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Transcript

Brazil and the World - Opportunities, Ambitions and Choices

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Nelson Jobim:

Ladies and gentlemen,

The organizers of this event have prepared questions about 'the Brazilian international engagement from the perspective of security and development'. I now will address each one of those questions.

How is Brazil going to balance development and security? Despite what some people believe, there is no insolvable contradiction between development and security or development and defence. The Brazilian national defence strategy (end) of December 2008 establishes an explicit relation between these two elements. The strategy states that defence is 'the shield of development'. That means that defence cannot exist without development and vice-versa. Development allows us to strengthen defence instruments. Defence guarantees protection to the development process from any external influences that could prevent or limit our capacity to reach higher standards of civilization.

One reinforces the other.

I say that the technocratic thesis according to which there would be an inescapable separation between investment in defence and the so-called social expenditure is fallacious.

First of all, the investment in defence is a social expenditure like any other. This expenditure has three particularities:

(1) It is based on providing an immaterial public good – security. Security is only valued when one is under threat.

Therefore, we can understand why there is a discouragement to its proper provision when there are no perceptible threats to collectivity.

(2) It is not very visible.

It involves the equipment of institutions – the armed forces - which will be more successful in performing their functions when they are less used in their essential mission: to ensure the external military security of the nation (or its defence), even through conflict if necessary.

(3) It is subject to moral criticism by those who do not understand the functions carried out by the armed forces.

Secondly, investments in defence will always be conditioned to a basic problem of collective action: the intertemporal dilemma. Allow me to me explain it to you. The logics of an immediate policy imposes the preference for

investments in sectors that will generate dividends right here and right now. The complete equipment of the armed forces, after all, will take years or even decades to give tangible results. We cannot forget that a complex weapon system takes years to be built and properly operated by well-trained staff. This largely explains the reasons why social investments in defence are often considered as mere expenses - and often as dispensable expenses. Such view could make sense in a Kantian world, in which there was perpetual peace. But that is not the world we live in. Therefore, I dare to say that Brazil will need more well-equipped armed forces – and not less – in order to guarantee the country's international interests.

This way, I shall answer the first question:

The balance between defence and development shall occur when we are able to reduce the remarkable gap between our stage of economic development and the nation's strategic profile. I affirm that this gap has now reached worrying proportions, once the defence's limited capacity to support Brazilian foreign policy prevents us from adopting bolder diplomatic initiatives. Therefore, the balance under discussion shall occur when our elites become aware of the importance of reducing such gap. Such awareness may occur in two ways: in a natural way, through persuasion, or; in a traumatic way, through a situation that highlights the precarious state of our defence structure. I hope that the first hypothesis may occur.

I now address the second question: What is Brazil's contribution to the debate about the challenges faced by development and global security? Brazil has made and may continue to make huge contributions to this debate. As a developing nation which is territorially satisfied, the country has been noticed for the moderation of its international positions, which aims at building bridges between the states that are part of the international system. In other words, we know the problems related to development and we have an extremely positive attitude towards global security issues. Our people want to achieve higher standards of development aiming exclusively at creating a more equal and fraternal society. We do not nurture aggressive intentions, nor do we intend to interfere with the domestic affairs of anyone.

Just by examining the position of our diplomatic body, it is possible to realize that Brazil is in favour of a holistic view of international security. Such view addresses not only the literal military problematics, but also the deep causes of conflicts between human groups: poverty, hopelessness, tribal hatred, ignorance, etc. Brazil believes there is a causal connection between

situations of disfavour and violence – whether at national or international level.

From another perspective, I have my doubts about the securitization of the social universe group. If it sounds reasonable to state that there are several causes to conflict, it doesn't seem to me to be politically and conceptually appropriate to securitize everything. Thus, it makes no sense to address housing, environmental, welfare or public health problems under the security umbrella. Eventually, this tendency will end up removing the peculiarity of the concept. What addresses everything ends up addressing nothing.

Besides providing a conceptual approach to this discussion, Brazil can give concrete examples of successful actions in fighting against poverty and maintaining positive relationships with its international partners. I shall emphasize, however, that the stability and purposeful nature of our foreign policy do not imply an indissoluble commitment to military precariousness. The current fragility of our military display does not derive from a conscious choice of the Brazilian society due to the weakness of the defence area. This actually derives from a complex set of historical and material circumstances.

In brief, a Brazil that is strong in the defence area, as we plan to be in the future, does not imply a more imposing Brazil. Likewise, a weak Brazil does not necessarily mean a more cooperative Brazil than it already is.

I now move to the third question. What is the potential of south-south co-operation at global level?

Since the beginning, south-south cooperation has been one of the prominent features of the current set of forces in the international context. This reality is highlighted especially after the consolidation of the idea that the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) would take more prominent roles in the different global diplomatic scenarios, particularly in the economic field. This new circumstance has two clear dimensions: a material one and a symbolic one.

From the material point of view, it is connected to the more accelerated growth rates registered in the so-called 'emerging' countries led by China. Naturally, this dynamism is reflected on more intense commercial exchanges between the countries of the south. In the case of Brazil, for example, we managed to increase significantly trade with south states – especially with the Chinese, our greatest partner nowadays.

From the symbolic point of view, the 'emergence' of the south implies an important rupture in the view that assumed there was an essential dichotomy

between the north hemisphere (rich and developed) and the south hemisphere (poor and underdeveloped). This fact is full of implications. It implies recognising the existence of a new paradigm of international affairs. In different worlds, we have to think differently.

Therefore, the potential of south-south co-operation is auspicious, which does not at all imply an abandonment of the traditional relations with countries of the north hemisphere.

I now move to the fourth question. How will the dynamic nature of global alliances and power balance affect Brazil's priorities?

The dynamics of global alliances and power balance resulting from it will certainly have an impact on our list of priorities. How this will happen is still a mystery. Since planners cannot predict the future, they need to make as few mistakes as possible in their assessments.

That is what we try to do.

In the international security area, our country has three great objectives that might be affected by the changes in the correlation of forces at global scale.

- (1) The assurance of sovereignty and territory integrity;
- (2) The construction of a South American security and defence identity based on co-operation, which might serve as an extra-regional deterrent factor;
- (3) The expansion of defence policy's capacity to support foreign policy.

In order to avoid the above mentioned dynamics to reduce the Brazilian international margin of manoeuvre, or even to threaten vital interests of the nation, diplomacy and armed forces need to work together. This is a basic axiom. In the diplomatic area, Brazil needs to keep its options opened, preserving the ecumenism that is part of our world engagement since the 1960's.

In brief, we do not want to nor should we be excessively dependent on any country or region. With partnership diversification, we become less vulnerable to shocks that might put our interests at risk. It should also be considered that a continental country cannot be dependant on whoever it is. The culture of tolerance and syncretism, which is an indivisible part of our way of seeing the world, represents an additional element for the promotion of a 'tous azimuths' foreign policy. I believe we must insist on that universal path that, after all, configures the best strategy for a nation with the characteristics of Brazil. In the defence area, Brazil adopts and will continue to adopt a co-operative

approach in relation to its South American neighbours. We understand we can go very far in this sense.

The establishment of an industrial base for South American defence is a clear example of that track of thought. We should deepen the mechanisms for sub-regional conciliation, such as the South American defence council. There is also room for increasing exchange, strategic dialogues, and common projects development, among other things. However, Brazil does not intend to encourage the creation of a collective defence organization in the subcontinent based on NATO's format. There are no reasons for that in our mid-term scenario.

With regards to the broad international security system, we will continue to insist on seeking productive and non-exclusive relationships with the relevant actors. We will pursue the goal of seeing Brazil's inclusion among the permanent members of the United Nations' Security Council (UNSC), the only institution that has legitimacy to decide about the use of force at global level. That is why I am concerned about NATO's new strategic concept. In short, this new concept allows the Atlantic alliance to promote military interventions in any part of the world – with or without previous approval from the UNSC.

Based on this reality and on the fact that OTAN's most prominent member did not ratify the united nations convention on the law of the sea (Montego Bay), Brazil rejects 'pan-Atlantic' perspectives, as those expressed by the absurd concept of the 'Atlantic Basin' and on the initiative carried out by Spain (a North Atlantic country, if I am not mistaken) of creating a 'south Atlantic community'.

In brief, there is no reason to believe that the world is destined to Kantian universal peace. The balance of power and the dynamics of global alliances will be closely followed by the country. Because of its evident impact on our nation's autonomy and interests, we have to build a dissuasive display that safeguards us against possible international developments that may limit our freedom of action or even our sovereignty. This dissuasive display will also allow us to broaden the range of options of Brazilian foreign policy.

Allow me to address, now, the fifth question: Is Brazil going to be a legitimate and capable broker to tensions in South America?

Regarding this question, which was formulated in good faith, it is necessary to clarify something first: Who is going to define the legitimacy of Brazilian mediation in South America?

There is no single answer to this question. As far as we are concerned, the answer will be, certainly and with fair reason, positive. To others, from their range of opinions, we cannot be sure.

Despite that, we must insist on the truth:

- Brazil is a remarkable case of a country that, in spite of its big power advantage over its South-American neighbours, has adopted moderation as a guideline on foreign policy actions.

For many Brazilians, our foreign policy is even excessively indulgent and courteous. There is no doubt, however, that Brazil plays an important role as a strategic promoter of stability in South America. We have direct interests in the maintenance of a peaceful subcontinent. By not having any expansionist or aggressive intentions towards our neighbours, and by prioritising stability as the basic requisite for development, Brazil gives a fundamental contribution to low rates of interstate conflict in its geographical surroundings.

More than that, this country invariably applies its regional influence to discourage the escalation of crises that may generate instability. It is evident that our influence capacity will always be conditioned by how confident other states are in our role as 'honest brokers'. Since Baron of Rio Branco's paradigmatic approach, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been creating a solid reputation regarding self-determination and impartiality when it comes to our partners' domestic policy. Therefore, I believe Brazil is, in fact, an 'honest broker'.

The incontestable answer to the question above is that Brazil is not only going to be a capable broker, but it already is.

I'm moving forward to the sixth question. Does Brazil have the conditions to play a role as a soft power out of its region?

Following the same train of thought of the previous question, I will make a little digression for elucidation purposes. The well-known distinction between hard and soft power made by Joseph Nye does nothing but treating as supposedly new the analytical differentiation between the coercive and cooperative aspects of power.

Nye apparently innovates when he suggests a third notion, which would aggregate both aspects: The 'smart power'.

To make a long story short, I do not believe in the possibility of separating power beyond the analytical field. In other words, soft power separated from hard power means a diminished power or a power that cannot be applied to

its full potential. It is evident that the so-called hard power cannot be used indiscriminately. But, I should highlight that it is the hard power that prevails in extreme situations. Therefore, the Brazilian influence capacity at global scale is largely conditioned by the increase of its soft power in relation to other nations. That includes, of course, military power.

Having made that brief clarification, I believe that within the next 20 years Brazil will be able to transit from its condition of regional power to that of great power – which, I insist, won't be possible without a significant increase in our current meagre military capabilities. This way, we could have a much more intense influence not only in our South American surroundings, but also in West Africa and in specific points of the world where vital Brazilian interests are at stake.

I affirm in a very straightforward way that our current capacity of regional influence is important, even though it is hindered by domestic gaps and by the low density of military power in the country.

In the global scenario, Brazilian influence is relevant in specific issues. Some of which have great significance and reach. I would mention as examples the following areas: energy, environment, agriculture and trade policy, among others.

Despite that, we must admit that Brazil still cannot play an equal role in all international affairs to that of great powers. Nothing can be stranger to the circumspection that marked the foreign policy of the patron of our diplomacy than outbursts of ostentatious behaviour or dreams of greatness that are disconnected from objective material conditions. We must assess Brazil's role in the world taking into consideration the best traditions of our foreign policy.

It is following that train of thought that I believe that our country can and should act in a more intense way in the global scenario. However, we can never put aside realism and temperance – virtues that are essential to success in the international sphere.

Ladies and gentlemen, I hope you will find this speech useful and that it may contribute to the debate about the role of defence policy in the broader context of Brazil's international affairs.

This is a debate that is ever more necessary, in which we are extremely delayed.

We must overcome that delay right now.

Thank you.