

Brazilian Foreign Policy after the Cold War

By Sean W. Burges

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Since 1992—the end of the Cold War—Brazil has been slowly and quietly carving a niche for itself in the international community: that of a regional leader in Latin America. How and why is the subject of Sean Burges’s investigations.

Under President Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Brazil embarked on a new direction vis-à-vis foreign policy. Brazilian diplomats set out to lead South America and the global south without actively claiming leadership or incurring the associated costs.

They did so to protect Brazil’s national autonomy in an ever-changing political climate.

Burges utilizes recently declassified documents and in-depth interviews with Brazilian leaders to track the adoption and implementation of Brazil’s South American foreign policy and to explain the origins of this trajectory. Leadership and desire to lead have, until recently,

been a contentious and forcefully disavowed ambition for Brazilian diplomats. Burges dispels this illusion and provides a framework for understanding the conduct and ambitions of Brazilian foreign policy that can be applied to the wider global arena.

Sean W. Burges is an adjunct professor with the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa and a senior research fellow with the Washington, D.C.—based Council on Hemispheric Affairs.

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