inequality; sustainable development; and reforming global governance** (Presidência da República, 2023b, c).

The **fight against hunger, poverty and inequality** was dear to the Workers' Party (PT) governments of Lula 1 and Lula 2, and remains central to the domestic and international agenda of Lula 3; it would be hypocritical for the government to fight for international inclusion without at the same time fighting for a more inclusive domestic society. The presence of these issues in the G20 implies a more holistic perspective and the need for responses to international financial crises to incorporate systemic aspects and distributive impacts, as well as a broadening of the debate that is pertinent and consistent with the Lula government's proposal. As Lula said at the end of the New Delhi Summit: »If we want to make a difference, we have to put reducing inequality at the center of the international agenda«. »All these priorities are contained in the motto of the Brazilian Presidency: Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet« (Presidência da República, 2023b, own translation).

One difference in relation to the treatment of hunger that will need to be incorporated into discussions at the G20 is the new context of food security associated with the impact of the war in Ukraine, in addition to the impact of the COVID pandemic and climate change (Aróstica & Pozo, 2023). According to the report by FAO et al., *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023*:

Global hunger is still far above pre-pandemic levels. It is estimated that between 690 and 783 million people in the world faced hunger in 2022. This is 122 million more people than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless, the increase in global hunger observed in

the last two years has stalled and, in 2022, there were about 3.8 million fewer people suffering from hunger than in 2021. The economic recovery from the pandemic has contributed to this, but there is no doubt that the modest progress has been undermined by rising food and energy prices magnified by the war in Ukraine.

FAO et al. 2023, vii

The geopolitization of food security affects international cooperation and consensus in the G20 given the position of Russia and Ukraine in food trade.⁴ In 2021, exports from Ukraine and Russia accounted for more than 34 percent of world trade in wheat (Ukraine, 10 percent), 17 percent in maize (Ukraine, 15 percent), 27 percent in barley (Ukraine, 13 percent); Russia is also a key exporter of fertilisers; it accounted for 15 percent of world trade in nitrogen fertilisers and 17 percent of world exports of potash fertilisers from 2018 to 2020 (Nolte 2023, p.20). In the case of Brazil, although the country does not depend on agricultural exports from Russia or Ukraine, it does depend on Russian fertiliser exports; according to the National Supply Company (Conab), 28 percent of fertilisers imported by Brazil come from Russia, representing 20 percent of all chemical fertilisers used in agriculture (Grilli, 2023).

Reforming global governance to create a more inclusive and legitimate system has been a priority of Brazilian foreign policy for decades. The Brazilian government has participated in discussions on reforms, in particular concerning the Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions. Brazilian civil society and the business sector have also participated in these discussions, for example on reform of the WTO under Roberto Azevedo (director-general 2013–2020) (Pereira, 2019). Frustration with the slow progress of reform within the UN led the Brazilian government to opt for informal forums such as cooperation with Germany, India and South Africa at the Security Council (Spektor 2023) and with the BRICS on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Bloomberg, 2023). Although these are extremely relevant discussions, the G20 does not seem to be the most appropriate or legitimate forum for discussing global governance reform because it does not include all affected countries. Brazil does not represent the countries of the Global South or Latin or South America in these discussions; on the contrary, its representation has been contested at various times, mainly by Argentina and Mexico. Pandit (2019) points out that the BRICS proposals have not

³ The Joint Declaration (paragraphs 90–92) foresees that these countries could join the group from January 2024: "90. We appreciate the considerable interest shown by the countries of the global South in joining BRICS. True to the spirit of BRICS and the commitment to inclusive multilateralism, the BRICS countries have reached a consensus on the guiding principles, norms, criteria and procedures of the BRICS expansion process; 91. We decided to invite the Argentine Republic, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to become full members of BRICS as of 1 January 2024; 92. We also instructed our Foreign Ministers to continue developing the BRICS partner country model and a list of potential partner countries and to report back by the next Summit." XV BRICS Summit Johannesburg II Declaration (Presidência da República 2023). Meanwhile, the new Argentine government under President Milei has announced that it will not be joining the BRICS bloc (AP 2023).

⁴ According to the definition established at the 1996 World Food Summit: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO 1996, Plan of Action, Art.1). As Nolte (2023) highlights, according a report by the World Food Organization (FAO), "it is estimated that in 2022, 9.2 percent of the world's population were undernourished (6.2 percent in LAC), that corresponds to 735 million people (43 million in LAC). Almost 30 percent of the world's population (2,356.9 million people) live in conditions of severe or moderate food insecurity" (FAO et al., 2023: 19; Nolte, 2023, 19, own translation). Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

necessarily been innovative or more inclusive, and the same argument may apply to the G20:

The growing asymmetry of power among the group's members has emerged as a serious constraint for the BRICS institutions to pursue radical reforms in the global financial system. Despite the collective vision of BRICS members to overhaul the distribution of global public goods, the emergence of intra-group differences on procedural aspects has meant that the new bodies have become mere proxies for the Bretton Woods institutions. Empirical analysis of the NDB's lending standards also shows the absence of any major institutional innovation or departure from existing norms. In the absence of any new learning, the NDB is increasingly becoming part of the existing structure, often serving the interests of its powerful members.

Pandit, 2019, p. 484

Finally, the promotion of **sustainable development** has gained increasing relevance in recent decades with the climate change crisis, and is a major challenge for Brazil in the G20. The concept of sustainable development includes economic, social and environmental aspects as well as energy transition. Despite recognition of the relevance of the environment and climate change by various governmental and non-governmental actors since the 1990s, when Brazil hosted the United Nations Conference on Development and the Environment (the Rio 1992 Earth Summit), this was not a strong point of the PT governments, which were criticized for their (neo)developmentalist projects, their lack of socio-environmental impact, and the absence of effective policies against climate change. Lula's third term seems to have a different perspective on this aspect, with new initiatives including the creation of the National Secretariat for Climate Change at the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change, led by Ana Toni, who has a long record of working in environmental NGOs such as Greenpeace and *Instituto Clima e Sociedade*. In a joint contribution, Ana Toni and Izabela Teixeira (Minister of the Environment 2010–2016, Co-Chair of UN Environment's International Panel on Natural Resources, and member of UN-DESA's High-Level Advisory Council), together with other authors, argue that:

A new political mindset is required to deal with the emerging global agenda, in which current geopolitical and economic tensions highlight the challenges of transition and transformation of development processes imposed by potential limits, defined by nature, to coexistence and survival of a global population on the order of ten billion people. More than ever, a real understanding of the intergenerational perspective is revealed to be strategic for the future of humankind, that is, a greater clarity of the impacts and implications of the aging population, in addition to the urgent need for reversal, today, of the inefficient use of natural resources throughout the planet. The inescapable convergence of the Anthropocene and digital-technological eras will happen.

Teixeira et al., 2022, p. 32

One key proposal of the National Secretariat for Climate Change is to transversalize the environmental agenda in the activities of other ministries to potentiate the effectiveness of the new approach. In a meeting on 23 November 2023, the Minister of Planning and Budget, Simone Tebet, announced that twenty-three ministries would join the cross-cutting environmental agenda, and that within the priorities of specific actions aimed at the environmental agenda, 17 ministries were involved with 33 programmes, 82 objectives, 291 deliverables and 125 institutional measures (Agência Gov, 2023). At the same meeting, Environment Minister Marina da Silva stated that her ministry was working with nine others on a plan to prevent extreme weather and deal with its effects; the plan has two main axes (one to deal with emergencies, and another for training of civil defense and early warning and escape systems) and other actions to avoid fatalities. Another recent example of willingness to implement an innovative and transformative perspective in sustainable development was the relaunch of the National Climate Change Fund by the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) and the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change (MMA), in August 2023. The new fund will have more resources and a focus on structuring projects and combating climate change, and will be linked to the New Growth Acceleration Programme and the Ecological Transition Plan in six new areas: resilient and sustainable urban development; green industry; transport logistics, public transport and green mobility; energy transition, native forests and water resources; and green services and innovation (Agência BNDES de Notícias, 2023). The mobilization of development banks to finance the energy transition and fight climate change is one of the key proposals advanced in the context of the G20, including by India's presidency (Griffith et al., 2020; Volz et al., 2021; De Souza Guilherme et al., 2021).

Another expectation for Brazil's G20 Presidency is that it will contribute to raising awareness and engaging Brazilian society on the issues addressed at the Summit, i.e. that the process of participation in the discussions will have a positive effect on democratic legitimacy, beyond the immediate results presented in the final declaration. This process is particularly important given that the declaration is not binding, and therefore will not be implemented unless the government itself and the relevant social and economic actors agree to do so. In this sense, the structure of the Summit is an important factor in optimizing the opportunities for societal participation. In the case of Brazil, the government's focal points for organizing the Summit are the Secretary for International Affairs at the Ministry of Finance, Tatiana Rosito, and the Secretary for Economic Negotiations at the Ministry of International Relations, Mauricio Lyrio. They will coordinate the thematic Working Groups (in the case of India there were eight in the Financial Track and thirteen in the Sherpa Track).

Civil society participation is carried out through the engagement groups: Think-tank20 (coordinated in Brazil by CEBRI, IPEA and FUNAG), Parliament20, Business20 (coordinated in Brazil by the National Confederation of Indus-

tries, CNI), SAI 20 (audit institutions), Youth20, Science20, Urban20, Women20, Startup20, Labour20 and Social20 (for civil society participation, coordinated in Brazil by the Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations, ABONG); the latter is an innovation introduced by the Brazilian Presidency. Engaging these actors effectively depends a great deal on publicizing the Summit and its activities, and channeling resources to carry out debates, studies, and draft documents, which has historically been a challenge for the countries of the Global South. Brazil hosted the G20 in 2008, but at that time it was only a ministerial summit. This is the first time Brazil will hold the Presidency since its meeting became a summit of heads of state and government, with much higher visibility. The holder of the last G20 Presidency, India, invested heavily in the 2023 Summit, although it was also criticized for wasteful »beautification« of the cities hosting the event and self-promotion by the far-right nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi (Ayyub, 2023, Mateen, 2023, Outlook Business, 2023, The Wire, 2023). Anyway, Lula's government is not expected to mobilize that level of resources.

3

POTENTIAL FOR CLOSER ALLIANCES WITH EUROPE

Brazil-Europe cooperation has been articulated via inter-regional relations with the European Union and bilateral relations with European countries, including initiatives with Germany, France and Portugal. In the case of the EU, three levels can be distinguished: the EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership (since 2007), relations with Mercosur (since 1999 in the pillars of development cooperation and political dialogue and in ongoing trade negotiations) and relations with CELAC (since 2013). The **EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership** has been assessed as underperforming: Ferreira-Pereira (2021) argues that after promising achievements between 2008 and 2014 the Strategic Partnership entered into a kind of »suspended animation«; from 2015 until 2019 there was no annual summit and the implementation of the third joint plan was postponed indefinitely. She concludes that the Strategic Partnership has become a »hostage to fortune«, characterized by missed opportunities, rather than pursuing a deliberate political strategy.

In January 2023, shortly after Lula took office, Brazil's Vice-President Geraldo Alckmin met European Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans in Brasilia to discuss the strategic partnership. Alckmin underlined that: »in the new phase of the Brazilian economy, the sustainability agenda and the green economy are the bases also for the re-industrialization process of the Brazilian economy«, signaling a potential improvement of the partnership, which is, however, deeply connected with an improvement of EU-Mercosur relations (MercoPress, 2023).

The EU-Mercosur agreement has gone through several stages since it was signed in 1999; although initiatives under the political dialogue and development cooperation pillars have been implemented, trade negotiations have never been concluded. In the most recent period, they were reopened in 2016 during Temer's government, and almost concluded in 2019 during the Bolsonaro government. Despite the democratic legitimacy problems of both governments, their adoption of – different – neoliberal policies favoured the resumption of negotiations. Temer's foreign policy was moving away from South-South co-operation and seeking a rapprochement with Europe and the Global North, as also seen in the process of joining the OECD (Mello, 2020). In Bolsonaro's case, his neoliberal electoral base, represented in the government by Economy Minister Paulo Guedes, pushed for conclusion of the agreement, despite

the ideological alliance with Trump. The negotiations ended up meeting opposition from various sectors both in Brazil and in the EU. The (almost) final text was made available by the European Commission, but is subject to modifications (European Commission, n.d.). In addition to the traditional European opponents of agricultural liberalisation, civil society and social movements such as the Brazilian Front Against the Mercosur-EU and Mercosur-EFTA Agreements were decisive. They were dissatisfied in particular with the lack of transparency throughout the negotiations and the negative environmental policy of Bolsonaro and his Environment Minister Ricardo Salles (FASE, 2023). In the end the European Parliament refused to ratify the agreement. Dialogue resumed after Lula's election and both sides indicated their intention to finalize the agreement by the end of 2023. However, the reopening of negotiations on government procurement due to the Lula government's new industrialization policy and the election of Javier Milei in Argentina in November has cast a shadow over the possibility of concluding the agreement (Chade, 2023, Harris et al. 2023). Brazil's invitation to Paraguay and Uruguay to participate in its G20 Presidency as a »Mercosur presidency« together with Argentina (which is already a member of the G20) could open up a channel for Brazil's engagement in the G20 collectively via Mercosur, as is the case for African and European countries with the African Union and the EU. That represents an innovative scenario for Latin American countries, but again, Argentine President Milei's interest in strengthening Mercosur is not clear.

The third level of relations between Brazil and the European Union is the EU-CELAC dialogue. The 3rd EU-CELAC Summit of Heads of State and Government took place in Brussels on 17 and 18 July 2023, after a pause of eight years. The Summit's theme was »Renewing the bi-regional partnership to strengthen peace and sustainable development«, and its main formal outcomes included the EU-CELAC 2023 Summit Declaration (European Commission, 2023) and the Road Map 2023–2025 (EU-LAC Foundation, 2023). Some observers were extremely critical of the results. Nolte & Alvarez (2023, p. 1), for example, argued that: »The III EU-CELAC Summit demonstrated that the two regions are far from having a common strategic vision in international politics, that there are deficiencies in the Latin American consultation process and profound disagreements in their respective worldviews. In short, the two

regions have yet to meet again and exploit the full potential of their political, economic, cultural and social ties». Nolte & Alvarez's negative view about the Summit's results seem to have been particularly affected by the lack of consensus on condemning Russia. However, certain issues, such as health and the environment, were addressed constructively. Regarding health, paragraph 30 of the summit declaration refers to the CELAC Health Self-Sufficiency Plan and the plans for an international treaty on pandemics.⁵ Health was also addressed in the EU-CELAC roadmap for 2023 to 2025, which proposes a high-level event on health regulatory structures, to be held in November 2023, and meetings on health self-sufficiency involving regulatory authorities from both regions, to be held in 2024–2025. This indicates a willingness to go beyond words and move towards implementing commitments. Regarding the environment and climate change, the Declaration included several recommendations drawn up by the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for the EU-CELAC partnership. The approach encompassed economic, normative and cultural perspectives on the environment and climate change, including, for example, a reference to »mother earth« in paragraph 16.⁶ Paragraph 3 states: »We will also co-operate to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation, in accordance with the principle of equity and common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in the light of different national circumstances« (European Commission, 2023), indicating a shared commitment to controversial principles such as Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR). As in the case of health, the EU-CELAC Roadmap includes activities for 2023 to 2025.⁷

One major challenge to the G20 will be to avoid a polarization among the G7 and the BRICS especially in light of the announcement of the BRICS enlargement. The challenge for Brazil will be even greater if Russian President Vladimir Putin decides to attend the Summit in person, given that

the International Criminal Court has issued a warrant for his arrest over the war in Ukraine. At a press conference during the G20 Summit in India, Lula declared that Brazil should review its position given that countries like the United States, China and India (as well as Russia) have not joined (Reuters, 2023), but that it will be up to the Brazilian judiciary to decide whether or not Putin will be arrested if he attends the G20 meeting next year in Brazil. During a visit to Berlin for an intergovernmental meeting on 4 December 2023, he reaffirmed that arresting Putin did not lie within the President's area of competence (dpa, 2023).

Despite these difficulties, two themes are promising for fostering a common agenda between Europe and Brazil at the G20: the fight against hunger (within the framework of the new food security context), and sustainable development. Specific themes in the broader field of sustainable development offer the greatest opportunity for a renewed partnership. As outlined above, Lula's government has incorporated environment and climate change into his domestic agenda and foreign policy; he seeks to strengthen the multilateral system and reverse Bolsonaro's climate denialism. These topics have been incorporated into the revived agendas of the EU-CELAC and EU-Mercosur channels, despite divergences regarding specific mechanisms, especially on the EU-Mercosur agreement. Environment and climate change are also on the bilateral agendas of European countries such as Germany and France, although not explored in this paper.

The priorities for cooperation between Brazil and Europe at the G20 include mechanisms to finance the energy transition and combat climate change, such as debt restructuring (debt for climate swaps) and mobilisation of resources from national and multilateral development banks. In the case of Brazil, the creation of the aforementioned National Climate Change Fund is a sign that the government is committed to a new approach to sustainable development and climate change. (Re)industrialization policies must include bioeconomy and circular economy. Including the private sector in this financing remains a challenge, and also a central topic for collaboration; proposals to create a global fund to finance global public goods have been discussed and could be an area of common interest. Another issue at the interface of climate change and finance, and therefore relevant for the G20, is the regulation of digital currency markets, since these are markets accessed by small and medium enterprises and start-ups operating in innovative sectors.

To conclude, successful collaboration between Brazil and Europe in the G20 will depend on selecting specific priorities that avoid conflict with global multilateral commitments and that could have the effect of delegitimizing the G20 itself given its intrinsically »elitist« nature. In other words, the choice of priorities must be guided by complementarity with global commitments, with the G20 operating as a facilitator of multilateral consensus based on the general principles of indivisibility, non-discrimination and diffuse reciprocity.

⁵ EU-CELAC Summit Declaration 2023, paragraph 30: »We express our commitment to take forward the bi-regional partnership for the local manufacture of vaccines, medicines and other health technologies, and to strengthen the resilience of health systems to improve prevention, preparedness and response to public health emergencies, in support of the CELAC Health Self-Reliance Plan. We look forward to progress in the ongoing discussions on a new legally binding instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response within the framework of the World Health Organization, with the aim of reaching an agreement by May 2024« (European Commission, 2023).

⁶ »We recognize that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our home, and that 'Mother Earth' is a common expression in various countries and regions within the framework of United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/77/169« (European Commission, 2023).

⁷ The following activities were planned: Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Fora on Higher Education, on Gender Equality, on Just Green and Digital Transitions, and on Social Cohesion to be organized by the EU-LAC Foundation; an EU-LAC Business Summit, including a circular economy event; an EU-Latin American Convention on Raw Materials; a high-level bi-regional meeting on Environment and Climate Change; and EU-LAC Dialogues on Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Management. The EU-LAC Foundation organized a Multi-Actor Forum focusing on the Just Green Transition, Inclusive Digital Transformation and Social Cohesion on 4 October 2023 in Costa Rica (EU-LAC Foundation, 2023a).

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IMPRINT

Publisher:
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e. V.
Godesberger Allee 149
53175 Bonn
Germany
Email: info@fes.de

Issuing Department:
Division for International Cooperation |
Department for Latin America and Caribbean

Responsibility for content and editing:
Dr. Christoph Heuser, Head of office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Brazil

Fabian Lischkowitz, Desk officer for Brazil, Uruguay,
Trade Unions and Trade Policy

Editing: Meredith Dale
Design/Layout: pertext, Berlin | www.pertext.de

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ISBN 978-3-98628-534-0

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WHAT TO EXPECT FROM BRAZIL'S G20 PRESIDENCY?

Opportunities for Strategic North-South Cooperation Amidst Geopolitical Turmoil



Since taking office in 2023, Lula da Silva has led the country back to an active engagement in multilateral cooperation, yet facing more difficult circumstances than in the past. The G20 presidency in 2024 will put to the test how successfully Brazil can bridge divides between different geopolitical interests with its policy of »active non-alignment«.



Resuming past efforts, the new Brazilian government can claim to strive more authentically than most G20 members for sustainable development, fighting hunger and poverty, and reforming global governance – the priorities it set out for its G20 presidency. Likewise, the commitment to more societal participation raises hopes for a more active involvement of the organized engagement groups.



If the right strategic priorities are set, the agenda of the G20 presidency can provide a valuable platform for intensified cooperation between Europe and Brazil, e.g. regarding financing mechanisms for energy transition and climate protection. However, geopolitical disruptions hang over the G20 summit like a sword of Damocles.

Further information on the topic can be found here:
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