Brazil has become an influential economic power. Its social and economic advancement has progressed to a point where it has the capacity to act not only in its own interest, but in the interest of others in the international community. It has demonstrated that it is an effective leader through its involvement in United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations, its activities in the G4, and through BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa). Because of all of this, it has decided to push for a well-deserved permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), one of the six major organs of the UN, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security.

Brazil's Rise to Economic and Geopolitical Prominence

Brazil's evolution to economic importance is reflected in its numbers. It is the sixth largest economy in the world, with a GDP of $2.22 trillion, and a GDP per capita of $12,100. It is a populous country of 202,656,788 people, and has been focused on industrialization since 1945. In the 1980s, Brazil began a transition to democracy, while a new constitution brought significant institutional changes. By 1990, the conversion to democratically elected governance had been completed, and a tradition of peaceful power transitions has been maintained. Brazil recently re-elected its first female president, Dilma Rousseff.

In addition to its newfound economic importance, Brazil also started to emphasize multilateralism in its foreign policy. It has demonstrated this through its membership in many international organizations such as the UN, G4, World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), Southern Common Market (Mercosur), and BRICS. Brazil has also won the chance to show the world that it has arrived as a global power. The country hosted the Federation Internationale de Football association (FIFA) World Cup soccer tournament in 2014 and will host the Summer Olympic Games in 2016. These events provide the country with an opportunity to promote its cities for future tourism, and let the world know that they have the infrastructure, security, and transportation systems of a country prepared for the international spotlight.

Of course, Brazil is not without challenges. In terms of its efforts to prepare for the aforementioned international sporting events, many have accused it of targeting minority and disadvantaged populations with displacement and further economic disenfranchisement. More broad-
ly, the country suffers from significant inequalities (even with its economic boom) and a historically high unemployment level at 15.4%. It must overcome these challenges if it hopes to realize its potential. Brazil cannot just rely on being the host of parties and games in order to become a world leader. It must do better.

Advocacy on the International Stage
Beginning in the 1990s, Brazil decided to use peacekeeping to build a strategic relationship between international participation and the advancement of the country’s national interest, shifting from a policy of “autonomy through distance” to one of “autonomy through participation.” This adjustment can be couched in terms of advocating conformity to international norms and rules and favoring multilateralism. As a result, the Brazilian government now pursues a strategy welcoming to international regimes, encourages greater participation in UN peacekeeping operations, and contributes more to regional stability. Of particular note is Brazil’s leadership in the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), created in 2004 to help “restore a secure and stable environment, to promote the political process, to strengthen Haiti’s Government institutions and rule-of-law structures, and to promote and protect human rights.” Brazil deployed some 1,200 soldiers and necessary equipment to Haiti, and continues to contribute via development programs and long-term investment as well. Haiti proved that Brazil is a global stakeholder ready to uphold universal principles and engage effectively beyond its borders. More generally, this re-orientation of Brazilian foreign policy towards multilateralism and peacekeeping operations is a large part of what has enabled Brazil to become a more important international player.

Brazil aims to achieve recognition as a global power through its economic improvement. It has taken notice of the need to revitalize Mercosur in order to build a strong and united South America that can be
used as a platform for Brazil’s competitive insertion in the global economy and its ambition to become a significant global player. Brazil sought to make a name for itself in cooperation with other rising economic powers, such as Russia, India, China and South Africa in the BRICS group. The BRICS have developed various strategies to influence global economic governance, such as reforming or undermining the IMF to make it more friendly to developing countries. At the 2012 BRICS summit, for example, members proposed and discussed the creation of a BRICS development bank that would work in parallel to the IMF, financing infrastructure and other sustainable development projects. Such a project would also enhance the prestige and influence of the BRICS nations. Furthermore, Brazil has taken a strong stance in favor of UNSC reform, demonstrated when then-President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva said in a speech before the UNGA in 2003:

“Reform of the UN has become an urgent task. (...) The security council must be fully empowered to deal with crises and threats to peace. (...) Above all, its decisions must be seen as legitimate by the Community of Nations as a whole. Its composition - in particular as concerns permanent membership - cannot remain unaltered almost 60 years on. It can no longer ignore the changing world. More specifically, it must take into account the emergence in the international scene of developing countries. (...) Brazil believes that it has a useful contribution to make.”

UNSC Membership
Brazil has been in the UNSC before and has in fact, been elected to the Security Council more times than any other UN Member State. It has previously served as an elected member of the Security Council in 1947-47, 1954-55, 1963-64, 1967-68, 1988-89, 1993-94, 1998-99, 2004-05, and 2010-2011. But Brazil is no longer satisfied with a non-permanent seat in the Security Council and seeks a permanent seat with veto power along with other rising great powers, such as the G4.

Within the UN, the so-called G4 (India, Japan, Germany, and Brazil) have been working to obtain a permanent seat in the UNSC. Their central claim is that the existing UNSC permanent members do not represent the distribution of power in today’s international order. The G4 believes that the UNSC should reflect the economic, political and military rise of middle powers. They also argue that their presence would improve the UNSC’s representation, and thus significantly enhance its legitimacy. Brazil and Germany in particular have pursued a strategy of ‘balance of power’ policies to advocate for a more representative and democratic reform of the UNSC.

The G4 initiative failed due to strong resistance from neighboring countries. Mexico opposed Brazil’s advocacy because it too sought a permanent UNSC seat. Argentina opposed Brazil due to its unhappy experiences with Brazilian trade policy in Mercosur. Pakistan also opposed India’s claim, Italy opposed Germany’s, and many Asian countries rejected Japan’s. In addition, the P5 were displeased with the idea of sharing their exclusive veto power and the UN General Assembly (UNGA) failed to support the G4. In fact, there was such strong opposition to the G4 that four nations (Argentina, Italy, Pakistan, and South Korea) went on to form an anti-G4 group. This anti-G4 coalition, called the “Together for Consensus” group, grew to nearly 40 member countries who actively oppose the G4 and promote alternative representation projects.

Conclusion
Brazil’s foreign policy is aimed at promoting Brazil as a responsible global player. It is able to do this largely because of its influential economic power, which has progressed to a point where is has the capacity act both in its own best interests as well as those of the international community. This, in combination with Brazil’s committed and effective leadership in UN peacekeeping operations and elsewhere, indicates that it both can responsibly manage and deserves a permanent seat on the UNSC.

Brazil is simultaneously dealing with major world events traditionally falling under the purview of developed, powerful countries (the World Cup and the Olympics) and facing the problems of the developing world (inequality, civil unrest, corruption). In the 21st century, what country is better suited to lead than Brazil – a country bridging the gap between developing and developed both internally and internationally?

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