

The EU for Brazil: A Partner Towards a ‘Fairer’ Globalization?

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Since the early 1990s, Brazil and the European Union have come to realize that their commercial, economic and political synergies offer vast opportunities for cooperation that are worthy of further exploration. This article aims to develop a better understanding of the role of the EU as both a political and economic actor by providing an outline of how the EU’s image is perceived in Brazil. Elaborating upon existing data and analyses at the levels of political elites, public opinion and the print media, the article argues that while the EU is regarded both as an opportunity and a challenge, the former perception is more structurally grounded in Brazil’s public discourse. In addition, the article suggests that some of the crucial elements of the academic and self-representation of the Union as an international actor have produced similar depictions within Brazil. However, in this particular country study, the social–solidaristic themes typical of the EU’s self-representation appear much less relevant in shaping the EU’s image than part of the literature on the EU’s ‘international identity’ suggests.

I Introduction

Since the early 1990s, relations between Brazil and the European Union have experienced a leap in quality. In this period, both parties have come to realize that their commercial, economic and political synergies offer vast opportunities for cooperation that are worth exploring. From a European perspective, Brazil is increasingly perceived as a global player whose aspiration to turn its new international status into regional and global clout needs to be fully supported.¹

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¹ B. Ferrero-Waldner, *Steering the EU/Brazil–Mercosul Relationship for the Challenges Ahead* (2005), Instituto Roberto Simonsen and the Federation of the Industries of the State of Sao Paulo, available at <www.europa.eu.int/comm/index_en.htm>.

From Brazil's viewpoint, the growing international assertiveness of the European Union is seen as something to be welcomed and encouraged and, potentially, as a positive factor on the path towards the achievement of the country's strategic goals.² Interestingly, this very process of *rapprochement* between the EU and Brazil in the last fifteen years reversed the US-centric focus that had characterized Brazilian foreign policy throughout the twentieth century.³ In witness of the solidity of these changes, one should recall that following the election of Lula da Silva as president of Brazil in 2002, the country's foreign policy approach towards the EU has been characterized by a substantial continuity.⁴ In fact, such continuity should be read not only as the result of the shift of Lula and his party towards the social democratic centre of the political spectrum,⁵ but also, as it has been argued, as a sign that Brazilian political elites, with all due differences, are keen to recognize that 'from a geostrategic perspective the preferential relationship with the EU fulfils Brazilian objectives in building alliances that support its international ambitions'.⁶

The economy plays a crucial role in this context. The EU is Brazil's main trading partner, receiving over a quarter of Brazil's external trade, and Brazil is the EU's main trading partner in Latin America. Moreover, Brazil represents an important destination for European investments.⁷ Both actors, therefore, share a strong interest in maintaining and furthering economic ties. It seems fair to argue, however, that relations between Brazil and the EU have acquired today a new strategic depth that goes beyond the realm of economics. The wide array of institutional settings within which relations between the EU and Brazil take place provides evidence of the new quality of a partnership that is acquiring an ever-increasing political connotation. The EU cooperates and interacts with Brazil at three levels. First, bilaterally, through the 1992

² M.F. Biato, 'Brazil–The European Union: A Rising Global Power?' in M. Ortega (ed.), 'Global Views of the European Union' (2004) *Chaillot Paper*, No. 72, EU Institute for Security Studies, Paris.

³ A. Ribeiro Hoffmann, 'The Foreign Policy of the European Union towards Mercosur in Historical Perspective' (2002) 4/2 *Cena Internacional*, pp. 68–86.

⁴ P.R. de Almeida, 'A política internacional do Partido dos Trabalhadores: da fundação do partido à diplomacia do governo Lula' (2003) 20 *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, pp. 87–102. See also A.C. Vaz, 'Brazilian Foreign Policy under Lula, Change or Continuity?', *Briefing Papers*, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, April 2004, available under <www.nuso.org>.

⁵ A. Klom, 'Mercosur and Brazil: A European Perspective' (2003) 79/2 *International Affairs*, pp. 351–368.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁷ The EU is Brazil's biggest trade, investment and cooperation partner, with total bilateral trade of around EUR35 billion in 2004, absorbing around a quarter of Brazil's exports. Brazil is an important destination of EU investment, whose total stock in the country is close to EUR80 billion. See European Commission, *The EU's Relations with Brazil*, November 2005, available at <ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/brazil/intro/index.htm>.

EC–Brazil Framework Cooperation Agreement.⁸ Second, at an interregional level through EU–Mercosur mechanisms. This is currently the main context in which political dialogue takes place between the two sides. Created in 1991 by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, with the ambitious goal of developing a common market between the participating countries, and reinforced in 1994 with the Treaty of Ouro Preto, Mercosur has brought new dynamism to the commercial ties and the political dialogue between its member states and the EU. In this context, the most contended issue concerns the negotiation of an Interregional Association Agreement that should lead to the largest free trade area in the world between the EU and Mercosur.⁹ The negotiations started in June 1999, and, although at an advanced stage, they have not been concluded yet because of the divergences that have emerged on the content and the timing of trade liberalization.¹⁰ Specifically, the failure to reach an agreement reflects the difficulties of the EU over agricultural issues and the problems within Mercosur to reach a consensus on industrial goods' market access.¹¹

Finally, at the broadest level, the EU has established and built up links with Latin American countries through two main forums for political dialogue: the EU–Rio Group dialogue and the EU–Latin America and the Caribbean Summits.

It goes without saying that EU–Brazil relations are not exempt from occasional friction and relevant problems. In fact, despite the high degree of strategic convergence and the existence of such a set of consolidated multilevel institutional ties between the two actors, important problems still need to be addressed. Unsurprisingly, this is particularly the case as regards the economic sphere. It is somehow natural to see the interests of an internationally

⁸ The agreement established a Joint Committee composed of both Brazilian and EC government representatives where policy dialogues have been developed on issues such as bilateral cooperation, trade, environment, science and technology, information society issues, social issues, air transport, maritime transport, nuclear cooperation and development cooperation.

⁹ The EU–Mercosur Interregional Framework Cooperation Agreement was signed on 15 December 1995. The framework consists of three main elements: political dialogue, cooperation and trade matters.

¹⁰ European Commission, *The EU's Relations with Mercosur* (2005b), available at <europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/mercosur/intro>.

¹¹ On this issue, see, for instance, P. Da Motta Veiga, 'Scenarios for Mercosur's Trade Negotiations' (2002) in P. Giordano (ed.), *An Integrated Approach to the European Union–Mercosur Association*, Chaire Mercosur de Sciences Po, available at <chairemercosur.sciences-po.fr>; Chaire Mercosur, *No Doha Round, No EU–Mercosur Negotiations?*, Annual Report 2005–2006, Working Group on the European Union–Mercosur Negotiations; A. Valladao and P. Guerrieri, *EU–Mercosur Relations and the WTO Doha Round: Common Sectorial Interests and Conflicts* (2005), Working Group on EU–Mercosur Negotiations, Chaire Mercosur de Science Po, available at <www.chairemercosur.sciences-po.fr/fichiers/Publications/commerce/livres/2005/Cluster1-Livre.pdf>.

recognized emergent economic power like Brazil and those of an economic giant such as the EU – accounting for more than a fifth of global trade – often clashing. The failure to respect the 2004 deadline for the establishment of a free trade area between the EU and Mercosur, recent trade disputes between the EU and Brazil within the World Trade Organization and the resulting collapse of the so-called Doha Round, are but a few examples of the problems that still remain on the agenda. The strict link between the multilateral and bi-regional processes and emerging divergences within Mercosur itself certainly does not help in creating a favourable negotiating environment and creates even more difficulties in an already complex strategic environment.¹² In this context, the EU's agricultural policy certainly represents the single major obstacle in shaping the path of future mutual relations.¹³

In light of recent trends in Brazilian foreign policy, however, it is difficult to foresee that mutual political relations will suffer any serious setback. The emphasis put by President Lula on the strategic relevance of both the partnership with the EU and EU–Mercosur bi-regional relations as a means of counterbalancing US influence in the Latin American context¹⁴ seems to suggest that the broad convergence of perceptions on display as to how to confront global challenges will prevail over occasional frictions concerning the economic and commercial spheres.

By providing an outline of how the EU's image is perceived in Brazil, therefore, this article aims to help cast light on a crucial aspect of the EU's international stance and to carry forward the intellectual conversation to develop a better understanding of the role of the EU both as a political and economic actor. This will be done by elaborating existing data and analyses focused on the EU's image as portrayed at the levels of political elites,¹⁵ public opinion and the print media.

¹² I. Maag, *Brazil's Foreign Economic Policy: South–South, North–South or Both*, Briefing Paper, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, March 2005, available at <www.fes-globalization.org/publications/050320_01_Genf.pdf>.

¹³ Chaire Mercosur (2006), note 11 above.

¹⁴ P.R. de Almeida, 'Um exercício comparativo de política externa: FHC e Lula em perspectiva', 2004, available at <www.pralmeida.org/05DocsPRA/1260PExtLula.pdf>.

¹⁵ Research on how the EU is perceived by the political elite in the country has been conducted by trying to extrapolate information from three different sources: government, political parties, and the main business and labour organizations. A wide array of official documents, speeches and policy papers concerning foreign policy issues have been collected and analysed from a variety of different sources with the aim of identifying relevant material through which government representatives and agencies, political parties, and business and labour organizations expressed, directly or indirectly, an opinion/perception concerning the European Union or the European integration process as a whole.

II The EU as an Economic Power: A Constructive Competitor

When one looks at how Brazilians perceive the EU's role in the economic sphere, it immediately emerges that there is somehow a discrepancy between how the general public, on the one hand, and the narrower category of the 'interested' observers, on the other, look at the issue.

First of all, among ordinary citizens, the EU itself is not very much an issue. According to Latinobarometro opinion polls, Brazilians tend to have little knowledge about the EU. In Brazil, only 43 per cent of those interviewed declared to 'know' the EU.¹⁶ Secondly, when it comes to assessing the EU's role in specific fields of international politics, it is clear that the 'economic' component of the EU's external image is not the most relevant in the eyes of Brazilians. In this regard, it is interesting to look in detail at some findings of recent Latinobarometro opinion polls. In 2004, the Latinobarometro provided insights as to how the EU's policies and its global role were perceived through a set of questions that touched upon relative perceptions of the EU's contribution in different realms of international policy. Specifically, the investigation concerned the perception of the EU's relative contribution with respect to the following policy issues: democracy, free trade, peace and development cooperation. The aggregate results clearly show that in Latin America the USA was perceived as the power that contributed the most in the four sectors examined. However, free trade and development were the realms where differences between the USA and the EU were more marked (respectively 29 and 20 percentage points) whereas with regards to democracy and peace, the differentials were lower (respectively 10 and 12 percentage points).

Public perception of the world powers' contribution to peace, democracy, development and free trade in Brazil was slightly more favourable to the EU. Not only did Brazilians believe the European Union contributed to peace in the world more than the USA (22 per cent against 17 per cent), but even when they believed the USA was a more important actor (democracy, free trade, development), differences between the two actors were far less marked compared to those at continental level (respectively 3, 5, 5 percentage points for Brazil; respectively 10, 29, 20 percentage points in Latin America as a whole). Altogether, however, these findings suggest that not only is the EU not a salient issue in the perception of ordinary Brazilians but that its image is somehow more visible as regards its 'political' dimension.

The picture is reversed when political elites and the print media are taken into consideration. As far as the political elites are concerned, for instance,

¹⁶ The data is drawn from M. Lagos (ed.), *América Latina & Unión Europea, percepción ciudadana* (Focus Eurolatino-Latinobarometro, Chile, 2004). These numbers should be considered as an average result for the 1995–2000 period. The 'level of knowledge of the EU' is measured by asking individuals whether they have heard or read something about the EC/EU.

recent research shows that the image of the EU as a global trade and financial player constitutes a key feature of how Brazil's political community views the EU.¹⁷ The same applies to how the EU is depicted in the print media. Again, quantitative research conducted on a number of important Brazilian newspapers – *O Globo*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *O Estado de São Paulo* and *Folha de São Paulo* – shows that an overwhelming majority of the views identified concerning the EU – roughly 79 per cent of the total – refer to an image that is associated to some of the multiple categories defining its economic dimension.¹⁸ In particular, within this group of references, the most relevant images concern two specific areas: EU–Mercosur trade relations and EU–WTO related issues. In quantitative terms, more than half of Brazilian press coverage of the EU concentrates on these two specific issues.

In other words, there is an apparent discrepancy between different social groups as to what images the EU casts of itself. Such discrepancy, however, can be easily accounted for. In light of both Brazil's status as an emergent economy in the wider international economic system and the EU's global economic power, the centrality of the economic dimension in the perceptions of the EU's image by political elites and the national press is hardly surprising. We expected political elites and authoritative informed commentators to have a clearer perception than public opinion of the objective patterns of relative power within the international economy. Such an interest is fully consistent with Brazilian diplomacy's core objective to push through a set of reforms of the international trade regime aimed at providing Brazil with a window of opportunity to fully exploit the potentials of global trade. In addition, the generally low levels of knowledge of the EU can certainly help to explain

¹⁷ A. Poletti, 'Country Report on Brazil' in Sonia Lucarelli (ed.), *The External Image of the European Union. A Preliminary Survey on the Existing Sources*, manuscript developed in the framework of the Network of Excellence *Global Governance, Regionalisation and Regulation: The Role of the EU* – GARNET, November 2006. The study attempted to carry out a quantitative analysis of different EU representations within the Brazilian political community. References to the EU's image from each source (government, political parties, business and labour organizations) have been inserted in one or more of the five categories identified that express different potential articulations of how the EU's image is perceived. In addition, within each category a distinction has been made between positive and negative perceptions. This allowed the researcher to draw some conclusions as to what were relatively the most important fields in which the EU was perceived as a relevant actor. In 51% of cases, the EU's image was perceived as that of a global trade and financial player.

¹⁸ Ibid. The presentation of the key findings from the print media analysis was organized by focusing only on the content and the characteristics of EU representations in the Brazilian national print media. In order to do this, the content of news articles was systematically assessed and the news containing references to the EU was identified and treated as propositions to be located in three different clusters: the EU as a political power, the EU as an economic power, and the EU as an actor in the field of social affairs. The analysis covers the period between May 2004 and February 2006.

the little salience of EU-related trade and economic matters in the eyes of public opinion. As the press analysis showed, news coverage of the EU largely concentrated on complex and technical issues (EU–Mercosur–WTO negotiations) which are likely to be of little appeal to the mass public.

Moving on to a qualitative perspective, it is interesting to note the different articulations, both positive and negative, of these images among politicians and top-ranking officials. In a substantial amount of cases, the perception of the EU as a global trade and financial partner is associated with a negative image. The common denominator in each reference is the perception of the EU as a great protectionist power that by imposing high tariffs on imports and subsidizing its exports distorts the international trading system at the expense of the developing world. In particular, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is often referred to as a main instrument through which the EU maintains a structure of global trade largely skewed in favour of the developed world that hampers the economic growth of those developing countries which largely depend on exports of agricultural commodities for their economic performance. This view is shared by different actors over a length of time. While in the words of the former minister of foreign affairs, Lampreia, the EU's trade policy 'restricts artificially, unjustly, not only the potential exports towards the EU but more importantly the capacity of Brazil and its partners within Mercosur to compete in third markets',¹⁹ in President Lula's view 'the EU is perceived as a great protectionist agricultural power'.²⁰ This perception goes beyond governmental level and is shared by political parties and business organizations. In particular, in a document published by the National Confederation of Industry, it is stated that 'the EU represented, from the beginning, a dangerous example of violation of free trade'.²¹ In a way, therefore, it is possible to argue that the EU's image in this field is substantially characterized by its constraining component. However, it remains to be seen to what extent such a representation is influenced by a consolidated tendency to use a 'dependence' rhetoric.

More articulated, in this context, is the perception associated with the positive image of the EU. First, in spite of the negative perception concerning

¹⁹ L.F. Lampreia, 'Palestra efetuada pelo Ministro de Estado das Relações Exteriores', Embaixador Luiz Felipe Lampreia, por ocasião do Seminário de Informação e Reflexão a propósito da Reunião de Chefes de Estado e de Governo da América Latina e Caribe – União Européia, realizado pelo Ministério das Relações Exteriores e pelo Governo do Estado de São Paulo – 'Diálogo para o Milênio', São Paulo, 9–10 June 1999, São Paulo, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

²⁰ L.I. Lula da Silva, 'Encerramento da IV Reunião Plenária do Fórum Empresarial Mercosul União Européia', Hotel Blue Tree, Brasília, DF, 29 October 2003, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

²¹ Confederação Nacional da Indústria, *Barreiras externas as exportacoes brasileiras para Estados Unidos, Japao e Uniao Européia* (2001), available at <www.cni.org.br>.

the aforementioned elements, there is a clear recognition of the importance of the EU both as a market for Brazilian exports and as provider of foreign investments in the country. For instance, the former secretary general for external relations, Seixas Correias, recognized that 'the partnership with the EU is of primary importance. Its fifteen members, together, represent the largest market for Brazilian exports and the main source of foreign direct investment in Brazil.'²² Secondly, the EU is also referred to as an actor that is characterized by a positive attitude towards negotiations. President Lula defined the EU as 'the only Mercosur trade interlocutor that, putting on the table offers in all the relevant areas, signals a positive disposition towards negotiations'.²³ Thirdly, a positive image emerges when the political discussion touches upon the issue of trade negotiations between Mercosur and the EU on the one hand, and between Mercosur and NAFTA on the other. Generally speaking, both Cardoso's and Lula's administrations shared the view of an EU that, in itself, is functional to a healthy multipolarity of Brazil's trade relations with the developed world. The Lula government's approach, however, is marked by a clearer preference for trade relations with the EU as opposed to the project of establishing a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) between Mercosur and the US-led NAFTA.²⁴ The minister of foreign affairs, Celso Amorim, made this clear when he declared 'for the Brazilian Government negotiations within WTO are priority number one and negotiations with the EU the number two. The FTAA comes after.'²⁵ Again, it is possible to argue that such a view was shared by prominent members of President Lula's party (Partido dos Trabalhadores) when they declared 'democratic mechanisms, attitudes towards negotiations and respect for pacts proper of the European experience do not exist in the FTAA'²⁶ and by Lula himself: 'we want integration with political, economic and cultural autonomy, in this sense the FTAA cannot be considered a project for integration. The process developed with the European Union, on the contrary, should be considered as an example.'²⁷

²² L.F. De Seixas Correia, 'Cúpula América Latina e Caribe-União Européia: uma diplomacia ativa na busca de equilíbrios estratégicos', *Globo*, 1 June 1999, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

²³ L.I. Lula da Silva, note 20 above.

²⁴ P. R. de Almeida, 'Uma política externa engajada: a diplomacia do governo Lula' (2004) 47/1 *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, pp. 163–184.

²⁵ C. Amorim, 'Prioridades são OMC e UE, afirma Amorim', interview with the senior minister of state, Ambassador Celso Amorim, for the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, São Paulo, 20 June 2004, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

²⁶ Partidos dos Trabalhadores, 'Mercadante: parceira do Mercosul com UE pode se contrapor aos EUA', *Noticias*, 11 October, website of the Partido dos Trabalhadores, available at <www.pt.org.br>.

²⁷ Partidos dos Trabalhadores, 'Queremos uma integracao soberana e digna, diz Lula em Havana', (2001a) *Noticias*, website of the Partido dos Trabalhadores, available at <www.pt.org.br>.

III The EU's International 'Political' Role

The above arguments should not lead to the conclusion that the political dimension of the image the EU projects of itself is irrelevant. On the contrary, it is important to put the arguments developed on the economic role of the EU into a broader context that includes an evaluation of the EU's degree of compatibility with Brazil's long-term political and strategic interests. As already argued, the relatively high level of attention paid to the EU as a financial and trade partner, with both negative and positive associated perceptions, reflects the importance that Brazil, an 'emergent' economic power, attaches to relations with one of the main trading blocks on the global scene and the political elite's awareness that the shape of such a relationship largely influences the country's own capacity to achieve its development goals. However, the economic dimension, although relevant, is but one of the elements upon which the overall perception about the EU is shaped. A comprehensive assessment of whether Brazilians perceive the EU as an 'opportunity' or rather as an 'obstacle' for their country to achieve its main foreign policy goals requires an understanding of their evaluation of the EU's influence on the international system in terms of both distribution of power and mechanisms of global governance.

At this level, it is possible to argue that the overall judgement of the EU is mainly positive. As shown in the previous section, ordinary Brazilians know very little about the EU. Nonetheless, it is important to note that there are few negative opinions associated with the EU. The opinion polls conducted by the Latinobarometro show that the majority of Brazilians held a positive opinion both about the EU in general (55 per cent)²⁸ and about Brazil–EU relations (56 per cent).²⁹ More importantly, by adding the percentages of those who evaluate relations positively and those who do not express an opinion, it emerges that 86 per cent of Brazilians do not judge relations with the EU negatively. These findings are particularly interesting when considered comparatively. The USA, for instance, ranked well above the EU in the preferences of Brazilians. Sixty-nine per cent of respondents to Latinobarometro opinion polls declared to have a positive opinion about relations between Brazil and the USA. When it comes to taking into consideration non-negative opinions (positive plus 'don't know' answers), the numbers are 83 per cent. This data clearly casts a different light on the interpretation of the findings concerning the evaluation of relations with the EU and point, once again, to the importance of the low levels of knowledge, rather than to negative perceptions, as major determinants of the gap between the EU and the USA in the levels of appreciation. In other words, Brazilians do not dislike the EU. They simply do not know much about it.

²⁸ The period of reference is 2000–2004.

²⁹ In this case, the result consists of the average from 1997, 2003 and 2004.

This general positive perception is confirmed when one looks at the political elites. Previous research in this field stresses that the political role of the EU and its influence on the international system are viewed as overwhelmingly positive.³⁰ Only in very few cases is the EU referred to as an actor playing a negative role. Coherently with an interpretation somehow consolidated in the region, the arguments represented in this group of reference go as follows: the EU represents an imperialist/capitalist force interested in maintaining an international system where developing countries are forced into a relationship of dependence with the developed world and, therefore, should not be considered as qualitatively different from the USA. A prominent Lula party member, Jose Genoio, expressed this approach well when he declared 'it is necessary to define an alternative to a subordinated foreign policy . . . characterized by the acceptance of the paradigms proposed by the great blocks of power – the US and the European Union'.³¹

In the vast majority of cases, however, the EU is perceived as a positive factor for the shaping of a new and more balanced international system. Again, this positive perception is articulated in different positions. First, common to different administrations is the view of the EU as a force instrumental to the achievement of a more balanced global distribution of power. While for former president Cardoso the relationship between Mercosur and the EU could contribute to 'an articulation in the Atlantic space . . . based on balance, based on a logic of equality and multipolarity that is necessary to build a more just architecture of international relations',³² in the words of the present minister of foreign affairs, Amorim, 'on a political level, dialogue with the European Union and its member countries is important in view of the strengthening of the elements of multipolarity of the international system'.³³ Interestingly, this perception is shared across the political spectrum. In the programme of one of the main opposition parties, Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB), it was stated that 'the creation of the European Union . . . will be conducive to the creation of a multipolar order'.³⁴

Second, the EU's image is associated with the promotion of multilateralism and, more generally, its positive contribution in the shaping of global

³⁰ Poletti, note 17 above.

³¹ J. Genoio, 'A nova politica externa', *O estado do S. Paulo Guadalajara*, Mexico, 28 May 2004, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

³² F.H. Cardoso, Declaração à Imprensa proferida pelo Senhor Presidente da República, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, e pelo Primeiro-Ministro de Portugal, António Guterres, Brasília, Palácio do Planalto, 5 September 2001, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

³³ C. Amorim, Discurso proferido pelo Embaixador Celso Amorim por ocasião da Transmissão do Cargo de Ministro de Estado das Relações Exteriores, Brasília, Brasil, 1 January 2003, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

³⁴ PMDB, Integra do Proposta de um programma de governo 'Para Mudar o Brasil', 2005 available at <www.pmdb.org.br>.

governance. The definitions of Europe as a partner 'with which we share the will to defend an international order based upon the strengthening of multilateralism as a way to oppose tendencies towards unilateralism', and that 'can contribute to make the international system more solidaristic, more representative and, thus, more legitimate and efficient'³⁵ are commonly used by Brazilian government representatives. Again, this perception seems to be widely shared by different political parties. The 2002 government election programme of the extreme left presidential candidate, Ciro, stressed the need 'to build an alliance to promote multilateralism with big continental powers, such as the European Community'.³⁶

IV The EU as a Model

The third relevant element is the image of the EU as a model of integration. Interestingly, no negative perception is associated with this image. The traditional importance of the Mercosur project for Brazilian diplomacy and the centrality that this project has come to acquire in the Lula government's foreign policy agenda, as well as successful Brazilian diplomatic efforts in the creation of the South American Community of Nations which brought Mercosur and the Andean Community into a cooperative framework in December 2004,³⁷ are certainly among the driving factors in explaining the attention to the European integration process at both government and party level. The EU, in fact, is both admired as a model of coexistence and seen as an example for integration efforts within Mercosur. While for President Lula 'the EU is not just a partner but a source of inspiration of which we admire the determination to shape a new pole of development and civilization',³⁸ Minister of Foreign Affairs Amorim, declared 'in many respects Europe represents a model and an inspiration for our own integration efforts within Mercosur and South America'.³⁹ Recently, President Lula declared that 'the vision of the future that European leaders held in the even most difficult moments serves as an inspiration for both Mercosur and the South American Community of

³⁵ L.F. De Seixas Correia, 'A agenda européia do Brasil e a sua importância', *Valor Econômico*, 27 June 2000, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

³⁶ Frente Trabalhista, Programa de Governo 2002 'O Brasil no mundo: integracao ativa', available at <www.estadao.com.br>.

³⁷ On this point, see de Almeida, note 24 above, and Maag, note 12 above.

³⁸ L.I. Lula da Silva, Discurso do Senhor Presidente da República na Assembleia da República de Portugal, Lisboa, Assembleia da República de Portugal, 11 July 2003, at <www.mre.gov.br>.

³⁹ C. Amorim, Palestra proferida pelo Ministro Celso Amorim, na London School of Economics, 17 March 2004, at <www.mre.gov.br>.

Nations'.⁴⁰ Once again, these kind of comments are also put forward at party level. These findings seem to point to the fact that Mercosur will represent a driving force in determining future Brazil–EU relations and, accordingly, mutual perceptions. Interestingly, this view is confirmed by the existing literature on the issue. Klom, for instance, argues that 'although Brazilian foreign policy was geared towards the US for most of the twentieth century, and only occasionally towards Europe, the Mercosur project has in effect pushed Brazil in the opposite direction; US difficulties with Mercosur and Mercosur's strong relations with the EU have been crucial factors in inclining Brazil's foreign policy towards the EU.'⁴¹

Surprisingly, research in this field indicates that two of the elements that most contribute to the self-representation of the European political identity, internally and externally – the European social model and European development policy – are largely neglected, if not negatively perceived, by the political elite in Brazil and the national print media. Not only could no mention be found in official documents, speeches or articles by government representatives about these issues but in the few cases where they could be found (trade unions and political parties) the perception was associated with a somehow negative image. For instance, in an official document of the main trade union of the country, Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT), the so-called European social model is referred to as being largely in crisis since the mid-1970s and not as a term to be used to define the substance of today's reality in Europe,⁴² and in the words of a prominent figure of Lula's party, Delgado, 'in Europe remains unchanged the model and vision of peace, development and democracy of those international organizations that judge and decide upon issues concerning poor and developing countries'.⁴³ It is surprising to note, in addition, that previous analyses developed in this context show that the theme 'the EU as a social actor' was completely absent from the images in the print media.

V Conclusions

Brazil certainly represents an interesting case study for the overall purpose of this special issue. The analysis developed has, in fact, provided interesting

⁴⁰ L.I. Lula da Silva, 'Declaração à imprensa do Presidente da República', por ocasião da visita ao Brasil do Presidente da França, Jacques Chirac Palácio Alvorada, Brasília – DF, 25 May 2006, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.

⁴¹ Klom, note 5 above, p. 356.

⁴² CUT, 'A politica internacional da CUT', Secretariat of External Relations, 2003, available at <www.cut.org.br>.

⁴³ P. Delgado, Secretary for External Relations of PT at the Conference 'A força progressista na Europa e na América Latina: a agenda da esquerda democrática', 2004, Italy, available at <www.pt.org.br>.

insights and contributed to casting light on key aspects of how the EU's international identity is conceptualized in two ways. On the one hand, it has confirmed that some of the crucial elements of the self- and academic representation of the Union as an international actor have produced similar depictions with external actors. On the other hand, the research has shown that other themes are not, at least in the context of this country study, as determinant in shaping the EU's image as part of the literature on EU identity has often claimed.

Unsurprisingly, the most important component of the image the EU has shaped of itself is that of an important economic and trading player in world affairs. In light of Brazil's status as an emergent economy in the wider international economic system, the centrality of the economic dimension in the perceptions of the EU's image was something that could reasonably be expected.

In this context, the perception of the EU seems to suggest that the EU is regarded both as an opportunity and a challenge. The identification of the EU as a protectionist power goes hand in hand with the recognition of its importance as a market for exports, as a provider of investments, and more importantly as a potential ally on the path towards forging a 'fairer globalization'. The evaluation of the EU's role in the international system both in terms of global governance and distribution of power suggests that the perception of the EU as an 'opportunity' is more structurally grounded in the country's public discourse than the 'challenge' view. The EU's impact on the international system is, by far, perceived as positive. The EU's potential contribution to a more balanced global distribution of power, in fostering multilateralism, and in making the international system more solidaristic, are all elements that shape a perception of an existing broad convergence with Brazilian long-term interests. These findings confirm some of the arguments developed in the already large and growing literature on the history of Brazil and its relations with the EU. In the last decade, Brazil's foreign policy has continued to focus on changing the international status quo in areas critical to achieving the country's development goals.⁴⁴ In particular, a reform of the international trade and finance regime was and still is considered a condition for continuing the ongoing process of Brazil's positive insertion in the international economy, and a redefinition of global collective security arrangements is perceived as a *conditio sine qua non* for the evolution towards a more balanced and multipolar distribution of power at global level.⁴⁵

The analysis also corroborates another element of the Union's self-representation as a unique international actor by pointing to the existing perception of its image as a model of regional integration for the Mercosur

⁴⁴ Biato, note 2 above.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

regional framework. Indeed, it ought to be stressed that the Mercosur project plays a crucial role in shaping EU–Brazil relations. The findings seem to point to the fact that Mercosur will represent a driving force in determining future Brazil–EU relations and, accordingly, mutual perceptions. As Klom puts it, ‘although Brazilian foreign policy was geared towards the US for most of the twentieth century, and only occasionally towards Europe, the Mercosur project has in effect pushed Brazil in the opposite direction’.⁴⁶ The insistence on the EU’s role as a model for integration, President Lula’s emphasis on Mercosur’s strategic importance and his preference for EU–Mercosur over Mercosur–NAFTA negotiations are all elements that seem to suggest that the European option is perceived today as something more than, as some commentators have termed it in the past, a simple strategic ‘card’ to be played in the context of ‘truly important’ foreign policy issues such as Brazil–USA bargaining.⁴⁷

Surprisingly, those elements of European identity associated with the social/solidaristic dimensions have been found to be largely absent from Brazilian public discourse.⁴⁸ As far as the internal dimension of the European integration process is concerned, the research found that, in the period considered, the EU as an actor in the field of social affairs was a theme almost completely ignored by both the press and political representatives. The same applies to the external dimension. The EU’s role in the field of international cooperation, the fight against poverty, the promotion of sustainable development, and the protection of human rights is largely neglected if not associated with a negative image. These findings seem to indicate that the relevance of social themes in shaping the EU’s image with external actors may be overestimated. Whether relations between the EU and Brazil, an actor defined as the natural leader of the Latin American region, will take the shape of an alliance of ‘civilian powers acting for the international governance . . . that cannot possibly be interpreted with purely realistic *Westphalian* and *Realpolitik* concepts’,⁴⁹ remains to be seen.

This research has shown that, broadly speaking, the substantial convergence between how Brazilians perceive the EU and how the EU perceives itself might offer a solid basis upon which a relationship of constructive engagement can be further developed. More plausibly, therefore, the Brazil–EU relationship could be described as one between actors sharing a Grotian conception of

⁴⁶ Klom, note 5 above, p. 356

⁴⁷ For an example of this argument, see J.A. Guilhon Albuquerque, ‘O Brasil e os chamados blocos regionais’ (2002) 16/1 *Sau Paulo em Perspectiva*, pp. 30–36.

⁴⁸ For an accurate analysis of the social/solidaristic dimension of European identity, see S. Lucarelli and I. Manners (eds), *Values and Principles in European Foreign Policy* (Routledge, London and New York, 2006).

⁴⁹ M. Telò, ‘Regional Integration in Europe and in the Americas’ in *A União Europeia, o Mercosul e os seus parceiros regionais*, Cadernos do Forum Euro-Latino-Americano, Instituto de Estudos Estratégicos e Internacionais (IEEI), 2000, p. 29.

world politics and attaching great importance to both political and economic soft power and consensual processes of integration in the contemporary world.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ C. Lafer, 'Discurso do Senhor Embaixador Celso Lafer', Ministro das Relações Exteriores do Brasil – 'As relações Brasil/União Européia e o novo multilateralismo', Brussels, 15 May 2001, available at <www.mre.gov.br>.