

Brazil Worried LatAm's Poverty Is Dragging Country Down

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The future of Brazil as an emerging power is closely linked to the regional situation. This according to Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's international affairs advisor, Marco Aurélio Garcia.

"We believe the destiny of Brazil is closely linked to the destiny of the region where we still have a complicated problem, which is too many poor people and a very unequal distribution," said Garcia, who is a history academic and has represented President Lula in several regional conflicts.

Garcia said that Lula's foreign policy towards Latin America has been above all to defend national interests but also "pursue with great insistence regional integration."

"Which has been the intelligence of President Lula?" asks Garcia. He's not a great theory man, but "he understood that Latin America has deep differences and he has worked hard to establish a good relation with all countries and insisted that we must see beyond our differences."

In this line of thinking Garcia said it would be good if the new United States administration understood the signals from Latin American countries, of all political sensitivities, that consider "dialogue with Cuba as most important for the region."

Garcia added the issue would probably crop up during the Americas Summit in Trinidad Tobago, on April 17, 19, even when it's not one of the main points of the agenda.

"The issue of Cuba is going to emerge because there's a general feeling in Latinamerica that the embargo at this stage is senseless; it belongs to the Cold War agenda."

"In Brazil we believe that normalization of relations with Cuba would have an extraordinary effect on the image of the United States. Even when the first steps must be unilateral, with no conditions or strings," insisted Garcia.

Lula's advisor said that if necessary Brazil could act as a mediator, as long as both sides so request it, "which has not happened."

Nevertheless the main issue at the Americas summit, which will be attended by US president Barack Obama, is the

crisis, said Garcia. "There are some countries in the area that are suffering particularly hard because of the dramatic fall in US imports and remittances."

Regarding Brazilian relations with Ecuador and Bolivia, Garcia said those differences "have been solved in an amicable way" and hopefully with Paraguay and "a civilized dialogue we will reach an acceptable consensus."

Ecuador and Bolivia nationalized Brazilian corporations assets and Paraguay is demanding a fair price for the electricity generated by the shared Itaipu dam, South America's largest.

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