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**THE BRAZIL-EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGIC  
PARTNERSHIP: ADVANCES, CONVERGENCES, AND  
CHALLENGES**

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# **The Brazil-European Union Strategic Partnership: Advances, Convergences, and Challenges**

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to discuss the importance and locus of the European Union (EU) in Brazilian foreign policy by analyzing the Brazil-European Union (EU) Strategic Partnership. To do so, this investigation involves the use of qualitative data, literature review, and documentary research. Both Brazil and the EU do not present precise definitions for what they understand as strategic partnerships and, hence, this phenomenon must be framed through structural elements in these actors' foreign policy. From 1960 to 2007, a diagonalization of the relations between the country and the European bloc could be observed, which created the conditions for establishing the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership in 2007. The analysis of the joint declarations from the seven Brazil-EU summits that happened between 2007 and 2014 reveals the restatement of many topics, but also some changes of focus and tone. The implications of the initiative can be considered heterogeneous, once the Partnership enabled contact and the strengthening of bilateral cooperation, at the same time that it evidenced the different implementation terms of international norms and rules, the framing of debates and the language choice of Brazil and the EU. In this sense, the European bloc is an important actor in Brazilian foreign policy, given the historic evolution of Brazil-EU relations, the establishment of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership, and the EU's economic relevance for the country. In turn, the current locus of the EU in Brazilian foreign policy is still unclear, due to overlapping levels of interaction between Brazil and the EU and to the difficulties in the domestic scenarios of both actors.

## **Keywords**

European Union, Brazilian foreign policy, Strategic Partnership

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Historical, cultural and economic ties unite Brazil and the European Union (EU). Brazil was the first Latin American country to establish diplomatic relations with the European Economic Community (EEC) and, on a political level, 'Brazil and the EU recognize themselves as players of a multipolar and transforming international system' (Brasil, 2018a). In terms of trade, Brazil stands out from other countries in Latin America, accounting for 30.8% of total EU trade and holding 48.5% of the total investment of the bloc in the region. In turn, the EU is Brazil's second largest trading partner, accounting for 18.3% of its total trade and the country's largest importer of agricultural products, while Brazil is the EU's eleventh largest trading partner, representing 1.7% of its total trade<sup>1</sup> (European Commission, 2018). In addition, there are numerous and vast initiatives of cooperation between the two parties.

The relations gained a new momentum on July 4, 2007, at the 1st EU-Brazil Summit, in Lisbon, when the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership was signed. On that occasion, the parties agreed 'to enhance their longstanding bilateral relationship and in particular to reinforce the political dialogue at the highest political level'. They were also committed to 'identify and promote common strategies to tackle global challenges' and to 'fully support the [sectoral] dialogues in addressing topics of mutual interest so as to enhance the existing co-operation' (Council of the European Union, 2007, p. 1-2). Among other initiatives, the Strategic Partnership established annual summits between Brazil and the EU – which took place between 2007 and 2014 – aiming to intensify the interaction between diplomacies, elaborating thus two Joint Action Plans (2008-2011 and 2012 -2014). The initiative was put on hold in 2015, when the annual summit did not occur and the Third Joint Action Plan (scheduled for 2015 and lasting until 2017) was postponed.

Therefore, the general objective of this research is to discuss the EU's role in the Brazilian foreign policy, based on the analysis of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership. The difficulties involved in analyzing the relations between Brazil and the EU are acknowledged, since they are composed of at least four distinct levels: Brazil's bilateral relations with EU countries; relations within the framework of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership; interregional relations, especially MERCOSUR-EU; and relations in multilateral fora (Gratius, 2018). This study assumes the overlap and synergy between the constituent levels of Brazil-EU relations, even though its investigative effort is directed at the interactions established between the country and the bloc within the framework of the Strategic Partnership, without, however, failing to analyze the other levels when necessary.

Thus, this article aims to answer the following question: considering the analysis of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership, what is the locus of the European bloc in the Brazilian foreign policy today? To do so, this research will have a qualitative approach and, regarding the objectives, an exploratory character. As for the procedures, bibliographical and documentary research was adopted. The study is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the concept of strategic partnership and its nuances in the foreign policies of Brazil and the EU. The second part deals with the evolution of Brazil-EU relations, using the multilevel typology proposed by Gratius (2018). The third part, at last, discusses the *modus operandi*, content and implications of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND THE BRAZILIAN AND EUROPEAN EXPERIENCES

The term "strategic partnership" emerged as an expression in international politics in the 1990s (Blanco, 2015). In that decade and in the subsequent decade, several players began to use it to designate bilateral relations understood as priorities. However, the term was widely

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<sup>1</sup> Data from 2016, 2015 and 2017, respectively (European Commission, 2018).

used in diplomatic rhetoric, without there being a clear definition of what strategic partnerships are and what they are supposed to be. In this sense, some authors indicate a growing popularization of the expression (Lessa, 2010; Lessa and Oliveira, 2013), a result of a progressive emptying of meaning and even, one might argue, of its own indefiniteness.

One of our assumptions is the possibility to identify common characteristics that justify the use of a minimum concept of strategic partnership, since 'most part of this type of relation serves the purpose of selecting and conducting bilateral relations in order to effectively contribute to the achievement of key national, regional and/or global objectives' (Becard, 2013, p.38). Also, in the post-Cold War international context, the elimination of barriers and constraints imposed by bipolarity enabled the configuration of a new international order, 'with international interactions and accommodations linked to the rise and fall of powers or to the greater or lesser beliefs about the benefits of interdependence, be it bilateral, regional or global' (Becard, 2013, p. 41). "Partnership" means an 'association to achieve common goals, involving cooperation, association and collaboration' (Farias, 2013, p. 24). It implies the notion of "sharing", which suggests the existence of common objectives, supported, in turn, by interests and values common to the parties (Blanco, 2015). The adjective "strategic" can be understood in different ways and, for this reason, its analytical treatment is more complex. A traditional definition of the term would be 'identification of relevant long-term objectives and the existence of interests and means to achieve them' (Farias, 2013, p.25).

In this sense, the definition of strategic partnership proposed by Blanco (2015) gathers the notion of "partnership" and the broader conception of "strategy," one that does not concern only the political-military cooperation in situations of conflict. The author defines strategic partnerships, in general terms, as

a relationship in which a coordinated planning is implemented towards a desired end, which is a common goal of the parties involved and that is based on common interests or even common values<sup>2</sup> (Blanco, 2015, p. 63).

It is also noteworthy that the notion of strategic partnership carries elements of identity, since, in addition to fostering cooperation around common goals, it is also a relevant instrument of differentiation and hierarchization of one player in relation to the other. This may imply changes in the international environment as these bilateral relations have normative consequences that interfere with the nature of international interactions (Becard, 2013; Blanco, 2015). In addition, some authors have elaborated different typologies based on the profile of the players, on the purposes of the partnership and on resources or means available to achieve those ends.

The profile of the players refers to their degree of importance, in which it is possible to distinguish three types of partners: the essential, the pivot, and the natural. As for the purposes of the partnership, they may be broader, including regional and global themes, or more specific ones. Finally, the resources or means available to achieve the proposed ends can be diverse, such as the promotion of cultural ties, joint military and security exercises, actions in multilateral fora, high-level bilateral dialogue, intensification of trade flows, etc (Becard, 2013). Within this typology, the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership can be understood as comprehensive in terms of goals and with a high degree of formalization and structuring, manifested in the high-level bilateral dialogue provided by the EU-Brazil summits, concerning resources and available means. However, the definition of the profile of the players is not unequivocal, since it depends on the relative position of Brazil in relation to the EU and vice versa, and because it can vary over time, given the possible changes in the position of players in the international system.

When analyzing the strategic partnerships established by Brazil, the Brazilian Antônio Carlos Lessa stands out for his contributions. For the author, the construction of strategic partnerships would be the result of the compatibility of the universality of Brazilian diplomacy with the need for selective approaches, motivated by niches of opportunity and international constraints according to the scenario. He divides the strategic partnerships signed by Brazil

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<sup>2</sup> Despite presenting a concept of strategic partnership, Blanco believes that a broad definition of the phenomenon is not enough, but that each strategic partnership must be analyzed separately, observed and understood within its specific context (Blanco, 2015).

into two generations: the first one comprises the strategic partnerships of the 1970s and 1980s, while the “new generation” is formed by the partnerships signed since the 1990s (Lessa, 2010). The author situates this first generation of strategic partnerships based on universalism as an escape valve, in which Brazil has built strategic partnerships to face adverse political and economic situations in a reactive movement (Lessa, 1998). The events of the 1990s, however, led to a restructuring of the macrostructure of power, which started to present greater participation opportunities for previously peripheral players, such as Brazil. This framework allowed the emergence of universalism as a selectivity, in which the country was faced with a disproportion between the universality of its external interests and its scarce resources (Lessa, 1998). The “new generation” of Brazilian strategic partnerships, therefore, began to show a tendency towards structuring, at both bilateral and interregional level, and gained strength not only in Brazilian foreign relations, but also in the diplomatic rhetoric of the country, especially in the 2000s (Lessa, 2010).

In fact, the Brazilian foreign policy has taken on a new profile since 2003, a consequence not only of the solidification of the international order inaugurated in the previous decade, but also of the changes in the domestic scenario after Lula da Silva came to power (2003-2010). During Lula da Silva’s mandate, three objectives were pursued by foreign policy: the first, the search for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council; the second, the restoration of traditional economic channels (USA, EU, South America) and the valorization of economic relations little explored (African and Asian continents and the Arab world); and the third, the opening of spaces for Brazilian companies, especially those in strategic sectors (Lessa, 2010).

Objectives of this scale demanded numerous efforts, such as the expansion of the country’s bilateral relations, the sophistication of the cooperation agenda with traditional partners, as well as the extension of the Brazilian diplomatic network to regions once forgotten. Such efforts to expand the diplomatic network led to the widespread use of the adjective “strategic” to characterize relations, albeit modest, established with the most diverse players, introducing thus a sense of opportunity and urgency in the Brazilian discourse and updating the country’s international profile. Therefore, the 2000s witnessed the popularization of the idea of “strategic partnership,” since several bilateral relations with players with different degrees of importance in the external practice of the country and not so fundamental for the expansion of the capacity of realization of their interests happened to be qualified as “strategic” (Lessa, 2010).

**Chart 1 –Strategic Partnerships of Brazil**

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Basic documents</b>	<b>Areas</b>
Argentina	1988 Treaty of Integration, Cooperation and Development. Bilateral Agreements	Political dialogue, trade, investments, education, labor, energy, transports, health, education, culture, tourism, security, defense, technical cooperation, environment, science and technology, justice, social policies, nuclear energy, space, regional integration
United Kingdom	1997 Joint Communiqué, Bilateral agreements Action Plan	Political dialogue, UN reform, Trade, investment, finances, science and technology, health, education, environment, human rights, poverty eradication, defense, public management
Germany	2002 Action Plan	Political dialogue, UN reform, trade, investments, environment, science and technology, Information technology, space, transport

Partner	Basic documents	Areas
Peru	2003 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan, Bilateral Agreements	Trade, investment, environment, energy, science and technology, education, social policies, defense, infra-structure integration, culture, fight of drug traffic and organized crime
Spain	2003 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Political dialogue, UN reform, economic development, social development
India	2004 Bilateral agreements	Political dialogue, development assistance, trade, investments, security, defense, science and technology, innovation, culture, education, energy, poverty alleviation, agriculture, environment
Venezuela	2005 Joint Communiqué	Energy, mining, customs, industry, trade, family agriculture, land reform, tourism, aquiculture, fishing, science and technology, military cooperation
France	2005 Bilateral agreements and Action Plan	Borders, security, water resources, health, education, family agriculture, defense, education, science and technology, nuclear energy, environment
European Union	2007 Action Plan	Political dialogue, trade, investments, environment sustainability, renewable energies, security, defense, science and technology, health, education, culture, development assistance, space activities, information society
South Africa	2007 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Political dialogue, human rights, governance, education, security, defense, trade, tourism, transports, agriculture, food security, social responsibility, technical cooperation, health, information technology, energy, labor and social policies
Russia	2008 Joint Declaration, Action Plan	Political dialogue, science and technology, space, military, energy, trade, agriculture, health, education, culture and sports
Finland	2008 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Political dialogue, UN reform, trade, environment, science and technology, education, innovation, defense, tourism
Sweden	2008 Action Plan	Trade, science and technology, human rights, education, renewable energy, environment, defense, UN reform, nuclear disarmament
Switzerland	2008 Memorandum of Understanding	Human rights, security, environment, energy security, poverty alleviation
Ukraine	2009 Joint Communiqué, Bilateral agreements	Space activities, education, energy, health, agriculture
Indonesia	2009 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Biogenetics, biofuels, science and technology, technical cooperation, renewable energy, defense, mining, social inclusion



Partner	Basic documents	Areas
China	2009 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Political dialogue, multilateral affairs, inter-regional cooperation, consular affairs, trade, energy, mining, finances, agriculture, space cooperation, science and technology, innovation, culture and education
Italy	2010 Joint Statement. Bilateral agreements and Action Plan	Political dialogue, judicial cooperation, defense and military cooperation, space, trade, finance, small and medium enterprises, energy, tourism, health, decentralized cooperation, sports, trilateral cooperation
Turkey	2010 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Energy, defense, agriculture, science and technology, culture, defense, trade, investment, environment, fight of organized crime and terrorism
Angola	2010 Joint Communiqué	Energy, health, education, agriculture, defense, public security, trade, investment, finances, food security, naval industry, mining, education and sports
Norway	2011 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Energy, environment, human rights
Australia	2012 Joint Communiqué, Action Plan	Trade and investment, climate change and the environment, agriculture, mining and energy (including biofuels), education, culture and other people-to people links

Source: Adapted from Vaz (2014).

Chart 1 shows the strategic partnerships formally established by Brazil, that is, established through joint declarations or statements<sup>3</sup>. Of the twenty-two strategic partnerships, ten were signed with developed countries (United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, France, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Italy, Norway and Australia), five with emerging countries (India, South Africa, Russia, China and Turkey), six with developing countries (Argentina, Peru, Venezuela, Ukraine, Indonesia and Angola) and one with the EU, economic and political union. As can be inferred from the chart, the scope of strategic partnerships is quite broad and the inclusion of themes related to global governance is a trend. Topics such as trade, finance, culture, education, science and technology, defense and the environment are also common.

With a greater degree of structuring and institutionalization, most of these strategic partnerships are guided by Joint Action Plans that present usually broad objectives and a series of measures in areas defined as priorities, which guide the partnership for a certain period of time. Regular meetings, at presidential and ministerial level, are held to evaluate the progress of the Joint Action Plans and the resulting initiatives, as well as to strengthen the political dialogue between the partners. Therefore, the number and scope of contemporary Brazilian strategic partnerships, as shown in Chart 1, reflect the multiple interests of Brazilian foreign policy under Lula da Silva's mandates. They also show the flexible and circumstantial approach that the idea of strategic partnership can acquire, due to the inexistence of a well-defined concept, at least officially, in the context of the country's external action (Vaz, 2014).

In the European case, although partnerships are defined as a principle of the EU external action (as established by Article 21 of the Maastricht Treaty), the existence of strategic

<sup>3</sup> During Lula da Silva's mandate, there were also other players who were referred to as "strategic" in diplomatic rhetoric, but with whom no strategic partnership was formalized: Chile, Mexico, Colombia, Canada, Namibia, Morocco and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Vaz, 2014).



partnerships has been recognized in the *European Security Strategy*, by the name of *A Secure Europe in a Better World* and published in 2003 (Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira, 2016). One of the strategic objectives listed by the document is the establishment of an international order based on effective multilateralism, since 'the development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective' (Council of the European Union, 2009b, p. 36). As a consequence of this objective, "Working with Partners" becomes a necessity of the bloc's foreign policy.

In the text, relations with the United States are classified as "irreplaceable" as the establishment of an "effective and balanced partnership with the USA" is an objective, while "respect for common values" will seek to strengthen the bloc's relations with Russia towards a strategic partnership. Significant is the statement saying that

we should look to develop strategic partnerships, with Japan, China, Canada and India as well as with all those who share our goals and values, and are prepared to act in their support (Council of the European Union, 2009b, p. 42).

One can argue that there is no clear definition of strategic partnership in the document, since it is not clear which (and to what extent) objectives and values should be shared regarding its establishment and, above all, what to be prepared to act in support of these goals and values means. Possible interpretations are the status of these countries as regional powers (a global power in the case of China), their robust material capabilities or the existence of sufficient political will for the establishment of a strategic partnership. Even if the term has not been explicitly and accurately conceptualized, it is possible to frame European strategic partnerships, according to the 2003 *European Security Strategy*, as a tool for the joint foreign policy towards the strengthening of multilateralism as a fundamental principle of governance (Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira, 2016).

In 2008, the *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy* addressed the Europe's role in a world that is changing and reinforcing the role of partnerships in promoting effective multilateralism. The call for the construction of effective multilateralism around the world, as proposed by the 2003 *European Security Strategy*, is enhanced while the efforts to strengthen EU partnerships and achieve this goal are acknowledged. As to the previous document, four new countries are cited, Brazil, South Africa, Norway and Switzerland, and they are only mentioned to say that relations have grown in importance since 2003. The term strategic partnership is used twice, but this time it does not refer to any country but to the partnership between the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which should be strengthened for better cooperation in the administration of crises. Therefore, the concept of strategic partnership is presented more than once but not explained. Also, it seems to widen as it comes to describe the relation of the European bloc with a regional organization.

More recently, in the document entitled *The Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy* (or simply *EU Global Strategy*) of 2016, which assembles the guidelines of the common foreign policy and replaces the 2003 *European Security Strategy*, a change of emphasis can be observed. Several references are made to the need to build a "stronger Europe" to promote the interests of European citizens and many themes of domestic order. Such an inflection must be analyzed and understood from a very different international context than in 2003, characterized by the repercussion of the 2008 economic crisis, by the debate on migratory flows and the divisions within the European bloc arising from them. It is noteworthy that the referendum that led to Brexit came less than a month after the publication of the *EU Global Strategy*.

Here the idea of strategic partnership is even vaguer. This term is only used to designate relations with Japan, India and other countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in a movement of European trade diplomacy, willing to sign free trade agreements with some of the most powerful Asian economies. There is also talk of working with 'other core partners such as the US, with regional organizations, and with like-minded and strategic partners in Asia, Africa and the Americas' (European External Action Service, 2016, p. 43). Only the report assessing the second year of implementation of the *EU Global Strategy*

references the institutional dimension of strategic partnerships established by the EU, citing agreements with Canada and Japan (European External Action Service, 2018).

In fact, the term strategic partnership has never been clearly and precisely defined in any EU document at legal or political level, so European strategic partnerships have been developed in different ways and to varying degrees, being established on an *ad hoc* basis (Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira, 2016). One can argue that the imprecision of the concept of a strategic partnership in the external action of the European bloc and the lack of an explicit definition of the objectives and values that must support them give the joint foreign policy a good deal of flexibility. In the case of Brazil, these factors allow the country to establish strategic partnerships with different players and content.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the current strategic partnerships of the European bloc. Given the multiplicity of the vocabulary of the European foreign policy discourse, it is not a simple task to identify the strategic partners of the bloc. There are players with whom agreements were made – such as Brazil, Mexico, South Africa and India –, and others who are only cited as strategic partners in official documents or have regular meetings with the EU<sup>4</sup>. There are also non-state strategic partners, such as NATO, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and the African continent (Blanco, 2016). In general, the literature recognizes the existence of ten strategic partners: South Africa, Brazil, Canada, China, South Korea, USA, India, Japan, Mexico and Russia (Grevi and Khandekar, 2010; Blanco, 2015; Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira, 2016).

**Chart 2 – Strategic Partnerships of the European Union**

Partner	Year	Areas
USA	–	Trade, investment, coalition-building, renewable energy, energy security, development issues, food security, global health, cyber-security
Japan	2001	Trade, investment, regional crises, aid coordination in Africa and South Asia, nuclear safety, energy cooperation, climate change, humanitarian assistance, emergency relief and disaster preparedness and prevention
Russia	2003	Trade, economic reform, growth and competitiveness, energy
China	2003	Trade, investment, governance, development cooperation, peacekeeping, reinforcing multilateralism
Canada	2004	International security, effective multilateralism, trade, investment, human rights, coordination in the UN context, nonproliferation, counter-terrorism
India	2004	Trade, science and technology, counter-terrorism, security, energy, climate change, reinforcing multilateralism, development cooperation
Brazil	2007	Trade, investment, democracy, peace, development, renewable energies, climate change, human rights, security
South Africa	2007	Trade, development cooperation, social affairs, education, crime and justice, energy, climate and global governance
Mexico	2008	Development assistance, triangular cooperation in Central America, global agenda on development, multilateral cooperation
South Korea	2010	Trade, democracy, peacekeeping, climate change, green technology, research

Source: Adapted from Grevi and Khandekar (2010).

<sup>4</sup> Terms such as “partner,” “associated country,” “candidate for membership,” “potential candidate for membership” and “strategic partner” do not infrequently qualify players in overlapping ways (Blanco, 2016).

From Chart 2, we can infer that the EU has strategic partnerships with six emerging countries (Russia, China, India, Brazil, South Africa and Mexico) and four with developed countries (USA, Japan, Canada and South Korea). The themes covered by the initiatives are diverse and it is difficult to set a standard. However, the most noteworthy fact is that the number of strategic partnerships with emerging countries is higher than the number of partnerships with developed countries – which are reduced to three if only the formally established ones are considered –, showing recognition and adaptation to the multipolar order. In fact, all its strategic partners can be considered ambitious international political players, since they rely on the foreign policy not only to obtain economic, political and private gains, but also to project power beyond their borders and, therefore, position in the international system (Blanco, 2015).

### **3. THE EVOLUTION OF BRAZIL-EUROPEAN UNION RELATIONS AND THE ORIGIN OF THE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

Regionalism, as a phenomenon of international relations, can be understood as a conscious state policy aiming at the administration of regionalization and, at the same time, as a response to the security and economic challenges imposed by the external order of the region<sup>5</sup>. Regionalization, in turn, is a process of intensifying the interactions and transactions of non-state actors that stimulates interdependencies between States, societies and adjacent economies, and it contributes to the emergence of regionalism. The first wave of regional organizations is situated in the 1950s and 1960s, whose distinctive features were a high degree of institutionalization and homogeneity among its members, protectionist economic policies and selective supranationalism, with its leading example in the EU. The 1980s and 1990s, on the other hand, witnessed the resurgence of international regionalism – called “new regionalism” –, not so much driven by supranational aspirations but by trade liberalization, as was the case of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) when first created<sup>6</sup>.

With the strengthening of regionalism, therefore, regional organizations began to develop their external relations as political units, of supranational or intergovernmental nature, becoming players in international relations and contributing to the creation of a system of global governance composed of several layers. Interactions between regional organizations increased in number and intensity, especially from the 1990s, and this phenomenon was defined as interregionalism (Hänggi, Roloff and Rüland, 2006).

In general, the literature on interregionalism is fragmented. There is no consensus on the definition of central concepts or on a single typology that can cover the variety of the existing interactions, given the complexity of the theme and the existence of diverse layers of governance in the international system, not isolated from one another, nor immune to the asymmetries of power. However, the recognition that the discussion about interregionalism has been linked to the experience of European integration and to the foreign policy of the bloc since its origin has been consensual. In fact, the theoretical construction around interregionalism was strongly shaped by the European experience, as the EU promoted integration processes and a network of interregionalism in different parts of the globe (Hänggi, Roloff and Rüland, 2006; Ribeiro-Hoffmann, 2016; Ferabolli, 2017). The concept of interregionalism therefore proves useful to the understanding of MERCOSUR-EU relations,

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<sup>5</sup> “Region” here means a geographic area made up of independent states pursuing common economic, social and political objectives.

<sup>6</sup> “New regionalism”, therefore, concerns the emergence of numerous and varied regional organizations, many of them aimed at promoting free trade in the 1980s and 1990s. While “old interregionalism” is understood as a ‘specific mode of international cooperation developed and dominated by the most advanced regional organization’ during the 1960s and 1970s, “new interregionalism” encompasses ‘the rapid growth of the network of interregional relations in the past decade [1990] and the gradual integration of almost all countries to a greater or lesser extent’ (Hänggi, 2006, p. 32), as well as the new types and forms of interregional relations involved.

which played an important role in bringing the EU closer to Brazil, especially during the 1990s and, ultimately, to the dynamics of Brazil-EU relations.

Within this discussion, an interesting typology, adopted in this article, is proposed by Gratius (2018) when analyzing the EU's multilevel foreign policy. It points out a dual identity of the European bloc, formed by both autonomous and nation-state institutions, and which eventually creates a hybrid structure between interregionalism and pure or hybrid bilateralism. Pure bilateralism encompasses the relations of a third player with the EU member countries, while the hybrid one comprises the relations of a third player with Brussels, that is, the relations of the EU as an economic and political union. In this sense, Gratius (2018) understands strategic partnerships as a manifestation of hybrid bilateralism. Therefore, we can say that relations between Brazil and the EU occur in at least four levels:

- a) multilateral;
- b) interregional, especially via MERCOSUR;
- c) hybrid bilateral, within the framework of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership;
- d) pure bilateral, with the relations established with the EU member countries.

Considering the four levels of Brazil-EU relations, we are now interested in addressing the relations between these players from a historical perspective, which will allow us to better understand the progressive diagonalization of Brazil-EU relations and the size of the establishment of the Strategic Partnership. Interactions during the 1960s and 1980s will be briefly addressed, while the events of the 1990s and 2000s will be emphasized. It is noteworthy that the European continent has always played an important role for Brazil and Latin America, as the history of the country and the region is closely linked to the expansionism of Europe and to the historical events of that continent, not to mention the notable European influence on the ethnic and cultural formation of Brazil (Silva, 2015).

In general, relations between Brazil and the EU – when the EU is mentioned here, reference will be made to the stage at which the EU was at the time – can be characterized as predominantly friendly. However, the country was very apprehensive about the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) initially, due to the potential negative effects on the Brazilian economy (Cervo and Bueno, 2002). This trade issue lasted beyond Juscelino Kubitschek's presidency (1956-1961), when diplomatic relations were established with the EEC. In the following years, with the mandates of Janio Quadros (1961) and João Goulart (1961-1964), Brazil-EU relations did not make great progress and neither did the military regime (1964-1985).

In the 1980s, the Brazil-EU relations gained new momentum, with the signing of a "second generation" agreement, the 1982 Cooperation Agreement, and the return of the democratic regime<sup>7</sup>. The 1982 Cooperation Agreement

went beyond the narrow view of the previous agreement and opened up a dynamic of conciliation and dialogue [...]. It included political elements and greater importance was attached to development cooperation and to new areas, such as business and scientific cooperation (Ayllón, 2011, p. 129).

This mechanism opened the doors to interinstitutional dialogue and established a Joint Cooperation Committee, which in turn enabled the emergence of bilateral Sectoral Dialogues in several areas. In the Brazilian context, the election of Tancredo Neves in 1985 and the subsequent rise of José Sarney to power (1986-1989) allowed the country to use its new democratic regime as an element of its international projection. It is noteworthy that it was at this time that the EEC assumed the position of Brazil's first trading partner (Leitão and Medeiros, 2009).

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<sup>7</sup> "First generation" agreements had a strictly commercial, non-preferential nature, whose main purpose was to expand trade. The "second generation" ones included, in addition to trade issues, cooperation and development aid. "Third generation" agreements, in turn, had as their main characteristics the basis for democratic cooperation, the incorporation of the evolution clause, the presence of advanced cooperation and the diversification of cooperation scopes and instruments. Finally, the "fourth generation" ones establish a new quality of bi-regional relations, based on the idea of association (Diz and Luquini, 2011).

Despite the more regular dynamic of relations since the mid-1980s, it was only in 1992 that a new Cooperation Agreement was established. On the Brazilian side, under the presidency of Fernando Collor de Mello (1990-1992), Brazilian foreign policy suffered an inflection motivated by the political reordering of the international system with the end of the Cold War and the strengthening of globalization. It was also motivated by the model of internal growth of substitutive logic, with the subsequent neoliberal option, both in the domestic and international arena<sup>8</sup> (Hirst and Pinheiro, 1995). Such an inflection led to a strengthening of ties with the USA and closer ties with the EU and with Japan, industrialized and developed powers. On the European side, the Maastricht Treaty (1992) transformed the EEC into the EU, establishing a new institutional framework (Lazarou and Fonseca, 2013).

In this sense, the new Cooperation Agreement included the democratic clause, which conditioned the institutional partnership to the observation of pluralist political principles and human rights, and the evolution clause, which enabled the parties to broaden the content of the agreement without the need to renegotiate it fully. The introduction of the evolution clause allowed the EU to expand the content of the agreement according to the political-economic maturity of its relations with its partners. In the case of Brazil, the transformation of the European perception occurred 'in the sense of conceiving it more and more, despite the deep endogenous social inequalities, under an economic prism in which the forces present are of approximately equivalent order of magnitude' (Leitão and Medeiros, 2009, p. 19). Within the evolution clause, the Financial Cooperation Agreement (1994) and the Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement (2004) were signed, in which ideas of mutual benefit and an overall balance of benefits are present, leading to a gradual diagonalization of the Brasília-Brussels relations.

Therefore, the new foreign policy standard of the Collor de Mello period aimed to serve as a support for domestic economic reforms in order to increase the country's competitiveness on the international scene. In addition, it is from this understanding that the creation of MERCOSUR, institutionalized by the Treaty of Asuncion of 1991 can be considered and understood as an instrument that would facilitate the liberalization of the Brazilian economy. In the following year, an Interinstitutional Cooperation Agreement was signed between MERCOSUR and the EU, and the aim was to make the European bloc provide technical and institutional support for the regional integration process of the Southern Cone (Lazarou and Fonseca, 2013). After MERCOSUR emerged, Brazil-EU relations began to take place mainly at the interregional level – a trend that would be interrupted with the establishment of the Strategic Partnership –, therefore, they began to be considered at a broader level, capable of covering different levels of interaction.

Under the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) the Interregional Cooperation Agreement was signed (1995), an important milestone in MERCOSUR-EU relations. Cardoso's foreign policy saw in MERCOSUR not only one of its regional fronts of action, but an articulating axis of Brazil's external action aiming at a greater international projection. The understanding of MERCOSUR as a mere instrument of economic liberalization was, therefore, partially overcome, and the regional integration process began to assume an important role in the country's South-American bet. In addition, the foreign policy of this period was characterized by presidential diplomacy, in which the official visits and dialogues of the president were presented as occasions to show the world a new Brazil, characterized by a more mature democracy and economic stability, given the success of Plano Real. Thus, the European continent was considered as an option within the redevelopment framework of the post-Cold War international system as Brazil sought to negotiate some matters of the foreign policy interest, such as the permanent seat in the UN Security Council. However, as to the Brazil-EU relations, Cardoso gave priority to the interregional relations (Silva, 2008; Lazarou and Fonseca, 2013).

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<sup>8</sup> Broadly employed, neoliberalism is understood, in this study, as an institutional reconfiguration of capitalism, whose pillars are privatization, deregulation and de-universalization. Different articulations and combinations of these pillars are possible, given the national specificities. In the Brazilian case, the first two were assumed (Fernandes, 1995).

An important milestone in MERCOSUR-EU relations, the very text of the Interregional Cooperation Agreement, also known as the Madrid Agreement, reveals the transitional nature of this instrument. As set out in Article 2: 'The objectives of this Agreement shall be to strengthen existing relations between the parties and to prepare the conditions enabling an interregional association to be created' (Acordo-quadro inter-regional de cooperação, 1996, p. 4). Considering, then, a non-preferential, provisional, transitional, and evolutionary agreement, the Madrid Agreement was perceived as a previous step towards a deepening of relations between the two blocs.

Negotiations for such an association began at the First MERCOSUR-EU Summit, in 1999, and, during Cardoso's presidency, they were marked by mutual rejection as a result of unsatisfactory proposals for sensitive sectors and products of both parties<sup>9</sup>. The negotiations represented an important counterbalancing movement for the US presence in the region, which had proposed a hemispheric integration project, the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), a few years earlier. Thus, for MERCOSUR, and specifically for Brazil, to negotiate the European proposal served the purpose of showing the US that there were options, equating a strategic triangulation (Albuquerque and Lohbauer, 2012). Challenging the predictions of a rapid outcome, the negotiations of the association lingered on, and the parties reached an agreement only in 2019. In order for the agreement in principle to enter into force, the final texts still need to be finalized, signed and ratified. Thus, due to the lack of detailed information, one cannot confirm whether the negotiations were truly concluded, nor their scope and depth.

When Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva became president (2003-2010), the Brazilian foreign policy developed a new profile, adopting a more active position in the international scene. Many of Lula da Silva's foreign policy traits were already available, as foreign policy continued to be perceived as a tool for the country's development model in search of greater global prominence. However, one of the traits of discontinuity was the framing of an international context in transition within the framework of an international system characterized by asymmetries of power to the benefit of the great powers. In this context, two main general objectives, embodied in specific objectives, were pursued by foreign policy: to obtain regional leadership in the South American continent and to become a global player in reorganizing international institutions from the defense of reciprocity in multilateralism<sup>10</sup>. The country, therefore, reoriented its behavior through the valorization of greater autonomy in external action, the strengthening of universalism through the diversification of ties – with emphasis on South-South cooperation – and through a strong participation in multilateral fora, increasing its proactivity in international politics. However, the ties with developed countries did not recede; on the contrary, a good relations policy was implemented (Saraiva, 2012).

In the meantime, negotiations of the EU-MERCOSUR Association Agreement were halted in mid-2004, which would only be resumed at the end of the second mandate of Lula da Silva, weakening the interactions between Brazil and the EU at the interregional level and laying the foundations for a more intense bilateral relation. The halt may be explained by the prominence of the negotiations in the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO), in which Brazil articulated the G-20, gained international recognition, as well as the country's regional operation, of strong integrationist nature and desirous of establishing and consolidating a cooperation network with the countries of its surroundings. This led to the understanding of MERCOSUR as a predominantly political project, in opposition to the old

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<sup>9</sup> The largest divergences concern the agricultural issue, on the European side, and the liberalization of the industrial, services and government procurement sectors, on the South American side. With the progress of the negotiations, internal disputes in each of the blocs gained momentum. In the EU, France, the largest beneficiary of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), led the opposition to accepting an extra-EU agreement to open the agricultural market. In MERCOSUR, there were differences both within and between sectors, considering the prediction of asymmetric gains and losses, mainly between Brazil and Argentina (Albuquerque and Lohbauer, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Brazilian diplomacy elaborated the concept of reciprocity in multilateralism based on two presuppositions: the existence of rules to compose the international order, without which the asymmetries of power prevail in favor of the great powers; and the joint elaboration of these rules, essential to ensure reciprocity of legal effects and to prevent the interests of some from overriding the interests of others. In other words, 'reciprocity is ensured when the rules of multilateral order benefit all nations' (Cervo and Bueno, 2011, p. 531).

economic vision<sup>11</sup> (Cervo and Bueno, 2011). Such a context, coupled with the proliferation of strategic partnerships and reinforcement of the EU's bilateral strategy during the 2000s, are elements that make up the situation in which the establishment of the EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership took place in 2007.

In this sense, during Lula's first mandate (2003-2006), relations with the EU were marked by competition and conflict, caused by Brazilian demands in various trade disputes within the Doha Round and the negotiations of the Bi-regional Association. The second one (2007-2010) was characterized by a reduction in tensions, which contributed to the decrease in the (political, economic and international) power differential between Brazil and the EU – given the relative maturation of the country's international projection – and Brazil's growing interest in strengthening relations with the European bloc to increase its negotiating power and its international visibility and prestige. Also, Lula's second mandate had a closer relationship with the European Commission, presided over by the Portuguese José Manuel Durão Barroso, who set as one of the objectives of his mandate to intensify relations with Brazil (Ayllón, 2011).

Then we can conclude that the evolution of the Brazil-EU relations was marked by a qualitative leap, which increased its intensity and scope (of a highly mercantile nature at first, the relations began to encompass several political themes). Initially, this relation was located within an asymmetric axis and was marked by verticalization. With the passage of time, verticalization was restricted and created spaces for more horizontal partnerships, leading to the diagonalization of relations. The country's economic growth and the reduction of political distances, in terms of influence and prestige, in the 2000s, made relations more horizontal, which in turn made the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership possible.

#### **4. THE BRAZIL-EUROPEAN UNION STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP (2007-2018)**

The Strategic Partnership was established at the first summit between Brazil and the EU, which took place in Lisbon in July 2007. The proposal to establish the Strategic Partnership was an EU initiative. Preparations for the celebration of the initiative can be identified in 2006 when the president of the European Commission, Durão Barroso, visited the country and in May 2007, with the first round of political consultations between Brazil and the EU, in Brasilia. In the document Towards an EU-Brazil Strategic Partnership, prepared by the Commission and presented to Parliament and Council also in May 2007, the scope of the relation within the framework of the initiative emerges. The document lists ten areas and cooperation sectors at global, regional and bilateral levels that delineate the Strategic Partnership (Commission of the European Communities, 2007):

- a) strengthening multilateralism;
- b) raising human rights standards, fostering democracy and governance;
- c) achieving the Millennium Development Goals and promoting regional and social development;
- d) protecting the environment;
- e) strengthening energy cooperation;
- f) enhancing Latin America's stability and prosperity;
- g) advancing the Mercosur agenda;
- h) reinforcing trade and economic relations;
- i) justice, freedom and security;
- j) bringing people together.

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<sup>11</sup> Group of intermediate countries interested in the end of European domestic subsidies and subsidies for US exports of agricultural products and greater access to traditional Northern markets, articulated within the WTO (Cervo and Bueno, 2011). It is noteworthy that there is another G-20: one formed in 1999 by finance ministers and central bank governors of the world's nineteen largest economies plus the EU. In the joint declarations made within the framework of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership, reference will be made to the latter.



It is noteworthy that Brazil was the last BRICS country to meet with the EU at a summit meeting, which can be explained by the fact that 'EU-Brazil dialogue has not been sufficiently exploited and carried out mainly through EU-MERCOSUR dialogue' (Commission of the European Communities, 2007, p. 2). In the joint statement of the summit, 'their close historical, cultural and economic ties' and the shared 'fundamental values and principles such as democracy, rule of law, promotion of human rights and basic freedoms and a market-based economy' were evoked as explanatory factors for the emergence of the Strategic Partnership (Council of the European Union, 2007, p. 2).

In order to implement the comprehensive thematic program of the Strategic Partnership, besides the establishment of the Action Plan, the *modus operandi* of the initiative was negotiated. It consists of holding high-level annual dialogues at regular summit and ministerial meetings that address global challenges and crises in a broader approach, while pursuing a common position between the parties. At a lower hierarchical level, meetings of senior officials and the EU-Brazil Joint Committee were held, responsible for the preparation of the presidential and ministerial summits, as well as for the monitoring of the Sectoral Dialogues and implementation of the Joint Action Plans. The need to deepen and strengthen the Sectoral Dialogues, of a less political and more technical nature, between specialized community institutions and their peers from ministries, entities and agencies of the federal administration of Brazil was also recognized<sup>12</sup>. In this context, the "EU-Brazil Sector Dialogues Support Facility" was created, whose resources were established by the *Country Strategic Paper 2007-2013*<sup>13</sup> (Ayllón, 2011).

Throughout the eleven years of Partnership, seven summits took place between 2007 and 2014, as well as the first Joint Action Plan, in 2008-2011, and the second, covering the period 2012-2014. The initiative was put on hold in 2015, when the annual summit did not occur and the third Joint Action Plan (scheduled for 2015 and lasting until 2017) was postponed. In this subsection, the joint statements prepared at the summits between Brazil and the EU will be analyzed (Council of the European Union, 2007, 2008, 2009a, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014). The high-level meetings and the text of the joint statements arising therefrom are believed to be interesting primary sources for understanding the content of the Partnership and the dynamics of relations within the framework of the initiative. Moreover, such joint statements not only reflect the broad objectives of the Partnership in the field of official discourse, with the recurrence of several ideas, but also some elements of the scenario in which they were conceived. These elements, in turn, influenced the relations, leading to changes of focus throughout the summits and even to soft changes of tone.

To better organize the analysis of the documents, a summary table of the contents of the joint statements was prepared, in which five thematic categories are proposed, in order to facilitate the examination of the documents and to make the modulation of the topics throughout the summits more evident. The categories adopted were:

- a) multilateralism;
- b) security and peace;
- c) economic issues;
- d) environment;
- e) science and technology.

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<sup>12</sup> 'The Sectoral Dialogues are an instrument of cooperation between the EU and Brazil based on the principles of reciprocity, complementarity and mutual interest. Sectoral Dialogue means the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices of a technical, political or both nature, in themes of common interest and occurring regularly in different hierarchical levels' (Diálogos União Europeia-Brasil, 2018). Although they emerged in 1982, it was only with the establishment of the Strategic Partnership and the EU-Brazil Sector Dialogues Support Facility that they expanded and gained momentum.

<sup>13</sup> *Country Strategy Papers* (CSP) are documents, drawn up by the European Commission, which guide international development cooperation with third countries over a period of time. In Brazil, two were published: one referring to the period 2001-2006 and other referring to the period 2007-2013. The structure of these documents consists of presenting the objectives of the European cooperation, analyzing the situation in the country using various indicators, a review of the European Commission's cooperation with the country concerned, and the strategy to be adopted by the bloc during the period defined by the CSP.

Given the breadth of the topics covered by the Strategic Partnership, such a categorization was necessary, considering the thematic axes of the initiative and the recurrence of these topics in the joint statements. In the summary table, the subjects were grouped in the order in which they appear in the documents to facilitate possible consultations with the primary sources. The Joint Action Plans were not covered by the summary table, but they will be briefly commented below<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup>The purpose of this summary table is, as we have said, to facilitate the examination of joint declarations and to highlight the modulation of the main themes of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership over the years. For this reason, it presents the themes in a concise manner, without reference to the instruments of international law cited by the parties and to any initiatives born within the framework of the Partnership.

**Chart 3 – Summary table of the joint declarations of the Brazil-EU summits**

	<b>Multilateralism</b>	<b>Security and Peace</b>	<b>Economic issues</b>	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Science and technology</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup>EU-Brazil Summit</b> Lisbon July 2007	Reform of the main UN bodies	Disarmament, non-proliferation; arms control	Conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement; conclusion of the Doha Round	Strengthening the multilateral climate change regime; energy efficiency; renewable energies	Strengthening the sector dialogues on science and technology
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> EU-Brazil Summit</b> Rio de Janeiro December 2008	Reform of the main UN bodies; strengthening the bioregional relations	Commitment to combat organized crime, corruption and illicit drugs	International financial crisis and its impact; conclusion of the Doha Round; conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement	Climate change; reducing the current rate of biodiversity loss; renewable energies	Innovative technologies oriented to the production of goods and services; cooperation agreement in the field of research on fusion energy
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> EU-Brazil Summit</b> Stockholm October 2009	Reform of the main UN bodies; strengthening the bioregional relations; triangular cooperation in Africa	Situation in Honduras; endeavors towards peace in the Middle East; disarmament, non-proliferation; Iranian nuclear program; commitment to combat organized crime, corruption, and illicit drugs	International financial crisis and its impact; consolidation of the G-20 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation; conclusion of the Doha Round; conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement	Strengthening the multilateral climate change regime; Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation; low-carbon economy; high level meeting in the run-up to Copenhagen Conference; renewable energies; Rio+20	Coordinated call on research in second generation biofuels; cooperation agreement in the field of research on fusion energy
<b>4<sup>th</sup>EU-Brazil Summit</b> Brasília July 2010	Reform of the main UN bodies; Brazil-EU cooperation in multilateral fora; entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty; strengthening the bi-regional relations	Commitment to combat organized crime, corruption, illicit drugs and people traffic; endeavors towards peace in the Middle East; disarmament, non-proliferation; support and	International financial crisis and its impact; global recovery; strengthening the financial systems; importance of G-20; promotion of international trade and investments; conclusion of the EU-	Rio+20; COP 16 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change with a view to obtain an effective legally binding outcome; renewable energies; efforts for combating biodiversity loss	Civil aviation; working group on information and communication technologies; launching of joint calls in the area of second generation biofuels, nanotechnologies and

	(EU-Latin America and Caribbean)	reinforcement of the International Atomic Energy Agency; Iranian nuclear program	Mercosur Association Agreement; conclusion of the Doha Round		public health; future cooperation in the field of satellite navigation
<b>5<sup>th</sup> EU-Brazil Summit</b> Brussels October 2011	Commitment to promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms; triangular cooperation to support the Universal Periodic Review mechanism	Situation in Syria and Libya; endeavors towards peace in the Middle East	International economic situation; unity and determination in the G-20; conclusion of the Doha Round; conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement; inclusion of the civil society in economic matters; loan agreement between the European Investment Bank and Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social	Rio+20; greater international cooperation in response to climate change; renewable energies and bioenergy	Academic cooperation and mobility (Erasmus, Marie Curie and Science Without Borders); future structured space policy dialogue; strengthening the scientific cooperation in environment topics
<b>6<sup>th</sup> EU-Brazil Summit</b> Brasília January 2013	Promotion and protection of human rights; moratorium on the death penalty in multilateral fora; EU-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Summit; trilateral cooperation to support electoral processes in African Portuguese Speaking Countries and East Timor	Situation in Syria; endeavors towards peace in the Middle East; opposition to Israeli plans of expansion in the West Bank; Iranian nuclear program; situation in Mali and Guinea-Bissau; disarmament; peacekeeping and peacebuilding; non-proliferation; combating corruption, money laundering, drug trafficking	Satisfaction with the volumes of bilateral trade and investment flows; international economic situation; strong, sustainable and balanced economic growth in the G-20; conclusion of the Doha Round; conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement	Commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions; Amazon biome; biodiversity; Rio+20; universal access to all forms of energy; renewable energies; biofuels; emissions of the aviation sector; good practices concerning safety of offshore oil exploitation installations	Commitment to promoting bilateral dialogue in science, technology and innovation; training and cooperation activities under the Brazilian mobility program Science Without Borders; coming into force of the agreement for cooperation in the field of fusion energy research; information

		and human trafficking			society;academic mobility
<b>7<sup>th</sup>EU-Brazil Summit</b> Brussels February 2014	Converge on the global agenda; promotion and protection of human rights; promoting the strategic partnership EU-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States; need for a reform of the UN Security Council	Haiti; peacekeeping and peacebuilding; disarmament; non-proliferation; Syria; negotiations Israel-Palestine; Iranian nuclear program; Tunisia; Mali; Guinea-Bissau; Central African Republic; South Sudan; trans-national security issues; drugs	Economic ties; contacts between business communities; conclusion of the EU-Mercosur Association Agreement; conclusion of the Doha Round	Greater international cooperation in response to climate change; sustainable development; renewable energies	Cooperation in research and development in renewable energy; Internet governance

Source: Adapted from Council of the European Union (2007, 2008, 2009a, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2014).

The Joint Action Plans serve as guides to the Strategic Partnership, as they 'enable both sides to start new regular bilateral dialogues as well as deepen existing partnership in areas that are of mutual strategic importance' (Council of the European Union, 2008, p. 8). The areas of cooperation are established in a more limited way when compared with the joint statements, but, nevertheless, they do not present indicators to measure success (Ayllón, 2011). The first Joint Action Plan (2009-2011) (Council of the European Union, 2008) establishes four major areas of cooperation, which are then divided into other themes:

- a) promoting peace and comprehensive security through an effective multilateral system;
- b) enhancing the economic, social and environmental partnership to promote sustainable development;
- c) regional cooperation;
- d) promoting science, technology and innovation.

The second Joint Action Plan (2012-2014) establishes the same four areas, constituting a revision of the first Plan without major innovations (Blanco, 2015).

Considering the content of the joint statements and the summary table prepared, we can notice the recurrence of some themes. In the case of multilateralism, there is often a reform of UN bodies, with explicit references to the reform of the Security Council, and the strengthening of relations at the interregional level (although it does not fit perfectly into the category of "multilateralism", the interregional themes were included in it, given their importance and recurrence in the joint statements). In the security and peace category, disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as the fight against organized crime, corruption and illicit drugs are recurrent themes.

In economic issues, the seven joint statements mention the need for joint efforts to conclude not only the EU-MERCOSUR Association Agreement (whose negotiations were stalled in 2004 and resumed only in 2010, the year of the fourth summit) but also the Doha Round, within the framework of the WTO. Overall, there is a consensus on strengthening the principles and measures of trade liberalization and the need to regulate the international financial architecture, given the profound impacts of the 2008 crisis, especially on the European continent.

The climate change regime, the preparation and results of Rio+20 and the energy issue, indicated as one of the foundations of the Strategic Partnership in the fifth joint statement, are included in the environment category. Finally, issues related to science and technology are less explored throughout the joint statements, being reserved for the Sectoral Dialogues. Still, nuclear fusion and biofuel research is a frequent topic. Some topics have not been covered by the categories proposed in the summary table, such as cultural cooperation and tourism.

In addition to the recurrence of certain themes in the joint statements, it is interesting to note the changes of focus throughout the documents. While the first joint statement welcomes the establishment of the Strategic Partnership and uses a more general language, the subsequent declaration of December 2008 has a more economical tone, with references to the impacts of the global financial crisis and the need for economic and financial measures to restore market confidence, stabilize financial markets, and promote global economic growth.

The third joint statement focuses on environment-related themes, with climate change topics – one of the most important challenges of the international community – and on the preparation for the Copenhagen Conference. It is noteworthy that this joint statement mentions, for the first time, the Brazilian and European positions on events in the international system, with references to the violation of the constitutional order in Honduras and the manifestation of support for peace efforts in the creation of two States (Israel and Palestine) in the Middle East. From then on, allusions to the international system will be made in other joint statements, including the mediation of Brazil and Turkey on the Iranian nuclear issue and the situations of Libya, Syria and other countries.

In the fifth declaration, with the presence of President Dilma Rousseff, the social dimension of globalization is mentioned, and the role of academic research, technology and innovation in generating sustainable growth and increasing productivity and employability is highlighted. In subsequent statements the cooperation in science and technology gains more focus. Finally, the last two joint statements are the longest and most dense ones, emphasizing security and peace and alluding to the convergence of Brazilian and European positions on many international events.

In short, the reaffirmation of the principles and values underlying the Strategic Partnership appears in all joint statements. In addition to the existence of recurrent themes, shown in the summary table, it is possible to notice changes of focus and an inflection in the tone of the declarations between 2007 and 2014. The first four declarations present themes more broadly, using a more general language to encompass cooperative interactions, emphasizing the efforts of Brazil and the EU to build a relationship marked by positive collaboration and complicity. The other three declarations, however, are longer, denser and cite concrete cases, listing convergent positions in the international system, but at the same time urging the parties 'to converge further on the global agenda and on our positions in international fora' (Council of the European Union, 2014, p. 2). This statement illustrates the perception of Lazarou (2013) about the sixth Brazilian-EU summit, which

has brought about a sense of renewed confidence and some more concrete deliverables. Several factors have contributed to this, including the global financial crisis and its domino effects, which are of Brazil's concern; the need for financial recovery and renewed growth in Europe; the demand for multilateral security initiatives globally given the US's reluctance to act as a unilateral security provider; and the launch of new regional projects in South America (Lazarou, 2013, p. 1).

By presenting joint positions on issues of global concern, the parties advocated the idea of showing the projection of their relationship. Also, by citing the need to converge even more on the global agenda, it was suggested that 'the parties would have to find a way to find a common ground to act together instead of defending positions that often put them on different sides at the negotiations table' (Blanco, 2015, p. 192) so that their Strategic Partnership could be deepened. Such an inflection of tone in the last declarations is related to a less favorable international scenario, with the impasse and paralysis of multilateralism, especially in the WTO and the UN, and the reflections of the Arab Spring, with the consequent change in the political forces in the Middle East and North Africa. This scenario updated the content of the Strategic Partnership by making efforts to promote multilateralism more urgent through greater articulation in the multilateral arena (Silva and Pérez, 2019). However, such a maturation of relations within the Strategic Partnership framework, which can be inferred from the change in tone of the last joint statements, did not prevent the halting of the initiative with the interruption of the summits after 2015 and the postponement – with no future date – of the third Joint Action Plan.

To complement the analysis of the joint statements, in an effort to identify the main implications of the initiative, the contributions of Gratiús (2012, 2018), Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira (2016), Saraiva (2017) and Gardini<sup>15</sup> are used. It is a consensus that the establishment of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership represented a qualitative leap in relations between the parties, once marked by distrust, arising from divergences in the commercial sphere, and by the interregional option, which relegated bilateral relations with the MERCOSUR countries to the background. The Strategic Partnership, therefore, changed the terms of engagement of the relations by proposing an institutional framework that began to shape them, including, in addition to trade topics, other relevant

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<sup>15</sup> Gardini, Gian Luca. **Desenvolvimento econômico e sustentabilidade**: agendas da União Europeia e do Brasil. Porto Alegre, UFRGS, Sept. 25, 2018. Lecture given to professors, students and employees of UFRGS and to external audiences.



topics that best fit Brazil's new international position as an emerging power, a fact recognized by the European bloc itself. It should also be considered that the technical cooperation between the parties has become denser, as illustrated by the strengthening of the Sectoral Dialogues, which currently total thirty-five, with emphasis on those dealing with migration, science and technology, and energy (Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira, 2016; Blanco and Luciano, 2018).

While acknowledging the existence of common principles and values between Brazil and the EU and the qualitative leap in relations provided by the Strategic Partnership, some studies do not fail to mention the results, initially intended, that were not achieved by the initiative. Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira (2016) emphasize the existence of divergent views between the parties, 'notably in terms of the implementation of international norms and rules, the framing of debates and the choice of language' (Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira, 2016, p. 65). Grätius (2012) argues that both Brazil and the EU aspire to multilateralism, but that their strategies differ. While Brazil seeks a "multilateral multipolarity", the EU seeks a "multipolar multilateralism", which means that the European bloc prefers a multipolar order based on international law and binding commitments. Brazil, on the other hand, values a balance of power with neorealist traits and, therefore, the multilateralism sought by the country is less normative, more pragmatic and considers the interests of the South. In turn, such strategies have led to different positions in multilateral fora. Here, once again, the different levels of Brazil-EU relations overlap, as the author's conclusions consider the positions of the EU member countries in multilateral fora, not the European bloc itself.

In addition, further obstacles to building a global mutual agenda are mentioned, given the different understandings in the areas of trade, development cooperation, climate change, international peace, and the global financial system. In fact, the trade issue has not presented such qualitative advances, and it still raises controversies, evidenced by the non-consummation of the MERCOSUR-EU Association Agreement.<sup>16</sup> As to climate change, despite the defense of a firm global commitment on this issue, Brazil and the EU start from different premises about its main cause, with the consequent adoption of different methods, emphasizing voluntary commitments, on the Brazilian side, and binding commitments, on the European side (Grätius, 2012).

Such divergences in the positions adopted by Brazil and the EU should be understood in a broader context, considering 'the two actors' distinct identities, historical trajectories and different loci in a globalized multilateral world' (Ferreira-Pereira and Vieira, 2016, p. 65). This discussion certainly goes beyond the scope of this study, but it is worth quoting the brief summary proposed by Grätius (2012). When citing the multilateral convergences of Brazil and the EU, she lists the maintenance of the liberal order, the commitment to protect the environment, the defense of fewer trade barriers, the maintenance of the current development regime, and the regulation of migration. Concerning the differences, she cites the understanding of sovereignty (while the EU defends "Responsibility to Protect," Brazil defends "Responsibility while Protecting"), the application of sanctions, the understanding of democracy (the EU undertakes to promote democracy, Brazil adopts the principle of non-intervention), the North-South divide, and trade issues (European protectionism encouraged by environmental interests *versus* opposition to non-tariff barriers and defense of the interests of the South on the Brazilian side).

Gardini, in turn, says that the implications of the Strategic Partnership are heterogeneous, and that it is necessary to adjust the objects of analysis, given the multiplicity of themes and objectives proposed by the initiative<sup>17</sup>. In addressing the implications of the initiative, he affirms that the strengthening of "effective multilateralism"

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<sup>16</sup> Negotiations gained new impetus in 2016, once the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership had been paralyzed (Brasil, 2018b).

<sup>17</sup> Gardini, Gian Luca. **Desenvolvimento econômico e sustentabilidade**: agendas da União Europeia e do Brasil. Porto Alegre, UFRGS, Sept. 25, 2018. Lecture given to professors, students and employees of UFRGS and to external audiences.

did not materialize as desired, since there were divergences in the voting pattern of Brazil and European countries in multilateral fora. Nor has there been any significant progress in the field of human rights and stability in Latin America. For the author, the greatest progress was made in the field of sustainable development, with the Sectoral Dialogues and the bilateral projects between Brazil and some European countries in this area, and bilateral trade, which became three times larger but still comprises an asymmetric relation.<sup>18</sup> It is noteworthy that other authors see in environmental cooperation some of the greatest advances of the initiative. Saraiva (2017) assures that 'despite the different scenarios faced by both players, the Strategic Partnership paved the way for greater understanding and cooperation' (Saraiva, 2017, p. 6), leading to a joint proposal between Brazil and the EU on carbon market regulation, which served as the basis for the Paris Agreement, signed in 2015.

Saraiva (2017), in a recent article, makes an interesting review of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership, pointing to the change of focus observed in the Lula da Silva-Rousseff transition. In this way, she seeks to position the EU in Brazilian foreign policy as of 2007, exclusively within the framework of the Strategic Partnership. Referring to the implications of the initiative during Lula's second mandate (2007-2010), the author emphasizes a greater understanding and articulation of environmental issues and triangular cooperation on the African continent, as well as advances in science and technology, with a more intense exchange between Brazilian and European scientific institutions. As to the interregional level, she claims that the gains were sparse and that, at multilateral level, divergences prevailed, since aligning the interests of both parties proved difficult. In this sense, she affirms that 'by the end of the Lula administration, the concrete results of the Strategic Partnership were limited' (Saraiva, 2017, p. 5).

In addressing the Strategic Partnership under Rousseff's mandate (2011-2014), she states that there were no significant results in the international arena, which is explained, furthermore, according to the author, by the changes in the Brazilian external performance, since there was a decline in participation in international and regional fora, leading Brazil to take a reactive position. She argues that, within the framework of the Strategic Partnership, there was a negative impact on multilateral topics, while the technical-level Sectoral Dialogues received more attention and funding, which promoted a greater exchange of ideas and cooperation (Saraiva, 2017).

The reasons for the interruption of the summits and the postponement of the elaboration of the third Joint Action Plan are not widely addressed by any author in the literature consulted nor were they explained by Brazil or the EU, as far as we researched. This study assumes that the interruption of the Brazil-EU summits led to a relative paralysis of the Strategic Partnership – relative because of the maintenance of the EU status as Brazil's strategic partner – given the high degree of institutionalization and formalization of the initiative. Domestic difficulties are usually mentioned to explain such paralysis, as they are abundant both on the European side and on the Brazilian side.

Gratius (2018) evokes Putnam's (1988) two-level model to explain the weakening of Brazil-EU relations, which would be the consequence of severe domestic crises on both sides, which led to changes in foreign policy. She argues about the migratory issue and its developments in the EU and in the political, moral, social, and economic crisis of Brazil, which would have created the conditions for Dilma Rousseff's impeachment. Blanco and Luciano (2018), on the other hand, are more emphatic in blaming Brazil for the cooling of Brazil-EU relations within the framework of the Strategic Partnership. Based on interviews with European diplomats, they underline 'the irregularity and lack of consistency of Brazilian diplomatic positions hindered the maintenance of solid connection with the European diplomats, jeopardizing the overall progress of the strategic partnership' (Blanco and Luciano, 2018, p. 11).

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<sup>18</sup> According to the data presented by Gardini, only 26% of the Brazilian products exported to the EU are manufactured, while 82% of the European products imported by Brazil consist of manufactured products.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The establishment of the Strategic Partnership represented a qualitative leap in Brazil-EU relations, since it changed its terms of engagement by proposing an institutional framework that increased and shaped the interactions between the parties. In fact, this institutional framework contributed to the overcoming of the mercantile character that once characterized relations, including other themes that, in turn, led to greater political articulation – even though it has not always materialized in convergent positions –, as well as strengthened technical cooperation by consolidating the Sectoral Dialogues. In addition, the establishment of the initiative has given Brazil-EU relations ideas of differentiation and hierarchization, as it assumed the EU recognition of Brazil's new status as an emerging power.

Despite the importance of the European bloc for Brazil and the establishment of the Strategic Partnership in 2007, the EU was not a central player in the Brazilian foreign policy framework under the mandates of Lula da Silva and Rousseff, who gave more emphasis to South-South relations and to the articulation with other emerging countries. This does not imply the claim that traditional partners, including the EU, have been forgotten or ignored during the period. There was, on the contrary, maintenance of good relations with these players. In addition, the EU did not lose importance – but centrality – in external action, which was evidenced by the efforts of Brazilian diplomacy to consolidate the Strategic Partnership. Thanks to the institutional framework proposed by the initiative, Brazil-EU relations during this period can easily be located at the hybrid bilateral level.

Today, however, it is not so easy to situate these relations on one level. The interruption of the Brazil-EU summits and the postponement of the elaboration of the third Joint Action Plan were not, as far as researched, justified by Brazil or the bloc. Some authors point to the difficulties of the Brazilian and European domestic scenarios as the main cause of the loss of dynamism of the Partnership. Considering the high degree of institutionalization and formalization of the initiative, it can be affirmed that the interruption of the Brazil-EU summits led to a relative paralysis of the Strategic Partnership. The use of the adjective “relative” is justified by the maintenance of the EU status as Brazil's strategic partner and the continuity of the Sectoral Dialogues. Recent changes in foreign policy are compounded by the stagnation of the Partnership, with the strengthening of its economic trade side and the defense of a predominantly commercial diplomacy.

Therefore, both the loss of dynamism of the Strategic Partnership and the inflections in Brazilian foreign policy highlight the resumption, with more impetus, of the negotiations of the MERCOSUR-EU Association Agreement in 2016. With the relative paralysis of the Strategic Partnership, Brazil-Brussels relations (hybrid bilateral level) have lost momentum, allowing interactions at other levels to be strengthened, with a stronger relationship between Brazil and the EU through MERCOSUR (interregional level), within the framework of the negotiations of the Association Agreement and with the member countries of the bloc (pure bilateral level).

In this sense, one can affirm that Brazil-EU relations were not interrupted, but altered, even though the contours of this oscillation are not so clear and the evolution of Brazil-EU relations in the coming years must be traced. One can also admit that in times of greater vulnerability, Brazil tends to interact with the EU at the interregional level – as in the 1990s, a period marked by attempts at economic stabilization and adaptation to the new international order –, while at a more favorable and prominent position in the external scenario, Brazil tends to interact bilaterally with the EU. The prospects for the resumption of the initiative and the strengthening of Brazil-Brussels interactions within the framework of the Strategic Partnership (hybrid bilateral level) are not encouraging. Jair Bolsonaro's foreign policy (2019-2022) is linked to a neoliberal development strategy, with the consequent strengthening of its economic trade side. Considering the

unfavorable position of the current president and some of his advisers in relation to MERCOSUR, one can expect a strengthening of the interactions with the EU at the pure bilateral level, encouraged by the strengthening of the nation-states in detriment of the global governance. On the European side, the strengthening of extreme right-wing and Eurosceptic parties, the negotiations on the Brexit and the EU elections in 2019 also do not make the resumption of the initiative feasible in the short term.

The celebration of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership led to a qualitative leap in Brazil-EU relations and, still today, represents a tool for bilateral convergence, encouraged by common goals, values and principles. Despite the criticism that the concept of strategic partnership and the inflation of the thematic agenda of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership can be imprecise, scholars believe the initiative should be resumed, even in the medium or long term. They claim that the interactions between Brazil and the EU have not proved to be so fruitful at the interregional level and have potential that can be better exploited through hybrid bilateral interactions (Brazil – EU).

To do so, it is necessary to revitalize the research agenda on strategic partnerships, focusing on the phenomenon, this time in a position that allows a greater temporal distance from the object of study, which potentiates the analysis. Specifically on the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership, it is important to promote a reflection on the scope of the proposed objectives, as well as to choose indicators that measure success, to give the initiative more strategic direction and coordination. In this sense, we should add that international cooperation does not imply a total harmony, but the identification of common interests and an adjustment of behaviors by the players involved (Axelrod and Keohane, 1985), whose divergences and clashes of interests must be recognized and submitted to dialogue. Finally, the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership is an important forum for discussion of relevant themes – multilateralism, the environment, development cooperation etc –, somewhat forgotten in an international context that is more resistant to cooperation and full of challenges.

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