THE POWER OF THREE —*New York*

Preface
When Monocle published a lighthearted idea encouraging Brazil Sweden and Turkey to work together, its message reached their capitals. We brought together the three foreign ministers for this issue's round table series.

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In the garden of a grand townhouse in Midtown Manhattan, three foreign ministers take a moment to relax. It is their busiest week of the year – the few days in September when the entire diplomatic world decamps to Manhattan for the United Nations General Assembly. Every minute of every day is divided into meetings – bilaterals and lunches, speeches and cocktail evenings. For now though, Brazil's Antonio Patriota, Sweden's Carl Bildt and Turkey's Ahmet Davutoglu – three of the world's most travelled diplomats – are happy to sit in the early-autumn sun and reflect on their agreement. For the three men have just established the world's newest diplomatic group.

In an increasingly fractured world, global leadership is hard to come by. The

The Panel

01 Antonio Patriota
Brazilian foreign minister. A career diplomat appointed by Dilma Rousseff in 2011. More high profile than his predecessors, partly as Rousseff doesn't want to be her own foreign minister.

02 Carl Bildt
Swedish foreign minister. One time prime minister and leading figure in Sweden's centre-right Moderate party. Spent several years working on the Balkans as envoy for both the EU and the UN.

03 Ahmet Davutoglu
Turkish foreign minister. Driving force behind Turkey's more proactive foreign policy and creator of the country's "zero problems with the neighbours" initiative.

"We span from the Arctic to the Amazon, quite a wide area"
Carl Bildt

one remaining superpower is in dire economic straits, its military is overstretched and the role of peacemaker is not one it has felt entirely comfortable with. China and Russia are both more concerned with internal matters and holding on to the allies they have. The European Union – Nobel Peace Prize notwithstanding – is too busy keeping its economic house in order to even begin to think about what should happen outside its own borders. Regional bodies, from Asean to the African Union to Mercosur, can barely influence their own members, let alone help shape a collective continent-wide policy.

And then there's the United Nations, never the most dynamic of decision-making bodies, which as the following days of speech-making and grandstanding emphatically highlight, is hopelessly split on all the big issues of the day.

So it increasingly makes sense for like-minded countries to create informal coalitions based on political views rather than geographical proximity. Brazil and Turkey have already worked together on nuclear talks with Iran, while Sweden has close ties with both. There was no plan to form a group though until a few weeks ago. Smiling, Patriota rises from his seat as he sees MONOCLE. "This is all your fault," he says. And he's right.

In the past two years MONOCLE has reported on all three foreign ministries, sending editors and photographers to Brasília, Stockholm and Ankara. After the most recent interview (with Patriota in issue 57) it became clear that the three countries all shared common traits. They are well respected around the world and have far more friends than enemies. They have impressive teams of ambassadors and are increasingly influential in the diplomatic world.

The individual ministers are key to their countries' reputations. Few have racked up as many air miles as Davutoglu, who has become a major diplomatic player during the Arab uprisings, while Bildt is one of the most respected ministers in the European Union. Patriota is a career diplomat who has played an integral part in shaping Brazil's new, more expansive, foreign policy.

We published a slightly tongue-in-cheek Monocolumn suggesting that the three ministers establish a new "diplomatic supergroup". Individually, we wrote, they "can all talk to different parts of the world that traditional superpowers struggle to engage with." Collectively, they could become an impressive global player.

The ministers all read the article and, it appears, didn't think it such a bad idea. Which is why they find themselves in the garden of the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations, preparing for a trilateral working lunch. (A lunch which, if you will allow us to point out, came with a "Monocle salad", all in the colours of the three countries' flags.)

What happens next is as yet unclear. Iran, Syria and the Israel/Palestine peace process were the main topics of discussion at the lunch and all three are issues that the trio could decide to take on. But while the new group may lack a fancy name (BST is no BRIC) it may be around for a while. Davutoglu has already invited Bildt and Patriota to join him in Izmir in January for round two. — (M)

MONOCLE: A very busy week for all three of you. Why did you decide to meet together today?

Patriota: Well we've been meeting each other bilaterally and we find there are a number of issues where our positions coincide. I think we are countries that stand for similar values, for dialogue, for multilateralism, for negotiation, for democracy. And perhaps by exchanging notes and looking at our own perception of some of the international issues that are the most pressing we can reinforce our individual agendas and accomplish something.

Davutoglu: Of course I fully agree with Antonio about global issues but there is another characteristic: we are also from three different regions and from three continents so we know the sensitivities and priorities of our regions. We agree on multilateralism, on UN reform, on other reforms of the international architecture of diplomacy. We had an excellent experience with Brazil regarding the Iran nuclear programme and we have worked with Sweden on Bosnia and the Balkans, for example.

Bildt: There are quite a number of issues where we have the same basic principles and values. Then we have different geographic positions – we span from the Arctic to the Amazon, which is quite a wide area, and look at the world from our different perspectives. But we are united by quite a lot of similarities and values and interests. But at the end of the day it's all your fault because you

"This trilateral process shows not only the substance but the method of diplomacy is important"
Ahmet Davutoglu

"I think we are countries that stand for similar values"
Antonio Patriota

wrote in your magazine that we should be together so we had to do it.

Patriota: That is the best explanation.

MONOCLE: We're living in quite a fragmented world at the moment. A lot of the regional groupings are dealing with their own issues – be that in Europe or Latin America or elsewhere. Do you think there is scope for groups like this where like-minded countries can come together where you don't have regional differences to argue about?

Patriota: There's no reason why we shouldn't discuss with Turkey and Sweden some problems, some of the challenges facing the international community where we may end up making a difference. We were having a brief discussion about the Middle East just now and this is one area that is a special concern to us. We all favour peaceful solution to disputes so let's see where it takes us. At this point it's still beginning.

Bildt: And as was mentioned – the Iranian nuclear issue where Brazil and Turkey were at the forefront of the attempts to move that forward a couple of years ago – we were not part of that but we regretted that it failed. I think it was a very good attempt and I think we would probably be in a better place if that had been carried forward. We are committed to seeking a diplomatic negotiated political solution on that, based on the obligations that are there for each and every one.

Davutoglu: This trilateral process shows not only the substance but the method of diplomacy is important. The substance might be the Middle East, it might be a nuclear programme, it might be the Balkans, it might be other issues. But the methods that we agree on, using soft power, using a multilateral approach, using empathy in international relations and trying to understand each other – this methodical aspect is as important as the substance of the issue.

MONOCLE: Do you think you'll work more formally together after this? Is there something you might come together on to work on?

Patriota: I'll tell you something, we've already planned a second meeting.

Davutoglu: In Turkey, in Izmir, in the first week of January, I invited my colleagues for work and holiday together for a weekend and they kindly accepted. And we will go to Brazil, we hope, and to Sweden.

Patriota: To the Arctic perhaps?

Bildt: From the Arctic to the Amazon.

Davutoglu: From the Arctic to the Bosphorus to the Amazon. It could be AAB.

MONOCLE: All groups need a name.

Bildt: Oh my God this is going to be complicated. We'll set up a working group of diplomats to contemplate that particular issue. We promise a name coming out of the Izmir meeting. — (M)

On air: A Monocle 24 special on diplomacy will air this Christmas.

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