



Sean W. Burges. *Brazilian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009. 224 pp. \$65.00 (library), ISBN 978-0-8130-3333-4.

Reviewed by Shawn Smallman (Portland State University)

Published on H-LatAm (May, 2011)

Commissioned by Dennis R. Hidalgo



## How Brazil's Newfound Power is Changing International Politics in South America

According to the CIA World Factbook, Brazil's economy is estimated to have grown by 7.5 percent in 2010. While this rate is expected to dip in 2011, Brazil's growth will remain substantially above that of the United States or Europe. At the same time, Brazil has attracted international attention because it has made significant progress in ameliorating income inequality, an issue that has long bedeviled the nation. Brazil has also ended its dependence on oil imports, through a combination of ethanol-fueled vehicles and a dramatic increase in domestic production. With the recent discovery of the Tupi oil fields, Brazil looks to become a new player in global energy markets, as President Obama has noted. These trends have attracted a boom in books for a general audience that document Brazil's growing power, such as Larry Rohter's *Brazil on the Rise: The Story of a Country Transformed* (2010) and Riordan Roett's *The New Brazil* (2010), amongst others. Historians might want to caution against excessive optimism, given memories of "the Brazilian Miracle" of 1968 to 1973, which was ended by a debt crisis and inflation. But the current period of growth seems likely to prove more enduring, despite some long-term concerns about the Brazilian pension system. While this trend has important implications for U.S. foreign policy, which gives considerable attention to the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), it is a dominant issue in South America, where Brazil's growth has attracted both attention and envy. There have been few studies yet of

how Brazil has managed its rise in relation to its neighbors, both diplomatically and economically, so that Sean W. Burges's new work, *Brazilian Foreign Policy after the Cold War* (2009) fills an important gap in existing scholarship, focusing as it does on Brazil's approach to South American diplomatic, economic, and security issues.

Burges's study had to face an important methodological question, given that archival sources for this area are unlikely to become available for decades. He has addressed this by conducting extensive interviews with key Brazilian policymakers, including former president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, who bears the credit for beginning Brazil's economic boom. This oral history work is combined with careful research in secondary sources, which is so thorough that his bibliography is likely to become a mandatory resource for future researchers. Based on these sources, Burges strives to describe a Brazilian grand strategy, through which the country has sought to use its newfound economic power to maximum political advantage.

As Burges explains, Brazil's foreign policymakers and political leadership have believed that not all nations will be able benefit equally from globalization. To succeed, South American nations need to work as a bloc. Mexico and Central America (with the clear exception of Nicaragua) have made their choice in favor of North America. From the perspective of Brazil's policymakers,

the country has a natural leadership position in South America, which the nation should solidify by creating a regional bloc under its direction. The challenge has been that despite its rapid growth, Brazil has not had the resources to carry the burden of leadership in the face of significant opposition. In response to this reality, Brazil has sought to create a bloc based on consensus, in which Brazil would adopt the rhetoric of equality, while using its market share and diplomatic expertise to exert its influence. To implement this policy, Brazil needed to demonstrate self-sacrifice, discipline, and patience, all of which it proved to possess.

Burges's study has a number of strengths, one of which is that it shows how tangential the United States is to many contemporary issues in South America. The key exception to this is security issues, where the United States remains a dominant player. In part, the United States' power may have declined because of Brazil's policy of excluding external actors from the region. Certainly, in the area of economics Brazil is the central actor in the region, and Burges's chapter on economics is particularly well done. In this section he provides key insights into the manner in which Brazil followed its grand strategy of shaping the continent's energy and transportation development. In many cases Brazil went against its immediate economic interests in order to encourage continental integration. This was the case, for example, with the joint construction of the Itaipú dam with Paraguay. Throughout, Burges demonstrates a theoretical sophistication, as his study draws heavily on Antonio Gramsci and more recent works on hegemony.

The book does have some weaknesses. One is that

the study fails to richly depict arguments and debates within Brazil's foreign policy establishment. Economic and security policies are always contested, but there is little information on these divisions. The power of the Brazilian presidency is also perhaps exaggerated. More information on congressional debates might have provided a different perspective. In addition, there is little information on the role that lobbyists, businesspeople, and other actors play in shaping Brazilian foreign policy. Burges's study would also have benefited from information on the foreign policy of other South American states, of which Venezuela would be the most important, given the leadership role that President Hugo Chavez aspires to within the region. How has Venezuela viewed Brazil's political project, and how does its aspirations for its own trade zone, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA, which is not listed in the book's list of abbreviations), challenge Brazil's hegemony? Despite these limitations, however, Burges's study is mainly notable for its strengths.

Burges's work fills a gap in the English-language literature on Brazil's foreign policy, as far too little research has been done on the country's leadership role within South America, particularly with regard to Mercosul/sur. The book's key contribution is that it brings events up to the recent past, based on a rich array of interviews. With its theoretical rigor and rich use of acronyms, the book will be most appropriate for use in graduate-level classes, where it will merit attentive reading. The book succeeds in its goal of providing an overarching understanding of Brazil's foreign policy goals, so that policymakers in the United States and Europe should also find it useful, as they react to the rapid rise of this emerging power.

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**Citation:** Shawn Smallman. Review of Burges, Sean W., *Brazilian Foreign Policy after the Cold War*. H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. May, 2011.

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