THE EMERGENCE OF BRAZIL TO THE GLOBAL STAGE

ASCENDING AND FALLING IN THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF COMPETITION

Francine Rossone de Paula
The Emergence of Brazil to the Global Stage

How do discourses about Brazil’s emergence as a global actor at the beginning of the twenty-first century reinforce particular temporal and spatial formations that enable the perpetuation of international hierarchies?

This volume argues that while the phenomenon of ‘emergence’ was celebrated as the conquest of more authority for Brazil on the global stage, especially as Brazil was presented as a leader of developing countries, discourses about Brazil as an actor who was finally arriving at its promised future as a global player were also perpetuating a spatiotemporal structure that continues to reward some societies and individuals at the expense of many others. Brazil’s success or failure has depended from the beginning on how well it would perform its pre-determined role as a newly relevant or emergent ‘global player’. Power and empowerment have been conceptualized in a way that discursively inhibits any form of escape from the temporal and spatial confines of a world order marked by geopolitical and geoeconomic competition. The book can be seen as an initial step towards an exploration of alternative forms of thinking, doing, and being, temporally and spatially, that are not limited to the competition among states for geopolitical status in the international system.

This work will be of great interest to students and scholars of critical international relations, international politics and Latin American studies.

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The Emergence of Brazil to the Global Stage
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# Contents

*Acknowledgments*  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The conditions for ‘re-presentation’ in international relations</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Re-presentation between the ‘space of experience’ and the ‘horizon of expectation’</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Order and progress: the re-production of the space for the future</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sports mega-events as trampolines to the future?</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Antipoverty policies in Brazil: global and local temporal disjunctions</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Index*  

170
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1 Introduction

At the opening of the General Debate of the 59th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2004, former Brazilian president Lula (Luiz Inácio da Silva) asserted: “the path to lasting peace must encompass a new political and economic international order, one that extends to all countries real opportunities for economic and social development” (Da Silva, 2004, p. 2). Lula’s speech has been received by many as an expression of a larger phenomenon, namely, “an emerging South-South coalition strategy” (Grey, 2009, p. 95) aimed at “affecting changes in international decision making”. His emphasis on tackling inequality and his call for a more democratic world order fit perfectly the expectation that the rise of emerging powers would “occasion a shift [...] favoring redistribution between the states of the North and South” (Stephen, 2013, p. 309). Lula reiterated his “life-long commitment to those silenced by inequality, hunger and hopelessness”, citing Franz Fanon on the legacy of the colonial past that determined the kind of freedom decolonization could offer to these people: “If you so desire, take it: the freedom to starve” (Da Silva, 2004, p. 1; Burges, 2013, p. 581). Addressing an audience of 191 nation-states, Lula reminded them that 125 countries, including Brazil, had been subjected in the past to the oppression of a few powers that represented less than 2% of the global territorial space. He acknowledged advancements towards a postcolonial democratic order, but he also expressed his view that the present configuration of international institutions still hinders a greater participation of the ‘Global South’ in the global economy and in global political debates.

The predominant strategy of Brazil’s foreign policy that took shape during the first mandate of president Lula (2002–2006) was to emphasize South-South cooperation, the establishment of new relations with non-traditional partners, and the formation of coalitions with other developing states. A widely disseminated interpretation of this shift to the ‘global South’ is that Brazil’s diversification of trade partners and alliances with developing countries were an attempt to reduce the asymmetries vis-à-vis the United States and the European Union while becoming part of an anti-hegemonic force (Sotero & Armijo, 2007; Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007, 2009; Cervo, 2010; De Almeida, 2010; Roett, 2010; De Lima & Hirst, 2006; Dos Santos, 2011).
Introduction

As a result of Brazil’s greater participation in the global economy, measured mainly by the solid performance of the Brazilian economy during the 2008 financial crisis and as a result of its strong and early recovery, a more preeminent role for the country in the delineation of the global governance architecture was not only accepted, but also expected (Cervo, 2010; De Almeida, 2010; Carrasco & Williams, 2012; Burges, 2013). For about 10 years, analysts were enthusiastic about the indicators of Brazil’s journey toward the fulfillment of its promised future. In 2003, the country has emerged into a leadership position among the newly formed coalition of developing countries within the World Trade Organization (WTO), the commercial G20. Brazil has also been heard at the financial G20, an institution that in 2009 had become a major multilateral forum for debates on global financial governance. As a member of the group BRIC (acronym that refers to Brazil, Russia, India, China, later transformed into BRICS with the inclusion of South Africa in 2011), formalized in 2010, Brazil has witnessed improved bargaining power in multilateral fora. For the first time, a Brazilian became the leader of one of the key bodies of the Bretton Woods system, with Roberto Azevêdo appointed in 2013 as the director general of the WTO. At the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Brazil was able to pay in full its obligations amounting to US$15.46 billion in 2006 (IMF, 2006, p. 9), and started to advocate a reform of the decision-making structure, considered obsolete because it no longer reflected the distribution of economic power across the globe. And, finally, at the United Nations (UN), in 2004, Brazil joined Japan, India, and Germany in a campaign for a reform of the United Nations’ Security Council (UNSC), reiterating their claim that the new global geopolitical reality called for new institutional structures and a redistribution of roles in the international game (Burges, 2013; Imber, 2006).

It was in this context of exacerbated optimism about the prospects of a different and less asymmetric global future that Brazil became the subject of several studies (see Brainard & Martinez-Díaz, 2009; Fishlow, 2011; Rohrer, 2010; Roett, 2010; Sachs, Wilheim, & Pinheiro, 2009) and much media speculation on the prospects and conditions of its newly acquired position in global politics. Brazil was said to no longer be condemned to the position of “the country of the future” (Eakin, 2013, p. 221). A different representation of Brazil as a ‘global player’ and possibly “the country of the present” started to emerge and be reinforced by analyses portraying Brazil and other economies in the so-called ‘global South’ as the new drivers of the world economy (Zoellick, 2010). Brazil was discursively positioned in a new political space and was granted a new temporal dimension. It was said to be climbing up both to the global stage and toward the future, a place and a time from where Lula could promise to challenge the current international institutional and normative frameworks in favor of a less asymmetric and more inclusive world order.

Most claims that Brazil’s time had finally arrived often go hand-in-hand with the recognition by politicians and analysts of Brazil’s new differentiated geopolitical position at the time. Both the claims about the new temporal dimension in which Brazil was being placed and the claims about Brazil’s greater influence in international politics derived their authority mainly from data related to Brazil’s
political and economic performance. The easy association between power/authority, future, and economic capability in these discourses is part of what I problematize. This book exposes the symbiosis between discourses of power, authority, and legitimacy in international relations (primarily concerned with states’ visibility and geopolitical positionings in international politics) and discourses of temporality (primarily concerned with the way states are positioned in relation to historical frameworks and/or expectations of the future) that enables an understanding of Brazil as an international actor that can be positioned along a temporal spectrum (past, present, or future), but also according to a spatial or territorial dialectic of visible versus invisible political space on an international scale.

The examination of Brazil’s temporal and spatial positionings or representations implied in the notion of Brazil’s emergence to the global stage cannot be detached from broader processes and discourses within which this ‘phenomenon’ took place. Future and power, concepts that are embedded in these narratives about the country’s status in the beginning of the twenty-first century, do not have an absolute or inherent meaning. They make sense when attached to particular representations of Brazil in relation to other types of representation.

Besides Brazil’s economic indicators and increased bargaining power in the institutions mentioned above, the new position of Brazil as a global player was also corroborated by Brazil’s ‘successes’ in other fields. Brazil’s ability and willingness to start assuming, in 2004, a leadership role in United Nations missions under Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, which qualifies those missions as military interventions that do not require the consent of the parties, has been seen as a major and necessary shift in Brazil’s foreign policy, one that could help the country shape its image as a global player (Kenkel, 2013; Amorim, 2005). In 2014, Brazil was said to have eradicated extreme poverty and did not feature on the UN World Hunger Map, for the first time since the annual reports started to be published (FAO, IFAD, & WFP, 2014). Adding to these ‘achievements’, the selection of Rio de Janeiro to host the Olympic Games after a competitive bidding process with other ‘global cities’, such as Chicago, Madrid, and Tokyo, was described by Lula as a final recognition that Brazil had become a global ‘first-class citizen’ (Da Silva, 2009).

While these events placing ‘Brazil on a global stage’ initially inspired a number of publications on this topic, this book is not concerned with the phenomenon of ‘Brazil’s emergence’ per se or ‘Brazil’s failure to hold the new status’ . It does not aim to add voice to the debate, predominant in the literature on Brazilian studies or Latin American Studies, on the most accurate delineations of the country’s past trajectories or explanations and prospects on Brazil’s rise and fall as a global player. Rather, it aims to investigate what has been taken for granted by many analysts and politicians, namely, the discursive and non-discursive conditions that enabled the proliferation and circulation of narratives and representations about the new status of the country, and about Brazil’s potential to intervene against the asymmetries of the global order. This book is at once an account of the narratives about the position of Brazil in the twenty-first century, and an exploration of what the ‘appearance’ of what we call ‘Brazil’ in this particular temporal and spatial ‘place’ entails. As such,
this book intends as a contribution to old and new conversations on the production of geopolitical knowledge (Ó Tuathail, 1986, 1996), the conditions for representation in international politics (Shapiro, 1988), the narrativity and textuality of politics (Der Derian & Shapiro, 1989; Campbell, 1988), stateness and performativity (Jeffrey, 2013; McConnell, 2016), the hierarchization of difference (Inayatullah & Blaney, 2004), and on the relevance of looking at the dynamics of temporality and subjectivity in world politics (Aghatangelou & Killian, 2016; Solomon, 2013). It draws inspiration, in various degrees, from a number of disciplines and sub-fields, such as, International Relations, Critical Development Studies, Critical and Feminist Geopolitics, Historiography, and Anthropology.

Inspired by Michel Foucault’s mode of inquiry, this work is primarily concerned with questions such as, “how have we become what we are, and what are the possibilities of becoming ‘other’?” (Tamboukou, 1999, p. 215). The current state of affairs I look at is one in which it has been possible to speak of transformations in the world order that, for a period of time, involved Brazil ‘coming to the future’ and pushing forward with reforms of the international institutional and normative framework. How are conditions and processes for the representation of Brazil as a country coming to the future or as an emergent and falling actor on the global stage articulated and performed? What does it take for one to get ‘there’? What can these conditions and processes reveal in terms of spatiotemporal boundaries and possibilities for new subjectivities and practices?

In the next sections, I briefly review some aspects of the discourses about ‘Brazil’s emergence to the global stage’, and I start to lay out the theoretical framework informing this analysis. First, I review existing representations of the world and world politics that inspire this work. Second, I analyze the importance of studying world politics as a matter of discourse, and of exploring ontological claims in traditional theoretical accounts of world politics that have been forgotten or ignored in the context of discourses of globalization and deterritorialization common to late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century international politics. Finally, I discuss how particular representations of the world and world politics shape the way the topic ‘Brazil’s emergence’ has been defined.

Brazil’s emergence to the global stage

Given its continental size, the fifth largest population of the world, a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US$2.25 trillion that elevated the country to the fifth position in the world’s ranking in 2013, its biodiversity, and the stability with regards to its borders, Brazil is frequently presented as naturally endowed with the resources to assume a role as a ‘big’ country in the shaping of the international order (Lafer, 2000, p. 208; De Lima, 2005, p. 21).

Despite its historical memberships and its participation in global fora, the recent debate about the emergence of Brazil as a global player was sustained by a representation of the country as one that could manage a strong domestic economy and promote an agenda of South-South cooperation, even during a world economic crisis that affected most of the top economies in the world. One condition that
seems to be taken for granted is that the path to the future, where the status of global player was waiting for Brazil to take, was necessarily paved with economic development measures. In this sense, the narrative about Brazil’s future is fused with mantras about Brazil’s development.

Brazil’s own conceptualization of sovereignty and the understanding of its external vulnerabilities have always been associated with economic development (De Lima & Hirst, 2006, p. 22). This explains that development has always been a top priority in the economic, political, and diplomatic agendas of the country. Dependency theorists, mostly dissident voices speaking from exile in the 1960s and 1970s, already recognized the problems of the developmentalist ‘raison d’état’ in Brazil and other countries in South America. In the 70s, Cardoso and Faletto (1979) argued:

The basic ideology of the state is fundamentally ‘developmentalism’. In view of the explicit ends of economic growth and national grandeur, the exploitation of workers, if not openly defended by the state, is justified by the argument that the tightening of belts is necessary ‘at the moment’ so that ‘in the future’ the results of this economy may be redistributed.

(p. 215)

Despite the critical interpretations of development disseminated from Latin America to academic circles all over the world more than 40 years ago, Brazil’s domestic agenda and foreign policy have remained dominated by the ideal of a future that has to be achieved through development. Considering Brazil’s historical background of participation in international institutions, and other cycles of accelerated economic growth and stagnation the country has been through, what some scholars argue that have distinguished the ‘emergence’ during the last decade is a combination of economic growth, an anti-imperialistic positioning (at least discursively) of a center-left government, and the reduction of inequality within the country. The alignment of economic development, the “reorientation of the Left in South America” (Mignolo, 2011, p. 42), and the financial crisis in major economies, seemed to have revealed a recipe for the democratization of decision-making structures in the world order that could make old criticisms on development discourses as the path towards self-realization and as ‘westernization’ obsolete. Mignolo (2011) argues that “the most significant effort in Lula da Silva’s government is his growing role in international relations and his alignment of Brazil with the general premises of dewesternization” (p. 42), what involved a “radical transformation of subjectivities responding to imperial differences” (p. 37). This means to argue that Brazil was in a position to help redefine the geographies of world economy and the geographies of knowledge simultaneously.

By looking at some of the elements of Brazil’s emergence, and the articulation of discourses that have made the ‘truth’ about Brazil’s emergence possible, we may also be able to understand the kind of emergence that has not been made possible, or that has been made impossible, often through these same discourses. What makes the ‘global stage’ or the ‘future’ possible ‘locations’ or ‘temporalities’
that enabled Brazil to have ‘emerged’? What spaces have opened up for the radical transformation of subjectivities?

**The new geography of the world economy and anti-imperialism**

Brazil’s increased bargaining power in the last decade has been associated with its effort to diversify its economic partners by shifting its attention to the ‘global South’ and by advocating for a better integration of ‘developing’ countries into the world economy. Brazil is said to have adopted a ‘southern’ stance in international institutions (Veiga, 2005). When Brazil assumed the leadership role in the coalition of developing states, the G20, in 2003 during the WTO negotiations in Cancun, the country has become increasingly active and assertive in multilateral fora, particularly during Lula’s presidency, and it has been described as a bridge between old and new powers (Burges, 2013), or between the developed and the developing world. The slogan “a new geography for world trade” adopted by ‘southern’ countries did not advocate isolationism vis-à-vis the ‘North’, but rather called for an alignment among developing countries that would allow them to present a united front against rich nations instead of remaining conditioned by rich countries’ predominant views or demands (De Almeida, 2010, p. 172).

The need for alliances to balance the relations between ‘North’ and ‘South’ also translates into a need for global institutions that enable encounters and fair negotiations among nations with divergent interests. Cervo (2010) highlights the importance of multilateralism in Brazil’s rise to the global stage, but also in the quest toward democratization in the global order. He argues that a multilateral order based on reciprocity in all areas – economy, trade, security, environment, health, and human rights – can ensure that international rules will benefit all (p. 11). Multilateralism has long existed without reciprocity, with asymmetries that have favored the dominant countries. Brazil was said to push for a reciprocal form of multilateralism (Cervo, 2010, p. 11) whereby the international order is not structured to benefit the stronger nations.

In an interview to *The Guardian*, Celso Amorim (2005), the Brazilian Ambassador who was leading the negotiations at the WTO, affirmed that developed countries “could not afford to keep the inequalities [and] to widen the gap between developing countries and developed countries”. When asked about the lack of compatibility between various interest groups, he answered:

The need to dismantle the absurd subsidies which distort world trade and which create hunger in the third world. We are talking about 60%-70% of mankind, something like 50% of agricultural production. Real reform is what will help countries like Burkina Faso, like Chad [and] Benin.

Later, Amorim (2006) argued that one could state, with no exaggeration, that the G20 had changed the geopolitics of international negotiations on matters of agriculture. According to him, the G20 was formed when the United States and
the European Union were trying to impose an unfair agreement that did not touch upon issues that could benefit developing countries (quoted in Cervo, 2010, p. 11).

In Lula’s statements in 2004 at the General Assembly and on several other occasions during his mandate, and from the perspective of Brazil as the leader of the G20 in World Trade Organization negotiations, the distribution of resources as one of the defining principles of power is clearly highlighted. According to the dominant logic that has recently informed Brazil’s participation in multilateral institutions and in coalitions of developing countries, like the G20, power needs to be redistributed. And, by redistribution of power, the representatives of Brazil have meant, among other things, the decentralization of world trade and the de-concentration of global wealth. In 2010, Lula affirmed in an interview that Brazil had to resist “the false paradigm of the country’s power limitations” (quoted in Eakin, 2013, p. 166) through the assertion of its new status an important player, “compatible with Brazil’s economic, political and cultural greatness” (quoted in Eakin, 2013, p. 166).

Power is intrinsically relative in these contexts, in the sense that Brazil has led a coalition of developing countries in order to balance what many of these countries have defined as the ‘developed world’s’ determination to maximize its own interests in the negotiations of the WTO to the detriment of the poorest countries. Efforts to balance power within the framework of multilateral institutions have meant that absolute gains (the liberal-institutionalist notion of a positive outcome that benefits all the ‘players’) are not always desirable or achievable. Considering the disparity between developed and developing countries’ positions, any negotiation would only be acceptable to the extent that it could reduce the gap. And the reduction of this power gap depended on relative gains in favor of ‘developing countries’.

The notion of ‘balance of power’ is at the very core of the discourses about ‘Brazil’s emergence’. Balancing against the asymmetries of power in multilateral institutions became a priority in Brazil’s foreign policy during Lula’s presidency, and we can discern in this discursive construction the reproduction of a world of competition that has been promoted by Brazilian politicians and through several interpretations about Brazil’s status in international politics.

As Ashley (1987) pointed out in the 1980s, “critical analysis cannot regard political realism as something opposed, external to, and constraining or conditioning the world historical development of capitalist society and its modernist ideology” (p. 423). Capitalism has been largely a territorial phenomenon, and without disregarding contingencies and historical transformations, one may argue that capitalism remains ingrained in collective action as state actors institutionalize competition for economic growth and treat it as normal or routine, to the point that any problem that could prevent them from continuing to play the game should be dealt with on an international basis (Wendt, 1996, p. 60).

While acknowledging the transformations in Brazil’s self-representation, its position as an emerging power, and the external recognition of Brazil’s impact on the decision-making process in many institutional contexts, the debates about whether or not Brazil is now ‘there’ start from a set of assumptions about the ‘now’
and the ‘here’ that need to be problematized. In this context, where and when discourses about Brazil’s emergence proliferate, Brazil’s participation in international institutions and its leadership in campaigns in favor of a less asymmetric world order call for a deeper analysis of the conditions for politics and power that have been attached for so long to an idealized future as an appropriate time and space for the realization of power, leadership, and supremacy.

When world politics is reconceptualized as a discursive practice, “by which intellectuals of statecraft ‘spatialize’ international politics in such a way as to represent it as a ‘world’ characterized by particular types of places, peoples, and dramas” (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 192), Brazil’s empowerment or final emergence may be seen as taking place within a field of possibilities and reasoning that can actualize Brazil’s future in a particular way. In the next section, I explain what understanding world politics as a discourse or discursive practice means for my analysis. Following this explanation, I also clarify what I mean by a ‘world of competition’.

**World politics as intertextuality**

This analysis is designed as a contribution to the investigations and inquiries initiated by those who came to be categorized as poststructuralists in the field of International Relations. The post-positivist and linguistic turns in the field of International Relations are marked by the incorporation of discourse analysis into the study of international politics. Critics of mainstream international relations theory have been largely influenced by the works of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, utilizing “‘deconstructive’ and ‘genealogical’ tools deliberately designed to automatically ‘target’ assumptive theoretical headquarters” (Lapid, 1989, p. 242). The purpose of these approaches has been mainly to problematize answers, to make strange what has become familiar, and to reverse the process of construction (Ashley, 1988). Although the constructions these authors proposed to destabilize more than 20 years ago, such as the concept of sovereignty, are quite different from the constructions that have become familiar in the twenty-first century, as long as we have a world that we understand to be always in construction, this critical approach and its analytical tools are still valid and extremely relevant.

Over the last few years, with ‘new materialisms’ turns in social and political thought, the field of International Relations witnessed a move in the literature towards the reprioritization of the politics of materiality over that of language and representation (see, for instance, Coole & Frost, 2010; Wight, 2006; Coward, 2012; Aradau, 2010). In this literature, poststructuralist analysis is defined as outdated and inadequate for thinking the contemporary context. Scholars in this genre have proposed a reconceptualization of materiality that would move beyond the limitations of both the traditional perspectives on material constraints to politics as rigid and inert structures and what has been interpreted as the post-structural tendency to reduce the world to text (Lundborg & Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 16). In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett (2010) defines ‘thing-power’ as something that “draws attention to an efficacy of objects in excess of the human meanings, designs, or
purposes they express or serve” (p. 20). The idea in this literature is that objects have agency themselves and are not simply at the mercy of human’s significations.

Even though there are poststructuralist scholars reducing discourse analysis to text, Lundborg and Vaughan-Williams (2015) argue that the move toward materiality and away from discourses promoted by scholarship referred to as ‘New Materialisms’, ‘New Vitalism’, or the ‘Materialist Turn’, can be problematic “since it perpetuates rather than challenges the notion of a prior distinction between language and materiality” (p. 3). They draw on earlier poststructuralist thought to show that “there are critical resources in this genre to think beyond the dichotomy between language on the one hand, and materiality on the other” (p. 6). In this book, I join them in arguing for an understanding of language that encompasses symbols, practices, performances, and material forms. However, my focus is predominantly in examining how these symbols, practices, performances, and material forms are said to ‘affect’ or mean as they are also mediated by and through language. The genealogical approach to the notion of ‘Brazil’s emergence’ and other representations in this book does not mean the compilation of different texts or words and the observation of their different usages over time, but as Connolly suggests, “a mode designed to expose the motives, institutional pressures, and human anxieties which coalesce to give these unities the appearance of rationality or necessity” (Connolly, 1993, p. 231; Lundborg & Vaughan-Williams, 2015, p. 16).

Poststructuralist scholars distinguish themselves from both mainstream and other critical scholars, such as constructivists, as they not only use language as a point of departure for a different understanding of social reality, but they also challenge claims to normativity (Debrix, 2003, p. 12). They often share a non-foundationalist stance, which rejects ‘progressive’ metanarratives and structural determinism. They recognize that “language is a form of action. Speaking organizes activity. And listening, interpreting, and understanding are integral elements of all political events” (Luke, 2003, p. 103).

More than simply mediating techniques, according to poststructuralists, “texts are what social reality is made of” (Debrix, 2003, p. 12). Any object or subject can only emerge as a performance of language. Judith Butler (1997), whose work on language and performativity was brought to the study of international politics by poststructuralists, adds that it is not only a matter of signification, but also one of enactment:

What would it mean for a thing to be ‘done by’ a word [. . .]? When and where, [. . .], would such a thing become disentangled from the word by which it is done or done in, and where and when would that conjunction between word and thing appear indissoluble? If a word in this sense might be said ‘to do’ a thing, then it appears that the word not only signifies the thing, but that this signification will also be an enactment of the thing. It seems here that the meaning of a performative act is to be found in this apparent coincidence of signifying and enacting.

(p. 44)
Introduction

It is not that a material world does not exist or does not impact social relations outside language, but rather that the materiality of the world affect social relations often in an intersubjective way. Foucault, who largely influenced the poststructuralist perspective in IR, was emphatic about the absence of foundational or essential meaning in ‘things’. As translated by Ashley (1987), “there are no constants, no fixed meanings, no secure grounds, no profound secrets, no final structures or limits of history” (p. 408).

For a critical analysis of discourse, statements are not judged on the basis of their truth-value in communication, but instead, as Michael Shapiro asserts, “on the basis of their capacity for value creation in human relations” (Shapiro, 1988, p. 11). In contrast to traditional empiricism, which recognizes non-discursive elements as referents to language, the emphasis on discourse as practice places non-discursive elements as a field of other possible practices (Shapiro, 1988, p. 11). Or, according to Foucault, it places non-discursive elements as a field of violence, “the violence which we do to things, or in any case as a practice which we impose on them” (Foucault, 1984, p. 127). The fact that meanings are imposed on world politics and that the field of possible practices is narrowed by the imposition of meanings inspires this exploration of the discourses and the conditions for discourses about Brazil’s emergence and empowerment as a global player and about Brazil’s representation as the country of the future.

Seeing the world as a discursive representation means that we should not expect it to reveal itself to us. It is always a world that co-emerges with our descriptions, definitions, and analyses. Taking this into account, a poststructuralist discourse analysis may be centered on identity or subject positions, but it does not begin by presuming a stable self, whether that of an individual or of a state. Epstein (2011) explains that the starting point of discourse analysis “is both more empirically grounded and unencumbered by the host of assumptions that need to be made about the internal structure of these identities and what constitutes their essential properties” (p. 341). State subjectivity, for instance, is constituted by practices of differentiation and representation, and there is no ‘originary presence’ that forms an essential basis for this subjectivity.

It would seem contradictory to adopt a poststructuralist perspective and to assume the pre-discursive existence of ‘Brazil’ or the world order within which a country can be placed in a particular spatial and temporal ranking. That is why it is important for me to be clear that I am not looking at an event or at the transformations of Brazil at the beginning of the twenty-first century, but rather at an economy of meanings and values that make intelligible and visible some interpretations and representations about the ‘reality’ of the country and world politics in this particular period of time, often to the detriment of others, and how this making intelligible and visible can have concrete implications and applications. It is worth noting here that representations do not imitate reality, but “are the practices through which things take on meaning and value; to the extent that a representation is regarded as realistic, it is because it is so familiar it operates transparently” (Shapiro, 1988, p. xi). In relation to Brazil, its performance, visibility, and trajectory as an actor of international politics can be seen under the light
of ‘rehearsal’, to use McConnell’s (2016) term. In its journey towards the future and the global stage, rehearsal “is done in anticipation of the ‘real’ event”, and it is always “contingent on belief in a script, in the playwright and in there actually being a final performance” (p. 2–3). I reiterate that my task is to investigate the different texts and pre-texts that give meaning to the new geopolitical position of Brazil, whose existence and performance in time and space depend on various ‘reality-making scripts’.

My approach assumes that there are no pre-discursive events or subjects. And there is no absolute and all-encompassing discourse that may signify events or subjects. In other words, there is no fundamental signified (a presence that can be expressed without any reference to a signifier), and there is no final signifier (an end of the chain of significations). Derrida (1981) notes that:

> In the extent to which what is called ‘meaning’ [...] is already, and thoroughly, constituted by a tissue of differences, in the extent to which there is already a text, a network of textual referrals to other texts, a textual transformation in which each allegedly ‘simple term’ is marked by the trace of another term, the presumed interiority of meaning is already worked upon by its own exteriority.

(p. 33)

Julia Kristeva coined the term ‘intertextuality’ in the late 1960s in the context of her influential interpretations of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin (Fairclough, 1992, p. 269). Bakhtin was concerned with the “ways in which texts and utterances are shaped by prior texts that they are ‘responding’ to and subsequent texts that they ‘anticipate’” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 269). In the field of IR, the term ‘intertextuality’ was introduced by James Der Derian and Michael Shapiro with the publication of *International/Intertextual Relations* in 1989. Shapiro (1989) argues that:

> Investigations of how the world is apprehended require inquiries into the various pre-texts of apprehension, for the meaning and value imposed on the world is structured not by one’s immediate consciousness but by the various reality-making scripts one inherits or acquires from one’s surrounding cultural/linguistic condition.

(p. 11)

Intertextuality is a condition for a discourse to emerge and circulate. For any particular text, there is a set of other texts that are potentially incorporated into it. Fairclough (2003) argues that critical discourse analysis should necessarily consider the relevance of the following questions: “which texts and voices are included, which are excluded, and what significant absences are there?” (p. 47). In this book, I too am driven by the question of which texts, broadly defined, are incorporated in the initial text: ‘Brazil’s emergence to the global stage’.

The notion of ‘Brazil’s emergence to the global stage’ contains a lot of pre-texts that need to be problematized. In order for ‘Brazil’s emergence’ to become a script
that can be circulated and reproduced, a particular spatial and temporal representation of power and politics has to be assumed. In the next section, I explain and justify my level of analysis by problematizing the relationship between the spatial particularity and the temporal universality that seems to be at the core of the discourses/texts that establish the idea of ‘Brazil’s emergence as a global player’ as a taken-for-granted notion.

**World politics as competition**

As I explained above, one of the purposes of critical discourse analysis is to make strange what has become too familiar. However, I need to highlight in this section that the discourses about Brazil’s emergence have assumed a number of ontological truths that are not necessarily popular in the study of international politics today. In contrast to the notion that has been present for more than 20 years that “exclusively political poles and fundamentally geopolitical polarities are slipping out of phase” (Luke, 1993, p. 255), I argue that the discourses about the new spatial and temporal position of Brazil as a global player in the last decade have revitalized narratives about balance of power politics and geopolitical polarity that, in turn, reenact a representation of world politics as a fragmented political space of competition between sovereign actors. This revitalized representation of world politics as a domain of and for global competition also becomes the discursive condition for the emergence and circulation of ideas such as ‘coalition of southern states’, ‘asymmetric world order’, etc.

In this so-called ‘postmodern era’ dominated by discourses about globalization, disintegration, decentralization, and deterritorialization, the idea that the sovereign state is a historical and obsolete construction may sound more familiar. Many scholars are now focused on flows over and across territories, on networks over and across relations between states, and on speed and simultaneity over and across linear conceptions of time. The problem with critical analyses that emphasize the global transformations that allegedly render the system of states obsolete is that they run the risk of replacing one totalizing ontology with another. While the ‘global’ and the ‘transnational’ may become dominant spatial categories that are said to correspond to the most recent and common conceptualizations of the political, economic, cultural, and social world, one may overlook the resilience of state-centric discourses and the interplay between universal and particular that constitutes the modern political world. By trying to destabilize and de-essentialize political realism, and showing how realist discourses of state-centric power politics do not correspond to current political realities, critics may end up essentializing a deterritorialized world where there is no longer space for recognition or critique of the kind of hierarchization that still depends and relies on national boundaries.

I assume that it is important to consider the conditions and effects of contemporary discourses that enable a representation of political fragmentation and competition at the level of nation-states. However, I am not concerned with the debate over whether ‘political realism’ or ‘globalization’ provides a better
Introduction

13

‘picture’ of the political world in the twenty-first century. As Rob B. J. Walker (2009) notes,

much depends on how it has become possible to draw the lines of discrimination marking boundaries, borders and limits, in time quite as much as in space, and on how we have been encouraged to think about boundaries, borders and limits as if they were indeed just simple lines distinguishing here from there, now from then, normal from exceptional, possible from impossible or intelligible from unintelligible.

(p. 6)

Traditional theories of international relations then remain instructive as “they so persistently affirm assumptions about where, and therefore what, political life must be” (Walker, 2009, p. 22). Keeping in mind the discursive character of world politics, and the way spatial and temporal boundaries are ‘naturalized’ through discourse, what matters for the purpose of this book is the possibility for a discourse about ‘Brazil’ to emerge out of a (sometimes unexpected) combination of different texts. This work is thus primarily concerned with the visibility, the rules of intelligibility, and the current value of particular discursive practices. But it is also concerned with the effects of these practices. One does not keep de-essentializing the world for the sake of preventing the stabilization of meanings, but because of the violent and exclusionary effects of the circulation of some discourses and the stabilization of some meanings.

Ideology is not necessarily antithetical to the notion of discourse. For Purvis and Hunt (1993), some discourses “impose their own rationalities upon the discursive possibilities of participants. There is a marked absence of attention to tensions, let alone contradictions, within discourses that provide the raw material for the discourse of resistance” (p. 489). Shapiro (1988) notes that

Ideological production will be characterized as a kind of writing and ideological thinking as a kind of reading, an enforced dyslexia wherein the reader is disenabled by being encouraged to adopt a politically insensitive view of the surrounding social formation and the objects, relationships, and events it contains.

(p. 6)

Every intelligible statement, such as ‘Brazil emerges as a global player’, or Brazilian politicians’ proclamation that ‘developing countries need to be better represented in multilateral institutions’, or economic analysts’ discussions about whether Brazil truly deserves the status of ‘country of the future’ or not, accommodates some degree of authority and institutionalized realities that derive legitimacy from depoliticized measurements, values, and goals of international politics. Even though the purpose is not to reveal the truth behind an ideology, it does intent to reveal power relations. These statements could not make sense if they were not anchored in normalized criteria for what is taken to constitute
successful statehood, global politics, or the temporality of development and authority.

**Structure of the book**

For the purpose of this analysis on the emergence and constitution of discourses, such as those related to Brazil’s emergence to the global stage, a genealogical approach to the problem seems to be the most appropriate. Shapiro describes the appropriate posture for a critical political perspective as “one that questions the privileged forms of representation whose dominance has led to the unproblematic acceptance of subjects, objects, acts, and themes through which the political world is constructed” (Shapiro, 1989, p. 13). For Ashley (1987), drawing insights from Foucault, a genealogical attitude is “a form of history which accounts for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc., without having to refer to a subject, whether it be transcendental in relation to the field of events or whether it chase its empty identity throughout history” (Foucault, Foss, & Morris 1979, p. 35; quoted in Ashley, 1987, p. 408). Genealogy further reveals the mechanisms through which certain concepts are naturalized. It does not oppose itself to history but, according to Foucault and Rabinow (1984), “it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’” (p. 77).

Foucault adds that the critical movement is a movement “by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and questions power on its discourses of truth” (Foucault, Lotringer, & Hochroth 1997, p. 32). Criticism serves the purpose of showing “that things are not as self-evident as one believed, to see what is accepted as self-evident will no longer be accepted as such. Practicing criticism is a matter of making facile gestures difficult” (Foucault, 1988, p. 155). I hope to show with this study that transforming (de-centralizing, or ‘de-westernizing’) the world order might be not as simple as having an increased bargaining power in a few multilateral institutions. And texts regarding ‘Brazil’s emergence’ or ‘Brazil as the country of the future’ carry more assumptions than one can challenge by simply looking at economic indicators.

Once again, my analysis does not aim at finding a truth, but rather at exposing the ‘pre-texts’, or in other words, the articulations in discourses that make it possible to ‘locate’ and ‘rank’ societies and nations according to particular images of time and space. By looking at what has been normalized or naturalized in the debate about the country’s political position in world politics, I wish to question the notion of transformation that follows the diagnosis about the emergence of the ‘developing world’. Thus, I am less interested in what is said or written about the event recorded as ‘Brazil’s rise to the global stage’ or as the ‘crisis’ that followed it culminating in the impeachment of president Dilma Rousseff in August 2016 than in what is mobilized in support of these statements about ‘Brazil’s emergence’ or ‘Brazil’s fall’, or in other words, in the ontological claims at work behind the recognition or affirmation of Brazil’s global power at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this sense, this is not a quest to find ‘Brazil’. Rather than asking,
“what is Brazil” or “who is Brazil”, a better question should be, as suggested by Roger Brubaker (1996), “how is nationhood as a political and cultural form institutionalized within and among states?” (p. 16). How are states and systems of state expected to persistently ‘improvise’, to use Jeffrey’s (2013) term? What possible futures may emerge from these performances that are always reliant on certain scripts of reality? In the second chapter, I explain more specifically how time becomes a crucial element in the formation of international space that cannot be ignored in these kinds of analysis.

Analyzing the textual conditions of representation allows me to go beyond the superficial ‘reading’ of the geopolitical shifts across the globe in order to question the processes through which materiality and reality have been mobilized or constructed in the constitution of intelligible discourses about an emerging ‘self’. But most importantly, this kind of analysis allows us to find the ‘others’ who are displaced through the same process. Criteria for power, authority, visibility, recognition, are rarely problematized in analyses about Brazil’s rise to what is represented as a ‘relevant’ global status. When these conditions for power are simply taken for granted, the debate is limited to accepting indicators, norms, and measurements. Instead, I look at the notion of ‘emergence’ in the context of established conditions necessary for the discursive constructions of a country’s spatial and temporal positioning.

There is no inherent meaning to the concept of the ‘future’ or to the notion of a new political status aimed by Brazil, and there is no inherent truth to claims about what the world order, nation-states, or societies should be or become. Analyzing Brazil’s representation as an emerging global player allows me to identify a number of assumptions about the conditionalities for Brazil’s bargaining power (influence) and Brazil’s future as a global player. At the same time, the discourses reproduced by Brazilian representatives about the transformations they aspire to achieve reveal an understanding of the normative framework of international politics that legitimizes and forces ‘corrections’ within Brazilian society.

After further examination of the conceptual framework informing my analysis in this book in chapter 2, the next four chapters are each an exploration of an aspect of the ‘emerging Brazil’ that has become part of a larger discourse about the future of the country. The unfolding of the book can be seen as a movement that starts with analyses of narratives about ‘Brazil’ as an actor who is positioning itself and being positioned across a certain spatiotemporal construct reproduced by and through international politics, to analyses that are focused on ‘Brazil’ as a space where Brazilian citizens are the ones who are being positioned according to images, representations, and expectations that are reproduced about Brazil’s future.

As Foucault (2010) explains, discourse is not an ideal or timeless form. Rather, from beginning to end, it is historical. It is “a fragment of history, a unity and discontinuity in history itself, posing the problem of its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality rather than its sudden irruption in the midst of the complicities of time” (p. 117). By ‘thinking’ these discourses and textually rendered spatial and temporal categories, I wish to be able
“to create the conditions of possibility for imagining alternative worlds (and thus to be able to recognize the political commitments sequestered in every political imaginary)” (Shapiro, 2013, p. xv).

‘Brazil’ can hardly be taken as a whole that can be measured and positioned in a world political map, or as a story with single plot threads. Any analysis of Brazil is necessarily fragmented, as it relies on a number of preconceived ‘archetypes’ according to which Brazil can be ‘othered’ or differentiated. The conditions for Brazil’s representability in the economic, political, military, or social arenas are possibly created, reproduced, and performed according to different practices of ‘materialization of time in space’. This explains why the book is organized according to multiple aspects of the story about Brazil’s emergence, different spheres of experience where the name ‘Brazil’ has been articulated with different processes and interpretations about what ‘Brazil’ is and what it should be: Brazil’s position as an economic power and its commitment to narratives of progress (chapter 3); Brazil’s position as an actor willing to assume a greater role in international security and its commitment to sovereignty (chapter 4); Brazil’s position as the host of mega-sports events and its commitment to the ordering of the domestic space (chapter 5); and finally, Brazil’s position as a transformational leader in the fight against hunger and extreme poverty and its commitment to the synchronization of the multiplicity of temporalities within the country around the notion of Brazil as a ‘rich country without poverty’ (chapter 6).

None of the chapters have been developed on the basis of isolated conceptual structures. Even though they can be read separately, each chapter emphasizes different aspects of the representation of ‘Brazil’ and of the conditions of possibility for the emergence of the country as a global player that are intrinsically connected with each other. The conceptualization of progress in the third chapter, for instance, lays out many pre-texts that are often been taken for granted in studies focused on the conceptualization of order and the organization of international space, which is my focus in the fourth chapter. Sovereignty, in turn, explored in the fourth chapter, underlines the conceptualization of domestic order (chapter 5) and social inclusion (chapter 6).

There is no such a thing as a totally reliable account of the present or the past. In response to the questions outlined above, I try to demonstrate and ‘pinpoint’ how the predominant representations and practices in each institutionalized platform of political performance allowed or prevented a different representation of Brazil as an important ‘character’ in the primary plot of world politics to emerge. At another level, this book questions the authority of ‘becoming’ over ‘being’, or of the ‘future’ over the ‘present’. I see this kind of analysis as an initial step towards an exploration of alternative forms of thinking, doing, and being temporally and spatially that are not limited to the competition among states for geopolitical status in the international system. Inclusiveness limited to ‘significant’ participation in the international market may fail to represent a challenge to current asymmetries and injustices in world politics. As long as we keep reproducing discourses that sustain the illusion of spatial and temporal separation between peoples across the globe, we will prevent less hierarchical forms of coexistence from emerging.
Introduction

Notes


4 Even though Cardoso and Faletto (1979) did not elaborate thoroughly on an alternative to capitalist development, they believed that the progress of productive force through the import of technology, capital accumulation, penetration of local economies by foreign enterprises, increasing number of wage-earning groups, and intensification of social division of labor would not lead to autonomy and amelioration of the population’s condition (xxiv). The arguments that will be developed in this book deal with a different scope of analysis, which involve the perpetuation of dependency and subordination beyond economic relations and the struggle between a core and a periphery that can be easily identified and classified.

5 The goal has always been development and progress, even though the strategies towards economic growth in Brazil varied between a more isolationist approach and the struggle for autonomy (which has included the notion of import substitution), and the integration with the international structures of production and trade.

6 Blake and Walters (1976) argued in the 1970s that “what were once international relations – understood as ‘politics among nations’ – progressively and unavoidably has become global politics” (quoted in Dwivedi, Khator, & Nef, 2007, p. 33). Since the end of the World War II, many scholars have conceptualized ‘globalization’ as an unavoidable and irreversible process, highlighting the development of military and industrial technology, which “reduced the time and space limits of world politics” (Dwivedi et al., 2007, p. 33).

References


Introduction


The conditions for re-presentation in international relations


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Re-presentation between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation


Order and progress


Sports mega-events as trampolines to the future?


Antipoverty policies in Brazil


Conclusion