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The third of extinction comes from several sources, including deforestation and poaching. Extinction is even more problematic in the Atlantic Forest, where nearly 93% of the forest has been cleared [208]. Of the 202 endangered animals in Brazil, 171 are in the Atlantic Forest [209]. The Amazon rainforest has been under direct threat of deforestation since the 1970s because of rapid economic and demographic expansion. Extensive legal and illegal logging destroy forests the size of a small country per year, and with it a diverse series of species through habitat destruction and habitat fragmentation.[210] Since 1970, over 600,000 square kilometers (230,000 sq mi) of the Amazon rainforest have been cleared by logging[211]. In 2017, preserved native vegetation occupied 61% of the Brazilian territory. Agriculture occupied only 8% of the national territory and pastures 19.7%.[212] For comparison, in 2019, although 43% of the entire European continent has forests, only 3% of the total forest area in Europe is of native forests.[213] Brazil has a strong interest in conservation, as its agriculture sector directly depends on its forests.[214] Main articles: Politics of Brazil, Federal government of Brazil, and Elections in Brazil National Congress, seat of the legislative branch Palácio do Planalto, the official workplace of the President of Brazil The form of government is a democratic federative republic, with a presidential system.[15] The president is both head of state and head of government of the Union and is elected for a four-year term,[15] with the possibility of re-election for a second successive term. The current president is Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.[215] The president appoints the Ministers of State, who form the cabinet and assist in government.[15] Legislative houses in each political entity are the main source of law in Brazil. The National Congress is the federation's bicameral legislature, consisting of the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate. Judiciary authorities exercise jurisdictional duties almost exclusively. In 2021, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index ranked Brazil as a "hybrid regime".[216] The three spheres of government are the Executive, the Legislature, and the Judiciary. The Executive comprises the Union, the states, the Federal District, and the municipalities. The states, the Federal District, and the municipalities are the "spheres of government". The Federation is set on five fundamental principles: sovereignty, citizenship, dignity of human beings, the social values of labor and freedom of enterprise, and political pluralism.[15] The classic tripartite branches of government (executive, legislative and judicial under a checks and balances system) are formally established by the Constitution.[15] The executive and legislative are organized independently in all three spheres of government, while the judiciary is organized only at the federal and state and Federal District spheres. All members of the executive and legislative branches are directly elected.[219][220][221] For most of its democratic history, Brazil has had a multi-party system, with proportional representation. Voting is compulsory for the literate between 18 and 70 years old and optional for illiterates and those between 16 and 18 or beyond 70.[15] The country has around 30 registered political parties. Twenty political parties are represented in Congress. It is common for politicians to switch parties, and thus the proportion of congressional seats held by particular parties changes regularly.[222] Main article: Law of Brazil The Supreme Federal Court of Brazil serves primarily as the Constitutional Court of the country. Brazilian law is based on the civil law legal system[223] and civil law concepts prevail over common law practice. Most of Brazilian law is codified, although non-codified statutes also represent a substantial part, playing a complementary role. Court decisions set out interpretive guidelines; however, they are seldom binding on other specific cases. Doctrinal works and the works of academic jurists have strong influence in law creation and in law cases. Judges and other judicial officials are appointed after passing entry exams.[219] The legal system is based on the Federal Constitution, promulgated on 5 October 1988, and the fundamental law of Brazil. All laws must originate from the Executive branch. The legislative process involves the approval of bills by the House of Representatives (Câmara dos Deputados) and the Senate (Senado Federal). Bills passed by both chambers become laws. The Executive branch can issue decrees, which have the force of law. The Judiciary branch is responsible for interpreting the law and ensuring its application. The Supreme Federal Court is the highest court in the country. Below it are the Superior Courts (Superior Tribunal de Justiça, Superior Tribunal Militar, Superior Tribunal de Relações do Trabalho, Superior Tribunal de Recursos Eleitorais, Superior Tribunal de Recursos Cíveis e Criminais), which act in a similar way to constitutional courts. [227] Legislative entities are the main source of statutes, although in certain matters judiciary and executive bodies may enact legal norms.[15] Jurisdiction is administered by the judiciary entities, although in rare situations the Federal Constitution allows the Federal Senate to pass on legal judgments.[15] There are also specialized military, labor and electoral courts.[15] Main article: Brazilian Armed Forces Brazilian Navy's flagship PHM Atlântico and frigate Liberal (F-43) (background) The armed forces of Brazil are the largest in Latin America by active personnel and the largest in terms of military equipment.[228] The country was considered the 11th largest military power on the planet in 2025.[229][230] It consists of the Brazilian Army (including the Army Aviation Command), the Brazilian Navy (including the Marine Corps and Naval Aviation) and the Brazilian Air Force. Brazil's conscription policy gives it one of the world's largest military forces, estimated at more than 1.6 million reservists annually.[231] The Air Force is the largest in Latin America and has about 700 crewed aircraft in service and effective about 67,000 personnel.[232] Numbering close to 236,000 active personnel,[233] the Brazilian Army has the largest number of armored vehicles in South America, including armored transports and tanks.[234] The states' Military Police and the National Firefighters Corps are designated as auxiliary forces of the Army by the constitution, but are under the control of each state's governor.[15] Brazil's navy once operated some of the most powerful warships in the world with the two Minas Geraes-class dreadnoughts, sparking a naval arms race between Argentina, Brazil, and Chile.[235] Today, it is a green water navy and has a group of specialized elite in retaking ships and naval facilities, GRUMEC, unit specially trained to protect Brazilian oil platforms along its coast.[236] As of 2022[update], it is the only navy in Latin America that operates a helicopter carrier, NAM Atlântico and one of twelve amphibious assault ships, the Minas Geraes-class LSTs. Brazil's air force has a fleet of modern fighters, including F-35 Lightning II, and a large fleet of transport aircraft, including A400G Milagro. Brazil's military has been involved in numerous conflicts, including the Brazilian Civil War (1964–65), the Brazilian dictatorship (1964–85), and the Brazilian intervention in Angola (1962–75). Brazil has a long history of involvement in international relations, particularly in the Americas. It has been a member of the United Nations since 1945, the Organization of American States since 1948, and the World Trade Organization since 1995. Brazil has also been a member of the G20, BRICS, and the Mercosur trade bloc. Brazil's foreign policy is based on the principles of multilateralism, peaceful dispute settlement, and non-interference in the affairs of other countries.[241] Brazil is a founding member state of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), also known as the Lusophone Commonwealth, an international organization and political association of Lusophone nations. An increasingly well-developed tool of Brazil's foreign policy is providing aid as a donor to other developing countries.[242] Brazil does not just use its growing economic strength to provide financial aid, but it also provides high levels of expertise and most importantly of all, a quiet non-confrontational diplomacy to improve governance levels.[242] Total aid is estimated to be around \$1 billion per year.[242] In addition, Brazil already managed a peacekeeping mission in Haiti (\$350 million) and makes in-kind contributions to the World Food Programme (\$300 million).[242] The scale of this aid places it on par with China and India.[242] The Brazilian South-South aid has been described as a "global model in waiting".[243] Main article: Law enforcement in Brazil and Crime in Brazil Headquarters of the Federal Police in Brasília In Brasília, Brazil, the Constitution establishes six different police agencies for law enforcement: Federal Police Department, Federal Highway Police, Federal Railroad Police, Federal District and State Penal Police (included by the Constitutional Amendment No. 104, of 2019), Military Police and Civil Police. The Federal Police is the largest and most visible. It is responsible for investigating crimes against the state, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, and organized crime. The Military Police are responsible for maintaining public order and security in urban areas. The Civil Police are responsible for investigating crimes against individuals, such as theft, fraud, and assault. The Highway Police are responsible for enforcing traffic laws and investigating accidents. The Railroad Police are responsible for enforcing laws related to the railway system. The District and State Penal Police are responsible for managing prisons and investigating crimes committed within their jurisdictions. Public disorder situations arising anywhere in the country.[244] The country has high levels of violent crime, such as gun violence and homicides. In 2022, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated an intentional homicide rate of 21.1 per 100,000 inhabitants.[245] The number considered acceptable by the World Health Organization (WHO) is up to 10 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants.[246] In 2024, Brazil recorded 38,772 homicides, down from 40,768 in 2023.[247] and from a record 63,880 in 2017.[248] Homicide rates vary regionally. While in São Paulo the homicide rate registered in 2023 was 6.4 per 100,000 inhabitants, in Amapá it was 57.4 per 100,000 inhabitants.[249] The national homicide rate for 2024 was 17.9 per 100,000 inhabitants, the lowest in over a decade.[247] Brazil also has high levels of incarceration. It had the third largest prison population in the world of approximately 909,067 prisoners in 2024, which put it only behind the United States (1,808,100) and China (1,690,000).[250] The high number of prisoners eventually overloaded the Brazilian prison system, leading to a shortfall of about 200,000 accommodations.[251] See also: Human rights in Brazil Human rights in Brazil include the right to life and freedom of speech; and condemnation of slavery and torture. The nation ratified the American Convention on Human Rights. [252] The 2017 Freedom in the World report by Freedom House gives Brazil a score of "2" for both political rights and civil liberties: "1" represents the most free, and "7", the least.[253] However, the following human rights problems have been reported: torture of detainees and inmates by police and prison security forces; inability to protect witnesses involved in criminal cases; harsh conditions; prolonged pretrial detention and inordinate delays of trials; reluctance to prosecute as well as inefficiency in prosecuting government officials for corruption; violence and discrimination against women[254] violence against children, including sexual abuse; human trafficking; police brutality; racial inequality; [255] Same-sex couples in Brazil have held nationwide marriage rights since May 2013.[255] Main article: Subdivisions of Brazil Further information: Municipalities of Brazil, States of Brazil, and Regions of Brazil Brazil is a federation composed of 26 states, one federal district, and the 5,571 municipalities.[15] The states have autonomous administrations, collect their own taxes and receive a share of taxes collected by the federal government. They have a governor and a unicameral legislative body elected directly by their voters. They also have independent Courts of Law for common justice. Despite this, states have much less autonomy to create their own laws than in other federal states such as the United States. Criminal and civil laws can be voted by only the federal bicameral Congress and are uniform throughout the country.[15] AtlanticOcean PacificOcean North Northeast Central-West Southeast São Acree Amazonas Pará Roraima Amapá Rondônia Tocantins Maranhão Bahia Piauí Ceará Rio Grande do Norte Paraíba Pernambuco Alagoas Sergipe Mato Grosso Mato Grosso do Sul Federal District Goiás Minas Gerais São Paulo Rio de Janeiro Espírito Santo Paraná Santa Catarina Rio Grande do Sul Argentina Bolivia Chile Colombia French Guiana Guyana Paraguay Peru Suriname Uruguay Venezuela Municipalities, as the states, have autonomous administrations, collect their own taxes and receive a share of taxes collected by the federal and state governments.[15] Each has an elected mayor and legislative body, but no separate Court of Law. Indeed, a Court of Law organized by the state can encompass many municipalities in a single justice administrative division called comarca.[15] Brazil's constitution also provides for the creation of federal territories, which are administrative divisions directly controlled by the federal government. However, there are currently no federal territories in the country, as the 1988 Constitution abolished the last three: Amapá and Roraima (which gained statehood) and Fernando de Noronha, which became a state district of Pernambuco in 2012. The states of Brazil are divided into smaller units called municipalities (municípios), which are the smallest administrative divisions in the country. Each municipality has a mayor (prefeito) and a municipal council (câmara municipal). The municipalities are responsible for local governance, including education, health, and infrastructure. The states are responsible for regional governance, including transportation, energy, and environmental protection. The federal government is responsible for national governance, including defense, foreign relations, and monetary policy. The Brazilian legal system is based on the civil law tradition, with a strong emphasis on written laws and regulations. The Constitution is the supreme law of the land, followed by federal laws, state laws, and municipal laws. The judiciary is independent of the executive and legislative branches, and is responsible for interpreting the law and ensuring its application. The Supreme Federal Court is the highest court in the country, and its decisions are final. The lower courts include the Superior Courts and the State and Federal District Courts. The Brazilian legal system is complex and often subject to change, reflecting the country's dynamic nature and ongoing development.

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Rio de Janeiro, São Francisco, Xingu, Madeira, and Tapajós rivers. Climate Brazil's climate has little seasonal variation, since 90 percent of the country is located within the tropics. However, the climate varies considerably from the mostly tropical north (the equator traverses the mouth of the Amazon) to temperate zones below the Tropic of Capricorn, which crosses the country at the latitude of the city of Rio de Janeiro. Brazil has five climatic regions: Equatorial, tropical, semi-arid, highland, and tundra. Temperatures in the cities of São Paulo and Brasília are moderate because of their altitude of approximately 3,000 feet (1,000 m). Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, located on the coast, have warm climates. Precipitation levels also vary widely, being higher in the humid Amazon Basin and lower in the somewhat arid landscapes of the northeast. The majority of Brazil has moderate rainfall, with most of it falling in the summer (between December and April), south of the Equator. The Amazon region is notoriously humid, with rainfall of more than 2,000 millimeters per year, getting as high as 3,000 millimeters in parts of the western Amazon and near Belém. Despite high annual precipitation, the Amazon rainforest has a three-to-five month dry season. Environment The Toco Toucan is typical of the Brazilian rainforest. Brazil's large area comprises different ecosystems, which together sustain some of the world's greatest biodiversity. Because of the country's intense economic and demographic growth, Brazil's ability to protect its environmental habitats has increasingly come under threat. Extensive logging in the nation's forests, particularly the Amazon, destroys areas the size of a small country each year, and potentially a diverse variety of plants and animals. Between 2002 and 2006, an area of the Amazon rainforest equivalent in size to the U.S. state of South Carolina was completely decimated, for the purposes of raising cattle and logging. By 2020, it is estimated, at least 50 percent of the species in Brazil may become extinct. The Pantanal area of Brazil is considered by many to be the world's largest, freshwater, wetland system. It is one of the most pristine and biologically rich environments on the planet. It also provides many economic benefits, including offering a huge area for water purification and groundwater discharge and recharge, climate stabilization, water supply, flood abatement, and an extensive, transport system, among numerous other important functions. There is a general consensus that Brazil has the highest number of both terrestrial vertebrates and invertebrates of any single country in the world. Also, Brazil has the highest primate diversity, the highest number of mammals, the second highest number of amphibians and butterflies, the third highest number of birds, and fifth highest number of reptiles. There is a high number of endangered species, many of them living in threatened habitats such as the Atlantic forest. History Colonization Map of Brazil issued by the Portuguese explorers in 1519. Most scholars agree that Brazil was first reached on April 22, 1500, by Portuguese explorer Pedro Álvares Cabral. Initially Portugal had little interest in Brazil, mainly because of high profits gained elsewhere. But after 1530, the Portuguese Crown devised the hereditary captaincies system to effectively occupy its new colony and later took direct control of the failed captaincies. The Portuguese colonists adopted an economy based on producing agricultural goods for export to Europe. Sugar was by far the most important product until the early eighteenth century. Even though Brazilian sugar was reputed to be of high quality, the industry faced a crisis during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the Dutch and the French started producing sugar in the Antilles, located much closer to Europe, causing sugar prices to fall. During the eighteenth century, private explorers found gold and diamond deposits in the state of Minas Gerais. The exploration of these mines were mostly used to finance the Portuguese royal court's debts. The predatory way in which such deposits were explored, however, burdened colonial Brazil with excessive taxes. Some of the popular movements supporting independence came about to protest the abusive taxes established by the colonial government, but they were often dismissed with violence by Portugal. Gold production declined toward the end of the eighteenth century, starting a period of relative stagnation in the Brazilian hinterland. Both Amerindian and African slave manpower were largely used in Brazil's colonial economy. Empire Emperor Dom Pedro VI of Brazil, in 1873. In 1808, the Portuguese court, fleeing from Napoleon Bonaparte's troops that had invaded Portugal, established themselves in the city of Rio de Janeiro. After João VI returned to Portugal in 1821, his heir-apparent Pedro became regent of the Kingdom of Brazil. Following a series of political incidents and disputes, Brazil achieved its independence in 1822, and Dom Pedro became the first emperor. Pedro's government was considered economically and administratively inefficient, and political pressures eventually made him step down in 1831. He returned to Portugal, leaving behind his five-year-old son Pedro II. Until Pedro II reached maturity, Brazil was governed by regents. The regency period was turbulent and marked by numerous local revolts including the Male Revolt, the largest urban slave rebellion in the Americas, which took place in Bahia in 1835. In 1840, Pedro II was crowned emperor. His government was highlighted by a substantial rise in coffee exports and the end of the slave trade from Africa in 1850, although slavery in Brazilian territory would only be abolished in 1888. When slavery was finally abolished, a large influx of European immigrants took place. By the 1870s, the emperor's grasp on domestic politics had started to deteriorate in the face of crises with the Roman Catholic Church, the army, and slaveholders. The Republican movement slowly gained strength. In the end, the empire fell because the dominant classes no longer needed it to protect their interests. Indeed, imperial centralization ran counter to their desire for local autonomy. By 1889, Pedro II had stepped down and the republican system had been adopted. Republic The House of Representatives at the National Congress in Brasília, the capital of Brazil. Pedro II was deposed on November 15, 1889, by a republican military coup led by General Deodoro da Fonseca, who became the country's first de facto president through military ascension. The country's name became the Republic of the United States of Brazil (changed in 1967 to the Federative Republic of Brazil). From 1889 to 1930, the dominant states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais alternated control of the presidency. A military junta took control in 1930. Getúlio Vargas took office soon after and would remain as dictatorial ruler (with a brief democratic period in between) until 1945. He was re-elected in 1951 and stayed in office until his suicide in 1954. The successive governments continued industrial and agriculture growth and development of the vast interior of Brazil. The military took office in Brazil in a coup d'état in 1964 and remained in power until March 1985, when it fell from grace because of political struggles between the regime and the Brazilian elites, just as the Brazilian regime changes of 1889, 1930, and 1945 unleashed competing political forces and caused division within the military, so too did the 1964 regime change. Tancredino Neves was elected president in an indirect election in 1985, as Brazil returned to a civil government. He died before taking office, and the vice-president, José Sarney, was sworn in as president in his place. Democracy was re-established in 1988 when the current Federal Constitution was enacted. Fernando Collor de Mello was the first president truly elected by popular vote after the military regime. Collor took office in March 1990. In September 1992, the National Congress voted for Collor's impeachment after a sequence of scandals were uncovered by the media. The vice president, Itamar Franco, assumed the presidency. Assisted by the minister of finance, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Itamar Franco's administration implemented the Plano Real economic package, which included a new currency, the real, temporarily pegged to the U.S. dollar. In the elections held on October 3, 1994, Cardoso ran for president and won, and was reelected in 1998. The peaceful transition of power from Cardoso to his main opposition leader, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (elected in 2002 and re-elected in 2006), was seen as proof that Brazil had achieved a long-sought political stability. However, sparked by indignation and frustrations accumulated over decades from corruption, police brutality, inefficiencies of the political establishment and public service, numerous peaceful protests erupted in Brazil from the middle of first term of Dilma Rousseff, who had succeeded Lula after winning election in 2010. Rousseff was impeached by the Brazilian Congress in 2016. Government and politics The Brazilian Federation is based on the indissoluble association of three autonomous political entities: the states, the municipalities and the Federal District. There is no hierarchy among the political entities. The federation is based on six fundamental principles: sovereignty, citizenship, dignity of the people, the social value of labor, freedom of enterprise, and political pluralism. The classic tripartite division of power, encompassing the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches under the checks and balances system, is formally established by the constitution. The executive and legislative branches are organized independently in all four political entities, while the judiciary is organized only in the federal and state levels. All members of the executive and legislative branches are elected by direct suffrage. Judges and other judicial authorities are appointed after passing entry exams. Voting is compulsory for those aged 18 or older. Four political parties stand out among several smaller ones: Workers Party (PT), Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB), Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), and Democrats (formerly Liberal Front Party—PFL). Practically all governmental and administrative functions are exercised by authorities and agencies affiliated with the executive. The form of government is republican and democratic, and the system of government is presidential. The president is head of state and head of government and elected for a four-year term, with the possibility of re-election for a second successive term. The president appoints the ministers of state, who assist in governing. The current president is Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who was elected on October 27, 2002, and re-elected on October 29, 2006. Legislative houses in each political entity are the main source of laws. The National Congress is a bicameral house formed by the House of Representatives and the Federal Senate. Foreign relations Brazilian army troops before boarding for MINUSTAH peacekeeping mission in Haiti. Brazil is a political and economic leader in Latin America. However, social and economic problems prevent it from becoming an effective global power. Between World War II and 1990, both democratic and military governments sought to expand Brazil's influence in the world by pursuing a state-led industrial policy and an independent foreign policy. More recently, the country has aimed to strengthen ties with other South American countries and engage in multilateral diplomacy through the United Nations and the Organization of American States. Brazil's current foreign policy is based on the country's position as a regional power in Latin America, a leader among developing countries, and an emerging world power. Brazilian foreign policy has generally reflected multilateralism, peaceful dispute settlement, and nonintervention in the affairs of other countries. The Brazilian constitution also states that the country shall seek the economic, political, social, and cultural integration of the nations of Latin America. Military The armed forces of Brazil comprise the Brazilian Army, the Brazilian Navy, and the Brazilian Air Force. The Military Police is described as an ancillary force of the army but is under the control of each state's governor. The Brazilian armed forces are the largest in Latin America. The Brazilian air force is the largest air force in Latin America, with about 400 manned aircraft in service. The Brazilian navy is responsible for guarding Brazilian territorial waters. It is the oldest of the Brazilian armed forces and the only navy in Latin America that operates an aircraft carrier. With a strength of approximately 190,000 soldiers, the Brazilian army is responsible for land-based military operations. Administrative divisions Politically, Brazil is a federation of twenty-six states and one federal district. The national territory was divided in 1969, into five main regions: North, Northeast, Central-West, Southeast, and South. The North covers 45.27 percent of the surface of Brazil and has the lowest number of inhabitants. With the exception of Manaus, which hosts a tax-free industrial zone, and Belém, the biggest metropolitan area of the region, it is fairly underindustrialized and undeveloped. It accommodates most of the rainforest vegetation of the world and many indigenous tribes. The Northeast, inhabited by about 30 percent of Brazil's population, is culturally diverse, with roots set in the Portuguese colonial period and in Amerindian and Afro-Brazilian elements. It is also the poorest region of Brazil and suffers from long periods of dry climate. The largest cities are Salvador, Recife, and Fortaleza. The Central-West region has low demographic density when compared to the other regions, mostly because part of its territory is covered by the world's largest marshlands area, the Pantanal, as well as a small part of the Amazon rainforest in the northwest. Much of the region is covered by Cerrado, the largest savanna in the world. The Central-West region contributes significantly toward agriculture. The largest cities of this region are: Brasília (the capital), Goiânia, Campo Grande, Cuiabá, Anápolis, Dourados, Rondonópolis, and Corumbá. The Southeast region is the richest and most densely populated. It has more inhabitants than any other South American country and hosts one of the largest megalopolises of the world. The most cities are the country's two largest: São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The region is very diverse, including the major business center of São Paulo, the historical cities of Minas Gerais and its capital Belo Horizonte, the beaches of Rio de Janeiro, and the coast of Espírito Santo. The South is the wealthiest by GDP per capita and has the highest standard of living in the country. It is also the coldest region of Brazil, with occasional occurrences of frost and snow in some of the higher altitude areas. It has been settled by European immigrants, mainly of Italian, German, Portuguese, and Slavic ancestry, and has clearly been influenced by these cultures. The largest cities in this region are Curitiba, Porto Alegre, Florianópolis, Londrina, Caxias do Sul, and Joinville. Economy Rio de Janeiro is the second largest financial center of the country. Brazil's GDP (PPP) is the highest of Latin America, with large and developed agricultural, mining, manufacturing, and service sectors, as well as a large labor pool. The country has been expanding its presence in international financial and commodities markets and is regarded as one of the group of four emerging economies. Major export products include aircraft, coffee, automobiles, soybeans, iron ore, orange juice, steel, ethanol, textiles, footwear, corned beef, and electrical equipment. According to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Brazil has the ninth largest economy in the world by purchasing power parity (PPP) and the tenth largest at market exchange rates. It has a diversified middle-income economy with wide variations in development levels. Most large industry is agglomerated in the South and Southeast states. The Northeast, though the poorest region, has attracted new investments in infrastructure for the tourism sector and intensive agricultural schemes. Brazil had pegged its currency, the real, to the U.S. dollar in 1994. However, after the East Asian financial crisis of 1997-1998, the Russian default in 1998, and the series of adverse financial events that followed it, the Brazilian central bank temporarily changed its monetary policy to a managed-float scheme while undergoing a currency crisis, until definitively changing the exchange regime to free-float in January 1999. Brazil received an IMF rescue package in mid-2002 in the amount of US\$30.4 billion, a rescue fund at that time. The IMF loan was paid off early by Brazil's central bank in 2005. Brazil has a diverse and sophisticated service industry. During the early 1990s, the banking sector amounted to as much as 16 percent of GDP and has attracted foreign financial institutions and firms by issuing and trading Brazilian Depositary Receipts (BDRs). One of the issues the Brazilian central bank was dealing with in 2007 was an excess of speculative short-term capital inflows to the country, which might explain in part the downfall of the U.S. dollar against the real in the period. Nonetheless, foreign direct investment (FDI), related to long-term, less speculative investment in production, was estimated to be US\$193.8 billion for 2007. Inflation monitoring and control currently plays a major role in Brazil's central bank activity in setting out short-term interest rates as a monetary policy measure. Energy policy Itaipu Dam, the world's largest hydroelectric plant. Brazil is the tenth largest energy consumer in the world and the largest in Latin America. At the same time it is also a large oil and gas producer in the region and the world's largest ethanol producer. Because of its ethanol fuel production Brazil has sometimes been described as a bio-energy superpower. The country's ethanol fuel is produced from sugar cane, the world's largest crop in both production and export tonnage. After the 1973 oil crisis, the Brazilian government initiated in 1975 the National Alcohol Program to replace automobile fuels derived from fossil fuels with ethanol. The program successfully reduced the number of cars running on gasoline in Brazil by ten million, thereby reducing the country's dependence on oil imports. Brazil is the third largest hydroelectricity producer in the world, after China and Canada. In 2004 hydropower accounted for 83 percent of Brazil's power production. Brazil co-owns the Itaipu hydroelectric power plant on the Paraná River, which is the world largest operational hydroelectric power plant. Science and technology An Embraer E-175 jet airliner, produced in Brazil and used around the world. Technological research in Brazil is largely carried out in public universities and research institutes. Despite governmental regulations and incentives, investment in research and development has been growing in private universities and companies as well since the 1990s. Nonetheless, more than 73 percent of funding for basic research still comes from governmental sources. Some of Brazil's most notable technological hubs are the Oswaldo Cruz Institute, the Butantan Institute, the air force's Aerospace Technical Center, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation, and the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), a research unit of the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology. Brazilian information technology is comparable in quality and positioning to those of India and China, though because of Brazil's larger internal market, software exports are limited. Catering to the internal market, Brazilian IT is particularly efficient in providing solutions to financial services, defense, CRM, eGovernment, and healthcare. Demographics Brazil's population comprises many races and ethnic groups. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) classifies the Brazilian population into five categories: black, white, pardo (brown), yellow (Asian), or indigenous, based on skin color or race. White people make up the largest proportion, but slightly less than the majority. The ethnic composition of Brazilians is not uniform across the country. Because of its large influx of European immigrants in the nineteenth century, the South has a white majority. The Northeast, as a result of the large numbers of African slaves working in the sugar cane plantations, has a majority of brown and black peoples. The North, largely covered by rainforest, has a majority of brown, because of its strong Amerindian component. Southeastern Brazil and Central-Western Brazil have a more balanced ratio among different ethnic groups. The largest Brazilian cities are São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Salvador. Almost all capitals are the largest city in their corresponding state. Languages Portuguese is the only official language of Brazil. It is spoken by nearly the entire population and is virtually the only language used in schools, newspapers, radio, TV, and for all business and administrative purposes. Moreover, Brazil is the only Portuguese-speaking nation in the Americas, making the language an important part of Brazilian national identity. In addition, 180 Amerindian languages are spoken in remote areas. There are important communities of speakers of German and Italian in the South, both largely influenced by Portuguese. Education and health Brazil has a universal, free, and compulsory education system. The federal government reserves 25 percent of state and municipal taxes for education. The state and municipal governments are responsible for providing and managing the public school system. Higher education starts with undergraduate or sequential courses, which may offer different specialization choices such as academic or vocational paths. Depending on the choice, students may improve their educational background with postgraduate courses. The public health system is managed and provided by all levels of government, while private health care fulfills a complementary role. Several problems hamper the Brazilian system. In 2006, the most notable health issues were infant mortality, child mortality, maternal mortality, mortality by non-transmissible illness, and mortality caused by external causes (transportation, violence, and suicide). Social issues In Rio de Janeiro, the Vidigal favela is testimony to high economic inequality within Brazil. Brazil has been unable to reflect its recent economic achievements into social development. Poverty, urban violence, growing social security debts, inefficient public services, and the low value of the minimum wage are some of the main social issues that currently challenge the Brazilian government. The poverty rate is in part attributed to the country's economic inequality. Brazil has one of the world's highest rankings for inequality. In 2006, nearly one-fifth of the populated lived below the poverty line based on labor income, though that was 33 percent reduction from the previous three years. Poverty in Brazil is most visually represented by the various favelas, slums in the metropolitan areas and remote upcountry regions that suffer from economic underdevelopment and below-par standards of living. There are also great differences in wealth and welfare between regions. While the Northeast has the worst economic indicators nationwide, many cities in the South and Southeast enjoy First World socioeconomic standards. The level of violence in some large urban centers is comparable to that of a war zone. Analysts generally suggest that social inequality is the major cause. Muggings, robberies, kidnappings, and gang violence are common in the largest cities. Police brutality and corruption are widespread. Brazil received an IMF rescue package in mid-2002 in the amount of US\$30.4 billion, a rescue fund at that time. The IMF loan was paid off early by Brazil's central bank in 2005. Brazil has a diverse and sophisticated service industry. During the early 1990s, the banking sector amounted to as much as 16 percent of GDP and has attracted foreign financial institutions and firms by issuing and trading Brazilian Depositary Receipts (BDRs). One of the issues the Brazilian central bank was dealing with in 2007 was an excess of speculative short-term capital inflows to the country, which might explain in part the downfall of the U.S. dollar against the real in the period. 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