

How Brazilian business anticipates geopolitics



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The astute business person – and potential future leader – is on the lookout for ways to successfully anticipate geopolitics. One who is at least successful enough to allow for the occasional luxury of stopping to think about the future in strategic terms, is someone who already knows the palpable advantages of looking beyond the short-term static of the local economic environment, and to peer above, at least every now and then, the received wisdoms. The fastest way to anticipate geopolitics is to look for the changes in the actual material conditions working themselves out upon the geopolitical and global energy flow maps – and to read the shifts in global material flows these changes are generating.

A fresh look at our actually emerging geopolitical and global energy flow maps reveals a broad array of new business and investment activity – in commerce, ports, infrastructure and more – and new forms of human security threats emerging across the Atlantic Basin. The Southern Atlantic, in particular, will register a significant upgrade in its relative strategic significance as current trends in marine energy and the blue economy deepen, and as growing shipping traffic make the Southern Atlantic sea lanes and the Cape Passage increasingly critical.

The global center of gravity of energy supply is also shifting westward, away from the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia, and into the Atlantic Basin. Most of the recent and dramatic hydrocarbons breakthroughs (shale) and discoveries (the deep offshore) have occurred in the Atlantic. Nearly 45% of 'proven oil reserves' are already located in the Atlantic Basin – as are nearly half of total technically recoverable gas reserves, two thirds of all the known shale gas, about half of all known fossil fuels, two-thirds of all installed 'renewable' electrical capacity, and four-fifths of all biofuels and offshore energy activity. As the global center of gravity for energy demand continues to flow into Asia-Pacific, the historical post-World War II 'East-to-West' maritime energy flows are now reversing into 'West-to-East flows.' This means that a relative strategic rise of the Southern Atlantic – with the potential of balancing out, to some extent, the rise of China over the last generation – can now be seen on the strategic horizon.

Brazil's business and technocratic leaders are increasingly well-positioned geo-strategically to finally begin the task of mapping the strategic horizon and defining the risks, opportunities, costs and imperatives of 'Brazilian' regional leadership. From its crossroads vantage point in the middle of an increasingly significant Southern Atlantic, at the nexus of two new emerging transnational systems (the Global South and the Atlantic Basin), Brazil now has the real potential to be a key pan-Atlantic broker and agenda setter within a new 'ocean basin world.' Depending on how the 'pre-salt dreams' finally pan out, Brazil might even become the most strategic oil exporter at the margin to Asia-Pacific.

More reforms are needed at home, no doubt: but astute business leaders – and potential future Brazilian statesmen and women – would move ahead on the strategic curve by seriously investigating the Atlantic space for economic and geopolitical opportunity. Aligning themselves with budding transnational associations committed to pan-Atlantic and marine prosperity and security would place them in anticipation of an increasingly probable Southern Atlantic future. ★

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