

# “Matando o Desconhecimento”: The Role of Culture in Brazil’s Relations with Canada and Beyond

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A Journal of Canadian  
Literary and Cultural Studies

ISSN 2254-1179

VOL. 6 (2017)

pp. 9-21 • ARTICLES



**SUBMITTED:**

21/03/2016

**ACCEPTED:**

25/01/2017

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**KEYWORDS**

Canada; Brazil; trade; culture; international relations

**ABSTRACT**

In recent years, observers in both Canada and Brazil have pointed to the benefits of further developing relations between the two countries. Despite diplomatic efforts to promote productive interchange however, levels of trade – perhaps the most salient barometer of relationship health – have remained both modest and relatively stagnant. This is true, moreover, in spite of broad advances made by Brazil in particular in relationship building elsewhere.

This paper seeks to explore the roots of this seeming paradox by examining the factors that appear to have facilitated the growth of diplomatic and trade relations between Brazil and partners other than Canada – specifically in Africa; relations rooted primarily in a strategy of “cultural approximation”. The potential role of cultural factors in promoting the Canada-Brazil relationship is then explored in this light, focusing on recent efforts to support enhanced educational and scientific interchange between the two countries.

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## INTRODUCTION

There are few bilateral relationships so full of promise, but so lacking in results than that enjoyed by Canada and Brazil. Despite their relative proximity and the sheer size of their economies, the two countries remain relatively estranged from each other – culturally, socially, and perhaps above all, economically.

That the will to further develop the relationship exists is fairly well accepted, whether in Ottawa or Brasília. Since the dark days of the late 1990s and early 2000's, defined by the Bombardier-Embraer and tainted beef disputes, the two countries have embraced somewhat varied approximation strategies, from the identification of common diplomatic purpose (through bodies such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States), to targeted joint activities (e.g. peacekeeping in Haiti).

Throughout all such attempts however, the principal barometer of bi-national collaboration, as measured by the volume of two-way trade, has largely remained fixed. Despite recent and growing levels of Brazilian investment in the Canadian economy, Canada's stake in Brazil has in fact diminished over time, and levels of bi-national trade over the past five years have remained relatively stagnant, at about \$5-6B both ways each year (UN Comtrade). This is approximately equivalent to what moves across the Canada-US border every two days.

All of this suggests that the path to success likely lies elsewhere. In the words of Ambassador Afonso Cardoso (2012), former Brazilian Consul-General in Toronto, the key to enhancing the relationship may in fact exist in our respective ability to, in his words, “matar o desconhecimento” (eliminate the barrier of the unknown) between the two countries.<sup>1</sup> This implies not just the sharing of knowledge, but also the development of a broader inter-cultural appreciation that citizens (and decision-makers) can relate to.

For Brazil, this approach has a strong precedent. The phenomenal growth of Brazil's diplomatic and trading relationship with the countries of Africa in recent years has arguably been built on the solid foundation of cultural ties, in areas from language to popular media and education. In this essay, the fundamental question we pursue is whether or not there are lessons to be learned from this explicit form of cultural approximation for the future of the relationship between Brazil and Canada. The article opens with a brief overview of Canada-Brazil diplomatic and trading relations in recent years, followed by a more substantive analysis of recent patterns of Brazil-Africa diplomacy and trade, focusing squarely on the direct facilitative role of culture in developing these. The essay concludes

<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with the author.

with a discussion of the potential for modelling this approach in a Canada-Brazil context; that is, by promoting specific cultural linkages between Canada and Brazil that may serve to propel bilateral bonding and a healthier diplomatic and trading relationship.

## THE PROMISE OF THE CANADA-BRAZIL RELATIONSHIP

In 2016, Canada marked the 150-year anniversary of its first trade delegation visit to Brazil (Government of Canada, 2016e), an event that virtually passed without notice in both countries. This is perhaps not surprising, given that arguably the relationship between Canada and Brazil has not advanced significantly in this time. Overall, the period may in fact be best characterized by its unrealized potential, punctuated by a series of diplomatic advances and set-backs.

In the late 1900s, and through much of the 20th century, Canada's relationship with Brazil was largely defined by the very visible activities of Brazilian Traction, Light and Power (BTLP), a Canadian-owned company that played an important role in the early development of Brazil's hydroelectric power generation, street car lines, gas and telephone systems. Such investments proved extremely profitable until the Brazilian state governments bought out BTLP's assets – in the communications sector in 1969, followed by its power business in 1979 (Funding Universe, 2016; see also Barbosa, 2016). By this time, however, BTLP (later known as Brascan) had become largely synonymous with Canada itself in the minds of Brazilians.

Despite occasional interactions – sometimes dictated by fate (as was the case when Canadian and Brazilian troops fought side by side in Italy during World War II) – it was not until the 1980s however that serious efforts were undertaken to establish a productive bilateral relationship between the two countries. This was signaled by the respective official visits of Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau to Brazil in 1981 and of President João Figueiredo to Canada in 1982. During this period, a range of targeted commitments and support mechanisms emerged to build stronger corporate and diplomatic foundations between Canada and Brazil, including a \$160 million (CDN) Export Development Canada credit to invigorate a 1980 agreement aimed at promoting commercial and industrial cooperation. Later, in 1985, the Canada-Brazil Chamber of Commerce led a high-level multi-sector Canada-Brazil dialogue resulting in the publication of an aspirational document entitled “Blueprint for the Year 2000: Managing Change in an Interdependent World”. According to Dosman and Frankel (2002) however, this flurry of activity was never in fact followed up by concrete actions that might have solidified the two countries' relationship-building potential.

In fact, toward the end of the 20th century – and despite at least one more round of high-level diplomatic visits undertaken by Brazil’s President Fernando Cardoso and Canada’s Prime-Minister Jean Chrétien in 1997 and 1998 respectively – Brazil-Canada relations took a serious downturn. In 1992, Brazilian authorities arrested Canadians Christine Spencer and David Lamont for their role in the abduction of Brazilian supermarket mogul Abílio dos Santos Diniz. The Canadian government, believing the pair was innocent and lacking faith in the Brazilian justice system, came to their defense and pressured the Brazilian government to intervene in the case. As it turned out, and embarrassingly for Canadian diplomats, additional evidence established the guilt of the pair beyond a reasonable doubt and they were jailed for several years in Brazil before being repatriated to Canada (Hester; Dosman).

Further exacerbating tensions between the two countries, Canada lodged in 1998 a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) accusing Brazil of providing unfair government subsidies to aerospace giant Embraer, a direct competitor to Canadian-based Bombardier. The WTO sided with Canada, prompting a retaliatory WTO petition from the Brazilian government in 2001, which was resolved in Brazil’s favour. The net result was a heated and unyielding bilateral standoff that resulted in both countries holding rights to import sanctions against each other and that to this day has not been formally resolved. Subsequently, and ostensibly unrelated to the aerospace dispute, in 2001 Canada arbitrarily embargoed all Brazilian beef imports for a short time, claiming that it was potentially contaminated with so-called “mad cow” disease. In Brazil, the action was met with widespread outrage among the public, which responded with vocal demonstrations at the Canadian Embassy in Brasília and by dumping Canadian whisky on the streets of São Paulo. In the end, Canada was forced to eventually back down, claiming that the entire incident was created by a bureaucratic misunderstanding (Hester).

With a gradual reduction in tensions by 2002, the Canadian government turned its attention from conflict to cooperation once again, particularly with an eye towards exploiting Brazil’s growing global importance and its potential strategic value as a trading partner. Representing about half of the Latin American GDP, a growing destination for foreign investment, and a leader in the expanding MERCOSUL bloc of South American nations, Brazil was increasingly seen as a target for relationship building by the Canadian government (see Jubany).

As a result, diplomatic efforts intensified. New agreements were pursued with Brazil in areas of mutual interest (education, science and technology, agriculture, defence, mining and energy, space, investment and trade, and health) (CBIE 3). For the first time as well,

Canadian government policy and efforts identified Brazil as a priority market and a partner, through unprecedented initiatives that included: the creation of a Senior Interdepartmental Committee within the then Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) to concentrate on Brazil relations; consultations at the Deputy-Ministerial level; meetings and visits of senior ministers and their delegations; discussions on potential military cooperation; joint peacekeeping and state-building missions in Haiti, as well as international development collaboration through the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Brazilian Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (ABC) (Hewitt). Notably as well, Prime Minister Stephen Harper made an official visit to Brazil in 2011, formally launching with Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff a new agreement for scientific and technological cooperation and a joint committee of Brazilian and Canadian CEOs to advise both governments on how to advance the two countries’ commercial relationship (Dosman).

Canada’s Parliament has also supported renewed efforts to strengthen relationship with Brazil. In 2012, the Canadian Senate published a report entitled “Intensifying Strategic Partnerships with the New Brazil”, which was the result of a one and half year consultation with stakeholders in both Canada and Brazil. Among the 10 recommendations contained in the report, the Senate called for renewed attention to the areas of “education, science and technology, investment and trade, infrastructure, and regional and global partnerships, where Canadian advantages and leadership [were] value-added to Brazil” (Government of Canada, 2012).

In its “Sharing Successes 2013-14: Canada’s Engagement in the Americas”, the government of Canada reported having achieved successes with Brazil in the realms of mutual prosperity, human rights and protection of vulnerable groups, and strategic partnerships (Government of Canada, 2015). All of these are key accomplishments and speak to solid relationship-building progress, particularly since the darker years of the 1990s and early 2000s. Yet, the fact remains that despite the more recent high-level, top-down strategic engagement between the two countries, Canada’s relations with Brazil have not remotely achieved their full potential, particularly within one of the key barometers of relationship building: trade.

#### **BUILDING DIPLOMATIC AND TRADE BRIDGES: BRAZIL AND AFRICA**

As previously indicated, this outcome contrasts markedly with Brazil’s emerging relationship with Africa. During the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, concomitant with its rise to emerging economy status, Brazil has evolved to become a major trading nation. Since

2000 alone, the volume of trade, including both imports and exports, increased over four times, from approximately \$111B (USD) to nearly \$482B (USD) in 2013 (SECEX, 2014a). Despite its more recent economic woes, this trend in part reflects Brazil's growing prowess as a producer and exporter of manufactured goods, but also the growing demands of its increasingly affluent population for both basic commodities and high-end consumer products.

Within this general scenario, what has been particularly stunning is the meteoric rise in trade between Brazil and its partners on the continent of Africa. Between 2000 and 2013, total trade with Africa increased nearly seven fold, from \$4.2B (USD) to \$28.5B (USD) annually. In some measure, this has been driven by rapidly increasing imports of oil – particularly from Nigeria – as Brazil sought to fuel swiftly expanding GDP growth. Far more important, however, has been the growth in exports, posting a 720 percent increase during the first 13 years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, from \$1.3B (USD) to \$11.1B (USD) (SECEX, 2014b). In this equation, higher-yield manufactured and semi-manufactured goods have long predominated, historically representing approximately two-thirds of Brazilian exports (Alves 40).

Trade with the five Portuguese speaking African countries – Angola, Mozambique, São Tomé, Cabo Verde, and Guinea-Bissau – moreover, has come to constitute an increasing portion of the trade picture. Growth in total trade between 2000 and 2013, from \$0.15B (USD) to \$2.7B (USD), has increased at twice the rate posted for all of Africa, and nearly four times Brazil's total increase in imports and exports combined. Exports to the five countries, which form the African hub of the nine-member Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa or CPLP (Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries), have increased nearly 10 fold, from \$0.13B (USD) to \$1.43B (USD), again much higher than that posted for the total Brazilian exports and for exports to Africa (SECEX, 2014c). As we saw earlier, during this same period trade with Canada barely increased three fold, a country with a GDP near four times that of the CPLP countries combined (World Bank, 2016).

Similar trends can be seen in investment over the past decade. According to the African Development Bank (4), private Brazilian investment in Africa has grown steadily in recent years, surpassing \$10B (USD) in 2009. While only a small fraction of total outbound capital investments from Brazil, typically well in excess of \$150B (USD) (see Alves 40), these investments have shown significant concentration in terms of both geographic region and economic sector (Alves 41). Brazilian companies currently investing in Africa include multinationals Vale and Petrobras – both former state enterprises and major global players in mining and oil, respectively – as well as developers Camargo Correa and Odebrecht,

and transportation companies Weg and Marcopolo. Collectively these companies post regionality indices for Africa in the range of 10-25 percent (Barbosa et al. 82). According to Alves (41), Brazilian SMEs are also increasingly active in Africa, often as contributors to the value chains of the much larger enterprises.

The scope of individual company investments is impressive. By 2010, mining giant Vale had invested \$2.5B (USD) in Africa, and in that same year committed another \$15-20B (USD) to be in place by 2015. Similarly, between 2000 and 2013, Petrobras invested \$2B (USD) in oil exploration/production in Nigeria. Currently, its daily oil production throughout the continent constitutes 24 percent of its entire output (African Development Bank 5). In 2012, BTG Pactual, a major Brazilian investment bank, announced plans to raise \$1B (USD) to increase the world's largest investment fund for Africa in energy, infrastructure and agriculture (CNN, 2012).

Here again, much investment has flowed to member countries of the CPLP. In 2009, \$1.9B (USD) of Vale's total African investment went to the construction of a coal mining complex in Mozambique, in which 20 other Brazilian companies participated (Visentini 8). Angola was the fourth largest recipient of Petrobras investments abroad, at \$900M (USD) for the 2009-2013 period. In addition to Petrobras, some 100 Brazilian firms are also operating in that country. These include developer Odebrecht, whose total investments reached over \$600M (USD) by 2008, and which employed nearly 26,000 Angolans by 2011 (African Development Bank 6).

Within the literature, this spectacular growth in Brazil's Africa trade and investment are typically positioned as both recent, and the result of a three-pronged approach that deftly combines its economic interests with political diplomacy and development cooperation (see Alves 37; White 224-225). Where in the post-World War II years, Africa was largely ignored as a prospective vehicle for Brazil's political and economic ambitions on the world stage (largely given the enduring colonial status of most jurisdictions), this changed gradually during the last quarter century coinciding with African decolonization, and specifically Brazil's support – during the later years of the country's 1964-1985 military dictatorship – for independence movements of Portugal's former colonies, particularly Mozambique and Angola. General João Figueiredo, President of Brazil between 1979 and 1985, was in fact the first Brazilian head of state to visit the African continent (Visentini 3).

With the return of democracy to Brazil, ties with Africa expanded slowly, particularly under the Presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) (Saraiva 22-23). Effectively awakening to the growing trade potential of the African continent – despite endemic governance and economic crises – as well as its potential to bolster Brazil's

position as a leader in the global south, Cardoso worked diligently to build bridges to the region. During his mandate, Cardoso led a process to forgive Mozambique's \$450M (USD) external debt. In addition, Brazil invested over \$1M (USD) in development cooperation projects with several African countries, established a centre for entrepreneurial training in Angola and a public administration school in Mozambique (Saraiva 22-23).

It was only with the election of socialist President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (commonly referred to as simply Lula) that relations with Africa became a priority within the Brazilian government. According to Vesintini (4): "Africa was seen as the most important experiment of South-South cooperation" which in turn Brazil sought to lead in accordance with Lula's foreign policy objectives more broadly. While affirming this view, Alves (37) also characterizes Lula's Africa strategy as more directly designed to promote expansion of Brazil's economic interests in the region.

In support of this foreign and trade policy offensive, the literature suggests that Brazil deftly utilized a series of tools. Primary among these was a "soft power offensive" that put Lula and his senior ministers face to face with their African counterparts on a near constant basis during his eight-year term (2003-2010). In fact, Lula made a total of 12 state visits to Africa during his two-terms in office, visiting 21 countries. Lula's long-time Foreign Minister Celso Amorim exceeded this record, making a total of 67 official visits to some 34 African nations (Stuenkel1). At the same time, the number of Brazilian embassies in Africa increased from 16 to 34, while the number of African embassies in Brasília expanded from 18 to 37 (Alves 38).

Brazil also made a number of investments in support of African development during Lula's regime, clearly demonstrating Brazil's solidarity with the region. In 2006, Celso Amorim, Lula's Minister of Foreign Affairs, referred in fact to these international technical cooperation efforts as "an essential tool of foreign policy" (World Bank 2012: 35). These efforts have been led by a host of Brazilian agencies, among them the country's foreign aid organization, the Agência Brasileira de Cooperação (ABC), often in partnership with EMBRAPA (the national research and development organization largely credited with fomenting Brazil's agricultural boom since the 1960s), and other agencies including FIOCRUZ, SENAI, and BNDES.

## BRAZIL, AFRICA, AND THE CULTURAL AGENDA

There can be little question that the increase in African trade witnessed over the past two decades is linked to Brazil's diplomatic assault and skilful use of development aid in the form of technical assistance, as described above. Importantly, however, other factors have

also been seriously at play for some time. In this regard, culture and cultural products have been a primary ingredient. This is evident in at least three respects or domains analyzed in the following sections: media and entertainment, language, and education.

### Media and Entertainment

One cultural element that has been utilized very effectively by Brazil for building bridges with Africa is media in its various forms. In part this can be tracked by examining trade patterns associated with specific cultural products. Although incomplete and largely restricted to cultural "commodities", the UN Comtrade database for International Trade Statistics reveals some striking trends. For example, Brazil-Africa trade in books, newspapers and recorded media (included CDs and new media) has virtually exploded in recent decades. Between 2000 and 2014, Brazilian exports to Angola in all these categories increased from just over \$200,000 (USD) annually to nearly \$4.6M (USD). While on a somewhat reduced scale, similar increases for Mozambique are also in evidence, from approximately \$63,000 (USD) in 2000 to nearly \$400,000 (USD) in 2014 (UN Comtrade, 2015).

Aside from these hard goods, there is some evidence of Brazilian market penetration in Africa in both music and television programming. Africa, for example, has long been a market for Brazilian popular music. This is hardly surprising, given both Brazil's position as an important "semi-peripheral" supplier in the global music network (see Moon et al. 389), but also the African roots of Brazilian music itself. As a number of authors have noted (see for example Tremura; Conduru), the evolution of Brazilian musical expression throughout the twentieth century has been profoundly influenced by Africa. This is particularly true of classic Brazilian "samba", a word derived from the Bantu language. Traditional African music has also been expressed in specific regional musical stylings such as Maracatu and Afoxé.

By far more impactful, however, has been the influence of Brazilian television programming. Brazil's first television exports arrived in Portugal as early as 1985, in the form of the telenovela – or classic soap opera – "Gabriela". Since then, the major Brazilian networks, particularly TV Globo, have sold similar programming to over 130 countries on all continents. It is estimated that the value of TV Globo's exports worldwide have easily topped \$40M (USD), with a potential total audience of nearly two billion (Pina).

African countries are said to account for 25 percent of Globo's export market, the largest after Europe which accounts for 37 percent (Thomas 11). In some countries, Brazilian television programming has in fact become a staple of the domestic television

diet (Visentini 4). Hugely successful in the Brazilian market, the telenovela format lends itself particularly well to the African reality, owing in part to commonality of language, but also common themes associated with challenges of work and family.

One study of the telenovela phenomenon in Cabo Verde, for example, affirms the centrality of the Brazilian television programming in everyday life (Pina). Following a steady diet of Brazilian television blockbusters, beginning with “O Bem Amado” in 1990, evening activities have long been dominated by the timing of successive telenovela episodes, attracting the largest daily audience of viewers. Importantly as well, in interviews the study captured positive impressions generated by these images, associating Brazil with wealth and modernity.

Brazil has penetrated African media in other key respects as well. Globo’s satellite broadcasting service, for example, has also been used to tremendous effect. Currently, over a third of Globo International’s 550,000 cable customers worldwide are located in just one country – Angola. Other Brazilian media companies have made similar inroads. TV Record, for example, now provides programming in a number of countries, producing at least 50 percent of its material locally in Angola, Mozambique, and Cabo Verde, primarily to meet domestic production requirements (Terra Brasil).

While it may be difficult to argue that such media penetration constitutes active promotional strategy, there can be no question that it has played a long-term and significant role in firmly establishing the Brazilian presence in Africa and in selling the Brazilian “brand”, thus facilitating easier access to African markets for manufactured goods. This is true much in the same way as Hollywood movies have long been recognized as promoting the “American way” globally for nearly a century.

And certainly the benefits of media promotion for relationship building have not been lost on the Brazilian government. In 2010, the Brazilian government itself announced the launch of TV Brasil Internacional. Based in Brasília, the channel broadcasts through Maputo, Mozambique to 49 African countries, with the largest audiences in the CPLP countries (BBC, 2010b).

### The Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa

Of all the cultural mechanisms actively utilized by Brazil in pursuit of African linkages over the years, language is probably the one that has been used most effectively, primarily through the Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa.

Best equated to the Portuguese-speaking world’s version of the Commonwealth or La Francophonie, the CPLP is an organization or community of member states united

by a common language, cultural affinity and historical ties. Its binding roots reside in the multiple expansion bouts of the Portuguese Empire during the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and particularly in the triangular trade relationship that ensued between Brazil, Portugal and the Portuguese African colonies for hundreds of years.

It was an awareness of this historical and linguistic context that prompted the development of the initial concept for the CPLP, a process begun in 1983, when Portugal’s Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Jaime Gama, spoke to such a vision during an official visit to Cabo Verde, where he stated:

The process in which to attain consistent and decentralized dialogue amongst the seven Portuguese speaking countries scattered across Africa, Europe and South America is to create biennial Heads of State and Government summits to promote annual Minister of State and Foreign Affairs meetings, effecting frequent political consultations amongst political leaders and regular meetings amongst UN delegates and national representatives in other international organizations, in order to advance with a constitution for a group of Portuguese speaking nations in the breast of inter-parliamentary union (CPLP, 2015a).

Gama, through his rhetoric, set the tone for what was to become the CPLP over a decade later. Formally institutionalized in July 1996 through its Constitutional Declaration and Community Statutes, the CPLP took effect as a community comprised of seven geographically-dispersed Portuguese-speaking countries (Angola, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Portugal, São Tomé and Príncipe), intent on consolidating respective national interests under the guise of culture and using the Portuguese language as its common denominator. Headquartered in Lisbon, the only city where all member states have embassies, the CPLP has thus been mandated to promote concerted political-diplomacy as well as economic, cultural and social cooperation within its sphere (CPLP, 2015a).

It is particularly interesting to note that while it may have been the Portuguese government that planted the seeds, it was the Brazilian government’s assertive and decisive action that ultimately transformed the CPLP from an aspiration into a reality. Brazilian President José Sarney took the first concrete step in this direction in November 1989, instigating and hosting the first Heads of State and Government summit inclusive of all seven countries in São Luís do Maranhão, Brazil. During this meeting, the consensus was to establish an Instituto Internacional de Língua Portuguesa (IILP) (Institute of the Portuguese Language) to promote and diffuse the language within the “community” parameters. While that specific resolution took over 15 years to materialize with the

IILP's launch in 2005 (CPLP, 2015b), it served much earlier to breathe significant life into the CPLP's formation during the 1990s. The momentum was carried further by CPLP champion and Brazilian Ambassador in Portugal José Aparecido de Oliveira. It was Brazil, in fact, that organized the second summit in February 1994 under the Presidency of Itamar Franco, welcoming the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Trade of all seven Portuguese-speaking states in Brasília to discuss the road to the CPLP's adoption by their respective governments and its acceptance within the wider "community".

The meeting resulted in the establishment of the Grupo de Concentração Permanente, the body entrusted with analyzing existent bilateral relations to author mutually beneficial provisions for concerted multilateralism, and with drafting the CPLP's founding acts: its Constitutional Declaration and Community Statutes. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Trade met a second time the following year in Lisbon to reaffirm their support for the CPLP and scheduled the first official Heads of State and Government Summit for 1996. Subsequently, in July of that year, the CPLP was born.

Since its inception, the CPLP has grown to nine member states with the addition of Timor Leste in 2002 and Equatorial Guinea in 2014, and acquired six associate observer nations. As it stands today, the organization has a global presence that spans four continents and is particularly concentrated in Africa, where two-thirds of its representation resides. On the basis of language and cultural affinity, the organization unites over 230 million people that speak Portuguese worldwide. With its population of over 200 million, Brazil represents about 80 percent of this number, making it the torchbearer of the Portuguese language globally. Perhaps more importantly, it has given Brazil significant weight within the CPLP (Saraiva 18), and thus a privileged platform to redefine and strengthen its relationship with its Portuguese-speaking African counterparts, secure its national interests in the region and position itself as an international power promoting peace and development in the global south (Gala).

## Education

Finally, education and educational ties have formed a key component in Brazil's attempts to build and solidify its Africa nexus in recent years. According to UNESCO figures, in 2011 Brazil sent just over 30,700 students abroad for tertiary level training. That same year, the country welcomed approximately 14,400, arriving from almost every continent.

Of these, some 3820 or 27 percent came from Africa. The numbers of African students arriving in Brazil has in fact grown exponentially since 2000. From virtually none in that year, incoming African students increased to 120 in 2004 to a high of 4285 in 2009.

By 2011, African countries accounted for three of the top five countries of origin. With 1552 students, Angola took first place, followed by Guinea-Bissau in second place with 825, and Cabo Verde in fourth with 741 – just slightly behind third place Argentina with 772. Collectively, students from the CPLP, numbering 3342, accounted for some 84 percent of all African students arriving in Brazil that year (UNESCO, 2014).

2011 also saw the establishment of a bold Brazilian venture in post-secondary education: the Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB). Conceived and implemented as a federal initiative with multiple campuses in the northeastern states of Ceará and Bahia, UNILAB has been uniquely dedicated to establishing and strengthening academic ties between Brazil and Africa. Its mission, according to its founding Act, is to:

Produce and disseminate universal knowledge so as to contribute to the social, cultural, and economic development of Brazil and other Portuguese-speaking countries – especially in Africa, and extending progressively to other countries of the continent – through education of citizens with solid technical, scientific and cultural knowledge and committed to the necessity of overcoming social inequality and preserving the natural environment. (Gomes and Vieira 87)

As a full-fledged post-secondary institution, UNILAB was designed to serve not only as a point of linkage between countries based on language, but also as a bridge between teaching and research within the context of shared social and economic realities. As such, it has developed a number of scholarly foci, including rural development, public health, teacher-training, public administration and sustainable development (Gomes and Vieira 88). Of the total student population, moreover, one half were envisioned as coming from Brazil, with the other half from CPLP partners. Within a relatively short period of time, UNILAB has moved steadily towards meeting that goal. As of 2013, foreign students represented 22 percent of the student body, or 299 of 1,352. Of the 100 teaching staff, 89 are Brazilian and the remaining 12 foreign (Gomes and Vieira 90). Importantly as well, UNILAB has developed cooperation agreements with 21 post-secondary institutions in eight countries, all but one (China) within the CPLP family.

Another key project within the educational sphere was the launch in 2013 of a comprehensive, nation-wide program to promote collaboration in Africa. Funded by the Brazilian Ministry of Education, the program brings together educators and researchers from some 20 institutions who in turn will offer services in the five African CPLP member countries. The program is intended to focus on teacher-training, curriculum development,

education administration, digital literacy and institutional capacity building. As part of the project, the University of São Paulo, for example, will offer a Masters in Education to Angolan students, while the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul will collaborate with the Universidade de Cabo Verde in the development of a course in agronomy. As part of the package, African students will also be eligible for scholarships to Brazilian universities (University World News). This will serve as a complement to another program, the Brazilian Federal government's Programa Estudante-Convênio de Graduação, which in 2014 provided 570 fellowships to foreigners studying at Brazilian universities. Of these, approximately half (280) were given to students from Africa, the vast majority from CPLP member countries (Ministério da Educação).

### LESSONS FOR THE BRAZIL-CANADA RELATIONSHIP

The story of Brazil's growing relations with Africa is both an impressive and a telling one. From a virtually standing start, Brazil has secured for itself a prominent place as a diplomatic and trading partner with the region, certainly on the scale of its main competitors India and China. In this ambition, Brazil has had a serious advantage. This relates not simply to its racial, linguistic and broadly cultural affinities with Africa, but also to the way in which Brazil's government and corporate interests profitably utilized these affinities to promote a much broader diplomatic and trade agenda.

One may reasonably ask what lessons may be learned from this experience for the expansion of the Canada-Brazil relationship. At face value, as previous analysis has shown (Hewitt and Edmonds), Canada and Brazil share far fewer cultural affinities than is the case with Brazil and Africa. Our colonial pasts and paths to national independence, and the evolution of our political culture are completely different. We do not share a language (hence access to common media and or entertainment products), nor in effect a religion given similarly high rates of secularization in both countries. We do share similar economic systems, rooted in capitalism. Obviously, this alone has not produced much hoped for increases in the volume of trade.

One set of cultural values we do strongly share and that could form the basis for a much closer relationship is related to education and scientific exchange, particularly at the post-secondary level. Just as education, training and knowledge sharing helped to solidify the cultural bonds of Brazil and Africa, so too could they for Brazil and Canada. And we are already moving well down this road, as evidenced by important recent developments, including a high-level visit to Brazil 2012 led by Governor-General David Johnston. Joined by dozens of senior representatives from the post-secondary sector, the Governor-General's

visit was almost exclusively focused on promoting educational exchange between Canada and Brazil.

Even before this visit, a number of initiatives were already underway. These included enhanced collaboration in training through the development of joint programs designed to foster student mobility, primarily at the graduate level. The Canada-Brazil awards, a collaborative effort of Global Affairs Canada (GAC) and CAPES (the Brazilian agency that funds graduate research), as well as funding offered through GAC's Emerging Leaders in the America's programme, have benefitted hundreds of Brazilian students looking for training opportunities in Canada (Government of Canada, 2016a; 2016b). These efforts have been matched, and greatly exceeded by the 2012 launch of Brazil's Science Without Borders (SWB) initiative (Government of Brazil). Funded with a multi-billion dollar investment by the Brazilian government, SWB was designed to facilitate a massive outflow of up to 100,000 Brazilian undergraduate and graduate students to top post-secondary institutions worldwide, primarily in the science, communications, and business fields. As the programme winds down, over 90 percent of these have been placed. For its part, Canada has been a major beneficiary of this flow, receiving over 7,000 students (for the most part, enrolled in single year "sandwich" degree programmes), ranking it the number three destination worldwide (Ciência sem Fronteiras). This is in addition to the nearly 20,000 Brazilian students who come to Canada each year for short-term courses to learn one of Canada's official languages (Languages Canada).

While government and institutions in Canada have largely focused on the economic benefits of this influx, these student programmes hold considerable potential in terms of bridging the "cultural gap" between the two countries. Following their sojourn in Canada, students return to Brazil with intimate knowledge of Canadian life and social media connections with literally tens of thousands of new friends. They return, moreover, not only to major cities along the coast but often to smaller centres throughout the length and breadth of Brazil where few Canadians have travelled. In effect, then, they serve as ambassadors and interpreters of Canadian life to Brazilians long after they have returned home. In terms of bridging the Canadian-Brazilian divide they thus go some distance towards "matando o desconhecimento" between the two cultures and in establishing future bridges between Canada and Brazil.

To take further advantage of such programs, a number of Canadian institutions have pooled their resources to develop common outward facing strategies to Brazil. One such collective is CALDO, an organization representing nine larger Canadian universities and acting as a conduit to attract students through the programs cited above (CALDO). The

model has been so successful that it has now been expanded to other countries of the region, including Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Colombia and Uruguay.

Part of CALDO's stated purpose is to facilitate collaborative research – both a corollary to its educational mission but also representative of yet another shared value between the two countries. Some institutions have gone so far as to strike unique funding arrangements with agencies in Brazil to support collaborative team efforts in R&D. Through agreements with the São Paulo State Research Funding Agency (FAPESP), for example, projects have been financed at a number of institutions including the University of Toronto and Western University (see for example FAPESP).

Broader efforts are also underway on this front. For the most part, these have been guided by the 2011 Framework Agreement Between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Federative Republic of Brazil for Cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation (Government of Canada, 2016c). This agreement established the foundation for the development of joint research and development activities across a number of sectors. Importantly as well, it called for the establishment of a Canada-Brazil Science, Technology, and Innovation Joint Committee to encourage and oversee such activities, with representatives from government, the private sector and academia. In 2012, the Joint Committee established an inaugural Action Plan that was further updated the following year. The Plan called for coordinated efforts to promote joint research in five key areas: Life Sciences, Ocean Science and Technology, Information and Communications Technology, Sustainable Technology and Alternative Energy and Nanotechnology. Further, working groups within each area were struck and mandated to pursue and encourage opportunities for collaboration through encouragement of student and researcher mobility, networking events, and development of joint research projects. These last initiatives were further supported by dedicated funding provided by the government of Canada to International Science and Technology Partnerships (ISTP) Canada (ISTP). The ISTP programme was subsequently replaced by the Canadian International Innovation Programme managed by the National Research Council (Government of Canada, 2016d).

The work of the Joint Committee has produced a range of outcomes over the years in support of research collaboration. These range from focused workshops to large scale events promoting networking in ICT, neuroscience and nanoscience, involving hundreds of participants across the public and private sectors. A number of research projects have also been funded through the ISTP mechanism. Between 2011 and 2015, over \$5M in competitive funding from ISTP was matched by Canadian and Brazilian partners and served to sustain a total of 13 industry-university collaborative research and development projects

and six major events designed to promote new joint initiatives. In bringing researchers from both the public and private sector from both countries together in pursuit of specific projects, these collaborations are quickly closing the gap between research communities in the two countries in a variety of disciplines.

Though not through the vehicle of formal linking programmes such as this, there is also evidence that Canadian and Brazilian academics are moving on their own to build bridges through existing funding sources. A recent report published by the Canadian Bureau of International Education, produced at the request of the three federal granting councils – the Social Science and Humanities Research Council, the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council, and the Canadian Institutes for Health Research – reveal that in fact over the past 10 years, Canadian and Brazilian researchers and students have had access to nearly \$20M (CDN) in funding from federal sources to pursue joint projects. These have ranged from studies examining climate change and oceans to alternative energy/biofuels, infectious disease and water quality (CBIE). All of this suggests the growing presence of a unique, spontaneously emerging and robust Canada-Brazil research community that not only shares a common perspective on the value of research but that can serve as a catalyst for broader inter-cultural interaction between the two countries.

## CONCLUSION

Improving the Canada-Brazil relationship holds promise for both countries. With respect to economic linkages, the benefits are perhaps most quantifiable. Increased investment and trade help to promote prosperity, in terms of both wealth and jobs. With enhanced trading relationships, however, come other benefits. Potentially at least, these include strengthened diplomatic relations that can result in common positions on global affairs, the reduction of international tensions, and support for international development. So too are the prospects for enhanced citizen exchange, not just toward commercial ends, but through increases in tourism and opportunities for learning. Currently, these benefits form the basis for Canada's well-established and continuing relationships with countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Germany.

The major question, of course, is how to stimulate such productive outcomes. The history of Canada and Brazil's relationship to date seems to suggest that economic arguments positing the benefits of economic exchange alone will not carry the day. In this regard, Brazil's experience in Africa may be more telling. By focusing on the cultural relationship and the values that tie it to its prospective African partners, Brazil was able to make unprecedented gains in diplomatic and economic interchange in a relatively short

period of time. This in turn has reinforced its global political agenda and the range of Brazil's allies in an important, albeit still emerging, part of the globe.

As regards to the role of culture in stimulating the Canada-Brazil relationship some promising signs are in play. The value placed on education by both Canada and Brazil is leading to unprecedented levels of student exchange, in ways that can only strengthen bilateral ties. To a considerable extent as well, scientific exchange and collaboration may have a similar effect, with benefits not only to participants in collaborative research, but also more broadly through the mutual development of innovations that can benefit citizens of both countries but also serve as a platform for launching international joint ventures.

Whether or not these types of initiatives will succeed in kick-starting the bilateral relationship remains to be seen. Arguably, however, they are pointed in the right direction – at very least perhaps our most promising bet to begin to “matar o desconhecimento” as the precondition to sustainable relationship building.

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