

BRAZIL - GENERAL INFORMATION

Brazil covers almost half of Latin America, having a total area of 8,511,965 km². It is a federative State which has twenty-one states and four federal territories, as well as the federal district of Brasilia, the capital.

Domestic situation

Brazil has been governed by military leaders since 1964. The current president, General Joao Baptista de Figueiredo took office on March 15, 1979 and he has pursued a policy of gradual liberalization. New political parties are being set up, in accordance with new regulations on the founding of political parties, and following the disbanding of the two traditional parties, the government party ARENA (Alliance for National Renewal) and the legal opposition MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement). Economically, Brazil has in recent years had one of the highest growth rates in the world. The development of this economy which was based on an intensive utilization of energy, in particular imported petroleum, was hard hit by the increase in the cost of petroleum products. Further, interest payments on Brazil's public debt rose to \$4.1 billion in 1979. This prompted the government to adopt a very strict monetary and fiscal policy in order to deal with such a delicate economic situation.

Foreign policy

In matters of foreign policy, Brazil sought to follow a more independent line of conduct during the seventies. Although it is pro-West, Brazil avoids getting involved in rivalries between the two superpowers. In recent years, Brazil has shown greater interest in and sensitivity toward Africa and it has endeavoured to improve its relations with its Latin American neighbours.

Adopting a pacific attitude and giving priority to economic development, Brazil exerts a moderating influence in international relations.