This study focuses on the development of Brazilian foreign policy since 1985, as Brazil has taken a more active role in regional and world affairs, concluding that Brazilian foreign policy continues to follow traditional patterns that have hindered its progress toward its desired status of a great power. To realize its aspirations Brazil must articulate and pursue a conception of the international and regional systems and must invest wholeheartedly in a Brazilian-led vision of South American integration.
Introduction

Brazil is on the rise, or so scholars and analysts are wont to claim. Historically the country has not achieved the level of political or economic importance on the world stage that its abundant natural and human resources would appear to suggest. The oft-repeated line about Brazil was that it was “the country of the future—and always will be.” Since the beginning of the century, however, it has increasingly looked as though the future has finally arrived for Brazil as it enjoys its first-ever stable democratic government. By 2011, Brazil had become the world’s eighth-largest economy. Some projections have placed it as the world’s fifth-largest economy as early as 2016 (Bodman, Wolfensohn and Sweig, 2011). Brazil and three other so-called BRICs are seen as likely to challenge American dominance in the near future,¹ and Brazil has consistently been considered an important economy and a rising power. As this paper will show, modern Brazilian leaders have attempted to adapt Brazil’s foreign policy to match its newfound power, working to secure a larger and more active global role for the country.

How can we evaluate the success of Brazil’s ambitions and its future prospects? This paper will argue that the foreign policy of democratic Brazil, despite its more active nature, continues to follow patterns that have consistently prevented Brazil from achieving its full potential as a world power. Brazilian leaders have always seen their country as destined for greatness, but they have not been able to translate this destiny into a reality, and I argue that this trend continues in modern-day Brazil. Brazil has proven unable to take advantage of opportunities to cement its position as the leading nation in South America. Brazilian-backed initiatives like Mercosul and Unasul have been slow to develop and have not had the depth that their backers had hoped. Furthermore, neighboring countries have not always responded positively to Brazil’s growth and initiatives such as the Venezuelan-led Bolivarian Alliance for
the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) offer challenges to Brazilian hegemony that have undermined its regional leadership efforts. This paper contends that Brazil has not fully articulated and pursued its conception of the international and regional systems and has failed to invest wholeheartedly in a Brazilian-led vision of South American integration.\(^2\) Brazil has focused too heavily on regional multilateralism and short-term self-interest at the expense of strong leadership. Thus, despite Brazil’s considerable progress since democratization, a change in course is necessary if Brazil is serious in its desire to become a true world power rather than merely a leading power in South America.

Many scholars and analysts have observed that since the transition to democracy in 1985, and particularly during the presidential administrations of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (president from 1995-2002) and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010, commonly referred to by Brazilians and in this paper as Lula), Brazil “has demonstrated a clear intention of wanting to expand the roles that it plays and the responsibilities that it assumes—in regional politics, in Third World agendas and in multilateral institutions” (Soares de Lima and Hirst 2006, 21). Brazil’s leaders point to its promotion of the Common Market of the South (Mercosul) and more recently its leading role in the creation of the Union of South American Nations (Unasul)\(^3\) as examples of growing Brazilian leadership in South America and as attempts to “construct a vision of the [South American] regional system and quietly obtain the active acquiescence of other regional states to a hegemonic project” (Burges 2008, 65).\(^4\) Brazil has also attempted to counter American leadership in the region, as exemplified by its instrumental role in organizing Latin America’s bargaining strategy in the talks surrounding the American-backed proposal for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the defeat of which was caused in part by the skepticism of countries like Brazil.
Brazil’s ambitions are also on display on a global scale. Recent Brazilian administrations have been eager to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations, with Brazilian forces taking a leading role in stabilization missions in Haiti and East Timor.5 Sánchez Nieto (2012) argues that Brazil’s peacekeeping activities are characteristic of “an expansionist republic…seeking influence by targeting nations in peril to increase its bona fides, which arguably has the positive effect of Brazil being regarded as a benevolent Big Brother/Good Samaritan” (Sánchez Nieto 2012, 162). Brazil has also sought, particularly under Lula, to form alliances with other countries of the so-called “global South”6 with the goal, in Lula’s words, of working toward a “democratization of international relations that are free of any hegemony,” (Handbook 2008). Burges (2005) argues that a major aspect of Lula’s foreign policy is the ideal of auto-estima, or self-confidence, which is articulated in Brazil’s greater willingness to pursue a leadership role. For Burges, the goal of auto-estima is to reduce the developing world’s psychological dependence on the so-called “First World,” which he considers to be “a prerequisite for a people to maximize their own potential for their own purposes” (Burges 2005, 1150). Besides becoming a leader of developing countries in forums such as the World Trade Organization, Brazil has promoted groups such as IBSA (a dialogue forum consisting of Brazil, India and South Africa) and the G20+ (a group of emerging economies) in order to bolster its credentials as a leader of the global South and a serious player in world affairs as well as South American politics. In the long term, Brazil aspires to a seat on the United Nations Security Council, which it considers undemocratic and unrepresentative of the international system as it exists today (Handbook 2008). This would represent the culmination of Brazil’s efforts to become a world power equal to China and Russia and would confirm the world’s suspicions that Brazil’s long-awaited future is finally a reality. However, as discussed below, there are
significant obstacles standing in the way of this goal which stem in large part from a lack of strong Brazilian leadership in South America.

This paper will focus on the administrations of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to identify defining trends in Brazilian foreign policy. I find that despite the divergent political and personal perspectives of Lula and Cardoso, they had surprisingly similar foreign policy goals and pursued those goals using surprisingly similar means. These two leaders are significant not only because of the length and historical significance of both of their administrations but because of the considerable personal and political differences between the two leaders. Cardoso, a distinguished sociologist and longtime professor who represented the center-right Social Democratic Party of Brazil (PSDB), was the first Brazilian president to pursue a proactive foreign policy based on engagement and leadership on the world stage. Lula—a onetime factory worker, labor leader and dissident who rose to power as the leader of the avowedly socialist Workers’ Party (PT)—was generally seen as a very different politician from Cardoso. Despite both starting out in left-wing political activism, the two became fierce political rivals, with Lula challenging Cardoso for the presidency twice. Cardoso, who served as foreign minister and finance minister under his predecessor, Itamar Franco, was best known for his generally liberal fiscal policies and received the support of the country’s business elite. By contrast, Lula, who ran for president (for the fourth consecutive time) on a platform of change, was viewed as “the first individual not representing the country’s social economic elite” to become president (Montero 2005, 135), and many foreign investors were frightened by his election, fearing that he would repudiate Brazil’s debt and lead Brazil down the road to socialism (Williamson 2003, 106). As it turned out, Lula, though still positioning himself to the left of his predecessor (with a renewed focus on social programs targeted at the poorest Brazilians),
governed closer to the center than many of his allies and rivals had anticipated, resulting in a “mixture of modest social reform with a sustained commitment to fiscal probity and open markets” (Montero 2005, 146).

However, many analysts and scholars considered Lula’s foreign policy to be perhaps more faithful to his socialist roots than any other aspect of his presidency, pointing to his larger degree of engagement with other countries of the global South and his greater willingness to challenge American leadership. Voices like the American magazine Newsweek accused Lula of “cavorting with autocrats and dictators” (Margolis 2010), pointing to his positive relationships with anti-American leaders such as Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, while scholars pointed to Lula’s new emphasis on finding “strategic partners in the South in order to have more bargaining power in international negotiation” (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009, 96). Lula was elected on a platform of change, and by 2010 Lula’s foreign minister, Celso Amorim, could write that Lula had worked to “shape a new role for Brazil in the world” (Amorim 2010, 215). Yet their foreign policies had more common elements than this rhetoric might suggest. Both Lula and Cardoso, like generations of Brazilian leaders before them, conceived of Brazil’s role as that of a great power with an important voice in the world; both saw the post-Cold War environment and the establishment of democracy in Brazil as an opportunity to realize this role. Though politics shaped their approaches in differing ways, I argue that Lula’s presidency did not, in fact, represent a fundamental break with the past and that the historical weaknesses of Brazilian regional and global leadership continued to haunt Brazil during his administration. This view provides an explanation for how two leaders with such different worldviews could share so many elements of foreign policy. This paper contends that
Cardoso’s and Lula’s foreign policies represent longstanding patterns of thought and action that Brazil has failed to fully abandon.

This study is meant to contribute to existing literature on both Brazilian politics and international relations. Brazilian leaders continue to search for new ways to broaden Brazil’s power and influence, and this paper will contextualize present-day Brazilian foreign policy and suggest ways that policy might be adapted to fit Brazil’s aspirations. From an international relations perspective, the case of modern Brazil is significant in that it represents the struggles of emerging intermediate or middle powers. As mentioned above, many scholars have asserted that newly powerful states like Brazil are significant forces in the international system and represent a challenge to American global dominance. Many have argued that this constitutes a “power transition”, in which the dominant power in the international system, the U.S., is gradually declining as part of a transition to a multipolar world in which other states will equal the U.S. in power and influence (Gilley 2011, 245). Most scholars have accepted the idea that middle powers like Brazil are likely to attempt to maximize their power through a behavioral pattern known as “middlepowermanship”: “the tendency to pursue multilateral solutions to international problems…embrace compromise positions in international disputes, and…embrace notions of ‘good international citizenship’ to guide diplomacy” (Flemes 2009, 163). More recently, a distinction has been drawn between “traditional” middle powers (usually stable, wealthy countries like Australia and Canada) and “emerging” middle powers like South Africa and Brazil, with the latter more regionally focused and more likely to actively counter hegemonic powers (Prys 2012, 4). As shown below, Brazil’s focus on “South-South diplomacy” and its participation in South American integration projects are characteristic of an emerging middle power, part of a group of such powers (which certainly includes India and South Africa, and can
also be considered to include countries like Mexico, Nigeria and Indonesia) that are becoming more and more significant in international relations. Looking at how Brazil has dealt with its growing power provides potential lessons for other emerging middle powers, and it can help scholars to judge the prospects of these rising states.

**Argument and Methodology**

This paper begins with a brief overview of trends in the history of Brazilian foreign policy, including Brazil’s long history of great power ambitions as well as its complicated relationship with its South American neighbors and the United States. While this project is intended to focus on modern-day policy rather than provide a comprehensive historical analysis, a basic level of context is essential in order to evaluate the systemic strengths and weaknesses of Brazil’s foreign policy since democratization. As mentioned above, I argue that Brazil’s present-day foreign policy shares more with that of previous generations than is generally believed to be the case. Beginning with the 1900s, which most scholars generally consider to contain “the roots of contemporary Brazilian foreign policy” (Burges 2009, 18), this paper will trace Brazil’s foreign policy initiatives and actions in attempting to identify enduring themes. I will look at Brazilian leadership both at the executive level and in Brazil’s Ministry of External Affairs, commonly known as Itamaraty (after its former headquarters in Rio de Janeiro).

I then examine the similar aspects of Cardoso’s and Lula’s approaches to foreign policy. This aspect of the paper owes much to the work of Elaine Vilela and Pedro Neiva, whose 2011 study compares the discourse of Cardoso and Lula over the course of their administrations with a particular focus on foreign affairs. Vilela and Neiva used word counts and close reading to analyze over a thousand pages’ worth of public statements from Cardoso and Lula, finding noticeable rhetorical differences between the two leaders. For example, while Cardoso spoke
more frequently about democracy and emphasized relations with European powers, Lula was more concerned about inequality and equity in the international system and was more interested in Asia, the Middle East and especially Africa than Cardoso had been (Vilela and Neiva 2011a, 70). However, Vilela and Neiva also identify common threads in their rhetoric, including the centrality of economics in foreign policy, the emphasis given to relations within South America and a desire to maintain a “calculated distance” from the United States (Vilela and Neiva 2011a, 90). Using some of the sources analyzed by Vilela and Neiva, this paper traces the common themes in the rhetoric of Lula and Cardoso, attempting to prove that their rhetoric fits into the historical framework of Brazilian foreign policy. I also analyze the actions and outcomes of the Lula and Cardoso foreign policies. The period of their presidencies saw a movement toward greater engagement with the international community, and this paper will trace this engagement and examine the ways in which it echoes historical patterns of foreign policy in Brazil. Particular attention is given to Brazil’s role in South American integration through continued participation in Mercosul and the formation of Unasul, and I argue that Lula and Cardoso took highly similar approaches to regional engagement. I also look at Brazil’s global diplomatic initiatives, including its role in bodies like the World Trade Organization and in creating groups like IBSA. I conclude that Lula’s and Cardoso’s foreign policies contain many common elements and that historical trends account for the surprising similarities between two very different leaders.

Finally, this paper evaluates the course of Brazilian foreign policy and concludes that Brazil has been fundamentally unsuccessful in achieving its goal of becoming a true world power with global influence and interests. Initiatives such as IBSA, while constituting a step in this direction, have not gained as much influence in the international community as their creators had hoped. Despite Brazil’s growing economic clout, it has not become a powerful state on the order
of China or even India, and Brazil’s ultimate aspiration, a seat on the Security Council, which would formalize Brazil’s role as a regional hegemon and one of the anchors of the international order, seems like a distant dream. In South America, Brazil has proven unable to use integration initiatives such as Mercosul and Unasul to implement a vision of a unified, prosperous South America under Brazilian leadership, contributing to the slow growth of these organizations and allowing alternative models of the South American system put forward by leaders like Hugo Chávez to gain traction. I argue that these shortcomings stem from endemic weaknesses in Brazil’s approach to foreign affairs. Brazilian leaders view their country as the natural leader of South America and as an important player in a multipolar world order, but Brazil has not proven willing to sacrifice and invest in building a South American order. I argue that Brazil has failed to effectively lead groups like Mercosul, often sacrificing the long-term needs of South American integration in favor of short-term self-interest, and that this leadership vacuum has contributed to the relatively slow growth of integration and the rise of competing visions of the regional order. Brazil has also been hampered at the global level by its contested leadership role in its own region as well as the difficulties of converting its more active rhetoric and diplomacy into real progress on issues important to Brazil. This paper thus concludes that Brazil must take a stronger leadership role in South America in order to advance its goal of being recognized as a major player in international politics.

**Historical Trends in Brazilian Foreign Policy**

To understand contemporary Brazilian foreign policy it is necessary to have a basic understanding of the history of Brazil’s engagement with the rest of the world. Among the major themes of Brazil’s foreign policy, according to many scholars, is the country’s “quest for autonomy,” as stated in the title of a recent book on the subject (Vigevani and Cepaluni, 2007).
According to this interpretation, Brazil has an overall goal of increasing its capacity to act freely and without great power interference (given Brazil’s location and the character of the modern international system, such interference would be most likely to come from the U.S.), but it has pursued this objective using a variety of strategies. Brazil, historically, has tended toward caution in its foreign policy and has generally eschewed active means of pursuing its goals. Former president Cardoso once described pre-1985 foreign policy in Brazil as “an archaic position of non-participation and non-submission to international rules of coexistence elaborated by authoritarian rulers” (Rivarola Puntigliano 2008, 35). Burges’s (2009) survey divides the history of Brazil’s foreign policy in the 20th century into three periods based on general goals: “close approximation to the United States; a ‘quest for autonomy’; and finally the articulation of a regionally based, cooperatively independent foreign policy” (Burges 2009, 17).

Modern Brazilian foreign policy and “the early development of a South American subsystem” (Teixeira 2012, 55) begins with the 1900s and the Baron of Rio Branco, Brazil’s best-known foreign minister, who served in that role from 1902 until 1912. Rio Branco is today considered something of a national hero for his consolidation of Brazil’s borders and for his role as the first policymaker to define a true grand strategy for Brazil. As discussed in greater detail below, even at this stage many Brazilians, particularly those in positions of power, had grandiose visions of their country’s potential and foresaw a much more prosperous and powerful future for Brazil. However, Rio Branco recognized that despite this potential the country was still vulnerable to the machinations of European empires. Rio Branco fatefuly decided that the best solution for Brazil was a policy of diplomatic alignment with the United States. Brazilian support for the Monroe Doctrine and for U.S. initiatives in the Americas facilitated a movement from mutual suspicion to friendship between Brazil and the U.S. (Burns 1966, 89). Rio Branco
believed that becoming a loyal ally of the U.S. would allow his country to be a leader in the South American region. The United States, lacking the capacity to enforce its will throughout South America, would turn to its ally as a regional interlocutor, strengthening Brazilian power with respect to its neighbors and allowing Brazil to play a preeminent role (Burges 2009, 19). By accepting American hegemony in North and Central America, Rio Branco hoped that the U.S. would “respect Brazilian pretensions of having its own sphere of influence in South America” (Teixeira 2012, 61). South America generally has been of “only limited strategic value to Washington,” and Brazilian foreign policy sought to take advantage of an absent empire in order to create a Brazilian national space (Soares de Lima and Hirst 2006, 22). This logic led Brazil for decades to maintain its status as a strong U.S. ally “even if at times [this friendship] was not reciprocated by the North American country” (Teixeira 2012, 64).

One of the major themes in the history is that Brazilian political leaders since Rio Branco have tended to view Brazil as a nation with unfulfilled potential and have endeavored to achieve what they see as Brazil’s rightful standing in world affairs. Brazil’s enormous size, its formidable natural resource base and its geographical position bridging the disparate regions of South America—the Andes, the Amazon, the La Plata region—naturally make it a “linchpin” in South American geopolitics, a fact long recognized by Brazilian policymakers (Teixeira 2012, 35). Maria Regina Soares de Lima and Mônica Hirst write that “since the early years of the twentieth century Brazil’s major foreign policy aspiration has been to achieve international recognition in accordance with its belief that it should assume its ‘natural role’ as a ‘big country’ in world affairs” (Soares de Lima and Hirst 2006, 21). Besides Rio Branco’s significant expansion of Itamaraty and his greater engagement with international conferences and organizations, his approach to dealing with the United States indicated a desire to develop a Brazilian “national
space” (Lafer 2000, 215). As mentioned above, Brazilian alignment with the United States was meant to give Brazil a somewhat freer hand in South America. Brazil would support American preeminence in its own sphere in the hope that the U.S. would reciprocate by granting Brazil a sort of viceregal role in the South American region, helping to thwart rival claims to continental hegemony from neighbors like Argentina and Chile.

The “lift[ing of Brazil’s] former limited diplomatic vision” (Burns 1993, 284) and desire for national greatness would continue to manifest itself in the decades following Rio Branco’s tenure. Brazil’s contribution during World War I, for example, was clearly meant to increase Brazil’s prestige (Burns 1993, 304). Following the war, Brazil sent a delegate to the peace negotiations at Versailles and unsuccessfully lobbied for a permanent seat on the Council of the nascent League of Nations. It would ultimately withdraw from the League, believing that “it would be more honorable to play no role at all than to play an insignificant one” (Burns 1993, 306). This desire for prestige also drove dictator Getúlio Vargas to send a division to participate in the liberation of Italy during World War II. Brazil’s participation in the war, besides contributing to national pride, symbolized Brazil’s importance in Latin America as the region’s only active belligerent, and it was hoped that this would translate into a leadership role in the postwar order (Burns 1993, 359). Brazil was active in the creation of the United Nations and again lobbied for a prominent role, this time as a permanent member of the Security Council. However, Brazil was again disappointed; it was awarded the rather meaningless consolation prize of delivering the opening speech at the General Assembly each year instead of the powerful role it coveted (Burges 2009, 21).

Burges’s second phase coincided with the Cold War, in which the U.S., preoccupied with problems elsewhere in the world as a hegemonic power, turned to “benign neglect” (Burges
Beginning with the advent of the so-called Second Republic (1945-64) and continuing through the military dictatorship (1964-85), Brazil came to focus on its own economic development in the pursuit of independence and autonomy from the great powers. Particularly during the military era Brazil focused on promoting its own internal development and on strengthening its own defenses, culminating in an arms race with Argentina during the 1970s. To be sure, Brazil did align itself with the United States as well as its neighbors on internal security issues, but as Teixeira (2012) points out, this resulted from the convergent interests of the U.S. and Brazil in combating communism and maintaining stability. Brazil took the side of capitalism in the Cold War, but it was not subordinate to the United States. The later period of dictatorship saw the “active destruction of the special relationship between Brasilia and Washington” through the cancellation of the two countries’ long-standing military collaboration agreement in 1977 (due to pressure from the Carter Administration on human rights) and Brazil’s refusal of U.S. demands to end its pursuit of nuclear weapons (Burges 2009, 27).  

By 1980 relations with Argentina began to thaw as cooler heads prevailed in both countries. At the same time, the bilateral economic relationship between Argentina and Brazil became more and more important to both. By the time democracy was restored, both governments had begun to recognize the weaknesses of their protectionist policies. In 1986 Brazil and Argentina inaugurated the Program of Economic Integration and Cooperation (PICE), a framework to govern the bilateral relationship between the two countries (Burges 2009, 29). Thus, as the military government ended, Brazil began pursuing the goal of a closer relationship with its strongest neighbor, paving the way for a Common Market of the South and Burges’s third phase, which he views as less narrow and more regionally based.
The military dictatorship led to an increase in Brazilian triumphalism. Military leaders promoted what was known as “National Security Doctrine,” which stressed the concept of international anarchy and contended that increasing Brazil’s power was vital to national security. As one leading strategist wrote, “Brazil at present has only one choice: to become great or perish” (Hepple 1986, S82). The pursuit of a “Greater Brazil” led to an increased focus on both anticommunism within South America and autonomous worldwide engagement with other developing countries, particularly Portuguese-speaking ones (Brands 2010, 7). However, this did not translate to the building of strong ties with neighbors, at least in the early years of military rule. Brazilian policymakers during the military era were almost exclusively interested in the pursuit of great power status rather than creating strong relationships with neighboring countries. The quest for autonomy during the military regime was focused on developing Brazil itself and not necessarily Latin America as a whole. It was at this time that foreign observers began to comment on Brazil’s potential. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was heard to predict that “in 50 years Brazil should have achieved world power status” (Brands 2010, 7). Brazil’s military leaders agreed with Kissinger. As one high-ranking officer put it, “we possess all the conditions that enable us to aspire to a place among the world’s great powers” (Brands 2010, 6). Thus, by the end of the dictatorship, an idea of Brazilian exceptionalism and Brazilian destiny had already become engrained in the country’s political culture.

At the same time, however, this ideal of Brazilian leadership over South America has not necessarily meant that Brazil has acted as a leader. It is certainly the case that Brazil has tended to focus on diplomatic solutions to regional problems, the rivalry with Argentina notwithstanding. Rio Branco’s greatest achievement, the consolidation of the national borders, was achieved through separate negotiations with Colombia, France, Great Britain, Peru, Bolivia
and Argentina (Burns 1993, 279). Rio Branco also sought to strengthen regional diplomatic ties, inaugurating diplomatic missions in nine regional capitals. Since then, despite Brazil’s self-image as a leader, it has been surprisingly reluctant to translate this idea into actual leadership status. “Brazilian diplomatic discourse has long been marked by consistent efforts to avoid suggestions that the country is seeking a leadership role…In effect, official Itamaraty discourse came to equate leadership with notions of coercive domination, making the status of ‘leader’ something that Brazil would not officially seek” (Burges 2006, 23). Burges argues that this resulted from a very real concern about the consequences of perceived Brazilian imperialism based on Latin America’s colonial past. Brazil, then and now, is a linguistic and cultural outlier in South America—to say nothing of the threat posed by its size—and Rio Branco was concerned about the possibility of a political and/or military coalition of South American nations that would launch a coordinated attack on Brazil. In any event, Brazil has focused on diplomatic initiatives rather than the threat or use of force in its diplomacy. Engagement with Latin America prior to 1985 through institutions such as the Latin American Free Trade Association (a proposed equivalent to Mercosul) tended to focus on multilateral engagement and eschewed coercive solutions (Cason 2011, 34).

Nevertheless, as others have noted, “Brazil’s regional rivalry with Argentina and its condescending attitude towards its neighbors prevented it from establishing a strong power base within its home continent (and these two factors continue to loom as obstacles to Brazilian strategy today)” (Brands 2010, 7). Rio Branco’s policies, while prioritizing diplomatic engagement, were also clearly aimed at increasing Brazilian power at the expense of Argentina and Chile. Rio Branco’s immediate successor at Itamaraty, Lauro Müller, continued this policy through his thwarting of a non-Brazilian proposal for an alliance between Argentina, Brazil and
Chile, fearing that this would strengthen Brazil’s rivals at its own expense (Burges 2009, 20). Meanwhile, taking the lead from the great powers of Europe, Brazil had entered into a naval arms race with Argentina that neither country could afford, setting the tone for the next several decades (Burns 1993, 297). It is true that after Rio Branco’s tenure Brazil can be considered “geopolitically satisfied,” having resolved its outstanding territorial disputes with its neighbors (Soares de Lima and Hirst 2006, 22), but at the same time there was a highly self-centered element to Brazilian foreign policy. Like many of its neighbors, it adapted the economic doctrine of import-substitution industrialization (ISI)\textsuperscript{14} in the 1930s, which “move[d] Brazil in a more nationalist direction” (Cason 2011, 32). This was particularly true during the military dictatorship, when, as discussed above, policymakers renewed their focus on expanding Brazil’s national space, which neighbors like Argentina and Bolivia found “threatening and expansionistic” (Hepple 1986, S80). Initiatives such as the Transamazon Highway, meant to deter Peruvian and Venezuelan incursions into resource-rich but sparsely populated Brazilian rainforest, were concerning to neighboring countries (Skidmore 1988, 146). The most dramatic aspect of the military dictatorship from a foreign policy standpoint was Brazil’s nuclear arms race with Argentina; despite a lack of territorial disputes (as in the case of India and Pakistan, for example) or a military threat from either superpower, both states feverishly pursued nuclear weapons (Skidmore 1988, 193). The détente between the two rivals beginning in the late 1970s, as well as both countries’ transitions to democracy, ended their pursuit of nuclear weapons. However, the arms race demonstrates that despite Brazil’s focus on diplomacy and multilateralism its relationships with neighboring countries have not been wholly positive.

\textit{Cardoso and Lula}
Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the two men who presided over some of the most consequential years in Brazil’s history, took differing approaches to improving domestic conditions in Brazil, in keeping with their distinct political views. On foreign policy, too, Cardoso and Lula approached international issues from conflicting ideological standpoints. Yet, in the final analysis, foreign policy under Lula, despite some shift in rhetorical focus, did not represent a major shift from that of Cardoso. After briefly outlining why Cardoso and Lula would be expected to differ politically, I will explore the similarities between the rhetoric and reality of their foreign policies.¹⁵

Fernando Henrique Cardoso grew up in Rio de Janeiro as the son and grandson of generals. As he said later, “I was born on a catapult to power” (Goertzel 1999, 1). Instead of becoming a soldier, he became a sociologist. Cardoso was briefly forced into exile after the military coup due to his reputation as a democrat. Returning to Brazil, Cardoso became involved with the democratic opposition during the later years of military rule as a political organizer, eventually becoming a senator.¹⁶ Cardoso would serve in the cabinet of President Itamar Franco as foreign minister and finance minister, gaining notoriety for his efforts to curb Brazil’s runaway inflation, before winning the presidency. In his early career Cardoso was a socialist, but his views shifted away from the left over time. Ultimately Cardoso became an advocate for the acceptance of globalization and integration into the world economy. Though he still described himself as a social democrat, he favored more neoliberal policies such as privatization and control of government spending. By the time of his election, Cardoso, backed by business interests, had become the candidate of the center-right.

Lula could hardly have differed more from his predecessor. In contrast to the sometimes “stiff and formal” Cardoso (Goertzel 1999, 113), Lula was known as a highly charismatic
politician. Where Cardoso’s roots were upper-middle class, Lula was born into an impoverished broken home. With little formal education, Lula became a factory worker in São Paulo, Brazil’s largest city. He was soon recruited into the labor movement and became president of the metalworkers’ union, bringing workers into conflict with the military regime in the struggle for their rights. After spending 30 days in prison, Lula and some of his colleagues formed the Workers’ Party (PT), splitting from Cardoso and other more moderate activists. After a brief congressional career Lula aimed for the presidency in 1989. He was defeated in that election and the following two elections before finally winning in 2002. By this time, Lula had become a symbol of the struggle for workers’ rights and of the Brazilian left. He was a considerably more ideological figure than Cardoso. The PT did not focus on the issue of hyperinflation because “it did not fit into their ideological framework,” and in general Lula was seen as unapologetically leftist (Goertzel 2011, 25). However, by the time of the 2002 election, Lula’s thinking appears to have changed somewhat as the PT crafted a new image to appeal to the Brazilian center.17 His campaign’s “Letter to the Brazilian People,” despite promising change, assured the business community that Lula would carry on Cardoso’s fiscal conservatism to some extent. Nevertheless, foreign investors and Brazilian businessmen were apprehensive about a Lula presidency, since Lula was elected on the promise of fundamentally changing the status quo that Cardoso represented.

Lula believed that this change ought to extend to foreign policy as well as domestic affairs, and he stressed this theme in his first inaugural address: “Our foreign policy shall also reflect the desire for change expressed by the ordinary people in the street. In my government, Brazilian diplomatic efforts will be guided by a humanistic perspective and will be used, above all, as an instrument for national development” (Handbook 2008). To this end, Lula intensified a
trend that had actually begun under Cardoso: the transition of Itamaraty from a non-political organization run exclusively by professional diplomats—a tradition begun under Rio Branco—to an organization with greater presidential involvement and a larger political role (Cason and Power 2006, 1-2). Lula pursued a more hands-on foreign policy than his predecessors, traveling abroad more frequently than any previous Brazilian president. He also gave political actors a larger role in the policymaking process as the PT became a powerful voice within Lula’s administration. As a result, it has been argued, Lula’s foreign policy was considerably more ideological than Cardoso’s. Brazil’s opposition to a U.S.-backed proposal for a Free Trade Area of the Americas (Amorim 2010, 217) and its more active role in institutions like the World Trade Organization, where previously “all crucial decisions were sorted out by a small group of countries” (Amorim 2010, 219), are considered to be departures from the Cardoso era. Then, too, Lula tended toward a rhetorical focus on social justice and on combating inequality, in keeping with his leftist roots. A comparison of presidential rhetoric found that while democracy and human rights were mentioned more by Cardoso than inequality, the relative positions of the two concepts were reversed almost as soon as Lula succeeded Cardoso (Vilela and Neiva 2011a, 83). According to this argument, Lula shifted Brazil into a stronger leadership position and into a role that more directly challenged the United States.

However, this analysis misses the considerable overlap between the Lula and Cardoso foreign policies. Despite his focus on democracy, Cardoso’s rhetoric did often stress the problem of inequality. His first inaugural address in 1995 made this point clear: “I believe that Brazil will be one of the most successful countries of the next century. I am convinced that the only obstacles that stand in our way are the problems of inequality between our regions and our social groups” (Cardoso 2001, 231). Cardoso would make this point again the same year in a speech
before the United Nations General Assembly: “This is a forum in which we should, within the complex context of globalization, work to overcome a persistent situation of social and economic inequalities giving rise to hopelessness and a feeling of exclusion. The goal of sustainable development must not be abandoned” (Vilela and Neiva 2011b). This aspiration manifested itself to some extent in Cardoso’s domestic policies; though his central priority was getting Brazil’s fiscal house in order, Cardoso also attempted to reform and expand the country’s social safety net and health care system (Montero 2005, 78-82). As he told a magazine near the end of his presidency, “What we want for the society of nations is what we seek to build for ourselves. Challenges overcome by the people of Brazil in recent years teach us that, yes, it is possible to overcome the tragedies of inequality. Yes, you can have both justice and prosperity. We are doing this in Brazil. Nothing condemns us to a world divided between rich and poor, split by resentment and despair” (Vilela and Neiva 2011b). Cardoso also appears to have had some interest in building relationships among the “global South,” though this was a more explicit goal during Lula’s administration. His inaugural address expressed a desire to build relationships with China, Russia and India, countries “faced with problems similar to our own” (Cardoso 2001, 231), and the relationship with China in particular took on greater importance during Cardoso’s presidency; China became Brazil’s number-two trading partner (after the U.S.) in 2002, and Cardoso received Chinese President Jiang Zemin twice in Brasilia as well as visiting China himself (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009, 74). Engagement with emerging economies was as vital under Cardoso as it was under Lula.

By the same token, Lula’s rhetoric differed less from that of Cardoso than his talk of “change” would imply. Lula’s inaugural criticized developed countries using a theme Cardoso had also frequently evoked: the need for true free trade, rather than free trade for only some.
“Brazil will combat protectionism, will fight for its elimination and attempt to obtain fairer rules appropriate to our status as developing country. We will seek to eliminate the outrageous agricultural subsidies in developed countries that harm our producers, depriving them of their comparative advantages” (Vilela and Neiva 2011c). Lula would reiterate this theme three years later at the summit of G8 advanced economies, at which he was an invited guest: “Poor countries do not need favors. They need equitable conditions to fully benefit from their comparative advantages” (Vilela and Neiva 2011c). In addition to national and global development, Lula also frequently spoke of democracy and human rights as central goals for Brazil, a priority shared by Cardoso. These rhetorical commonalities reflect a surprisingly moderate approach to economic policy by the Lula administration, seemingly at odds with the ideological rhetoric of years past. Cardoso would eventually go so far as to ask one interviewer: “What is the difference between my government and the Lula government? We have differences, but not in terms of liberalism” (Burges 2009, 159).

Besides the rhetorical similarities between Lula and Cardoso, both took similar approaches to the major issues confronting Brazil. Though the Free Trade Area of the Americas talks collapsed under Lula, who was never particularly interested in pursuing an FTAA—before taking office he had described the U.S. proposal as “amounting to a de facto U.S. annexation of Latin America” (Williamson 2003, 108)—Cardoso had also expressed skepticism toward the idea based upon a concern that an FTAA based on an American model—“simple accession to NAFTA” for all of Latin America (Burges 2009, 51)—would not be in Brazil’s best interests. Upon taking office “the administration decided to put off the FTAA for as long as possible” (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009, 64), and Itamaraty began to use the Rio Group, a political organization seen as an alternative to the Organization of American States, as a means of
organizing a common Latin American position in FTAA negotiations (Burges 2009, 52). Over time Brazil became the leader in the Latin American side of the talks and, through bargaining, fostered a degree of unity over the Rio Group objections to the American proposal (Burges 2009, 55-6). Cardoso, like Lula, worked to prevent Brazil’s interests from being subsumed by American pressure as well as attempting to advance Brazil’s leadership goals. In securing a role as the lead Latin American negotiator, the Cardoso administration attempted to “consolidate its position in [the South American] regional subsystem” (Teixeira 2012, 141).

On a global level, too, many of the major initiatives of Lula’s Brazil, such as the creation of the G20+ and the IBSA dialogue forum, were preceded by Cardoso’s outreach to other emerging nations, though Lula did make such relationships a higher priority (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2009, 74). During his days as a left-leaning academic Cardoso became known for his work on dependency theory, a concept that assumes a sharp division between the world’s “haves” and its “have-nots,” and even as president he pushed for international economic institutions to more adequately represent the interests of the global South (Burges 2005, 1134).

Finally, Cardoso and Lula approached Mercosul in a similar manner. Both saw South American integration as the central priority in Brazilian foreign policy, but neither effectively fulfilled Brazil’s leadership potential in the region. The details of this are discussed in the following section, but in comparing rhetoric and action it can be concluded that Cardoso’s and Lula’s foreign policies were surprisingly similar despite their obvious philosophical differences. This, I argue, is representative of the larger historical trends discussed earlier in this paper. (For a summary of the similarities and differences between the two administrations on some of these issues, see Figure 2).

Brazíl’s Leadership Problem
Brazil, despite its considerable progress since 1985, has not achieved the powerful status in world affairs that Rio Branco and Brazilian leaders since have anticipated and worked toward. A prime indicator of this is the fact that despite its long-standing interest in a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council Brazil is no closer to this rank than it was in 1945. Moreover, the U.S. government under President Barack Obama, despite endorsing the Security Council bid of fellow BRIC India, has withheld support for a Brazilian permanent seat.

According to some analysts, this stems from the fact that Brazil “is not a nuclear power and is unwilling to share the burden of leadership” (Neves 2012). However, others point to opposition to Brazil’s candidacy from other regional powers such as Argentina and Colombia (Brands 2012, 37). This point seems particularly crucial in explaining Brazil’s difficulties in achieving its goals. Brazil’s relative lack of military strength compared to many great powers (despite increases in military spending under Lula) is worth noting but understandable considering its lack of serious security threats in its own region and the fact that competing with the United States would be a futile course of action (Brands 2010, 16). Additionally, as noted above, Brazil has been active in peacekeeping operations in an effort to “further its power and influence” (Sánchez Nieto 2012, 162), and historically “Brazilian officials do not perceive grand strategy primarily in hard-power terms” (Brands 2010, 16). Rather, it is the fact that Brazil cannot convince its neighbors of its trustworthiness as a representative of South America at the international level, despite its desire for South American leadership, which continues to hamper Brazil. At the heart of this is Brazil’s role in the process of South American integration, an undertaking many on the continent have hoped for since the days of Simón Bólivar and which has gained new life through the institutions of Mercosul and later Unasul. As this section will demonstrate, however, a lack of Brazilian leadership in these institutions, combined with the popularity of alternative visions for South
America, has hampered Brazil’s ability to truly “lead” South America, causing its international standing to suffer as a result.

The Common Market of the South, formed in 1991 by the Treaty of Asunción, has the stated goal of “reduc[ing] all tariffs among the signatories and set[ting] common external tariffs for most goods imported into the common market” (Montero 2005, 124). Besides Brazil, the founding members of Mercosul included Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay; since then Venezuela and Bolivia have joined as well (“Quienes Somos”). By 2005, Mercosul had become the world’s third-largest trading bloc, exceeded only by the North American Free Trade Agreement and the European Union (Montero 2005, 124) (though by 2011 it had been surpassed by the Association of South East Asian Nations) (Klonsky et al 2012). Brazil was and is Mercosul’s most important economy by a considerable margin. In 2011, Brazil accounted for around eighty percent of Mercosul’s combined gross domestic product, and this share decreased only slightly after oil-rich Venezuela’s admission (see Figure 1). Brazil was thus expected to play a correspondingly large role in Mercosul. Despite its suspicions about hemispheric integration (i.e. the FTAA), Itamaraty was broadly supportive of the idea of regional integration (Cason 2011, 52), though business and labor were generally more skeptical (Cason 2011, 55-7). Mercosul was also meant to consolidate democracy in Argentina and Brazil, by far its largest economies at its founding (Cason 2000, 24).

Mercosul achieved a number of early successes. General economic growth in the early 1990s allowed for the deepening of the integration process (Cason 2011, 67). The result was the Protocol of Ouro Preto, signed in 1994, which created a customs union earlier than most observers believed possible (Cason 2011, 68). At the same time, trade between Argentina and Brazil had sharply increased and would continue to do so throughout the 1990s (Cason 2011,
75). The Protocol of Ouro Preto created the framework for deeper integration, as well as creating a legal basis for Mercosul to deal officially with other countries and groups (Cason 2011, 81). Soon Mercosul signed its first two agreements with other institutions as a group, contributing to the deepening of the integration process (Valls Pereira 1999, 15). Brazil also not only consolidated its own democracy but aided in the consolidation of others. Its response to Paraguay’s political crisis of 1996 was instrumental in preventing a military coup (Genna and Hiroi 2007, 55). By 2000, Cardoso was able to tell a group of newly minted Brazilian diplomats that “[Mercosul] has become possible because of democracy and openness… We gained momentum with the stability of the Brazilian currency, just as fears grew when we had difficulties with our currency, and Brazil’s ability to resume economic growth has helped Mercosul grow. It withstood the financial crisis and emerged from it stronger than ever before” (Vilela and Neiva 2011b).

Nevertheless, tensions were already beginning to develop within Mercosul, and these tensions contributed to the organization’s “torturous” growth after 1995 (Montero 2005, 124). By 2012 former Uruguayan president Jorge Batlle could openly claim that “we have to face reality: [Mercosul] has failed” (“Three former presidents” 2012). Nearly twenty years after Ouro Preto, despite the very real achievement of a customs union, Mercosul had still not taken real steps toward a common market that would allow for benefits such as the free circulation of workers (Cason 2011, 110). Mercosul has broadened in the number of countries involved, but integration has not deepened as has occurred in the European Union since the signing of the Maastricht Treaty.25 Mercosul’s weakness was thrown into sharp relief by the 2008-2009 financial crisis, during which trade between Argentina and Brazil decreased sharply. At Mercosul’s annual summit in late 2009, Argentine president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner declared that the crisis
“made clear everything that [Mercosul] could not achieve or construct.” Lula, meanwhile, left the summit meeting without having lunch with his fellow leaders (Cason 2011, 114). As the above anecdote demonstrates, some of this failure can be attributed to the large impact of external and internal economic crises on Mercosul. The East Asian crisis of 1997, the devaluation of the Brazilian real in 1999 and the Argentine economic crisis of 2000-2001 all weakened Mercosul at a critical juncture (Bouzas et al 2002, 17-9). But Mercosul’s main difficulties have stemmed from internal tension, and much of this has been caused by a lack of Brazilian leadership. As in the past, Brazil has been unable to act effectively as a leader.

Brazil’s wholehearted support of Mercosul is critical to the bloc’s success because of Brazil’s outsize economic position within Mercosul. “The progress and stagnation of Mercosul were intricately linked to Brazil’s capacity to play a leadership role” (Genna and Hiroi 2007, 55). The defusing of an attempted military coup in Paraguay in 1996 represents an example of positive Brazilian leadership (and is in keeping with Cardoso’s strong interest in the consolidation of South American democracies), but Brazil generally has not acted as the strong leader that a country representing three-quarters of the Mercosul economy must be. Probably the most damning aspect of Brazil’s leadership in Mercosul is Brazil’s consistent opposition to “any sort of supranational institutions that might help sustain [Mercosul]” (Cason 2011, 63). The Protocol of Ouro Preto did in fact create some common Mercosul institutions such as the Mercosul Secretariat, but these were strictly intergovernmental. Brazil refused to accept the idea of Mercosul institutions that operated above the national government apparatus (in the manner of the European Commission) and impinged on national sovereignty (Cason 2011, 84). In fact, a Mercosul Parliament (or Parlasul) was eventually created in 2006 after a long period of negotiation. Its powers are purely consultative and, in practice, extremely limited compared to
the European Parliament upon which Parlasul was partially based (mostly amounting to the likes of “organiz[ing] public meetings” and suggesting possible laws to national parliaments) (Dri 2010, 69). Besides the question of political integration, the lack of any powerful Mercosul institutions complicates efforts to implement common economic policy, creating a “Harlequinesque mixture of normative inflation, implementation gaps and ineffective integration mechanisms” (Malamud 2005, 428). This unwillingness to surrender any but the most minimal amount of national sovereignty places a clear ceiling on the extent to which Mercosul can develop into an entity with meaningful political power. Smaller powers like Uruguay might favor supranational institutions, but Brazil “continues to prefer ad hoc resolution of disputes, and its major tendency is to shoot first and ask questions later” (Cason 2011, 113), making future deepening uncertain at best. Despite Brazil’s rhetorical support for South American integration, its opposition to supranational institutions represents a lack of willingness to sacrifice on behalf of its vision for South America.

Brazil has made other such decisions over the years. Unilateral actions such as the 1997 Brazilian decision to require cash payments for imports were seen by other Mercosul states as “yet another example of Brazilian arrogance and hegemony” (Cason 2011, 97), and economic actions like the 1999 devaluation of the Brazilian real, aimed at stabilizing the Brazilian economy, have had adverse impacts on other Mercosul member states (Cason 2011, 100). Brazilian leaders have also consistently refused to alleviate other Mercosul nations’ trade deficits with Brazil, caused by the massive imbalance between Brazil and the rest of Mercosul. Calls for “greater power sharing and a more equitable distribution of economic gains” have been rejected for fear that measures to aid other Mercosul economies will compromise Brazil’s economic advantage. Brazilian elites “have shown little interest in schemes that would divert Brazilian
resources to fostering the development of neighboring countries” (Brands 2010, 39-40). Though Lula did attempt to aid Paraguay, the poorest Mercosul country, by giving it a greater share of proceeds from the Itaipu Dam (shared by both countries), the measure failed in the Brazilian Senate, and in general convergence has taken a back seat as Brazilian diplomats favor a “parochial commitment to Brazilian self-interest” (Brands 2010, 40). As Argentine President Nestor Kirchner reportedly said in 2005 after a particularly frustrating summit, Brazil has not been willing to “shoulder the costs of leading” (Brands 2010, 41).

It remains to be seen what effect this leadership problem will have on Unasul, formed in 2008 as part of a planned gradual convergence between Mercosul and the Andean Community to create a “South American space” (Kašpar 2011, 31). Brazil has conceived of Unasul as a political project, but the organization has had little impact thus far (Varas 2008, 2). Despite calling for a few institutions like the South American Parliament (which has yet to become operational), Unasul is primarily conceived as a means of integrating existing institutions like Mercosul (Kašpar 2011, 32), whose weaknesses I have described previously. As with Mercosul, Brazil has opposed the development of EU-style supranational institutions, conceiving of Unasul primarily as an intergovernmental and specifically interpresidential forum, placing a ceiling on its potential influence. Perhaps for this reason, “apart from the political meetings at different levels, no activity is visible under [Unasul]” (Kašpar 2011, 64). Like Mercosul, Unasul’s power is limited in large part by a lack of Brazilian leadership.

It is hardly surprising, then, that challenges to Brazilian preeminence in the South American regional system have emerged. The most prominent of these has come from Venezuela and its left-wing populist former president, Hugo Chávez. 26 A comprehensive analysis of Venezuelan foreign policy under Chávez is beyond the scope of this paper, but whereas Brazil’s
efforts at hegemony tend to have an underlying motive of economic gain, Venezuela’s efforts are more ideological, reflecting the country’s political opposition to the U.S. (Burges 2007, 1344). During his administration, Chávez attempted to align globally with countries sharing his antipathy toward the U.S. and global capitalism, and regionally his vision of South American cooperation focused on promotion of “Bolivarian socialism.” More broadly, this is a sort of “counter-hegemonic project” reflecting “an ambition dating from the 1970s to lead Latin America” (Burges 2007, 1346).

Venezuela’s major effort toward this end has been the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), a regional organization consisting of eight South American, Central American and Caribbean nations. A direct response to the proposed FTAA, ALBA (the Spanish word for “dawn”) focuses on regional solidarity and opposition to dependence on the global economy, undoubtedly financed by Venezuela’s massive oil wealth. ALBA’s most significant projects to date have been Petrocaribe, a means of facilitating oil trade between member states, and the Unified System for Regional Compensation (SUCRE), a proposed new currency meant to decrease the region’s dependence on the U.S. dollar (Kašpar 2011, 28). Venezuela has also proven an active player in other regional institutions such as Unasul and Mercosul, placing a higher priority on the political agendas of those institutions (not to mention its outsize role in the dissolution of FTAA negotiations), and Venezuelan development aid within South America has increased, which Chávez used to support ideological allies (like Bolivian president Evo Morales) and promote the development of regional infrastructure (Burges 2007, 1348). Notably, despite the larger size of its economy and the leadership role it has articulated, “Brazil still offers much less in the way of economic aid or preferential trade deals than does Venezuela” (Brands 2010, 39). Brazil ultimately took on a somewhat confrontational policy
toward Venezuela’s ambitions, working to marginalize its representatives at diplomatic engagements and joining Chávez’s Bank of the South “with a fairly clear agenda of blocking the Bolivarian ambitions floated for the institution” (Burges 2007, 1355).

The persistence of the Venezuelan “alternative” speaks to Chávez’s ideological predilections and Venezuelan wealth, but it also indicates Brazil’s inability to conceptualize and implement a vision of Latin American integration which is acceptable to other Latin American countries. The failure of Brazilian leadership and concerns about U.S. power make organizations like ALBA more appealing to Latin American leaders, undermining Brazil’s goal of acting as a regional hegemon and playing this role on the world stage. Differing visions of regional integration put forward by other leaders, such as the Organization of Latin American States proposed by President Rafael Correa of Ecuador (an ideological ally of Chávez) (Varas 2008, 2) reinforces the vacuum of indigenous leadership in South America. Notwithstanding the engrained conception of Brazil’s leadership role of South America, Brazil has thus far proven unequal to the task of translating this idea into reality.

Conclusions

Despite considerable rhetoric from scholars and politicians alike regarding change in Brazilian foreign policy, there has been a surprising amount of continuity since the days of Rio Branco. Historically, Brazil has considered regional leadership and great power status its goal and its destiny, given its dominant position in South America and the size of its population, land area and natural resource base. In recent years, enjoying its first-ever period of stable democracy and consistent economic growth, Brazil has more actively sought to realize its ambitions through diplomatic action both regionally and worldwide, particularly through international institutions. However, Brazil has been unable to cement its regional leadership position, which has hindered
it at the global level. Despite a rhetorical commitment to the project of regional integration, it has opposed steps toward truly meaningful political and economic integration, making its foreign policy actions inconsistent with its stated vision for South America. This has led to a vacuum of regional leadership, creating space for organizations like ALBA, which offers a very different vision for what an integrated South America should look like. As I have attempted to prove, this trend has proven consistent under presidents of differing ideological stripes and with very different ideas of what foreign policy should look like. Despite the political differences between Cardoso and Lula, and despite a growing trend toward presidential control of foreign policy in Brazil (Cason and Power 2006, 1), these leadership problems continued under both administrations, and Brazil’s foreign policy orientation did not drastically change. Brazil has generally been unwilling to make the sacrifices required of a regional leader, and this has undermined its credibility as a great power. Without a South America supportive of its leadership, the prospect of Brazil being recognized as the equal of powers like China appears uncertain at best.

What changes would lead to a stronger Brazilian foreign policy? A deeper form of integration for South America has thus far been stymied by Brazil’s lack of interest in either political or economic deepening, and I would argue that a shift in this policy could benefit Brazil by creating a stronger South America in which Brazilian preeminence is recognized. Brazilian policymakers might draw upon the example of Germany, which has maintained its commitment to European integration despite short-term financial costs; like Germany, Brazil must recognize that integration is in its long-term interest. Stronger integration would also align with the theoretical underpinnings of Brazilian foreign policy, particularly under Lula and Dilma Rousseff, his successor and protégé (president since 2011). In the long term, Brazil is interested
in an international order more focused on multilateralism in which intermediate powers like itself can play a larger role. Lula’s rhetoric in particular stressed the idea of *auto-estima*, or self-reliance, which psychologically reduces the dependence of the global South on developed countries (the idea has been compared to the work of anti-colonial philosopher Frantz Fanon) (Burges 2005, 1134-5); this is the basis for initiatives like the G20+ and IBSA, and it also underlies regional institutions in the developing world like Mercosul and Unasul. Creating a stronger South America would contribute to Brazil’s overall goal of increasing its national autonomy and decreasing its economic and psychological dependence on the U.S., and it would allow Brazil to more convincingly act as a representative of South American interests in the international community.
Appendix

Figure 1: Gross Domestic Products of Mercosul Member States, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country name</th>
<th>2011 GDP (in millions of U.S. dollars)</th>
<th>Percentage of Mercosul total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>445989</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2476652</td>
<td>83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>23877</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>46710</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2973228</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 2: Comparison of the Cardoso and Lula Administrations on Foreign Policy Issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy areas</th>
<th>Fernando Henrique Cardoso</th>
<th>Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trade policy</strong></td>
<td>Skepticism toward Free Trade Area of the Americas; major role in Latin American side of negotiations</td>
<td>Continued concern about Free Trade Area of the Americas; talks eventually lapse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South-South policy</strong></td>
<td>Attempts to build closer ties with global South; some success with China, little with other countries; greater focus on building relationships with the U.S. and European Union</td>
<td>More successful in building closer South-South ties; IBSA, G20+, etc. represent examples, China becomes Brazil’s largest trading partner; greater interest in the Middle East and Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democracy assistance/human rights</strong></td>
<td>High priority for administration; Mercosul founded in part to consolidate democracy; resolution of Paraguayan crisis of 1996 with the successful avoidance of a military coup</td>
<td>Still a central goal, but inequality a more frequently discussed issue; stronger ties with some authoritarian states outside South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global inequality</strong></td>
<td>Major issue for Brazil; unfair trade practices criticized by administration, which encouraged a fairer international system</td>
<td>The highest priority for Brazil; continued reaction against unfair practices by developed countries; domestic policies focused on alleviating plight of the poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank Professor Alfred Montero, my project adviser, for the invaluable advice and guidance he has given me throughout this process and in general during my time at Carleton. Thanks are also due to Professor Greg Marfleet, who taught the class that eventually led to this project; to my comps group for their feedback and support; to Professor Pedro Neiva of the Instituto Universitário de Pesquisas do Rio de Janeiro for the use of his data on the rhetoric employed by Cardoso and Lula; and, of course, to my friends and family for being there for me.
The concept of BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) was coined in a research paper (2001) by Jim O’Neill, then chief economist of the investment bank Goldman Sachs. It has since become a common term grouping together four of the largest rising economic powers in the world today and has recently been inaugurated as a formal political grouping (Nolte 2010, 881).

The “international system” is a general term used in international relations to refer to the sum total of all states in the world (the term generally ignores non-state actors). The idea of a “regional system” (also known as a “regional subsystem” or “subordinate system”) constitutes an extension of this theory; a regional system is simply a subset of the international system that is synonymous with a particular region (Teixeira 2012, 13-4). Regions are most often defined by geography and by patterns of interaction, which makes South America a regional subsystem. Many have also argued for a cultural element of region, which makes “Latin America” a distinct region (Teixeira 2012, 16), but this paper will generally focus on South America in particular, since this has been the focus of Brazil’s interactions.

Due to this paper’s focus on Brazil it uses the common Portuguese names for these institutions rather than the Spanish versions—Mercosur and Unasur respectively—more commonly used in English-language writing. (Though English is the national language of Guyana, a Unasul member state, the acronym “USAN” is rarely if ever used.)

Use of the term “hegemony” can be “confusing,” and depending on one’s definition of it the concept can be either restricted to the United States or applied to a number of countries worldwide. Robert Keohane’s book After Hegemony, an influential work on the subject, defines a hegemon as a state which “is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules governing international relations, and is willing to do so” (Jesse et al 2012, 4). In other words, a state fulfilling a hegemonic role must have both the desire and the capacity to shape events. It is also necessary to distinguish regional hegemony—taking on the leadership of one’s own sphere of influence—from global hegemony (Burgess 2004, 2). Brazil clearly has no interest in the latter; its dalliance with the former is the subject of this paper.

Sánchez Nieto (2012) notes that in East Timor, a fellow Portuguese-speaking country, Brazil has also taken steps to promote stronger diplomatic and cultural ties. The significance of this is certainly debatable, but at the very least it indicates Brazil’s interest in non-military dimensions of national power.

As with many concepts in global politics the meaning of the so-called North-South divide is contested, but generally it is held to separate rich countries from poor ones and is synonymous with the division between developed countries (what was once called the “First World”) and developing countries (the erstwhile “Third World”). The name stems from the fact that most—but not all—developed countries tend to be concentrated in the Northern Hemisphere. Traditionally Latin America is seen as belonging entirely to the “global South”, though the case can certainly be made that countries like Brazil, Argentina and Mexico are more similar to Western Europe than to other developing economies in Africa and Asia (“Brandt Report”).

The idea of “great powers” and “middle powers” stems from a hierarchical view of international relations, with one, two or possibly no superpower or superpowers at the top and great powers, middle powers and small powers playing respective subordinate roles (Flemes 2009, 163). Though the definition of “great power” is contested, as are the identities of the great
powers in the present-day international system, a great power can be broadly understood as a state with worldwide influence and worldwide vital interests, distinct from weaker states with a less important role in world affairs (Zakaria 1998, 3-4).

8 In addition to the “middle power”, discussed above, scholars have also identified “regional powers”, which hold a dominant position in their regions but have relatively less influence at the global level (Nolte 2010, 883). As this paper discusses, Brazil can be considered a middle power both due to its population and economic clout and as a result of its behavior on the international stage, which is increasingly assertive yet focused on multilateralism.

9 This and all other translations of Vilela and Neiva’s work appearing in this paper are mine unless otherwise noted.

10 Both Brazil and Argentina pursued nuclear weapons during their military dictatorships; both have since dismantled their nuclear programs.

11 National Security Doctrine, as with its equivalents in other Latin American dictatorships, was also used to strengthen the military’s hold on power and its ability to crack down on dissent (Skidmore 1988, 84).

12 The last interstate war fought by Brazil within South America was the War of the Triple Alliance against Paraguay, which ended in 1870 (Skidmore 1999, 62).

13 By the end of Rio Branco’s tenure at Itamaraty, Brazil was engaging directly with every Latin American country save Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

14 Import-substitution industrialization, adopted in many Latin American countries at various times, is a statist economic doctrine focused on developing domestic industries and reducing imports as much as possible, often through nationalization of industries (as happened in Brazil under President Getúlio Vargas). This is meant to reduce the nation’s dependence on industrial powers such as the United States (Montero 2005, 16-7).

15 The background information on Cardoso and Lula that follows is derived from Ted G. Goertzel’s biographies of Cardoso and Lula (1999 and 2011, respectively) unless otherwise noted.

16 Under military rule only two parties were permitted—a government party and an opposition party (Brazilians sarcastically referred to them as the “yes” party and the “yes, sir” party). This forced opposition members who wanted to run for office to unite in a single organization (Goertzel 1999, 71)

17 It is worth noting that Cardoso has claimed some credit for convincing Lula, a longtime colleague and strong supporter of Cardoso’s initial Senate campaign, of the need to moderate. As Cardoso relates it, he and Lula spoke after Cardoso’s trouncing of Lula in the 1998 election, and Cardoso implored Lula and the PT to accept that capitalism was not on the road to collapse. Cardoso has said that Lula “was never quite as combative” after their conversation, though of course its true influence is impossible to determine (Goertzel 2011, 29).

18 In his first term Lula traveled abroad an average of 15 times per year in office. Cardoso had left fewer than 12 times per year, and none of the military-era presidents left more than four times per year (Cason and Power 2006, 9).

19 The Rio Group contains all Latin American countries; unlike the OAS (which is headquartered in Washington), the U.S. and Canada are not part of the Rio Group.

20 The Group of 20, known as the G20+ to distinguish itself from the better-known group of the same name, is a group of newly industrializing countries formed in 2003 to counter U.S. and
European Union influence over the World Trade Organization’s Cancun ministerial. Brazil played a key role in founding the G20+, and over time the group became an effective platform for Brazilian leadership on the world stage (Burges 2009, 166).

Describing Cardoso’s work on dependency theory would take a separate paper in itself, but dependency theory is the general concept that power and wealth flow from “peripheral” countries to “core” countries—in other words, from poor countries to rich countries (Goertzel 1999, 11). The concept is traditionally associated with Marxist political thought.

“Hard power” in international relations is generally considered to represent traditional military and economic might, while “soft power” is more focused on diplomacy and such initiatives as foreign aid and cultural dialogue (Brands 2010, 13). The relative importance of the two types of power is, like so much else in international relations, hotly debated.

As of this writing Paraguay’s membership had been suspended due to the country’s 2012 political crisis; it was expected to be readmitted after presidential elections scheduled for April 2013 (Klonsky et al 2012).

Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru have “associated state” status in Mercosul, and all Mercosul member states and associated states are members of Unasul as well. Thus, with the exception of the relatively small countries of Suriname and Guyana (which are members of Unasul), every independent nation in South America has some form of affiliation with Mercosul (“Quienes Somos”).

The Maastricht Treaty (Treaty on European Union), signed in 1992, created the European Union; it has been amended since.

Hugo Chávez died on March 5, 2013. As of this writing it was still too early to determine whether his death would result in any concrete changes in Venezuela’s foreign policy.

As of 2013 ALBA consisted of Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Cuba, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica, and Antigua and Barbuda.
Works Cited


Cason, Jeffrey W. and Timothy J. Power. 2006. “Presidentialization, Pluralization and the Rollback of Itamaraty: Explaining Change in Brazilian Foreign Policy Making from Cardoso to Lula.” Presented at the conference “Regional Powers in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Near and Middle East,” German Institute of Global and Area Studies, December 11-12, 2006.


Cohn 40


