



# Brazil's Changing Foreign Policy Ambitions

Lula, Bolsonaro and Grand Strategy Analysis in the Global South

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## Abstract

This study compares three cases of Brazilian foreign policy: two administrations under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-04 and 2007-08) and the Jair Messias Bolsonaro administration (2019-20). It offers insight both into the flow of Brazilian grand strategy and into a new method to systematically and consistently analyze grand strategies across the global north and south. To do this, it applies an analytical framework dubbed “grand strategy analysis” (GSA). This approach is actor-centered. It identifies grand strategy in the overlap between leaders’ rhetoric and policy decisions; thus, it is sensitive to beliefs and perceptions as well as concrete, “hard power” considerations. This study draws upon contemporary news reports, expert interviews, and academic studies to observe grand strategy across the three cases. It finds that each administration has been constrained or shaped by Brazil’s existing economic, diplomatic and military status and investments, yet each president’s domestic political calculations and ideological commitments unfolded in surprising ways. Lula entered office with strong leftist credentials and rhetoric, yet he brought unusual ambition to elevate Brazil’s profile. Bolsonaro, by contrast, emulated contemporary nationalist rhetoric prominent in foreign capitals such as Washington D.C. and Ankara. He also elevated support for the military, yet his strategic approach returned to older patterns for Brazil in which the president’s domestic agenda dictates his foreign policy positions.

**Keywords:** grand strategy, foreign policy, Brazil, diplomacy, global south

## Introduction

This study compares three cases of Brazilian foreign policy: two administrations under President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-04 and 2007-08) and the Jair Messias Bolsonaro administration (2019-20). To do this, it applies an emerging analytical framework dubbed “grand strategy analysis”, an approach allowing observers to evaluate governments’ foreign policies based upon the individuals making decisions, setting agendas, and promulgating rhetoric. Overall, the study offers insight both into the flow of Brazilian grand strategy and into a new method to systematically and consistently analyze grand strategies across the global north and south.

International relations and foreign policy scholars often apply the concept “grand strategy” to a government’s overarching goals in the world and its means or theory to achieve them. National security and relative power are the prototypical substance of grand strategy; however, grand strategies may also include economic, diplomatic, political and perhaps cultural content (Johnston 1995, p.4). Indeed, growing scholarship holds that grand strategy can be observed as a distinct phenomenon, and any state is likely to develop and debate its own grand strategic preferences and agendas (Balzacq, Dombrowski, and Reich 2019; Silove 2018). Unfortunately, two limitations have plagued grand strategy scholarship. First, observers often assume that only the most powerful states are likely to devise and implement grand strategies (Morgan-Owen 2020; Paz 2012; Shiffrinson 2020). Second, studies attuned to the global south tend to analyze instances of grand strategy as *sui generis* rather than one instance of a class of phenomena (Kingah and Uberti 2016; Lim 2020; Shekhar 2020; Taşpınar 2012).

To compensate for these shortcomings, this study applies a simple, generalizable approach. Grand strategy analysis (GSA) draws from the well-established methodologies of foreign policy analysis (FPA) (Hudson and Day 2019). Both approaches are actor-centered. Rather than evaluate grand strategy as either an idealized concept or a set of actions and behaviors, it locates grand strategy in the decision makers and leaders themselves. As such, it is sensitive to beliefs and perceptions as well as concrete, “hard power” considerations. Specifically, GSA scholarship seeks to observe the overlap between leaders’ rhetoric and policy decisions. In turn, GSA proposes three basic dimensions across all grand strategies: *scope* (geographic extent and perceived allies or adversaries), *substance* (ideological and political content), and *assertiveness* (relative level of aggression). Such an approach is flexible

within a consistent framework across regional and cultural contexts (Puri 2017).

Using the GSA framework, this study draws upon contemporary news reports, expert interviews, and academic studies to observe grand strategy in the three cases. It finds that each administration has been constrained or shaped by Brazil’s existing economic, diplomatic and military status and investments. Despite this, the presidents’ domestic political calculations and ideological commitments unfolded in surprising ways. Lula entered office with strong leftist credentials and rhetoric, yet he brought unusual ambition to elevate Brazil’s profile in existing international organizations and issues. Bolsonaro, by contrast, emulated contemporary nationalist rhetoric prominent in foreign capitals such as Washington D.C. and Ankara. He also elevated support for the military, yet in the face of this tough talk, Bolsonaro’s strategic approach to the world returned to older patterns for Brazil in which the president’s domestic agenda dictates his foreign policy positions.

## Grand Strategy Analysis

“Grand strategy” remains a contested concept. Whether it is appropriate to apply to any given state, whether it is simply a set of beliefs, or whether it is even a coherent and real phenomenon remains debated (Silove 2018; Lissner 2018; Recordati 2020) (Silove 2018; Lissner 2018; Recordati 2020). Traditionally, grand strategy was largely conflated with great power politics (Markowitz and Fariss 2018; Mearsheimer 2014). Despite this, scholars continue to refine grand strategy research and expand it beyond its traditional focus on military power and confines in the global north (Balzacq, Dombrowski, and Reich 2020; Cheng 2011; Germann 2014; Köstem 2018; Lantis 2015; Puri 2017; Petrič 2013). Still, an empirical grand strategy framework that is fungible across cases and timeframes remains elusive. In an effort to build upon and advance these debates, we approach grand strategy as an observable set of practices and beliefs with wide purchase across governments and regions. To do this, we apply the GSA framework.

GSA draws its basic approach from foreign policy analysis, which emphasizes foreign policy as the product of specific individuals and groups in interaction with each other and their context. Applied to grand strategy, this framework emphasizes that grand strategy can be observed among decision makers and other leaders as a pattern of thought

and policy (Shively 2020). Whereas many scholars grapple with how to define grand strategy, which variables are most relevant to understanding it, and whether it is an idea, a set of behaviors, or some mix of the two, GSA allows flexibility on these questions, and, instead, it seeks out what is actually observable of a grand strategy concept. For this reason, it is agent-centered. The approach emphasizes what leaders say and how that compares with what they do and what policies they adopt. Rather than observe states or ideas, GSA observes the specific people. In this approach, grand strategy is treated as the unit of analysis, but that unit is operationalized or observed via specific agents. In turn, rather than impose abstract categories, the researcher has flexibility to observe the grand strategy as the people involved understood it, even if they themselves never expressly called what they were doing “grand strategy.” Finally, using the GSA approach, this analysis identifies grand strategy in each case using a three-dimensional framework (Ibid.) (See Table 1.). *Scope* refers to the geographic parameters, adversaries, and allies where leaders’ rhetoric and policy overlap. *Substance* refers to the strategy’s ideological content, from domestic priorities to national interests to a theory of international politics. *Assertiveness* refers to the level of military engagement and the degree to which leaders emphasize diplomacy versus coercion or aggression.

Dimensions	Characteristics
SCOPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geographic Extent</li> <li>• Allies</li> <li>• Adversaries</li> </ul>
SUBSTANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core Interests</li> <li>• Nature of System</li> <li>• Role</li> </ul>
ASSERTIVENESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Force Level</li> <li>• Security Strategies</li> </ul>

Table 1: A framework to identify grand strategy types using the GSA approach.

The following sections comprise three case studies. Each covers the administration’s first two years, which are typically the most formative because they include early precedents but also, by the end, display stable patterns of behavior. Lula and Bolsonaro are often taken as Brazil’s left- and right-wing exemplars in the early 21st century, so directly comparing

them is intrinsically valuable. In the context of GSA, they are also of interest because their leadership, rhetorical, and ideological styles diverge. Evaluating them with an outside, standardized framework will help identify similarities and differences as they trace through Brazil’s overall grand strategy. The article then reviews its empirical findings before drawing general conclusions.

## First Lula Administration, 2003-04

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva defied expectations. On the one hand, an established leftist, he sought to gain greater independence from Global North governments, foster Global South cooperation, and reorient global power structures. On the other hand, he also advocated increasing Mercosul’s influence, expanding trade with Europe and the United States, and a permanent seat for Brazil in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Lula was born in 1945 to a poor family in northeast Brazil, rose to prominence as a union leader, and was jailed under Brazil’s military dictatorship. He helped found the leftist Worker’s Party in 1982, and later secured the party’s 2002 nomination and won the presidency (Rohter 2002). His policy proposals oriented around free-market growth for businesses and government programs for the poor. These included employment programs, tax reform, wider income distribution, and establishing a new relationship between government, workers, and entrepreneurs (*Horário Eleitoral: Presidente Brasil (20/08/2002) TV 2002*, min. 6:32-7:12). Lula also adopted a neoliberal economic policy encouraging internationalization of Brazilian companies, “which is still an irony in the history of the Workers Party to leverage the Brazilian capitalist economy” (Vidigal 2020). To justify this left-right balance, he explained, “Brazil needs businessmen and it will provide all the necessary incentives, but this will be the country of production and not speculation” (Ibid.).

Previously, the Workers Party rarely engaged Brazil’s global presence, but Lula now pushed the concept of Brazil as an emerging regional and world player, but he paired this with arguments - particularly in his 2003 and 2004 UN speeches - that economic development and poverty reduction would directly improve national and global security (Saraiva 2020b; Amorim 2005, p. 10; *At UN, Lula calls for international action to combat hunger and preaches peace with social justice* 2003; L. I. L. d. Silva 2004; Villa and Sundaram 2021). Previously “universalist”

(Almeida 2020), Brasilia now emphasized multilateralism and the claim that “Brazil had neither enemies nor adversaries” (Saraiva 2020a) but would focus particularly on Latin America and the Global South, as exemplified by Lula’s early travel (Almeida 2020; Querido 2017; Saraiva 2020a; Prado 2007) (see Table 2). Brands characterizes his approach as three diplomatic strategies: “soft balancing, coalition building, and seeking to position Brazil as the leader of a more united South America” (Brands 2011, p. v). Vigevani and Cepaluni simplify the approach as “autonomy through diversification” (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2007, p. 283). Organizations Lula advocated to promote economic, infrastructure, and social development included the South American Community of Nations (joining the Andean Community and Mercosul), the G-3 (India, Brazil, and South Africa), and the UN World Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty (including a program dubbed the “Lula Fund”) (Amorim 2005, p.5; *UN agency looks to team with Brazil on global campaign to fight hunger* 2004). Brazil and Africa, he argued, are connected by trade, history, culture and the fight for racial equality, so Brazil should expand commerce as well as support African democracies and technical areas like agriculture. In the Middle East, Lula emphasized economic integration as well as Brazil’s traditional support for an independent, democratic, and stable Palestine alongside Israel.

Continents	Country
South America	12
Europe	9
Africa	7
Middle East	3
North America	2
Central America	2
Asia	0

Table 2: President Lula’s country visits by continent, 2003 (Ferro 2020).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also positioned itself as a key Global South leader through cultivating Brazil’s power and leadership alongside multilateral and regional trade negotiations (Amorim 2005). At the 2004 UN Conference on Trade and Development, Brazil’s delegates emphasized the Global South’s place in a “new global trade geography” (*UN Conference on Trade and Development Opens Eleventh Session in Sao Paulo, Highlighting Importance of Trade Among Developing Countries* 2004). Brazil saw increasing exports to the United States and Europe as well as developing countries, and of-

officials worked to maintain growing trade relations with China and Russia. During Doha Round negotiations for WTO reform, Brazilian diplomats innovated an issue-based strategy that drew together developing countries aligned against rich world trade policies (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2007; Motta Veiga 2005). In this environment, the G-4 was created by Brazil, Germany, Japan, and India to advocate permanent seats in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This policy contradicted traditional Workers Party positions, which rejected Cold War international organizations, but when Haiti experienced spiraling election violence, Brazilians pushed for, achieved, and led a UNSC peacekeeping mission. For Lula and Foreign Minister Amorim, Brazil could support the world’s first black republic but also showcase Brazilian capabilities in its case for reforming the UNSC. Lula also emphasized state sovereignty but also “non-indifference” (Amorim 2005, pp. 8–9). For example, when political crisis erupted over President Hugo Chávez’s push to retain the presidency, Lula worked with the United States to broker a deal ending with Chávez consolidating power (DeYoung 2003). Foreign Minister Amorim dismissed these concerns over Brazil’s growing regional leadership: “If our internal development, if our attitudes of [...] respect for international law, the search for a peaceful solution to controversies, the fight against all forms of discrimination, the defense of human rights and the environment, if these attitudes generate leadership, there is no reason to refuse it” (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2007, p. 302). These ambitions soon reached limitations. As one expert explained, Lula developed “a super ambitious and sophisticated foreign policy, but not a sustainable foreign policy” (Casarões 2020). In practical terms, Brazil could not sustain commitments like the international fund to combat poverty. Failures included a push for presidency of the International Labor Organization, the director general position of the WTO, and a proposal - resisted by Brazil’s South American neighbors - for a free trade agreement between the United States and Mercosul (Prado 2007, pp. 60–61). Despite growing trade relations, the Chinese never backed Brazil’s reform ambitions. Brazil represented and defended human rights, but associations with countries like Cuba and Iran weakened its public image (Almeida 2010). Despite all this, scholar Miriam Saraiva argues that Lula’s approach was as well-designed as possible to pair the Lula government’s longing for power and its desire for more solidarity and more equality among Global South states. Brazil was showing “power articulated with a left view” (Saraiva 2020a).

## Second Lula Administration, 2007-08

Overcoming a corruption scandal and advertising his achievements, Lula started his second term with political capital, consistent political rhetoric, and a mature foreign policy approach (Casarões 2020). Over the next two years, Lula's strategic agenda largely carried forward from his prior administration: hunger and poverty, Global South cooperation, multilateral trade negotiations, reform of the United Nations Security Council, and expanding Mercosul (Prado 2007, pp. 60–61). Lula continued pushing for a new world order with greater consideration for developing countries and less power concentrated in Washington, D.C. Rhetorically, Brazil defended regional democracy, integration, and development under its own leadership even as Argentina continued to resist singular Brazilian leadership. In general, Lula's leftist sensibilities guided much of his vision even as he continued to reach for trade and power relations within the existing world order. Throughout 2007 and 2008, Brazil's diplomatic profile continued to grow as Lula again sought to expand Brazil's relations across regions. During those years, he spent 61 and 75 days out of the country, respectively, and these trips ranged widely with similar emphases on South America, Europe and Africa. Elsewhere, Brazil was invited to the Annapolis Conference on Israeli-Palestinian relations in order to help represent developing countries outside the region; Brazil hosted the first forum for cooperation between East Asia and Latin America; and it strengthened relations with France through bilateral initiatives (Amorim 2010, p.236–237). At the UN, Lula's ambitions persisted. In 2007, he again used his General Assembly speech to highlight hunger and poverty and explained that if policies do not change, an environmental and human catastrophe would be inevitable (*Veja a Íntegra Do Discurso De Lula Na ONU* 2007). His solutions included wealth distribution within and between countries as well as biofuel as a renewable energy that developing countries would be well-positioned to produce and could, in turn, stimulate domestic job growth and more favorable trade balances. The following year, citing environmental, hunger, migratory, financial, and energy crises, Lula argued that a new geopolitics more dominated by the developing world was emerging and that, again, the UNSC needed reform (*Leia e Ouça a Íntegra Do Discurso De Lula Na Abertura Da 63ª Assembléia Geral Da ONU* 2008). To signal Brazil's growing capabilities, his administration advocated for the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), an annual review of human rights among

UN member states. Lula also pushed greater military investment, such as greater protection for the “Blue Amazon”, Brazil's ecologically rich coastal Exclusive Economic Zone (Saraiva 2020a).

Lula also carried forward his prior economic ambitions, which sought to support domestic companies with international potential. The Brazilian delegation continued to lead the so-called G20-T group of Global South countries during the Doha Round WTO talks (Hopewell 2015). Mercosul tried but ultimately failed to close an agreement with the European Union, which remained protective of its agricultural market; however, Brazilian officials helped Mercosul secure agreements with India and the Southern African Customs Union (Saraiva and Palermo 2007). Indeed, trade with African as well as Arab states increased during this period. When Argentina established export restrictions without Mercosul's consent, Lula did nothing because of his concern for Brazilian industries. When the United States provided massive financial aid to its own private sector in order to prevent economic collapse during the 2008 financial crisis, Lula criticized Washington for its state intervention, saying that markets could self-regulate and a US problem became a global one (Passarinho 2019).

Indeed, during this second term, Lula adopted a strong “anti-hegemonic” position, but this effort also began to show limitations (Almeida 2010, p.160–177). Brazil's main strategic partners in this agenda were China, Russia, India, South Africa, and several states in the Middle East, which Lula maintained can support each other based upon shared social and economic characteristics (Almeida 2006, p.1–3). He sought to create a front that could maintain greater independence from Global North governments; however, this foundation quickly revealed its cracks. China and India, in particular, held incompatible views on agriculture protectionism and high subsidies (Almeida 2010, p. 172). For Brazilian producers, export to Global South states under this “new commercial geography” returned far less capital. Meanwhile, many Asian countries like China were enjoying massive economic benefits from their existing commercial ties to the Global North. President Lula recommended Brazilian importers work with products from Brazil's regional partners to show sympathy and support even if the products were more expensive, but few took this step seriously over their own financial interests. Lacking the military and economic resources of a great power, Lula and his team struggled to justify the strategic logic of aligning with weaker and poorer states (Vidigal 2020). Further, though Brazil qualifies as a regional leader in many geographical, economi-

cal, industrial and technological dimensions, it lacks a foundational requirement: acceptance of leader status, particularly from Argentina and Colombia. Finally, Lula struggled to justify his position to his own Workers Party. He sought to integrate South America, but he risked accusations of “imperialist” behavior. Almeida argues that “this view of the world of us and them, of north and south, of developed and developing, of oppressors and oppressed” had been absorbed from Cuba’s old left and limited Lula’s own ambitions, both with his fellow partisans and among the world’s rising and established powers (Almeida 2010, p.171).

## **Bolsonaro Administration, 2019-20**

President Jair Messias Bolsonaro represents a stark break with Lula’s politics. His rhetoric paralleled contemporary nationalist leaders, particularly US President Donald Trump. Campaigning, Bolsonaro claimed an ambition to protect “traditional values”, and in office, he broke with Brazil’s existing foreign policy trends by seeking out new partnerships and new positions on international issues. Bolsonaro himself was born in southern Brazil in 1955, later served 17 years in the army, rose to the rank of captain, and then, starting in 1991, represented Rio de Janeiro in the federal Chamber of Deputies. He courted attention by admiring Brazil’s former military government and sharing blunt right-wing opinions, such as the claim that he “would be incapable of loving a homosexual son” (Wallenfeldt 2018). In 2016, he joined the Social Christian Party as the Workers Party, now under President Dilma Rousseff, fell into corruption scandals and a presidential impeachment. Gaining notoriety as “Trump of the Tropics”, Bolsonaro’s uncompromising rhetoric in the 2018 election articulated national dissatisfaction and found a coalition of gun rights advocates, nostalgia for dictatorship, anti-corruption sentiment, Evangelical Christians, and the military (Casarões 2020; Desideri 2019). “Bolsonaro”, argues Guilherme Casarões, “is the disorganized sum of different voices”, and easily carried the election. Campaigning, he upended existing foreign policy positions. He declared that “China does not buy in Brazil. China is buying Brazil” and extended support for Taiwan (Casarões 2020). He emphasized bilateral relations over multilateralism and frustrated Arab governments by following Trump’s lead and relocating Brazil’s Israel embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and rejecting Brazil’s prior support for a

two-state solution (Casarões and Fledes 2019, p.4). He also advocated leaving the Paris Agreement, UN Human Rights Council, and the UN Global Compact for Migration (Ibid.).

Within Bolsonaro’s coalition, the military, economic liberals, and the “Olavistas” vied for power, but the latter group - including foreign minister Araújo and Bolsonaro’s son, politician Eduardo Bolsonaro - embodied the new president’s unique ideological influence (Lopes 2020). Following polemicist Olavo de Carvalho, they held that Judeo-Christian civilization and, in turn, Western institutions like the UN and WTO are contaminated by “globalism” and cultural Marxism, a concept now pitched by Carvalho’s followers as a far-right conspiracy theory. Implicated movements include women’s and LGBTQ rights, gun control, abortion rights, secularism, and environmentalism (Saraiva 2020b). In response, Olavistas’ strategy is to radicalize in support of a national identity characterized by right-wing politics, traditional values, and defending God, family, and nation (Casarões and Fledes 2019; Casarões 2020). This logic shaped his foreign policy for a “new Brazil”, which, Bolsonaro told the UN, had been saved from socialism (Mazui, Rodrigues, and Barbiéri 2019; *Speech by Brazil’s President Jair Bolsonaro at the opening of the 74th United Nations General Assembly – New York, September 24, 2019* 2019). Some dissent to this vision did emerge. Vice-President Hamilton Mourão represented competing military prerogatives, farmers expressed concern about Chinese trade relations, and economic liberals - led by trade and finance minister Paulo Guedes - promoted free trade and deregulation (Saraiva and Á. V. C. Silva 2019, pp. 117–137; Casarões and Fledes 2019, pp. 1–12). Confronting such internal dissent, Bolsonaro attempted to create his own party in 2019 named Alliance for Brazil. He drew heavily from the military, which received few strategic investments but did enjoy higher salaries. Miriam Saraiva (2019) argues that Bolsonaro saw the military not in terms of strategic power projection but as a domestic player able to help protect his presidency.

Foreign Minister Ernesto Araújo may have constrained Bolsonaro because he had already held a post at the Itamaraty, or Brazil’s foreign affairs ministry; nevertheless, the administration did reorder Brazil’s international priorities (Ruic 2018; Saraiva and Á. V. C. Silva 2019, pp. 117–137). South American leadership and the Global South lost their previous emphasis and gave way to greater emphasis on right-wing governments, such as Bolivia’s and Uruguay’s, over Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua (Furquim 2019; Desideri 2019; Nolte and Schenoni



2021). President Bolsonaro also traveled far less than Lula, and his visits now favored North America, the Middle East, and East Asia. In his visit to the United States, Bolsonaro abandoned Brazil's special treatment in WTO negotiations in exchange for Trump's support for Brazil to enter the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Casarões 2020; Reinsch 2019). Other arrangements included trade deals, military purchases, and support for Iran that matched Trump's strategic agenda but lacked clear Brazilian support (Desideri 2019; Saraiva 2020b). Carlos Eduardo Vidigal argues that Bolsonaro sought a relationship with Trump rather than the United States, and even Foreign Minister Araújo maintained that Trump was "the only man who can save Western civilization" (Cervo 2020; Saraiva and Á. V. C. Silva 2019, p. 119). Closer to home, the Amazon rainforest emerged as a global issue when France's President Emmanuel Macron suggested giving it international status and, later, Germany and Norway withdrew environmental funds based on Brasilia's relatively *laissez faire* response to massive wildfires (Ibid., 129-130). Bolsonaro emphasized Brazilian sovereignty, accused Europeans of colonial thinking, and argued that the region was not a sanctuary but rather was available for economic use (*Speech by Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro at the opening of the 74th United Nations General Assembly – New York, September 24, 2019* 2019; Saraiva and Á. V. C. Silva 2019, p. 129; *Brazilian President Speaks out against 'Media Lies' Surrounding Amazon Fires* 2019; Desideri 2019). The row fit the administration's preexisting ideological expectations. Araújo declared Brazil a victim of globalist "climatism" and climate change a "Marxist conspiracy" (Casarões and Flesmes 2019, p.1). Bolsonaro also broke with the non-intervention tradition in other countries' elections by recognizing Juan Guaidó as President of Venezuela despite sitting president Nicolás Maduro's refusal to concede power. On trade, Bolsonaro sought greater cooperation between the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and other actors. (Mazui, Rodrigues, and Barbiéri 2019). During his 2019 visit to Beijing, he dropped much of his confrontational talk and signed several trade agreements. He used talks between Mercosul and the European Union (EU) to push the former from a social to a commercial focus. Technology, infrastructure and trade rose in Brazilian foreign policy along with agribusiness (Casarões and Flesmes 2019, p.7-8). In the UN Human Rights Council, Brazil's delegation advocated traditional values and religious freedom over "human rights". When German foreign minister Heiko Maas announced an Alliance

for Multilateralism, Bolsonaro considered it a "useless institution"(Ibid.). Still, Bolsonaro reaffirmed Brazil's willingness to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations and praised economic openness, all framed within Brazil's sovereign prerogatives (*Na ONU, Presidente Jair Bolsonaro Apresenta 'Um Novo Brasil'* 2019). Throughout 2020, as COVID-19 killed a growing number of people in and outside Brazil, Bolsonaro minimized the threat, largely disregarded his government's health ministers, and emphasized keeping Brazilians on the job.

Continents	Country
Middle East	4
Asia	3
North America	3
South America	3
Europe	1
Africa	0
Central America	0

Table 3: Continents where countries received the most visits by President Bolsonaro in 2019 (Ferro 2020).

## Findings

The GSA framework helps organize and evaluate these cases. Where other analytical approaches tend either to oversimplify or, at the other extreme, treat each case as *sui generis*, GSA reveals a specific set of divergences and similarities across the Lula and Bolsonaro administrations. In both terms, President Lula sought to expand Brazil's geographic extent to a different variety of countries and country types, from rich Europe to developing Africa. Regarding allies, he focused on South-South cooperation with special attention to Cuba, Bolivia and Argentina as well as other middle income states like China, India, and Russia. Still, despite Lula's conciliatory, inclusive rhetoric, Brazil still found itself - especially during Lula's second term - grappling with conflicts across its region. Bolsonaro, by contrast, shrank Brazil's good neighbor approach and reoriented around bilateral economic interests and right-wing governments. Drawing inspiration from Donald Trump's style of nationalism in the United States, Bolsonaro's rhetoric and policies provoked adversarial responses from governments in Europe and elsewhere. Further, he considered anyone with "globalist" and "socialist" beliefs to be a Brazilian adversary.

Dimensions	Characteristics	Lula, 2003-2004	Lula, 2007-2008	Bolsonaro, 2019-2020
SCOPE	<i>Geographic Extent</i>	Global South (South America and Africa), Europe, Russia, India, China, Middle East, and East Asia.	Global South (South America and Africa), Europe, Russia, India, China, Middle East, and East Asia.	South America, United States, Europe, Middle East, and Asia.
	<i>Allies</i>	Left-leaning gov'ts, South America, South Africa, Russia, India, China and Middle East.	Left-leaning gov'ts, South America, South Africa, Russia, India, China, and Middle East.	United States, Poland, Hungary, Israel, Italy, and Saudi Arabia
	<i>Adversaries</i>	None	None, but conflicts with Argentina and some South American countries	Leftist, "globalist" governments: France, Venezuela, Iran, Germany, Argentina, Cuba.
SUBSTANCE	<i>Core Interests</i>	Decrease Brazil's vulnerability and increase Brazil's influence in the world. Fight for social causes domestically and internationally, social development.	Reform of the UNSC, search for autonomy, include agriculture in the WTO, new geopolitical world order.	Combat cultural Marxism and globalism in the West. Maintain or grow trade, economic development.
	<i>Nature of System</i>	Cooperation, multilateralism, economic integration, and no division between North and South	Cooperation, multilateralism, economic integration, and no division between North and South	Bilateralism and division between North and South.
	<i>Role</i>	Leadership regionally but not dominant and accepted. Defend domestic and international social causes.	Leadership regionally but not dominant and accepted. Defend domestic and international social causes.	Alliance partner in western civilization
ASSERTIVENESS	<i>Force Level</i>	Low, but cultivate military for UNSC appeal	Low	Low
	<i>Security Strategies</i>	Diplomacy	Diplomacy	Protect current government domestically

Table 4: Lula's first and second administrations compared with Bolsonaro's using the GSA framework.

Regarding “substance” and “assertiveness”, Lula’s administrations remained remarkably consistent; however, their intensity differed. In 2003-2004, Lula concentrated on social causes and development, whereas in 2007-2008, the administration emphasized Brazilian power and interests. In both, Brazil sought a position in the UNSC, though with greater energy in the second case. Lula sought multilateral relations with developing and Global South states, but his rhetoric also welcomed greater accord between the Global North and South. Indeed, Lula pushed Brazil’s global role through assertive diplomatic engagement. In his formulation, hunger and poverty were directly tied to Brazilian and global peace and security. He pushed for South American leadership, perhaps characterized as “first among equals”, but key neighbors such as Argentina resisted. Bolsonaro’s nationalist approach often sought the opposite of these sensibilities. In South America and beyond, he emphasized sovereignty and bilateral relations rather than leadership and multilateralism. He appealed to traditional values and, appealing to far-right conspiracy theories, sought to fight “globalism” and cultural Marxism in Western civilization, concepts alien to Lula’s framework. Despite these differences, both administrations displayed a low force level because neither perceived direct or distant security threats; however, in his first term, Lula did take some initial, ultimately isolated efforts to expand Brazil’s military capability in order to improve the country’s case for a permanent UNSC seat. Rather, diplomacy and dialogue were Lula’s security strategy when, for instance, he insisted that the Palestine conflict could be resolved with serious engagement from both sides. Interestingly, despite his strong talk and military connections, Bolsonaro saw little need to build Brazilian military capabilities. Rather, his strategy for the military was inward-focused: he sought to build domestic political support with higher salaries and greater access to senior government offices.

## Conclusion

We argue that Lula was an internationalist and Bolsonaro a nationalist, yet both were constrained by Brazil’s commitments and capabilities as they assumed office, and neither fundamentally reordered Brazil’s position in the world. Each president’s tone, ambition, and content dramatically diverged, but that alone proved insufficient to fundamentally change Brazilian grand strategy. Despite expect-

tations among supporters and adversaries that he would prove a strictly ideological leftist, Lula fostered relatively moderate liberal - sometimes characterized as “neoliberal” - administrations. In foreign policy, Lula reached for economic and political approaches that included working with international organizations and private sector trade. He aimed to cycle Brazil into a higher level of wealth for Brazilians even as he advocated for the poor around the world, supported Global South diplomacy, and pushed regional leadership and power. By contrast, Bolsonaro’s grand strategy assumed state sovereignty and civilizational/cultural values should guide Brazil’s domestic and foreign priorities. Pragmatic but rarely focused on trade, Bolsonaro saw the “globalist” environment as a threat and pursued foreign affairs as an appendage of his domestic political fights. Lula brought and consistently applied a consistent strategic agenda that sometimes fell awkwardly between left and right and sometimes exceeded Brazil’s capabilities. By contrast, Bolsonaro’s approach limited Brazil’s ambitions. Ideologically, rather than cooperation and mutual benefit, it espoused defending Western Civilization as a set of cultural priorities and aligning with Trump’s United States. Still, during these years, Bolsonaro’s approach reflected a set of general priorities rather than a clearly-developed strategic vision. For Brazil, neither leader dramatically reworked the country’s global status. Perhaps if applied consistently over multiple administrations, one or both strategies might create the outcomes leaders hoped to achieve; yet, in practice, both Lula and Bolsonaro shifted Brazil’s grand strategy at its margins rather than its core. Its basic status among peers as well as its economic, political, and security interests remained relatively stable in a broader historical context.

This article also demonstrates the utility of the GSA approach. As a comparative framework, it allows the observer to consistently evaluate administrations across time and types of states, whether in the Global North or South. This has been a consistent challenge for scholars because the concept of grand strategy itself typically has been applied primarily to Global North states, while studies of Global South states offer particular studies of foreign policy but lack generalizable observations of strategy. As an agent-centered analytical tool, GSA also allows scholars to observe grand strategy as decision makers and others in the policy process understood their own goals and approaches. Such flexibility within a standard framework also facilitates comparative observation of consistency and divergence between cases. In these cases, GSA underscores the

dramatic divergence between Lula and Bolsonaro, highlights the constraints upon that divergence, and establishes a baseline for comparison with other administrations and governments. Indeed, future research can extend this study in time within Brazil as well as across regional and global peers. Finally, this framework and these findings also set a baseline for more normative questions. GSA provides a simple tool to observe grand strategy as an empirical phenomenon. Whether one president's approach is likely to prove more successful over time or whether either approach to grand strategy is an appropriate fit for Brazil and its place in the world are important questions and debates. GSA helps clarify the empirical parameters of this ongoing work.

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