

**Year 4 International Studies Coursework**

**4.11 Stephen**



**“To what extent is Brazil an important country in the world today?”**

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**Word count: 2000 words**

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## 1. Introduction

Latin America is a region located in the Americas, that is particularly set apart by the large usage of Romance languages, which are derived from Vulgar Latin. In Latin America, Brazil is the largest country both by landmass and population, which plays a pivotal role in today's world. Brazil is a federative republic comprising 26 states, and it being the home to the famous Amazon basin has solidified its position as a rising middle power. Our research analyses the role of Brazil in Latin America, and aims to present how Brazil plays a vital role in ensuring the region's prosperity. "Important" is described as a measure of Brazil's economic strength by measuring its GDP, its political influence by looking at its role in the UN and region, and its culture derived from the Amazon Rainforest. Our research question is **"To what extent is Brazil an important country in the world today?"**.

This paper's topic is significant and worthy of study because our main focus is Brazil and its multifaceted role in today's world. By analysing the economic, ecological, and political aspects of Brazil's current situation, we will accurately be able to predict potential changes in Latin America, which would be useful in policy creation. This essay will discuss Brazil's economy, regional influence, and biodiversity, referencing information from the World Bank, World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and the Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC). From the World Bank<sup>1</sup>, we found that the Amazon's biodiversity is of utmost environmental and economic importance to Brazil and the world as a whole. When referencing the WWF<sup>2</sup>, we found out about the damage that the Amazon is sustaining because of illegal logging and forest fires. Finally, our paper relied on information from Observatory of Economic Complexity<sup>3</sup>, where we researched information regarding Brazil's economic activity.

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<sup>1</sup> "Why the Amazon's Biodiversity is Critical for the Globe: An Interview with Thomas Lovejoy." World Bank, 2019. Accessed May 13, 2023.  
<https://www.worldbank.org/e/news/feature/2019/05/22/why-the-amazons-biodiversity-is-critical-for-the-globe>

<sup>2</sup> "Learn about the Amazon Rainforest." WWF. Accessed May 16, 2023.  
<https://www.wwf.org.uk/where-we-work/amazon>

<sup>3</sup> "Brazil (BRA) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners." OEC. Accessed May 17, 2023.  
<https://oec.world/en/profile/country/bra>

This essay will argue that Brazil is an important country in the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to a larger extent.

## 2. Amazon Rainforest



The Amazon Rainforest, covering much of Brazil and other Latin American countries, is the world's largest rainforest, accounting for well over 50% of the total rainforest volume in the world. The sheer amount of forest cover contained within the Amazon Basin, of which over 60% is in Brazil, is home to a colossal array of plants and animals alike, making up 10% of all living species on Earth. The rainforest also absorbs about 2.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide in a year, an enormous amount equivalent to around one-third of the carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels.

The rainforest has a key role to play when considering its importance as a source for medicine, since many groundbreaking medicines have come from rainforest materials. Notwithstanding this, the opportunities that the rainforest affords are still nearly endless, with only a fraction of a percentage point of its materials being tested for medicinal purposes. For example, the creation of Angiotensin Converting Enzyme inhibitors was inspired by neurotoxins found in snakes from the Amazon. Furthermore, the rainforest is home to thousands of indigenous tribes, who act as "great protectors of the forest"<sup>4</sup>. The indigenous tribes of the Amazon are an indispensable source of medicinal knowledge<sup>5</sup>, where residents of the upper Negro



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<sup>4</sup> "Why the Amazon's Biodiversity is Critical for the Globe: An Interview with Thomas Lovejoy. World Bank. Accessed 24 May 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2019/05/22/why-the-amazons-biodiversity-is-critical-for-the-globe>

<sup>5</sup> "Peoples of the Amazon". Amazon Aid. Accessed 1 June 2023. <https://amazonaid.org/resources/about-the-amazon/peoples-of-the-amazon/>.

river used 55 different plant species to treat malaria. Their traditional ecological knowledge is crucial for development in the scientific perspective, showing how Brazil is an important hub for medicinal information. Since Brazil holds most of the power over decisions made in the Amazon, it plays a very important role in overseeing it.

In 1965, Brazil created and passed its first Forest Code, a law requiring landowners in the Amazon to maintain 35 to 80 percent<sup>6</sup> of their property under native vegetation. However, the Forest Code remains extremely difficult to uphold, and perpetrators are rarely brought to task, because the Amazon's land area is very large. This means that the financial cost and manpower utilisation needed to track down offenders is exorbitant. To combat this issue, the Cadastro Ambiental Rural (CAR) was set up in 2010, making it mandatory for Brazilian land owners to register their land and map it through government systems. CAR works with the states of Para and Mato Grosso to ensure that land owned by Brazilian businesses complies with the standards of the Forest Code. This is done through three main methods: restoration through ecological succession and planting, sustainable intensification of vegetation and developing economic alternatives to maximise farming benefits.

To quote Benito Guerrero, the Conservancy's private lands strategy coordinator, "CAR is the first step to enabling all rural property owners to meet their Forest Code obligations"<sup>7</sup>. Thus, Brazil plays an important role in ensuring the upkeep of the rainforest through the CAR working jointly with the Forest Code.

### **3. Brazil's Political Climate**

Brazil's politics is largely controlled by the President, who acts as both the Head-of-State and the Head-of-Government. Currently, this top position in Brazil's politics is held by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, otherwise known as President Lula, who assumed this role in early January of 2023. This is his second non-consecutive time

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<sup>6</sup> "Brazilian Amazon- The Forest Code: Using Law to Protect the Amazon". The Nature Conservancy (n.d) Accessed 24 May 2023.  
<https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/brazil/stories-in-brazil/brazils-forest-code/>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

as Brazil's president. He emerged victorious over the previous president Jair Bolsonaro in a balanced presidential election in 2022<sup>8</sup>, and was sworn in with three key promises: to effectively resolve the various problems in Brazil's economy, take action to stop the deforestation of the Amazon, and to uphold Brazil's democracy. Brazil's role as a democracy<sup>9</sup> is a symbol of its close alliance with the United States. The two countries have a close-knit relationship, being some of the world's largest democracies.



According to Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI)<sup>10</sup>, Brazil's political transformation ranks 29<sup>th</sup> of 137 countries at 7.05 out of 10. The project states that Brazil mainly faltered in areas such as organised crime, deficient law enforcement and failing security policies, but also gives credit to how most of the



2016 protest for rights in Brazil under Dilma Rousseff

country recognises its constitution and government. Due to the fact that there is no systematic exclusion of ethnic, religious and racial minorities from political citizenship, this shows that despite Brazil's security issues, it is a socially unified nation. In past years, Brazilians rioted over rights and living costs, especially under then President Dilma Rousseff.

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<sup>8</sup> "Who is Lula? What to know about Brazil's president." Washington Post, 2022 Accessed 1 June 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/10/30/lula-da-silva-president-brazil/>

<sup>9</sup> "Democracy in Brazil". Chatham House. 2023. Accessed June 10 2023. <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2022/08/democracy-brazil>.

<sup>10</sup> "Brazil Country Report 2022". Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index. (n.d) Accessed June 10 2023. <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/BRA#pos2>

However, led by President Lula, the Brazilian government is determined to give Brazil a strong international voice, with the ability to support international humanitarian efforts, collaborate and cooperate with countries in other parts of the world and make meaningful decisions to help the global community, garnering support from the community.

#### **4. Brazil's Influence on Other Countries**

Brazil has placed emphasis on the upkeep of strong cross-border relationships with neighbouring nations, and in the process also exerts a considerable influence over them. Experts say that Brazil is especially favourably placed to help with three transnational issues: rallying other countries to help in the protection of the Amazon, raising the profile of Haiti's crisis and easing the deadlock in Venezuela.

As mentioned above, Brazil has already taken large steps to protecting and reforesting the Amazon in hopes of rebuilding its natural biodiversity and the environment. It has also engendered a large-scale regional effort to effectively restore the rainforest. The Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation (ACTO)<sup>11</sup> consists of Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela. ACTO implements the Amazon Cooperation Treaty, which works to restore natural resources, help indigenous people, gather knowledge from the forest, develop new infrastructure and develop rainforest tourism.

Next, Brazil has the ability to take major steps in helping the crisis in Haiti<sup>12</sup>. Haiti is currently in turmoil, with no elected leaders, gang violence, famine, cholera, fuel shortages and economic collapse, but this issue is not widely covered in the media. This is why President Lula has called out on multiple occasions, such as the Group of Seven (G7) meeting in Hiroshima, for international efforts to be directed

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<sup>11</sup> "Amazon Cooperation Treaty". Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation. 2023. Accessed 10 June 2023. <http://otca.org/en/project/amazon-cooperation-treaty/>.

<sup>12</sup> "The Haitian Crisis and the International Stalemate". Washington Brazil Office. 2023. Accessed 10 June 2023. <https://www.braziloffice.org/en/articles/the-haitian-crisis-and-the-international-stalemate>.



towards Haiti. In the past, Brazil has led the MINUSTAH<sup>13</sup> (United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti) mission run by the UN in Haiti, which successfully shut down armed conflict in 2004. Yet, MINUSTAH may not be enough to fully solve the crisis in Haiti right now, and Lula's call for more action is a strong sign to show that Brazil is taking the right steps to further humanitarian

action in the region. This means that as it becomes a key world power focused on resolving the issues in Haiti, it will solidify itself as a country that exerts a wide range of influence on global affairs, a hallmark of an important country.

Finally, Brazil is engaged in solving the deadlock in Venezuela. Lula has already taken various steps to create better relationships with the Venezuelan leaders, such as lifting the ban on Venezuelan president, Nicolas Maduro. Previously banned by far-right ex-President Jair Bolsonaro, Maduro is now able to enter Brazil, and has gone on to say that the two countries "must be united, from now on always". The two parties are cooperating due to their left-wing ideologies and political alignments. Maduro spoke of Venezuela being open to Brazilian investors, and the two countries are now discussing how they can help their people better.



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<sup>13</sup> "MINUSTAH FACT SHEET". United Nations Peacekeeping. 2023. Accessed 10 June 2023. <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/minustah>.



## 5. Economy

Brazil boasts a strong and broadly supported economy, with the 12<sup>th</sup> highest GDP in the world<sup>14</sup>. Brazil's largest export is iron ore, a material used widely in the production of steel, construction and engineering, with Brazil being its second largest producer. Just recently in March 2023, the country had a net positive trade balance of \$10.9 billion. Brazil remains the world's biggest exporter of soy, a key produce needed in foodstuffs around the globe.

Yet, Brazil's people are facing increasing economic turmoil each day<sup>15</sup>. While the country's GDP grew 2.9% in 2022<sup>16</sup>, the inflation rate in April of the same year was 12.1%, showing that while Brazil's economy is growing, the depreciation of its currency is a major source of concern for the people. In 2023, GDP growth is projected to be a meagre 0.8%, fueled by high inflation, low demand and monetary tightening. Public debt is also expected to grow to 78.5% of GDP<sup>17</sup> by 2025, resulting in an unstable economic state.



Brazil's meagre GDP growth and other hindrances to Brazil's productivity growth can be attributed to an unmanageable business environment and a counterintuitive tax system. Brazil's trade is also in a decline due to the increase in energy imports and a decreasing value of exports. This shows that Brazil's GDP growth, of 0.6% over the last decade<sup>18</sup>, is trailing behind most of the world's largest

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<sup>14</sup> "Brazil" The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC). 2022. Accessed May 14 2023. <https://oec.world/en/profile/country/bra>.

<sup>15</sup> "Brazilian foreign trade in figures". Santander Trade Markets. 2022. Accessed May 14 2023. <https://santandertrade.com/en/portal/analyse-markets/brazil/foreign-trade-in-figures>.

<sup>16</sup> "The World Bank in Brazil." World Bank. 2021. Accessed May 14, 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/brazil/overview>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> "The World Bank in Brazil." World Bank. 2021. Accessed May 14, 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/brazil/overview>.

economies, with industrial sectors such as metalworking and manufacturing even showing rates of decline in recent years.

As tensions between China and the USA heighten considerably with each passing year, Brazil may be forced to side with its long-time ally, the USA, and turn its back to China. This outcome could have long-lasting detrimental effects on Brazil, as China has been Brazil's largest trading partner since 2009, with trade between the two nations skyrocketing to \$135 billion in 2021, as both Brazil's imports and exports increased by more than 30%<sup>19</sup> compared to the previous year. Yet, Brazil and the USA have strong democratic ties, and both share a deep history of cooperation and shared values, which may lead to decisions that favour its ties with the US. In the past, Washington has tried pressuring Brazil to ban Huawei and ZTE, a Chinese corporation, from the country as a way to minimise Chinese influence<sup>20</sup>.

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, Brazil has a large part to play in Latin America today. Brazil is a vault for natural medicine and indigenous culture<sup>21</sup> through the Amazon. As a political power, it shows a will to kickstart and lead regional cooperation and efforts towards a greater good, exerting considerable influence on global politics across borders. Economically, it faces many challenges from its low productivity, GDP and conflict between the US and China. Yet, with its new president and stronger foreign relations with Venezuela, there are many opportunities for the economy to grow. Thus, we conclude that Brazil is an important country in the world today to a larger extent.

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<sup>19</sup> "Brazil-China trade hit historic high of US\$135 billion in 2021" The Macao News, 2022  
Accessed 6 June 2023.

<https://macaonews.org/lusofonia/brazil-china-trade-hit-historic-high-of-us135-billion-in-2021/>

<sup>20</sup> "Redefining China-Brazil Relationships and Implications for the U.S." China-U.S. Focus. April 26, 2023. Accessed 3 July 2023.

<https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/redefining-relations-between-china-brazil-and-implications-for-the-us>

<sup>21</sup> The Amazon Rainforest and its people are a cultural vault of medicinal information and historical practices that may lead to new discoveries.

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## Script

Slide 1:

Good morning/afternoon Sir and classmates. I am Mark and together with my groupmate Aarya, we will be presenting on our IS coursework on the Importance of Brazil.

Slide 2:

Here is our table of contents.

Slide 3:

Our RQ is: "To what extent is Brazil an important country in the world today?"

Slide 4:

Now let's talk about the Amazon Rainforest and how Brazil has protected it

Slide 5:

The Amazon is culturally important, as it accounts for more than 50% of the total rainforest in the world, and 60% of this rainforest is in Brazil alone. It is a source for medicinal plants and herbs, which are well-used by the indigenous tribes of the rainforest. The tribes use as many as 55 plant species to treat malaria naturally.

Slide 6:

So what has Brazil done to preserve the Amazon? For starters, the Amazon Forest Code was implemented in 1965. AFC requires landowners to keep a portion of their land as natural vegetation. While this is good, the large land area and sheer population of owners makes it difficult to uphold.

Slide 7:

To make up for this, the Cadastro Ambiental Rural was implemented in 2010, ensuring that landowners register their land into a mapping software. CAR works to ensure the forest is maintained through 3 methods, restoration through ecological succession, intensification of vegetation and developing economic alternatives to farming.

Slide 8:

To quote Benito Guerrero, the Conservancy's private lands strategy coordinator, "CAR is the first step to enabling all rural property owners to meet their Forest Code obligations"

Slide 9:

Now, let's discuss Brazil's political climate, namely its transformation

Slide 10:

Looking at Brazil's past Presidents, we can see that Lula Da Silva, the current president, seems to be a **breath of fresh air for Brazil**. Lula was sworn in with 3 promises to resolve its economy, stop deforestation and uphold democracy. The previous president, Jair Bolsonaro is a right-wing, corrupt president who has been banned from running in elections for 8 years. The president before Jair, Dilma Rousseff, saw millions protesting, leading to her eventual impeachment. This all shows how Lula's presidency is a step in the right direction towards ensuring Brazil's prosperity.

Slide 11:

Let's now talk about the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index. The BTI ranks countries' political transformation, looking at its constitution, government and social unity. Constitution refers to the recognition of the law, government refers to the support the government has **from** its citizens and social unity refers to political exclusion based on race and status.

Slide 12:

Looking at how Brazil fares in these aspects, we can see that it is decent. Brazil's main fault is in its constitution, which is due to high crime rates and lack of law enforcement. Its government is also well supported, with 75% of citizens supporting it. Brazil's social unity is good, as there are no laws against legal minorities, and only illegal immigrants and offenders are taken action against.

Slide 13:

So what does this mean for Brazil? Brazil ranks 29<sup>th</sup> on the BTI scale, with a respectable score of 7.05 out of 10, which is respectable considering its challenges

Slide 14:

Now, moving onto Brazil's influence on other countries.

Slide 15:

Let's discuss the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organisation, A C T O. It works in 4 key areas: regional, benefaction, knowledge and economy. A C T O wants to restore natural resources, provide indigenous people with aid, gather knowledge from the forest, promote rainforest tourism and develop new infrastructure.

Slide 16:

Now, the Haitian Crisis. Haiti currently has no elected leaders, has gang violence, famine, cholera outbreak, and has an economic collapse. Evidently, it's heading towards its own destruction with no ability to stop it. Yet, the main international efforts are underfunded, and have little effect.

Slide 17:

So far, Brazil has led the United Nation Stabilization Mission in Haiti, known as MINUSTAH, which shut down armed conflict in 2004. Since then, there hasn't been much action, yet Lula is taking steps to change it. He has raised the topic of Haiti to international bodies, like the G7 meeting in Hiroshima. Brazil's leaders' willingness to help other countries signifies its regional importance.

Slide 18:

Brazil has also eased the international deadlock in Venezuela, which has stopped receiving aid internationally due to Maduro, its dictator. Brazil has lifted the ban on Maduro, allowing the countries to discuss political changes. The two leaders are leftists, and would like to cooperate. To quote Maduro, the two countries must "be united, from now and always"

Slide 19:

Moving onto Brazil's economy, and how it limits Brazil's regional importance

Slide 20:

Brazil exports iron ore, being the second largest exporter in the world. It is also the largest exporter of soy in the world. Looking at facts and figures, Brazil has the 12th highest GDP at 1.609 Trillion in 2021.

Slide 21: Next, let us discuss Brazil's increasing economic turmoil. Brazil's inflation rate in April of 2022 was 12.1%, while economic growth stagnated at 2.9% of GDP. Public debt is feared to grow to 78.5% of GDP by 2025

Slide 22: This can be attributed to counterintuitive tax systems, decrease in value of exports and a decline in productivity of major sectors, such as metalworking and manufacturing sectors.

Slide 23: Brazil's GDP growth was a meagre 0.6% over the last decade, showing the abysmal state of its economy

Slide 24: US-China Tensions also play a role in limiting Brazil's importance. On the one hand, China has been Brazil's largest trading partner since 2009, with \$135 billion in trade in 2021 alone, making it pivotal to Brazil's economy. But, the US is increasingly pressuring Brazil to ban Huawei and ZTE to minimise Chinese influence. Brazil is now stuck in a dilemma as to which side to remain on, and may be forced to choose a side in this issue.

Slide 24: Thank you, are there any questions?

Latin America!

Brazil

**TWE is Brazil an important country in the world today? Why? Why not?**

Definitions:

Important - benefit to the world as a whole in terms of economics, social effects and politics.

“Important”

1. Economy - what Brazil can provide other countries with
2. Geopolitics - Brazil's decision making capacity in international affairs (how their geographical location affects this)
3. Culture - how its massive rainforest are catalysts for growth

Cover page:

1. Brazil flag but with earth on it

Topics:

A1: Amazon Rainforest contributes a large diversity to the world, with much potential for research (medicinal value of nature)

A2: Brazil's exports are important to the world, specifically iron ore, soybeans and petroleum

A3: Brazil's influence on surrounding countries

CA1: Decline in productivity growth may signal economic downfall of Brazil

A1

Amazon Rainforest generates more than 20% of Earth's oxygen, and is home to about 10% of known living species on Earth.

Absorbs about 2.4 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide in a year (almost 1/3 of carbon dioxide emissions from burning fossil fuels)

Dense vegetation keeps Earth cool

Many medicines which have major health benefits come from rainforest materials.

The opportunities that the rainforest affords are nearly endless, with only a fraction of a percentage of the rainforest being tested for medicinal purposes.

Not only plants, but also animals can contribute to medicinal research from a scientific perspective.

For example, the bark of the South American climbing vine can be used as a muscle relaxant.

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/4-medicines-with-roots-in-the-rainforest/>

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/amazon-rainforest/>

**Essay extras:**

A social aspect, with data provided to support our argument, showing the sheer amount of forest cover contained within the Amazon Basin, of which over 60% is in Brazil. It also covered economic topics such as the reasons behind Brazil's meagre GDP growth and other hindrances to Brazil's productivity growth, including an unmanageable business environment and a counterintuitive tax system.

Issues such as the trends in its net trade value, which increased 12.3% from March 2022 to March 2023. This essay will also examine the advantages and functionality of the Amazon Rainforest, its considerable exports, and politically, the international influence that it exerts across borders, while simultaneously comparing and contrasting the economic implications of a decline in productivity and thus growth of Brazil.

<https://www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/latin-america/brazil/stories-in-brazil/brazils-forest-code/>