

Brazil

China and Brics will 'defend' global order as Trump withdraws, Brazil says

Developing nations are 'main defenders' of global diplomacy, argues president's top foreign policy adviser



Brazil will push for deeper co-operation between the Brics grouping, with a focus on tackling poverty and boosting sustainable development © Ilkin/Alamy

Michael Stott and **Michael Pooler** in Brasília

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China and its partners in the Brics group of developing countries will increasingly stand up for international co-operation as the US withdraws under President Donald Trump, a top Brazilian diplomat said.

“China and developing nations are today the main defenders of the multilateral system,” President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva’s top foreign policy adviser Celso Amorim told the Financial Times in an interview. “What’s fundamental is to have rules which are multilaterally accepted.”

The comments reflect a global trend of countries focusing on relationships that do not involve the US, as Trump imposes blanket tariffs and threatens long-standing allies.

“As the United States steps back from multilateralism, from the economic and social order which they themselves created after the second world war, the space for the Brics increases,” said Amorim, 82, who has guided Brazilian foreign policy over more than three decades, mostly at Lula’s side.

Brasília will push for deeper co-operation between the Brics grouping — led by founders Russia, India, China, and Brazil — at a July summit in Rio de Janeiro.

founders Russia, India, China, and Brazil — at a July summit in Rio de Janeiro. The focus will be key Lula priorities such as tackling poverty and boosting sustainable development, as well as energy and economic co-operation.



Celso Amorim: 'What's fundamental is to have rules which are multilaterally accepted' © Evaristo Sa/AFP/Getty Images

Latin America's biggest nation, Amorim is at pains to point out, "does not have exclusive alliances" but wants good relations with all major powers.

He argued that if Brazil boosted the Brics, this would help the G20 group of developed and developing nations. "The strengthening of the Brics has given force to the G20," he said, citing last year's well-attended G20 summit in Rio de Janeiro as an example.

Ultimately, Amorim thinks a world order without Washington is impossible. "Little by little, we will have to attract the United States again," he said. In the meantime, Brazil will try to avoid conflict with the US but "we're also not going to stop giving our opinion".

Trump's tariffs, he believes, create "an enormous risk of returning to the 1930s".

Washington's big rival China is by far Brazil's main export market and relations between Beijing and Brasília are close, with Amorim counting Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi as a "very good friend".

But he stressed that each country had its own path and that "we don't have to copy anyone's model".

Brazil has not signed up to Beijing's flagship Belt and Road infrastructure initiative, in contrast with most of Latin America.

"I told him I don't have anything against Belt and Road but it has to come with content," the veteran Brazilian diplomat said of his talks with Wang. "It can't be something we sign up to and then see what happens. He understood perfectly."

Brazil has also taken a different line on Brics expansion to China. It welcomed the entry of Indonesia but did not want, Amorim said, to reproduce a previous developing world bloc, the Non-Aligned Movement, because that group was too large to agree on practical action.

Reflecting Brazil's all-embracing diplomacy and his own long diplomatic career, including two stints as foreign minister and one as defence minister, Amorim said he had good relationships with key aides to Russia's Vladimir Putin and with top Americans, such as Jake Sullivan when the latter advised Joe Biden as president.

He is yet to speak to Mike Waltz, Trump's national security chief, though he has spoken to people close to Waltz, he said.

Amorim was present at a Munich conference in February when US Vice-President JD Vance shocked Europeans by accusing them of failing to deal with mass migration and curbing freedom of expression.

"The floor disappeared from under their feet," he said. "But that wasn't the case for Brazil. Brazil has various floors, including some constructed from Brics."

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