

## The Brazilian Foreign Policy Towards Africa

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**A**s of the last decade, the African economic and political environment had been affected by various international forces and players. In this respect, the African continent witnesses the competition of two international teams. The first team is represented in the traditional players who are leading the world system since the 1950s, represented in the USA, some EU countries and Japan, while the second team is represented in the new international players who seek to play new roles on the international arena, on top of which is China.

The recent years had witnessed intensive discussions over China's growing role in Africa, especially within the framework of its endeavors to introduce itself as a super power during the post Cold War era in the face of a power dominating the international system; namely: the USA.

However, a deep look at the current African foreign relations reveal China's growing ties with some other developing powers, especially the Brazil; one of the most important BRICS countries with Russia, China, India and South Africa.

### General Principles Governing the Brazilian Policy towards Africa

The Brazilian foreign relations are governed by various principles that are specified in Article 4 of the Federal Constitution; i.e. national independence, respect of human rights, right of self determination, non intervention, equality among states, defending peace, fighting terrorism and ethnicity, collaboration among peoples for the welfare of humanity and guaranteeing the right to asylum.

In this respect, the Brazilian foreign relations towards Africa is based upon several principles, including the non-intervention in the African internal affairs and the respect of the integrity of the states, in addition to the Principle of the Non-Indifference or the Diplomacy of Solidarity; a.k.a. Active Solidarity which shows the Brazil's endeavors to realize political and economic solidarity with the developing countries, especially the poor countries, so as to solve their social and economic problems, represented in hunger, poverty and social marginalization.

The main principles governing the Brazilian foreign policy, in general, and its policy towards Africa, in particular, reveal that Brazil is giving a priority to the peaceful political and diplomatic tools and to the principles of the international law as a means for solving international disputes and for enhancing multilateral cooperation, especially cooperation with the states in the South; the matter which deems a key issue to the Brazilian foreign policy.

In this vein, the Brazilian deve-

lopmental cooperation with Africa is based on paying due attention to the needs of the developing countries and on fulfilling the African needs and developmental priorities, in addition to avoiding the direct cash transfers and the conditionality and concentrating on the transfer and exchange of technology and experiences.

#### The Nature of the Brazilian Foreign Policy towards Africa

Since the era of President Lula da Silva (2003-10) and his successor Dilma Rousseff (Jan. 2011), the Brazilian foreign policy programme is mainly based on the active diplomatic action, not only on the regional level inside the Latin American continent, but also on the international level.

In this respect, the Brazil sought to develop an active diplomacy that is based on compromising between its location as a pivotal power in Latin America on the one hand and its belonging to the developing countries in the south and representing their interests in various international forums against the advanced states in the west on the other hand.

Moreover, Lula da Silva asser-

ted that ties with the southern states will be on top of the Brazilian foreign policy interests, especially as regards Africa.

During the past recent years, Brazil sought to further its interests with Africa so as not to confine its relations with the traditional African countries. It was also keen to extend the bridges of communication with some Sub-Saharan and French-speaking African states such as Benin, Mali, Senegal, Kenya and Ghana.

Brazil depends on a number of factors that might contribute to enhancing relations with Africa, including:

**First:** The existence of mutual historic heritage between the Brazil and most of the African states, especially that Africa was one of the most important stations for the supply of slaves to the Brazil during the Portuguese colonization period to some African countries.

**Second:** The bilateral cultural and linguistic ties between Brazil and Africa that contributed to enhancing cooperation between both sides. In this respect, the Portuguese language is considered a strong tie especially with

the Portuguese-speaking African countries.

**Third:** The existence of humanitarian mutual ties between the Brazil and Africa. Currently, the Brazil includes the biggest percentage of the African descent population outside the black continent. It is also the second largest state (after Nigeria) whose population stems from African origins.

**Fourth:** The environmental factors represented in the geology and the geography of the place plays a key role in the Brazilian support to the African development. In the inaugural session of the first Africa-South America Summit in Abuja, Nigeria, 2006, Lula da Silva declared that the Atlantic Ocean is nothing but a river that links between the two continents. Furthermore, the similar climatic conditions in both places open vistas for wider participation in various fields.

**Fifth:** The similarity between the challenges that face the Brazil and Africa. Lula has pointed to this point in his radio-transmitted address to Africa in 2003, saying “the Brazil and Africa share the same long strife for

achieving freedom, social justice, democracy and development. Such a mutual history can be considered a fertile ground for mutual cooperation.

**Sixth:** The absence of the Brazilian colonial history in Africa. Moreover, the Brazilian relations with the black continent lacks any arrogant tendency; a privilege for the Brazil against other western states.

#### **Brazilian Objectives and Interests in Africa**

**First:** Benefiting from the foreign policy in consolidating economic and commercial relations with specific countries so as to improve the internal economic conditions, thus directly benefiting the Brazilian citizen.

**Second:** Realizing a distinguished position for the Brazil through playing an active, effective and independent role on the international level. This aims at reforming the structure of the international system so as to become a multi-polar with the participation of emerging southern countries.

#### **The Brazilian Political Dimensions towards Africa**

The Brazilian- African econo-

mic relations enjoy a special relation. The Brazil does not consider Africa the lost continent, but rather deals with it as a continent of special economic and strategic importance. It also regards Africa as a promising market for the Brazilian commodities and products and a fertile land for Brazilian companies to establish their projects.

On the other hand, the Brazil is the sixth biggest economy worldwide. Thus it is clear that its Arab partners will support a big amount of such economic growth. This explains the increase in the amount of the Brazilian foreign trade since 2000 by around 15% annually. Furthermore, trade with Africa represents 1.7% of the GDP and 7% of the total amount of the Brazilian foreign trade worldwide.

It is worthy to mention that the volume of trade exchange between the Brazil and Africa rose from US \$ 5 billion in 2000 to around US \$ 26 billion in 2012. The oil-rich Nigeria accounts for one third of the Brazilian trade in Africa; the matter which made Nigeria an important commercial partner to the Brazil. According to the Ministry of Foreign Af-

fairs, the Brazil is currently responsible of 70% of the total amount of trade between Latin America and Africa which reached around US \$ 39.4 billion in 2011.

The Portuguese-speaking African countries receive 34% of the total amount of the Brazilian developmental aids as  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Brazilian developmental projects in Africa are directed to such states, on top of which are: Cape Verde, Angola, Sao Tome, and Principe, not to mention South Africa that lies in the center of the Brazilian interests.

#### **Second: The Political-Diplomatic Dimension**

Despite the poor developmental cooperation offered from the Brazil to the African countries if compared to that offered by China and India for example, yet the Brazil is more interested in fostering its political role in Africa. In this respect, closer relations with Africa on the political level are a fundamental part of the Brazilian foreign agenda that aims at highlighting the rising international Brazilian role. Despite the fact that the Brazil is the fourth biggest commercial partner to Africa after the USA, China, India,

yet it undertook unprecedented initiatives to establish economic and commercial partnerships with Africa.

On the institutional level, the Brazilian government sought to establish strong partnerships not only with African counties, but also with African institutions such as the African Union (AU) and other African regional economic gatherings and committees.

Furthermore, within the framework of the efforts exerted to foster its African relations, the Brazil hosted the second Conference “Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora” in 2006. The Brazil had also contributed to establishing high-level political summits such as the African-South American (ASA) in November 2006 so as to entrench relations between both regions in the fields of commercial negotiations, investments and developmental cooperation.

Such a Summit came as a result of the mutual efforts of Lula and the then Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo during Lula’s official visit to Nigeria in 2005. The Nigerian proposal was firstly confined on convening an African-Brazilian summit, but was then

developed to take the model of the Arab states-South American summit, thus considering the Summit as a new mechanism to consolidate dialogue between Africa and South America.

Furthermore, the Brazilian existence in Africa was fostered through inaugurating and reopening 17 Brazilian embassies during Lula's era, in addition to the 16 already existing embassies, thus reaching a total number of embassies for 37 out of 45 African countries. In this respect, the Brazil ranks the 7<sup>th</sup> worldwide and the 2<sup>nd</sup> in the western world after the US regarding the number of embassies in African states. Lula da Silva had also restructured an African and Middle Eastern affairs Administration inside the Brazilian foreign ministry, in addition to introducing a special administration for Africa.

In July 2009, Lula was the guest of honor of the 13<sup>th</sup> AU Summit that was held in Libya. In July 2011, Rouseff had appointed Lula as a representative to the Brazil in the 17<sup>th</sup> AU summit that was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea. In his speech, Lula asserted that the image presented to the world about Africa is a dis-

torted one that only focuses on poverty and misery, stressing on the fact that both the peoples of Africa and of Latin America wish to be treated equally and to participate in the production of the world wealth.

Such Brazilian interest in developing relations with Africa had been reflected in a number of institutional initiatives, including the Brazilian-African Forum which was held in the Brazil, June 2003, to encourage relations, especially in the fields of economy and trade and to entrench the political cooperation. Furthermore, the Brazilian presence as a guest of honor in a number of AU meetings was a precious opportunity to share interests with African partners.

Among other institutional frameworks that aimed at enhancing cooperation and coordination between both sides was the IBSA Dialogue Forum, or what is known as the G3 that is established by virtue of the Brasilia Declaration between India, South Africa and the Brazil and was endorsed by the foreign ministers of the three states in June 2003 in Brasilia.

In this respect, presidents of such states declared the establishment of the IBSA during the UN 58<sup>th</sup> meeting in September 2003 and the first summit was held in the Brazil in September 2006. Since then, the IBSA periodical ministerial meetings and summits were held in Pretoria, 2007, New Delhi 2008, Brasilia 2010, Pretoria 2011 and New Delhi 2013.

This Forum is a strategic alliance for defending the mutual interests of the developing countries inside state institutions. It is also deemed a background for mutual and common interests. It is also deemed a ground for bilateral and trilateral cooperation on the regional and among the inter-south states, especially in the fields of fighting poverty and the developmental policies. These three states declared that their main aim is to improve the economic geography (maybe the political one also), through paying due attention to the issues of reforming the international commercial system inside the WTO and the UN permanent membership system.

In this respect, the IBSA criticized the universal governance and called for the realization of the principle of regional representa-

tion in international organizations.

### Third: The Cultural Dimension – Technical

The cultural and technical Brazilian cooperation in Africa aims at consolidating relations with the Portuguese-speaking African countries. In this vein, the Brazil directed the technical support and the vocational training programmes to Africa due to the mutual close cultural and historic ties; the matter which facilitated the exchange of expertise. Furthermore, the linguistic and cultural ties have opened wide vistas for the participation in the fields of music and literature.

The Brazil is committed to the cooperation with the Portuguese-speaking African countries in various fields including; military cooperation, financial aids and cultural exchange. This should be implemented within a framework of the Community of the Portuguese-Speaking Countries which was established in 1996 with seven states; Angola, Portugal, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome, Principe,. In 2002, East Timor acceded to the Community upon its independence.