

# A golden opportunity for Dilma Rousseff

PEDRO SEABRA

Portuguese Institute of International Relations and Security (IPRIS)

Fresh from her decisive win on October 30<sup>th</sup>, newly-elected President Dilma Rousseff continues down the path of attracting intense world media scrutiny, with the purpose of setting in motion the likely course she has chosen for Brazil in the next four years. Apparently, not wanting to wait for her to even take the oath of office on January 1<sup>st</sup>, *Forbes* magazine already ranked Rousseff as the 16<sup>th</sup> most powerful person in the world. A rush predicament for some; an inevitable outcome for others.

Diverging opinions are inevitable but must be looked at under a new light if we take into consideration the low profile of foreign policy issues during the Brazilian presidential elections. With little substance in the debate, any predictions over where Dilma's Brazil will go from here on – in terms of global repositioning and expression – are understandably incomplete, tinged by post-win euphoria and therefore not fully made clear to the general public. But one crucial factor will undoubtedly keep on conditioning any intended foreign policy agenda: the remaining influence of now-departing President Luiz Inácio 'Lula' da Silva and his high profile throughout the world. Indeed, during his two terms, Lula has consistently embodied the image of a rapidly emerging and internationally demanding Brazil, earning widespread praise abroad for his commitment to a fairer and sustainable development for all. As expected, he leaves some big shoes to fill, but for the time being, Dilma has not yet given any indication that she is capable or even willing to carry on the notorious and public posture that characterized Lula's tenure.

Hence, both internal supporters and the international community at large have set the bar of expectations comprehensively low. However, if Dilma ever needed an opportunity to fully grasp the world's evolving dynamics and understand the magnetism of high-stakes diplomacy before formally assuming the Presidency, she ought to pay close attention to the valuable political experience that Lula is about to provide her with.

Indeed, recognizing his anointed successor's shortcomings in this particular area, Lula has already planned a series of farewell trips abroad with mandatory stops in international and regional gatherings, all the while accompanied by Dilma. The purpose of this foreign co-exposition is no secret to anyone. On the one hand, Lula seeks to prepare and introduce his former Chief of Staff to some of the world's thorniest and most puzzling issues that she will inevitably have to face and become familiar with. But on the other, Lula also wishes to present Dilma to his peers, hoping that some of his charisma and of the international goodwill that he has gathered throughout the years will, in some way, rub off on his *protégé* – helping her to forge personal working relationships with the world's most important leaders, at least in an initial stage.

This 'presentation tour' will kick-off with a quick visit to Mozambique, on November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, which will allow Lula to end his laudable and fruitful commitment to the African continent with a golden key, while giving Dilma a chance to show her willingness to follow on the footsteps



of her predecessor in improving so-called South-South ties.

But the real test will come with the G-20 Summit in Seoul, South Korea, the following day. With such a multitude of international leaders in attendance, the odds of striking good bilateral relations are clearly in Dilma's favor. Still, Lula has also warned that he and Dilma would go to Seoul to "fight with the US and China" over the ongoing currency fluctuations that are increasingly hurting emerging economies, and Brazil in particular. Whether he intends to put Dilma's economic credentials to good use or to set himself up for one last big standoff remains to be seen. New developments regarding the final decision in the long-delayed fighter bid – probably to be announced after the Summit – are also expected, as Dilma and Lula will meet with French President Nicolas Sarkozy and most certainly jointly confirm the Dassault Rafale multi-billion purchase for the Brazilian Air Force.

As the year comes to an end, Dilma will also have a taste of regional politics when she tags along with Lula to the UNASUL Summit in Georgetown, Guiana, and the MERCOSUL Summit in Brasília – as Brazil currently holds the *pro tempore* presidency of the latter. Both meetings will surely help verify Dilma's level of engagement with the structural and institutional development of both projects. Likewise, Lula's visits to Argentina and Chile in December will let Dilma 'measure the temperature' of the bilateral relationship with these two important partners in the region.

Nevertheless, fully aware that a free ride in 'Air Lula' is

no magic pill for any discomfort with foreign matters, Dilma is also likely to pick a credible team to head the *Itamaraty* in the coming years. After eight years of Lula's presidential diplomacy, Brazil's Foreign Ministry is expected to take the helms of the country's foreign agenda, leaving the President with the juicy public summits, but allowing the next Foreign Minister an even greater role and say in this department. With conjectures brewing, current Minister Celso Amorim is considered a favorite, but given his eight-year exposition, Dilma might opt for a new face. In that case, Amorim's number two, Secretary-General António Patriota, is clearly the front-runner. Additionally, Lula's extremely influential foreign policy advisor Marco Aurélio Garcia is also set to retain his backstage consultant role given his close alignment with Dilma's inner circle.

Ultimately, Dilma is in a much better position than most President-elects. Not only does she have the necessary amount of time to bring together a competent and credible team – that can cover for her, when she decides to invest more time in internal issues, a more than probable scenario – but she also enjoys the active support of Lula da Silva, who is more than happy to show her the ropes of international politics and point the way of greater emergence in the world's establishment. By January 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, Dilma Rousseff will have had a golden opportunity to keep up with Brazil's stance in the world. The only question remaining is whether she will put it to good use.

EDITOR | Paulo Gorjão

ASSISTANT EDITOR | Laura Tereno

DESIGN | Atelier Teresa Cardoso Bastos

Portuguese Institute of International Relations and Security (IPRIS)  
Rua Vitorino Nemésio, 5 - 1750-306 Lisboa  
PORTUGAL

<http://www.ipris.org>  
email: [ipris@ipris.org](mailto:ipris@ipris.org)

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