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## The European Union's partnership policy towards Brazil: more than meets the eye

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**Abstract** *This article focuses on the evolving nature of the foreign policy of the European Union (EU) towards Brazil, which gained momentum and became more dynamic and denser after the establishment of a formal strategic partnership (SP) in 2007. It provides a historical overview of the institutional relations between Brussels and Brasília, before proceeding with an analysis of the main drivers behind this novel development. The study goes on to offer a critical examination of the implementation of the EU–Brazil SP by casting light on both its major achievements and the challenges it has faced. It concludes that the establishment of a formal strategic partnership with Brazil has contributed to the strengthening of the EU's globally oriented partnership policy and ultimately to the incremental empowerment of the EU necessary to the assertion of its values, objectives and interests on the international stage.*

The relationship between the European Union (EU)<sup>1</sup> and Brazil dates back to the 1980s, when an economic and commercial cooperation agreement was first signed between the two parties. A formal, third-generation agreement was signed in 1992, yet little further progress was made for some years afterwards. This state of affairs changed with the signing and implementation of a formal strategic partnership (SP) in 2007 through which the EU has recognized Brazil as its main strategic counterpart in South America. Since then, the EU–Brazil relationship has gained momentum and evolved in an unprecedented way towards being a more institutionally structured and integrative bilateral relationship. This has been mirrored in the annual summits since the inception of the SP, involving a plethora of actors and institutions, as well as in the mushrooming of diverse sector-specific dialogues under the aegis of joint plans that serve as roadmaps for practical action conducive to the achievement of common objectives and interests.

The central argument guiding the analysis revolves around the idea that the establishment of the EU–Brazil SP has been fuelled mainly by the interplay between two mutually reinforcing dimensions. On the one hand, there is the symmetric evolution of EU and Brazil's international profiles, in the course of which the two actors have developed similar traits in order to tackle both political and economic globalization and transnational security threats. On the other hand, there is a

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<sup>1</sup> In this article, 'the EU' will refer both to its current form and to its predecessors.

perception of a positive sum game, on the basis of which the EU and Brazil have come to realize that by means of the institutionalization of a SP they may be able to leverage a range of global interests and preferences, and consequently enhance their respective international personae. In connection with this, the present study highlights that the EU–Brazil SP is a by-product of the two actors’ endeavours to seek status and recognition on the world stage, something that has moved them to espouse a utilitarian or instrumental interpretation of the benefits springing from the institutionalization of a fine-tuned bilateral engagement.

This article draws upon and acknowledges the existing valuable contributions that examine the evolution of EU–Brazil relations. The scholarly work available remains scarce, although over the last five years or so there has been a tangible increase in the volume of literature devoted to this topic (Ferreira-Pereira 2015). Most contributions tend to look to this bilateral relationship through a Brazilian lens. Issues are examined through the prism of Brazil’s partnership policy, that is to say, by considering the country’s diverse SPs spanning regional neighbours and emerging countries such as China, India and Russia (Saraiva 2006; 2012; Lessa 2010; Silva 2011; Vaz 2014); and also against a more general background of Brazil’s evolving regional and global actorness (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2007; Cervo 2010; Saraiva 2010; Malamud 2011; Pino 2011; Hurrell 2010; Rohter 2010; Vaz 2013; Tickner 2012; Herz 2014). The few works that explore the relationship between Brussels and Brasília from the EU’s point of view are mainly concerned with the renewed interest of the EU in Brazil, the general context in which the EU–Brazil SP has emerged, and its main content (Valladão 2008; Ceia 2008; Whitman and Rodt 2012). Others cover more ground by laying out the range of the EU’s SPs with emerging powers as part of the organization’s external response to global problems, challenges and opportunities, and as a sign of the EU’s foreign policy shifting approach from inter-regionalism to bilateralism (Husar et al 2010; Gratius 2013; Sautenet 2012; Grevi 2013b). Here little attention is given to the European SP with Brazil.

While seeking to provide a full picture of the evolving nature of the formal SP between Brussels and Brasília, the present article adopts a different perspective insofar as it anchors the analysis of this matter within the research framework of EU studies. This is achieved by examining the EU–Brazilian relationship in articulation with the development of the EU’s partnership policy, which has been helping the organization shape itself into a credible and effective foreign policy player in a multipolar world. It looks, therefore, at the EU–Brazil SP as the corollary of a longstanding partnership dynamics whilst placing emphasis on the evolution of the EU as an emergent political and security actor on the international stage. It concludes that the establishment of a formal SP with Brazil has contributed to the reinforcement of the EU’s globally oriented partnership policy, with all that this implies for the organization’s incremental empowerment in world affairs. In that sense, this article attempts to make a contribution to the academic study and debate on the institutionalization and implementation of the EU’s contemporary partnership policy (see the introduction to this special issue). It also aims to contribute fruitfully to the emerging stream of literature specifically devoted to the EU–Brazilian relationship by further illuminating the specificities of the evolving SP with Brazil on the basis of empirical work encompassing different rounds of interviews conducted in Brasília and São Paulo with senior diplomats, analysts and academics possessing expertise in Brazilian foreign policy.

## Revisiting the historic antecedents of EU's partnership dynamics towards Brazil

Prior to the emergence of the EU–Brazil SP, one can identify two phases in Euro-Brazilian relations. The first, from 1950 to 1986, corresponds to the period between the launch of the European integration process and the accession of Portugal and Spain to the European Community (EC) against the backdrop of the signing of the Single European Act (SEA). This period is typified by a relative indifference, which originated mainly from a relational deficit between the founding countries of the European project and Latin America. Unlike the African continent, which received the attention of the EC's founders, Latin America remained for many years a somewhat distant region. At the beginning of the 1970s, the EC established a dialogue mechanism involving discussions with the ambassadors of the Latin American countries in Brussels. However, the truth is that any subsequent endeavour made in order to promote an inter-regional partnership revealed itself unfeasible given the integrational vacuum prevailing in Latin America—something that left Brussels without an appropriate partner for dialogue in this region (Piening 1997).

In the late 1970s, the EC negotiated an economic and commercial cooperation agreement (known as a “first-generation agreement”) with Brazil that came into force in 1982.<sup>2</sup> The 1982 Framework Agreement, adopted during the dictatorial regime in Brazil, was conceived in order to govern trade relations between the two parties. Before the country joined the so-called Rio Group,<sup>3</sup> which was created in 1986, Brazilian representatives took part in informal meetings held between this group and the EC's representatives. These meetings became institutionalized in 1990. Yet again, that agreement represented a somewhat parsimonious gesture on the part of Brussels when judged against the attention given to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries (the ACP Group) and the Mediterranean states (Piening 1997). Therefore, Brazil lingered at the margins of the EC's foreign policy interests.

The overall state of affairs started to change after the EC's Iberian enlargement in 1986, which brought with it the improvement of relations between Europe and Latin America, in general, and the introduction of Brazil onto the European agenda, in particular (Vasconcelos 2007; Ferreira-Pereira 2010; Roy 2012). In this respect, 1986 marked the beginning of a new phase that saw the EU sowing the seeds for the incremental development of a deeper dialogue and institutionalized relationship with Brazil. The most illustrative evidence of that was the signing on 29 June 1992 of the Framework Agreement for Cooperation between the European Economic Community and Brazil,<sup>4</sup> which is acknowledged as the first significant agreement between the two parties (Silva 2011; Sousa 2011; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013). Thus, this third-generation agreement with Brazil may be considered the predecessor of the formal SP that would see the light of the day two-and-a-half decades later. Its establishment benefited from the reinforcement of the EC's external action under the impetus

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<sup>2</sup> The official designation of the document is Framework Agreement for Cooperation between the Economic European Community and the Federative Republic of Brazil; it was signed on 18 September 1980.

<sup>3</sup> The Rio Group was founded by eight countries, namely Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela.

<sup>4</sup> This Agreement came into force on 1 November 1995. See [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21995A1101\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21995A1101(01):EN:HTML), accessed 10 March 2015.

of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) enshrined in the SEA, and particularly from the efforts to boost a common foreign policy that led to the creation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) within the framework of the Maastricht Treaty. Also of prime importance for that development was the establishment of the Common Market of the South, known as “Mercosur”,<sup>5</sup> in which Brazil came to play a leading role. Under this new agreement, a Joint Committee<sup>6</sup> was entrusted with the task of ensuring the functioning of the former, which eventually extended cooperation beyond the domain of trade to encompass new areas, namely health, social matters and intellectual property.

During the second half of the 1990s, the relationship between Brussels and Brasília received more attention due to an agreement signed between the EU and Mercosur, through which a political dialogue (separate from that developed with the Rio Group) between the two economic blocs was institutionalized (Piening 1997). Such institutionalization, encouraged by the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, gained expression in the establishment of the EU–Mercosur Cooperation Framework Agreement of 1995.<sup>7</sup> This was indeed a significant achievement, since it helped to solidify European links with Latin America while representing the first step potentially conducive to the creation of a free trade area between the two regions. Nevertheless, the advent of the EU–Mercosur Framework Cooperation Agreement led the EU to gradually shift its attention to the Southern Common Market to the detriment of Brazil as an individual actor in its own right. This has clearly demonstrated the EU’s preference for inter-regionalism, a tendency that would linger for more than a decade, limiting both the scope and the import of the EU–Brazil relationship (Lessa 2010; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013).

A number of factors may account for the low level of political cooperation characterizing EU–Brazil relations throughout the 1990s and up until the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Firstly, there was the necessity of tackling the effects produced by the by Cold War’s demise, notably German reunification and the breakup of the Soviet Union, which came to fundamentally challenge the traditional course of reflection on and practice of the role and identity of the European project. Secondly, and in relation to this, there was the successive conception, revision and implementation of the EU’s treaties (that is, the Treaty of Maastricht, in 1992; the Treaty of Amsterdam, in 1997; and the Treaty of Nice, in 2001), which called for a plethora of processes and instruments across the various actors and institutions of the new EU. Thirdly, there was the prospect of an unprecedented enlargement process that would incorporate much of Central and Eastern Europe, which eventually materialized in the form of the expansions of 2004 and 2007, bringing 12 new states into the EU’s fold. All these multidimensional challenges facing the European leaders gave rise to a more introspective approach

<sup>5</sup> The founding members of Mercosur which signed the Treaty of Asunción on 26 March 1991 were Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. Chile and Bolivia became associated states in 1996.

<sup>6</sup> This Joint Committee was originally established after the 1982 Cooperation Agreement. The contracting parties also decide to retain the Subcommittee on Science and Technology and the Subcommittee on Industrial Cooperation, established in 1987 and in 1989, respectively. See [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21995A1101\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21995A1101(01):EN:HTML), accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=405>, accessed 10 March 2015.

for a decade-and-a-half or so, which further helps us to understand the putative parsimony assigned to the EU's partnership dynamics with Brasília between 1992 and 2007.

What's more, in spite of the fact that the 1992 EC–Brazil Framework Cooperation Agreement incorporated a development clause that envisaged the future expansion of bilateral cooperation,<sup>8</sup> the EU–Brazil relationship became both outdated and unsatisfactory as Brazil grew into a more significant economic and political actor on the world stage. The EU was thus confronted with the need to reassess its strategy towards the country. Besides that, Brussels began to exhibit some fatigue vis-à-vis the meagre progress made at the negotiating table with the Mercosur countries, especially concerning the persisting sub-regional arrangements. In 2004, the failure of negotiations conducive to the signing of a free trade agreement with Mercosur, along with the prevailing trade disputes between this economic bloc's major players, contributed considerably to this fatigue. Against this backdrop, the only sign of vitality in the EU–Brazil relationship was the reinforcement of the 1992 Framework Agreement by means of an Agreement for Scientific and Technological Cooperation, which was created in 2004.<sup>9</sup>

That being said, the failure of the EU–Mercosur free trade agreement would pave the way for the renewal of the EU's interest in Brazil, as both an economic and a political partner, and would ultimately lead to the inception of a formal SP (Saraiva 2006; Valladão 2008; Silva 2011; Sousa 2011; Gratius and Saraiva 2013).<sup>10</sup>

### The EU–Brazil SP: scope and significance

After 2004, there was a growing perception of an unquestionable need to find a new mode of interaction with Brazil which matched the country's rising status on the world stage, and also to mitigate the effects of the deadlock in the EU–Mercosur relationship.<sup>11</sup> Following on from the stimulus provided by the proposal made by the Barroso-led Commission in the document 'Brazil: country strategy paper 2007–2013',<sup>12</sup> the EU–Brazil SP was signed on the occasion of the first EU–Brazil Summit, which took place in Lisbon on 4 July 2007. The organization of this high-level gathering under the Portuguese EU presidency laid the foundations of a new phase in the EU–Brazilian relationship—one expected to be characterized by a

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<sup>8</sup> According to Article 35, which conveyed the 'Future developments clause', '(1) The Contracting Parties may by mutual consent expand this Agreement with a view to enhancing the levels of cooperation and supplementing them by means of instruments on specific sectors or activities. (2) Within the framework of the application of this Agreement, either of the Contracting Parties may put forward suggestions for widening the scope of cooperation, taking into account the experience gained in its mutual implementation.' See [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21995A1101\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:21995A1101(01):EN:HTML), accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=2041>, accessed 10 March 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Such failure was corroborated during the Rio Group Summit at Santo Domingo, held in April 2007, during which negotiations to reach a final agreement collapsed yet again. This signalled the protracted tensions between the economic blocs while raising serious doubts about the ultimate viability of any eventual free trade agreement.

<sup>11</sup> In 2005, the Commission document *A Stronger partnership between the European Union and Latin America* stressed the need to take into consideration 'major players, i.e. Brazil and Mexico, which deserves special treatment because of their important role in regional affairs'. See [http://eeas.europa.eu/la/docs/com05\\_636\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/la/docs/com05_636_en.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>12</sup> See [http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/csp/07\\_13\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/csp/07_13_en.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

more robust bilateral engagement and political dialogue at the highest level on a range of issues of common interest, from security to culture.

The SP's content is all-encompassing in nature, since it incorporates a varied array of themes like the defence of multilateralism, the promotion of human rights and cooperation in tackling global challenges, just to mention the most prominent ones (Ceia 2008; Valladão 2008; Whitman and Rodt 2012; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013). As for the defence of multilateralism, the document underlines the support given by the EU to the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH),<sup>13</sup> in which Brazil has been particularly engaged in military terms. It also emphasizes the view held by both parties in favour of the idea that the reform of the United Nations' (UN's) institutions should mirror the rapport de forces existing in the international community as the latter stand in the twenty-first century. The SP further refers to cooperation in arms control and disarmament. This is a goal that is expected to be prioritized, given the need for both the EU and Brazil to tackle security challenges arising particularly from organized crime and terrorism. A coordinated supportive stance towards the Non-Proliferation Treaty may well prove important in their endeavours to come to terms with some of the major security problems that both partners face (Valladão 2008). Commitment to the success of the Doha Round—one of the principal rationales underlying the conception of the SP (Ceia 2008; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013)—is referred to in the framework document, which considers cooperation in matters concerning environmental and energy policy to be of critical importance as well.

As some have observed, the launch of the SP in July 2007 was a signal of the EU's acknowledgement of Brazil's position as one of its key international partners, and reinforced the country's status as an emerging power (Garcia 2008; Malamud 2011; Smith 2013). It was furthermore symptomatic of the organization's need to find reliable allies to aid its attempts to address major global challenges posed by the increasingly complex international order resulting from the events of 9/11 and its aftermath (Gratius 2013; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013), and ultimately to shape the future course of globalization. The EU's willingness to move from an eminently reactive to a more proactive posture vis-à-vis globalization has, indeed, contributed to the increase of Brazil's salience in the eyes of both the European institutions and the member states. For example, in the document entitled 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council—towards an EU–Brazil strategic partnership', the country is depicted as a global leader, which the EU wishes to help 'exercis[e] positive leadership globally and regionally' and as a 'champion of the developing world in the UN and at the WTO [World Trade Organization]'.<sup>14</sup>

Incidentally, the new cooperative framework governing the EU–Brazil relationship was not without consequences for the rapport between Brussels and Mercosur. In recognizing Brazil's global actorness, the SP singles out the uniqueness of the country vis-à-vis other Latin American partners, notably Argentina. This entailed

<sup>13</sup> At the time of writing this article, Brazil was taking the military leadership of MINUSTAH, which began on 1 June 2004. Since then, this mission's mandate has been renewed for several times. The latest renewal was materialized by the UN Security Council Resolution 2243 of 14 October 2015 that has extended the MINUSTAH mandate until 15 October 2016.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007DC0281:EN:NOT>, accessed 10 March January 2015.

a change in the status quo, since regional integration in South America has traditionally been structured around Brazilian recognition of Argentina's significance and the mitigation of Argentinean fears of having to coexist with a much-too-strong Brazil in the region (Saraiva 2010; Gratius and Saraiva 2013). Consequently, the new bilateral *modus operandi* generated a certain malaise between Brasília and Buenos Aires, while calling for a clarification on the part of the EU as to the place of Mercosur states following the development of a closer EU–Brazilian relationship (Valladão 2008).

Possibly more important than that, it also called for extreme care on the part of both parties in handling the parallel evolution of EU–Brazil and EU–Mercosur relations. Not surprisingly, the need to safeguard the continued deepening of the relationship between the EU and Mercosur was emphasized from the outset of the EU–Brazil SP. An illustrative example can be seen in the fact that the 'Brazil: country strategy paper 2007–2013'<sup>15</sup> and the 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council—towards an EU–Brazil strategic partnership',<sup>16</sup> both of which were issued by the Commission in May 2007, were followed by the 'Mercosur regional strategy paper 2007–2013'.<sup>17</sup> The 'Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council—towards an EU–Brazil strategic partnership', in particular, envisaged the strengthening of EU–Mercosur relations whilst considering Brazil 'central to the success of the EU–Mercosur negotiations, an EU priority strategic objective'.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the goal of advancing the Mercosur agenda towards consequential negotiations in order to bring about an EU–Mercosur Association Agreement has recurrently featured in the joint statements produced at the end of each EU–Brazil Summit and has been instituted in the joint action plans (that is, 2009–2011 and 2012–2014).

Despite some arguments that the EU–Brazil SP 'may contribute to increas[ing] the tensions among the Mercosur's member states', (Ceia 2008; Lessa 2010; Malamud 2011) it is also acknowledged that the leadership capacity of Brazil—and the recognition of this implicit in the 2007 SP—may assuage the ideological differences between members and consequently contribute to the strengthening of the region as an economic and political bloc (Ceia 2008; Whitman and Rodt 2012).

On the EU's side, according to some authors the EU–Brazil SP represents a change in the European approach to Mercosur (Ceia 2008; Pino 2011; Whitman and Rodt 2012). In fact, except for the Framework Agreement of 1992, all European attempts at strengthening relations *vis-à-vis* the region have been based on a bloc-to-bloc formula, the dialogue with Mercosur and with the Andean Community of Nations and the EU–LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) Forum being cases in point. Some analysts like to stress that the SP may well constitute an expedient found by the EU to circumvent the failure of negotiations conducive to the signing of an association agreement and an indication of the organization's departure from longstanding projects relating to regional integration in South America (Malamud 2011; Silva 2011; Roy 2012). This can be seen as indicative of an overall

<sup>15</sup> See [http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/csp/07\\_13\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/csp/07_13_en.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>16</sup> See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007DC0281:EN:NOT>, accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>17</sup> The 'Mercosur regional strategy paper 2007–2013' was issued in August 2007. See [http://eeas.europa.eu/mercosur/rsp/07\\_13\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/mercosur/rsp/07_13_en.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52007DC0281:EN:NOT>, accessed 10 March 2015.



change in the EU's traditional promotion of inter-regionalism, which over the past decade came to be complemented by the reinforcement of bilateral relationships with emerging countries, including Brazil (Grevi 2013b). On the other hand, in view of Brazil's twofold profile as an emerging regional and global actor, the EU may have realized that it would be more advantageous to bring direct negotiations with Mercosur to an end and pursue its original goals in an indirect fashion with the latter's most important member, Brazil (Ceia 2008; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013; Vaz 2013).

That being said, it is important to highlight that the first EU–Brazil Summit, held in 2007, and the subsequent launching of the formal SP was the corollary of a joint attempt to transcend the traditional minimalist trade-based alliance between the two entities in order to establish a structured cooperation dynamic founded on stronger political commitment. The next section will discuss the two interrelated explanatory factors that account for that.

### **Explaining the emergence of the EU–Brazil SP: major drivers of a novel process**

#### *The symmetric evolution of the EU and Brazil as emergent political and security actors on the world stage*

The EU–Brazil SP saw the light of day as a result of a symmetric evolution by means of which the EU and Brazil have developed similar concerns, goals and ambitions in the process of (re)defining their international personae in a globalized, multi-lateral world. Such a process has caused them to converge in three major aspects that will be elucidated in this section. The first is the quest for enhanced force and weight on the international stage. Largely due to internal and international conditions linked to the end of the Cold War, the two actors have embarked upon various efforts directed towards gaining increased visibility, influence and status in global governance structures.

For Brazil, it can be said that the enactment of a SP with the EU should be seen as a by-product of a process of redefinition of the country's role in contemporary world politics. This has translated itself into Brazil's willingness to take on increasing world commitments and responsibilities on the international stage by getting involved in several causes, namely participation in UN peacekeeping operations. In recent years, the perception of Brazilian authorities of the country's capacity to play a tangible role in the promotion of a more inclusive system of global governance and, ultimately, the democratization of the global order has grown considerably. Brazil's growing willingness to craft a major global role for itself can be seen in the country's main initiatives in recent years, such as the creation of the G20 at the Cancun Conference in 2003, its candidacy for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, its leading military role in MINUSTAH (Valladão 2008; Cerro 2010; Ferreira-Pereira 2010; Hurrell 2010; Lessa 2010; Rohter 2010; Onuki 2011; Pino 2011; Sousa 2011) and its proactive engagement with the Iranian nuclear issue. It also found expression in the Brazilian presence in diverse groups, namely the Brazil, South Africa, India and China (BASIC) group (Husar et al 2010), the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) dialogue forum (Lessa 2010) and the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) initiative (Sousa 2011).

Changes in Brazil's self-perception in terms of both its identity and its role in the international arena are inextricably connected with the vision of the former president Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) regarding the country's place in the sphere of international politics, economy and trade, and its ability to contribute to the resolution of major international problems. Such a vision was encapsulated in the idea of 'Power Brazil' ('Brasil Potência'), although this was rarely explicitly voiced in plain terms. From Lula da Silva's standpoint, the country could aspire to play a leadership role at the global level and concrete efforts were made to reinforce the assertion of Brazil as an international actor in the framework of a presidential foreign policy described by the then minister of foreign affairs, Celso Amorim, as 'active and self-confident' (Almeida 2004).

With the advent of the first presidency of Dilma Rousseff (2011–2014) some of the heat has gone out of the appreciable political dynamism and enthusiasm that marked the pursuit of a globally oriented foreign policy during Lula's presidency, governmental efforts now concentrating primarily on coping with major domestic issues. On the one hand, this can be readily understood with reference to a feeling that the party was over, to the extent that the socio-economic conditions that benefited the middle class during the Lula da Silva administration proved to be structurally unsustainable.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, foreign policy, in fact, was not among President Rousseff's personal preferences. As some foreign policy analysts have stressed, 'she does not like foreign policy, she does not understand it and has no charisma for conducting it at all'. The lack of interest in foreign policy on the part of President Rousseff was not without resonance for Itamaraty, whose prestige has reached its lowest level.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, after a period marked by a high degree of activism and voluntarism in the pursuit of a foreign policy with a universalist focus, during which, as observed by a top diplomat, 'the Brazilian President has been all over the place, except the Moon',<sup>21</sup> the space for diplomatic entrepreneurship and innovation has decreased considerably. That being said, a degree of foreign policy entrepreneurship was retained. This has mainly found expression in the launching of the concept of "responsibility while protecting" at the UN debates on security and protection of civilians (2011),<sup>22</sup> the organization of the Rio+20 Summit (2012) and the successful candidacy for the chairmanship of the WTO (2013). In this regard, another aspect that should be stressed is that the foreign policy discourse continued to impart the idea that Brazil is 'a player that cannot be sidestepped'<sup>23</sup> as well as the conviction that 'Brazil is ready to take up

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<sup>19</sup> This idea draws on a discussion with a Brazilian foreign policy expert, August 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with an analyst of contemporary Brazilian foreign policy, São Paulo, August 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Interview at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty), Brasília, August 2012.

<sup>22</sup> The concept of "responsibility while protecting" was put forward officially during President Dilma Rousseff's historic speech at the Opening Session of the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations, on 21 September 2011. The creation of this concept is attributed to Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (in office from January 2011 to August 2013). Cf. <http://www2.planalto.gov.br/acompanhe-o-planalto/discursos/discursos-da-presidenta/discurso-da-presidenta-da-republica-dilma-rousseff-na-abertura-do-debate-geral-da-66a-assembleia-geral-das-nacoes-unidas-nova-iorque-eua>, accessed 3 March 2015.

<sup>23</sup> This draws on the first speech of Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado, who took over after the resignation of Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonio de Aguiar Patriota. See <http://kitplone.itamaraty.gov.br/sala-de-imprensa/notas-a-imprensa/discurso-do-embaixador-luiz-alberto-figueiredo-machado-na-cerimonia-de-transmissao-do-cargo-de-ministro-de-estado-das-relacoes-exteriores>, accessed 10 March 2015.

responsibilities as a permanent member of the Security Council'.<sup>24</sup> Equally important, the furtherance of the EU–Brazil relations was not called into question under Dilma Rousseff's presidency.

On the EU's side, the quest for assertiveness and activism on the global stage, notably in the sphere of foreign and security policy, has been pursued particularly strongly since 2003 and has been growing in scale and in importance since then. Two manifestations of this should be considered here. Firstly, the SPs became an integral part of the operation of the EU in the world, in the course of the organization's continued endeavour to promote privileged bilateral relations with pivotal global and regional powers. According to the European Security Strategy (ESS), among those countries with whom the EU intended to strengthen its strategic relationship were China, India and Russia. In a proactive attempt to engage further countries, the EU signed SPs with South Africa and Brazil in 2006 and 2007, respectively. The formal existence of these partnerships was recognized by the 'Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy' of 2008. In this way, the EU has fostered a network of strategic partners that came to comprise all members of the BRICS initiative.<sup>25</sup> Secondly, there was the launching of consecutive peace support operations in various regions of the world under the aegis of the CFSP and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), which have gained an array of structures, instruments and mechanisms. Along these lines, the EU has been attempting to build its influence on the international stage as an increasingly independent political and strategic actor while signalling both a willingness and a capacity to take on increasing responsibilities in the promotion of international peace and security. The extension of the EU's role in the provision of security from its limited regional origins to its current global ambition has further benefited from and been boosted by a deepened institutionalized relationship with the UN on issues ranging from development policy, climate change and global health to conflict prevention, crisis management, peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance, human rights promotion and the fight against corruption and crime.

The two actors' unprecedented efforts to enhance their status and influence in world politics is inextricably linked to a second aspect when it comes to the symmetric evolution of EU and Brazil on the international stage. This aspect relates to the expansion of both the European and Brazilian foreign and security policy objectives, which has translated into the pursuit of a globally oriented foreign policy on the part of both entities to address such critical security challenges as transnational crime, human trafficking and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In the case of the EU in particular, the events of 9/11 and subsequently the post-2008 economic and financial crisis have resulted in greater foreign policy cooperation and coordination with key players in the political, economic and trade spheres becoming more necessary.

This globally oriented foreign policy is anchored in a normative agenda that, besides an emphasis on democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, also comprises the defence of international law and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Incidentally, respect for human rights, the security–development nexus,

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<sup>24</sup> See President Dilma Rousseff's historical speech at the Opening Session of the 66th General Assembly of the United Nations.

<sup>25</sup> At the time of the writing, the complete list of the EU's strategic partners included ten members. These are Brazil, Canada, China, India, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, Russia and the United States (US).

the reinforcement of the International Court and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals correspond to thematic areas covered by the EU–Brazil SP. Such subject matter is also in line with concerns conveyed by the key EU strategic documents that I have already referred to, namely the ESS and the ‘Report on the implementation of the European Security Strategy’. The EU–Brazil SP therefore demonstrates the significant role played by the existence of common values in international politics (Ceia 2008; Valladão 2008; Onuki 2011; Gratius and Saraiva 2013; Grevi- 2013a) and can generally be associated with the existence of shared worldviews.

Yet, diverging views on various matters do prevail, notably in terms of the implementation of international norms and rules, the framing of debates and the choice of language. This is hardly surprising considering the two actors’ distinct identities, historical trajectories and different loci in a globalized multilateral world. Moreover, as some have stressed, the EU has been behaving as if its own rules and visions of the world must be universally accepted, something that has limited its understanding of the outlook of “others” (Valladão 2008). The case of Mali is typical of the polarizations that can be produced by contentious issues. On the occasion of the EU–Brazil Summit of January 2013, President Dilma Rousseff expressed strong reservations regarding French intervention in Mali, stressing that the intervention should have been preceded by a UN deliberation and ‘the fight against terrorism should not justify neo-colonialist temptations’.<sup>26</sup> Underneath the surface of this tension lie diverging interpretations of both the principle of non-intervention (one of the principal tenets of Brazilian foreign policy) and the limits of the concept of “responsibility to protect”.

Nevertheless, on the basis of this normative foundation, the EU has developed itself as a model of governance and social organization (Ferreira-Pereira 2012) while Brazil has emerged as an example of leadership, at least in some quarters, including in Europe. The EU has asserted itself as a model for intra-regional conflict resolution, deeply rooted in democratic traditions and social justice concerns and inspired by the principle of political and economic solidarity, which has gradually led to its emergence as an exemplar community of peace and stability (Ferreira-Pereira 2012). At the same time, by singling out Brazil as its main South American interlocutor, the EU has signalled its support of Brazilian “positive leadership” and its political model vis-à-vis the Venezuelan or Bolivian models, which are considered more radical.

Finally, the third aspect in which both the EU and Brazil have converged in the process of (re)defining their international personae is connected to the common concern with the promotion of sustainable development and stability on the African continent. The Lula da Silva administration carried out a leadership-orientated strategy on the African continent marked by numerous official state visits. This took place against the backdrop of diplomatic engagement promoting South–South cooperation which between 2003 and 2007 eventually overtook the deepening Brazilian ties with the EU (Ceia 2008; Lima and Melo 2010) in importance. This strategy targeted especially, albeit not exclusively, the Portuguese-speaking states where Brazil has benefited from the comparative advantage of not having to cope with the shadow of a colonial past. For the EU, this strategy gained formal

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<sup>26</sup>See <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,dilma-diz-que-e-preciso-evitar-tentacoes-coloniais-em-intervencao-no-mali,988343>, accessed 10 March 2015.

expression through the establishment of a SP with the African Union in 2007, and the launching of various civilian and military operations on the continent. Indeed, most of the peace-support operations undertaken by the EU to date have been conducted in African countries, notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, Libya, Guinea Bissau, Somalia, South Sudan, Mali and Niger.

All in all, in the course of their symmetric evolution as emergent political and security actors on the international scene, the EU and Brazil have identified a number of mutual dividends that could only be won if they committed themselves to a change in approach.

### *The perception of a win–win formula*

From the EU's perspective, generally speaking, the creation of any formal SP results from a perception that it will entail a positive-sum game for the parties involved. As the former president of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, has remarked, 'strategic partnerships have to be based on a balance of mutual advantages and commitments' (Van Rompuy 2010, 3). More concretely, the establishment of a SP with Brazil fitted into the European interest in deepening its relations with pivotal regional and global states. Such an interest can also be appropriately linked to the EU's efforts to improve its aptitude to assert itself as an effective and respected foreign policy actor on the international stage. In view of the Brazilian proclivity to playing a vocal role in the reform of the global governance organizations, a SP presented itself as a valuable instrument to pursue, along with the authorities in Brasília, mid- and long-term strategies relating to the fight against terrorism, transnational crime, human trafficking, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the promotion of the security–development nexus and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Besides helping the EU to address these contemporary challenges, the establishment of a SP with Brazil was considered to be of key importance to strengthening European attempts to promote effective multilateralism and shape globalization (Grevi 2013a). Indeed, the keenness of the Brazilian authorities to gain increased leverage in the mitigation of the negative effects of political and economic globalization brought the country closer to the EU's predisposition to playing a proactive role in the future evolution of globalization trends, as affirmed in 'The EU declaration on globalization' of December 2007.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, the political calculus underlying the signing of a SP with Brazil was informed by the EU's de facto recognition of the country's emerging economic and political role in the world. To be sure, Brazil had come to be viewed as a state that had become too internationally significant to be ignored. In the eyes of the EU, this has only consolidated the view of Brazil as the "natural" and irreplaceable leader of South America capable of further promoting stability and prosperity in the region (Saraiva 2010). This idea was clearly recognized in the Commission's document 'Brazil: country strategy paper 2007–2013', mentioned earlier.

At the same time, the differentiated support given to Brazil under the umbrella of the SP presented itself as a means to contain the tendency towards radicalization in South America politics, thereby safeguarding the continuity of democratic

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<sup>27</sup> 'The EU declaration on globalization' was annexed to the Presidency Conclusions of the Brussels European Council held on 14 December 2007. See [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/97669.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

values as the bedrock of South American regional integration processes (Ceia 2008; Valladão 2008, Pino 2011). Moreover, the Brazil-led integration dynamics matches what is considered the ideal situation according to the European model, which corresponds to a balanced combination of politics, economy and society (Ceia 2008; Valladão 2008). Finally, the EU's acknowledgement of Brazil as a privileged interlocutor in the region allows the country to counterweigh the presence of the US in South America (Valladão 2008; Ferreira-Pereira 2010; Lessa 2010).

From the Brazilian perspective, there was also a perception of diverse gains arising from a more structured bilateral cooperation with the EU based on the general assumption that in this particular political-diplomatic venture national interests and values come together. The concept of SP was very near to the heart of President Lula da Silva, who encouraged the expansion and diversification of SPs. The latter matched the pursuit of a foreign policy with a universalist focus that enabled a course correction of his predecessor's (Fernando Henrique Cardoso's) strategy, which was characterized by a more defensive stance; and were perceived as valuable tools for the national development strategy while strengthening the country's capacity for autonomous international action (Lessa 2010; Vaz 2014). Another of these dividends can be straightforwardly associated with the establishment of an individual dialogue with a great economic and commercial power. This was expected to give Brazil economic and trade advantages, particularly access to the European market of more than 500 million people. There were also clear expectations relating to benefits in the sphere of technology. This was because the SP was expected to create the necessary conditions for a more significant transfer of technological know-how from Europe to Brazil (Saraiva 2012).<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, considerable symbolic political value was attached to the country's entry into the restricted club of the EU's strategic partners. For Brazilian diplomacy, the SP has signalled an overall acknowledgement that the country should be taken seriously in the most influential multilateral structures, namely the EU (de Lima and Hirst 2006; Lessa 2010; Saraiva 2006; 2010; Rohter 2010; Pino 2011). There was also recognition of the country's leverage and relevance, particularly, in the multilateral trade negotiations in major fora like the WTO and G20 (Sousa 2011; Vaz 2013).

This links to the shift in how Brazil perceived its own international status, from that of a second-class to a first-class country (Rohter 2010, 225) and its subsequent diplomatic endeavours towards positioning itself among the global players (Saraiva 2006). Pointing explicitly to this, President Lula da Silva declared proudly in 2009, after winning the candidacy to host the 2016 Olympic Games, 'Today is the day that Brazil gained its international citizenship. Today is the day that we have overcome the last vestiges of prejudice against us' (Rohter 2010, 223). Interestingly, the question of gaining external respect has been critical to the shaping and making of Brazilian foreign policy (Rohter 2010, 224-225). In the context of a respect-seeking approach, a deeper relationship with the EU in the form of a SP presented itself as an indispensable expedient. Within the remit of the EU's partnership policy, Brazil would be placed on an equal footing with the organization and would be granted a differentiated status from that of other states inside and outside Latin America. In short, the SP was an expression of the EU's respect for

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<sup>28</sup> This idea was confirmed during an interview with a top-ranking Brazilian ambassador, São Paulo, August 2013.

the country's role in the regional context and, ultimately, for its ambition to establish itself as a global player. Obtaining international respect was considered of critical importance for Brazil's efforts to make its voice heard on the most important decisions made within global power structures, and, even more so, to improve its credentials as a candidate for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

Incidentally, Brazilian leaders have seen the EU as an important ally in the reformation of the US-led international order, within which they did not feel comfortable. From their standpoint, the US ought to share leadership with other relevant actors, so that the imbalance of power that characterizes contemporary world politics could be tackled and, ultimately, overcome. The role played by certain European countries during the Iraq War in countering American unilateralism was not without consequences for the Lula da Silva government's appraisal of a political partnership with the EU (Almeida 2004). Eventually, this organization could further enable Brazil to counterbalance the hegemonic weight of the US (Valladão 2008; Lessa 2010) whilst fostering multipolarity in the international system.

### **The EU–Brazil SP under the “foul weather” of economic crisis: advancing, but with some drawbacks and major challenges ahead**

The EU–Brazil SP had a promising beginning, the early days of its operation being marked by the intensification of cooperation across a vast range of topics, which began to be progressively exploited by means of annual summits, specific dialogues and joint action plans. Since 2010, ministerial dialogue has reinforced the high-level character of the debates. Moreover, the High-Level Political Dialogue on all issues of mutual interest, of both a regional and an international nature, is at the core of the bilateral relationship, since it is within its purview that new dialogue has been proposed by the parties involved.

The Second EU–Brazil Summit, held in 2008, marked a milestone in cooperation with the signing of a Brazil–EU Joint Action Plan for three years. The latter was expected to ‘serve as the framework for practical action in their Strategic Partnership ... [to] enable both sides to start new regular bilateral dialogues as well as deepen existing partnership in areas that are of mutual strategic importance’.<sup>29</sup> In the framework of the first joint action plan, adopted in December 2008, 16 new dialogues and one roundtable were envisioned, clearly showing a tendency towards the deepening of mutual understanding. Areas like technology and education (Saraiva 2006; Pino 2011; Sousa 2011) have garnered particular attention from the parties (Valladão 2008; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013). The same can be said regarding the environment sphere, which stood out as an important area for consideration in the first joint action plan.

Against the backdrop of the Fifth EU–Brazil Summit,<sup>30</sup> which took place in October 2011, a second joint action plan, due to be implemented between 2012 and 2014, was launched. New topics had emerged in the dialogue between the parties, notably tourism flows between South America and Europe, and space policy. The

<sup>29</sup> See [http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/docs/2008\\_ii\\_summit\\_joint\\_statement\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/docs/2008_ii_summit_joint_statement_en.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>30</sup> See [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/124878.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/124878.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

introduction of energy issues onto the SP agenda constituted an innovation of particular importance (Vaz 2014).

In the following years, bilateral sectoral dialogues would mushroom, thereby signalling the momentum gained by the EU–Brazil SP, at least on paper. When the Sixth EU–Brazil Summit took place in Brasília, in January 2013, there was general ‘satisfaction with the development of the bilateral Sectoral Dialogues, which involve initiatives in some 30 different areas’.<sup>31</sup> Such groundwork created favourable conditions to establish a High-Level Dialogue on International Peace and Security and a Dialogue on Drug Matters in the course of that year, thereby adding a new forum for debate and cooperation on matters relating to security, peace-building, crime and human rights. One year later, as indicated in the joint statement issued on the occasion of the Seventh EU–Brazil Summit in Brussels, the parties continued to reflect upon the progress achieved, ponder the lessons to be learned in order to advance bilateral dialogue and look at new areas for cooperation on issues of mutual concern.<sup>32</sup>

When we examine the evolution of the EU–Brazil SP it is indisputable that there were several positive changes in the EU–Brazil relationship. The novel bilateral format has altered the terms of engagement between the two parties by substantiating a more institutionalized and comprehensive framework that has transcended economic and trade-related matters to embrace matters pertaining to other areas such as security and culture (Ceia 2008; Valladão 2008; Silva 2011; Whitman and Rodt 2012). Furthermore, there has been some convergence in the positions adopted by the EU and Brazil within the international fora concerning the defence of human rights and multilateralism, the conclusion of the Doha Round and the promotion of environmental issues and ecological consciousness through the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Ferreira-Pereira 2010; Gratius 2013; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013). Another area of convergence has been linked to the triangular cooperation with African countries (Valladão 2008; Ferreira-Pereira 2010; Pino 2011; Sousa 2011). More recently, both actors have agreed on terms regarding intellectual property and related issues.<sup>33</sup>

Overall, the EU–Brazil SP, nurtured by a series of high-level summits, has considerably increased mutual knowledge between the parties, which have come to treat each other as equals (Lazarou 2013). It has introduced a new tempo into the relationship between Brussels and Brasília while moving the parties towards denser cooperation and new directions for the improvement of relations. Symptomatic of this was the multiplication of sectoral dialogues from a handful or so in 2007 to nearly 30 in 2014.<sup>34</sup>

Yet, there are several drawbacks and failed expectations as well as major challenges to the EU–Brazil partnership. Cooperative achievements accumulated under the auspices of the EU–Brazil SP should not obscure the fact that the full

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<sup>31</sup> See the corresponding joint statement: [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/135015.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/135015.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>32</sup> See ‘7th EU–Brazil Summit, joint statement’, Brussels, 24 February 2014, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/141145.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/141145.pdf), accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>33</sup> See <http://www.eubrazil.eu/en/2014/11/19/brazil-and-eu-discuss-issues-on-intellectual-property>, accessed 10 March 2015.

<sup>34</sup> According to data conveyed on the official site of the EU External Action Service, there were 30 active sectoral dialogues by 2014. See [http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/brazil/index_en.htm), accessed 10 March 2015.



implementation of the latter's goals has been undermined by various types of hindrances and constraints. There are the intricate disputes over trade and agriculture, chronic disagreements over sanitary and phytosanitary rules and measures, cleavages over the use of natural resources, and divergences on the reconciliation of food, energy security and environmental sustainability (Ceia 2008; Valladão 2008; Vaz 2013). Moreover, as already mentioned in the present article, although the two parties share a normative agenda comprising democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights, defence of international law and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, diverging views on how these principles should be translated into policy commitments in the "real world", notably those relating to humanitarian intervention and non-proliferation, continue to occur—and may be expected to persist in the future (Grevi 2013a; Gratius and Saraiva 2013). Brazil's abstention from UN Security Council Resolution 1973 on the situation in Libya, Brasília's criticism of the French military intervention in Mali<sup>35</sup> and the Brazilian reluctance to adopt sanctions against Iran and Syria are all cases in point.

Another problem links to the fact that the EU's SP with Brazil continues to vie with Brazil's strong partnerships with key European states such as France, Germany and Italy whose foreign policy agendas are not always in harmony with the European collective agenda in which the SP is anchored. Over time, Brazil has won differing degrees of interest and prioritization among the EU member states' external relations, this not being without consequences for the significance assigned by individual European countries to EU–Brazil rapport in the CFSP's purview. What is more, the diversification strategy in the framework of Brazilian foreign policy, as reflected in the country's growing engagement with international coalitions like the BRICS, BASIC, IBSA, WTO and G20, confronts the EU with an additional challenge to the strengthening of structural cooperation with Brazil. Thus it will be important to take measures in the near future to advance political dialogue when it comes to contending issues in the framework of global governance and multilateral structures, so that the bilateral partnership will not be watered down (Vaz 2013).

On Brazil's side, the SP's perceived delivery deficit has given rise to a widespread feeling of failed expectations among foreign-policy-makers. Symptomatic of that, some observed in 2013 that Brazilian leaders 'do not look at the SP with the EU in the same way as when they signed it'.<sup>36</sup> Surely, the financial and economic turmoil that has afflicted the EU since 2009 has contributed to this.<sup>37</sup> The same can be said regarding the perception of a European delivery deficit given the difficulties exhibited by the organization, not only to secure a stable economic and monetary zone, but also to assert itself as an influential security actor. Examples can be seen in the protracted crisis in the Eurozone combined with the cracks appearing in the EU's solidarity ethos; as well as in the diverging positions adopted by France, Britain and Germany during the Libyan crisis. At a more tangible level, this feeling of disappointment should be seen in direct connection to the realization that the Brazilian authorities did not get the support from

<sup>35</sup> In the particular cases of Libya and Mali, the Brazilian stance was largely informed by diverging interpretations regarding the implementation of the concept of "responsibility to protect".

<sup>36</sup> Interview with a former high-ranking diplomat, São Paulo, 20 August 2013.

<sup>37</sup> Interview with a former high-ranking diplomat, São Paulo, 20 August 2013; interview with Carlos Lins da Silva, Communication Adviser of Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP), expert in Brazilian foreign policy, São Paulo, 27 August 2013.

the EU that they had initially envisaged for the country's permanent membership of the UN Security Council, as part of a much needed democratic reform of this key institution that no longer mirrors the global distribution of power. The achievement of this concrete ambition has been challenged by the virtually insurmountable over-representation of the EU within this UN institution. Discontent with the lack of the EU's support further applies to Brazilian diplomatic efforts directed towards the democratization of other key international organizations and multilateral structures.

The EU's continued alignment with US interests and priorities, together with its reliance on both the US and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to counter threats to its own security, has triggered contending views at the level of political dialogue (Vaz 2013). For Brazil, the EU is perceived as continuing to be strongly conditioned and influenced by American vested interests, rather than pursuing an autonomous stance. In doing this, with few exceptions, the EU presents itself as an indefectible collaborator with Washington, rather than a "promoter of stances" that could make a difference in world affairs. Such a predisposition on the part of the EU has generated disappointment, especially in those who have the conviction that, if exploited by Brazil to its fullest, 'the political relation with the EU can prove itself to be somewhat easier than that with the US, which is very important for the country's foreign policy'.<sup>38</sup> Equally important, failed expectations should be understood in light of complex trade disputes, still under a process of resolution, which have caused many in Brazil to see the EU as a nuisance player at the international negotiations table,<sup>39</sup> and also in relation to the amount of knowledge transference in the domains of innovation and technology, which was less than initially contemplated and desired. Brazilian dissatisfaction has also emerged in relation to cooperation in the higher education sector, in support of the national programme Science without Borders.<sup>40</sup>

Finally, it seems clear that for both sides a major factor that has contributed to the delivery deficit of the EU–Brazil SP and has generated failed expectations, especially among Brazilian political leaders, relates to the EU–Mercosur trade agenda (Gratius 2013; Vaz 2014), whose furtherance has been consistently seen as a goal that needs to be pursued alongside the deepening of EU–Brazil relations under the aegis of the SP. Despite Brazil's strong will to conclude the EU–Mercosur negotiations and the multiple measures already undertaken to advance the Mercosur agenda, the EU–Mercosur Association Agreement has not hitherto seen the light of day (Smith 2013). Recent developments that took place in the context of EU–US relations linked to the establishment of the US-led Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) have increased Brazilian concerns about the conclusion of the long-awaited association agreement. The advent of the TTIP represents a threat to the country's market share and prominent role in South America, and threatens to undermine the substantial investments made in the region at the level of infrastructure and market expansion (Lazarou 2013; Valladão 2013; Malamud 2014). Nevertheless, Argentina and Venezuela have shown reluctance to sign a

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with a former high-ranking diplomat, São Paulo, 20 August 2013.

<sup>39</sup> This idea also draws on various interviews conducted in Brasília and São Paulo, in 2012 and 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Science without Borders (Ciência sem Fronteiras) is a large-scale nationwide scholarship programme largely funded by the Brazilian federal government, which aims to promote the international mobility of both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

bi-regional agreement with the EU. And, as rightly observed by Valladão (2013), this poses a clear dilemma for the Brazilian authorities: how to advance towards the conclusion of an association agreement with the EU without jeopardizing the country's three-decades-old cooperative relationship (after almost two centuries of strategic competition) with Argentina and eventually causing the fragmentation of Mercosur, which constitutes the cornerstone of the Southern Cone integration scheme and the basis of Brazil's neighbourhood stability.

Although feelings of failed expectations regarding the SP with the EU have moved Brazilian foreign policy leaders to invest further human and material resources in promoting the development agenda and South–South cooperation, they have not led to political disinvestment in the reinforcement of this bilateral relationship. Yet, again, it is hard to escape the fact that the EU has continued to not be central to Brazil's foreign policy inclinations.

That being said, the existence of certain areas that hold great potential for the deepening of cooperation, notably renewable energy, the fight against illegal migration, the promotion of multilateralism and the joint maximization of these entities' "civilian power", has fostered optimism regarding future prospects (Vasconcelos 2007; Ceia 2008; Valladão 2008; Lazarou and Fonseca 2013). The same can be said regarding EU–Brazilian cooperation on global governance in the financial, health and internet spheres. The eventual intensification of triangular cooperation in development assistance has already been described as 'a promising area for further progress' in the remit of EU–Brazil relations (Vaz 2013). The establishment of a high-level dialogue on international peace and security, which also aims to build bridges concerning peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions (Lazarou 2013), also augurs well for the future. Finally, the adherence of Brazil and the EU to the same community of values allows these two actors to expect more from their strategic rapport as compared with the existing bilateral partnerships with China and Russia (Valladão 2008), where normative affinity is limited or non-existent.

If it is true that the early years of the implementation of the EU–Brazil SP have been overshadowed by considerable strains in the Eurozone, something that has stood in contrast with the economic rise of Brazil, it seems that the forthcoming years may well witness some inversion of this situation, that is to say, an increasingly stagnant Brazilian economy and a EU grappling more or less successfully with the plagues of low economic growth, high unemployment and meagre competitiveness in the global market. The scope and significance of the EU–Brazil Joint Action Plan,<sup>41</sup> envisaged during the Seventh EU–Brazil Summit, held on 24 February 2014, which should serve as a roadmap for the period 2015–2017, will depend on various factors. These encompass not only the vision of both the Jean Claude Juncker-led Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, but also intra- and extra-mural developments in Brazil. The challenges facing Dilma Rousseff, who saw her presidency continued in January 2015 after highly disputed elections, are manifold. On the one hand, good opportunities may arise from the organization of the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro to enable the country to sustain international visibility. But, on the other hand, the growing debt, the negative balance of trade, the mounting inflation and corruption scandals, with all

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<sup>41</sup> At the time of the writing of this article the Eighth EU–Brazil Summit has not taken place yet and, therefore, the new Joint Action Plan 2015–2017 is still to be approved.

that this implies in terms of impact on an enormous society plagued with endemic racial and socio-economic inequalities, stand out as major manifestations of the end of Brazil's 'good economic times'.

## **Conclusion**

Although recent years have given rise to promising prospects, EU–Brazil relations, whether explored from the Brazilian perspective or through a European lens, continue to be subject to insufficient academic attention when compared with the analytical interest given to relations with others emerging powers, like China and Russia (Ferreira-Pereira 2015). This article has attempted to be an addition to the literature on the EU–Brazil relationship by consolidating knowledge of the context, motivations and expectations that brought the 2007 EU–Brazil SP into being, the degree to which it has been implemented and what it has meant in practice for the substance of this bilateral relationship. In doing so, the work has also cast light on the SP's major achievements and challenges against the backdrop of its first years of existence, which were marked by the foul weather of the European recession and several international crises (for example, Libya, Mali and Syria). The subject is examined through the prism of the EU's partnership policy, which has been developing as a multidimensional instrument of the EU's contemporary foreign policy and international identity. In this way, the article has sought to add to the debate on the meaning, scope, implications and prospects of both the institutionalization and implementation of this organization's SPs.

After a period of relational indifference, followed by decades of minimal cooperation largely restricted to trade and economic issues, EU–Brazil relations entered a new phase with the establishment of a formal SP in 2007. This bilateral achievement was the corollary of the EU's partnership policy towards Brazil, which, for more than a decade, was mainly governed by the 1992 EC–Brazil Framework Cooperation Agreement and the 1995 EU–Mercosur Framework Cooperation Agreement. From the European standpoint, it also conveyed the definitive acknowledgement of Brazil as its privileged interlocutor in South America, which deserved a differentiated status and recognition, with all that this implies for the extension and leverage of the EU's foreign and security profile. This article has attempted to demonstrate that the creation of a formal SP between Brussels and Brasília mainly resulted from the interplay between two dimensions that have constituted powerful drivers for the materialization of this positive outcome.

The first dimension relates to the symmetric evolution of the EU and Brazil as emergent political and security actors on the world stage, as reflected in common traits and aspirations exhibited by the two regional powers in their process of (re)defining their international personae in a globalized multilateral world. The quest for enhanced force and weight in the international arena, the adoption of a globally oriented foreign policy to tackle transnational security challenges and the promotion of sustainable development and stability in Africa stand out as the main common features illuminated here. In this regard, this article has stressed the connection between the reinforcement of the EU's partnership dynamics towards Brazil and this country's willingness to assert itself as a recognized and respected political actor on the international stage, a proclivity that would deepen dramatically throughout much of the first decade

of the twenty-first century. Indeed, a privileged partnership with the EU has risen as a component of Brazil's developing global actorness, characterized by its increasing political–diplomatic engagement in the promotion of South–South cooperation and multilateralism through active participation in the BRIC group, BASIC countries and IBSA dialogue forum.

The second dimension corresponds to the perception that the SP is of benefit to both parties, in view of the mutual advantages springing from more structured bilateral cooperation. From Brazil's standpoint, the expected dividends associated with the SP were tangible and diverse, namely economic, commercial and technological. From the EU's perspective, a SP with Brazil was perceived as critical given the organization's necessity to engage regional powers in multilateral solutions to solve common problems and come to grips with common threats. For both parties, the SP was considered a mutually reinforcing vehicle to amplify their profiles and roles in the architecture of global governance.

As this article has corroborated, the EU–Brazil SP has changed the terms of the traditional economic relationship between Brussels and Brasília, due to innovative factors which brought new blood into veins that may have been hardening. As a result of regular bilateral dialogue at the highest political level, across a wide range of areas, including security, mutual familiarity and consensual decision-making have been taking root. Summits between the two partners have instilled a new dynamic into the cooperative relationship, which came to be informed by an unprecedentedly low power differential between the two actors. Although EU–Brazil cooperation has become stronger and denser, the fact remains that this bilateral relationship continues to be an arena of divergence largely because of intricate international trade disputes. Despite this and also the failed expectations that have marked the SP's unfolding to date, there is the prospect and expectation that it has the potential to be a source of innovative and constructive ideas that could lead to common stances and policy options that might well prove to make a difference at a global level.

Be that as it may, for the time being, the institutionalization and implementation of a formal SP with Brazil has contributed to the strengthening of the EU's globally oriented partnership policy and ultimately to the incremental empowerment of the EU necessary to the assertion of its values, objectives and interests on the international stage. This acquires even greater importance if one considers that, similar to the enlargement process, the partnership-based policy may have the potential to establish itself as an EU foreign policy instruction in its own right and to be considered pertinent to securing the credibility and respectability of this organization's role on the global stage. Hence, under the pressures of globalization and interdependence, the length and depth of the EU's relations with its strategic partners, notably with Brazil, will help to further define the organization's capability and performance as an actor and as a credible and effective foreign policy player.

### **Disclosure statement**

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## Notes on contributor

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