

Roundtable
Discussions for
Middle Power
Diplomacy
No. 3

Presenter

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Moderator

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Discussants

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East Asia Institute invites distinguished presenters from Middle Powers and prominent discussants to share meaningful insights on prospects of Korea's Middle Power diplomacy in the midst of U.S.-China relations.

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Middle Power Diplomatic Strategy of Brazil and Policy Recommendations for South Korea's Middle Power

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East Asia Institute (EAI) is conducting research on the possibility of middle power diplomacy as a vision for Korea's foreign policy. By definition, middle power diplomacy refers to a strategy adopted by middle powers categorized as such based on national resources. The definition of middle power diplomacy in fact extends beyond a strategy that serves only national interests; middle power diplomacy encompasses universal norms and values, and influences regional and global strategic environments. Middle power diplomacy is being considered as a viable policy option for South Korea to effectively respond to growing uncertainty resulting from power transition-triggered conflicts between the U.S. and China.

On August 19, 2013, EAI invited Edmundo Sussumu Fujita, Ambassador of Brazil to Korea, to discuss Brazil's foreign policy built on its historical experiences and suggest recommendations for South Korea. Following are main points from the roundtable discussion.

Experience of Brazil

Brazil's diplomatic history began when the Portuguese royal family migrated to Brazil to flee from Napoleon's invasion of Portugal in 1808. Upon arriving in Brazil, Dom João, Prince Regent of Portugal (position before being crowned in 1816 as João VI), established the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Defense and Foreign Affairs, through which Portuguese foreign policy was conducted. This laid the foundation for upgrading Brazilian foreign policy from merely colonial level to the monarchical level. In 1822, Brazil declared its inde-

pendence from Portugal and became a constitutional monarchy. Since then, Ministry of Foreign Affairs separated from Ministry of Defense and operated independently. Brazil's diplomacy at that time focused on settling territorial disputes between Brazil and its neighbors. During this process, Rio Branco, considered to be the "father of Brazilian diplomacy," contributed significantly to defining the country's borders. To commemorate his prominent achievements in Brazilian diplomacy, Rio Branco Institute, a diplomacy academy that trains Brazilian diplomats, is named after him.

Brazil successfully negotiated territorial disputes with its neighbors and consolidated the borders of modern Brazil by the early 20th century. Resolving disputes through peaceful settlement reduced a possibility of further conflict with neighboring countries and eliminated security threats to a large extent. An obvious lack of security threats perceived by Brazil explains why Brazil does not place emphasis on building up its military power. Although Brazil ranks 11th in military expenditure, most of its military budget is spent to pay for veterans pension. Additionally, Brazil has not engaged in military conflicts or war for almost 150 years. Brazil uses outdated military weapons system and equipment, which have not been updated since the World War II. In Brazil, the role of the military is to implement and enhance social welfare programs, rather than to carry out warfare. For example, the Brazilian military is responsible for providing social infrastructure by constructing schools or hospitals in areas such as Amazon that are difficult to access for other divisions within the government or civilians.

Colonial experience played a key role in creating the unique complexity of today's Brazilian society. Under the Portuguese rule in Brazil, Portuguese colonists and aboriginal inhabitants were interbred. Brazil's racial composition became even more complex by the influx of slaves brought into Brazil by Portuguese colonists. Additionally, since the 19th century, Brazil supported open-door policy to immigrants from various regions such as Middle East, Asia, and Africa, which diversified the races of Brazilians. With racial diversity, Brazil is a multi-racial and multi-cultural "melting pot," displaying openness to other cultures.

Brazil's Diplomatic Strategy

Basic principles of Brazil's diplomacy can be summarized as "3D" (development, disarmament, decolonization), a concept first promulgated by Araujo Castro, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the 18th United Nations General Assembly in 1963. Brazil's diplomacy emphasizes the mutual prosperity of the international community, peaceful reconciliation of conflicts through communication and negotiation, and equality of states as important values.

Brazil firmly maintains that every nation needs to make an effort to improve the quality of life for its people, and human rights for better quality of life should be respected. Despite arguing against the unlimited development of the nuclear weapons which can potentially be used for building weapons of mass destruction (WMD), Brazil supports development in science-technology in the field of nuclear energy. Just because use of nuclear energy to develop WMD is a threat to national security, it should not be a reason to regulate scientific research for the sake of progress. In terms of resources, Brazil emphasizes co-prosperity through cooperation between producing and consuming countries regarding acquisition, transaction, and application technology development of resources.

Brazil's adherence to resolving territorial disputes by international law or negotiation, not by force, clearly demonstrates its commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts. Brazil set a good example of settling territorial disputes with its neighbors through negotiation.

The principle of sovereign equality of states is a fundamental concept by which Brazil has abided since the Second Hague Peace Conference in 1907. This right to state

sovereignty is inherently guaranteed regardless of the national power and hierarchy among sovereign states does not exist. Brazil has continuously been committed to establishing democracy in international society. Such principle and values imbedded in Brazilian diplomacy explain why Brazil is not seeking regional hegemony and is rather pessimistic on the whole concept of hegemony.

Brazil pursues flexible diplomacy. It has neither formed a military or ideological alliance, nor was it active in Non Aligned Movement (NAM); Brazil's only role in the NAM was to participate as an observer. Although Brazil is considered to be part of the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, and China), categorizing Brazil together with other BRICs countries is based on shared interests in economic factors, not cultures or national identity. BRICs speak with one voice not because there exists strong solidarity among member countries, but because they are cooperating on shared perception of threats and problems for national interests. Brazil's commitment to flexible diplomacy is based on its multi-cultural societal background, which enables Brazil to accept and embrace broader scope of values. In terms of developmental stage, Brazilian society is a complex mixture of developed, developing, and underdeveloped aspects, which enables Brazil to better understand and empathize with other countries in various developing stages. Brazil's ability to successfully execute a "consensus-builder" role based on flexible diplomacy contributed to the adoption of Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21, as well as United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

Implications for South Korea

1. South Korea should acknowledge the inherent limits to hierarchy in international relations and construct diplomatic discourse on the global level, rather than on narrowly-focused concept such as middle power diplomacy.

Strongly supporting the sovereign equality of states, Brazil does not accept an idea that hierarchy exists among nations. Brazil also does not believe that countries are to be categorized as great, small, and middle powers. In the same vein, seeking regional hegemony or strengthening national power is not a priority for Brazil. It is crucial, especially in the age of globalization, for countries to cooperate in order to

resolve issues commonly faced by the international community. A problem faced by any one country is closely linked to other countries, such as epidemics, climate change, and terror. There no longer exists an issue that implicates only one country or region. Even an issue that seemingly has no impact on other countries ends up affecting the international community and this global impact returns to the originating country. Therefore, it is imperative in today's globalized international community for each country to carry out "common but differentiated responsibility" in accordance to national capability. South Korea's diplomacy should also be built in a way that corresponds to such changes.

2. Instead of developing strategies in response to the changing U.S.-China relations, South Korea should adopt an approach to resolve problems through international institutions.

Brazil does not overestimate the implication for emergence of the G2 era and competition between the super powers. Because the military power has become less significant in today's international relations, there is an obvious limit to evaluation of national power based on military capabilities and use of such evaluation to devise foreign policy. Positive and negative aspects always coexist in the international relations. In its relations with either the U.S. or China, Brazil walks a thin line between cooperation and conflict. In order to resolve conflicts existing among countries, institutions built upon international agreements such as World Trade Organization (WTO) are established. Brazil has always brought a troubling issue or conflict to the international community and tried to resolve it within the institutional framework. For Brazil, settlement of conflicts through international institutions has been deemed successful and effective. In the era of globalization, resolving problems in the realm of international institutions is more effective than focusing on bilateral relations or regionalism.

3. Instead of focusing on suggesting creative ideas, South Korea should work to gain trust of other countries by pioneering in implementing its own ideas.

To strengthen its influence in the international community, any country needs to practice diplomacy by setting a good example. In the sovereign equality of states, the skill of persuasion rather than coercion is crucial in successfully adopting and implementing any specific ideas in the international realm. In this context, a question of whether a country can gain trust of other countries by first executing its self-suggested idea becomes more important than a question of whether creative ideas have been suggested. In today's diplomacy, it is imperative and even necessary to become a good example for other countries and maintain consistency in its diplomatic strategies. ■

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