

WAYS OF DEVELOPMENT: RETHINKING MODERNIZATION ROLE IN BRAZILIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

This article aims to present the overlaps between the foreign policy agenda and aspects of transformation of Brazil's international relations in the first decade of 21st century. Therefore, it seeks to understand the modernization as a value historically integrated into diplomatic activity regarding foreign policy objectives and national development strategies.

Keywords: Brazilian Foreign Policy. Modernization.

1. Introduction

In Brazil, the effects of expansion of academic research and public debate on foreign affairs are relevant, interfering positively in both the renewal of theoretical formulations, and in the intellectual openness of the discussions about Brazilian foreign policy agenda. In this article, foreign policy action will be analyzed from the perspective of a particular element that interferes decisively in the history of the Brazil: the national development project. The paper aims to identify aspects of modernization in the foreign policy agenda in the early twenty-first century.

Based on events that marked the action of Brazil's foreign policy from the 2000s, the most significant political actions of the country's international role will be analyzed related to the issue of development in modern bases, namely measures designed to change the country's position among the nations.

In order to place the foreign policy agenda, combined with international presence and Brazil's development project at the beginning of this century, this paper first presents a brief review on the discussion about the "national question". It is the quest for development in modern bases, a striking feature of both political and cultural legacy of the country, as well as a traditional debate of the Social Sciences in Brazil.

2. National Question and Brazilian Foreign Affairs

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There is extensive literature on the national question in Brazil.¹ In general, the authors agree that the national society formation process is closely related to political, economic and cultural variables of the country as well as external factors posed by the international system. In this regard, draws attention the period from the advent of the Republic in Brazil (1889) and the end of World War II (1945).

Taking into account, both internationally and nationally, a time of change in political, economic, social and cultural order, the Brazilian development agenda was under the effects triggered by the advance of industrial production for the period, the new balance power between the major European powers and the emergence of the United States as an international power.² These facts promoted a necessary conformation of Brazilian foreign policy, as well as of its international identity.

Mediated by the analytical categories of tradition / modernity, particular / universal or national / foreign, development dilemmas of a peripheral country in the context of international relations are the subject of debate for generations among Brazilian politicians and scholars (IANNI, 2004, p. 29). At the same time, in foreign policy, to discuss the national question, that is, the country's development agenda is to contribute to a type of reflection that highlights some elements addressed in International Relations analysis in Brazil, including: the idea of national identity (LAFER, 2002, p. 10).

In Brazil, this traditional Social Sciences discussion field is characterized not only by highlighting the modernization imperatives in our political and social formation, but also by the importance of the international dimension in this process (LAFER, 2002, p. 11). However, little emphasis has been given to the relationship between Brazil's foreign policy and modernization regarding the international insertion of the country.

2.1 The National Question: the idea of Modern Brazil

The history of Brazil comprises its own reflection on the development models and ways of modernizing the country. The national question, in turn, is indicative of the debate on processing conditions of improvements in national life, working on analyzes committed to explain the modern idea of Brazil.

Between the archaic and the modern, domestic and foreign, the country's development was the object of reflection from different perspectives and generations throughout history. Politicians, writers, intellectuals, religious reflected on the Brazilian dilemmas in terms of political, economic and social situation.

The history of Brazilian thought expresses the fascination on the national question. Past and present, many are concerned to understand the challenges that compose and decompose Brazil as a nation. This concern is revealed particularly pronounced in situations such as the Declaration of Independence

¹ See Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil* (2006); Caio Prado Júnior, *Evolução Política do Brasil* (2012); Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande & Senzala* (2006); Raymundo Faoro, *Os Donos do Poder* (2001).

² See Serge Bernstein (Org.). *História do Século XX* (2007); Edward Burns, *História da Civilização Ocidental* (1999); and Eric Hobsbawm, *Era dos Extremos* (2005).

in 1822, the Abolition of Slavery and the Republic Proclamation in 1888-89 and the 1930 Revolution (IANNI, 2004, p. 24).

In the nineteenth century, reflection on the country's modernization possibilities took shape, content and action through political and intellectual activity of prominent people like Jose Bonifacio, Frei Caneca, Mauá, Alves Branco and Tavares Bastos. Participation in modern life meant performing institutional and social reforms unbearable for the inherited structures of Portuguese colonialism.³ The monarchy and slavery were the expression of backwardness and anachronism present in Brazilian reality that prevented economic growth, industrial development and civilizing advances (IANNI, 2004, p. 28).

Moreover, in 1850, with the end of the international slave trade, and especially after 1871 with the approval of Rio Branco Law⁴, the prospect of the abolition of slavery opened the way for wage employment relationships and, consequently, new economic growth.

This is an important part of history that is revealed in the writings and actions of Tavares Bastos, Romero, Jose Verissimo, Nabuco, Machado de Assis, Raul Pompeii and others. They dedicated themselves to think what was the 19th century Brazil, and how it was displaced, frozen in timeline, when in contrast with the more developed capitalist countries at that time. (IANNI, 2004, p. 17).

The first republican decades, characterized by new political and economic trends, made room for a new cultural environment. The intellectuals of the turn of the century, among them: Euclides da Cunha, Machado de Assis and Manoel Bomfim, pioneered a new approach on the Brazilian national question, revealing horizons that decades later would gain a more accurate definition.

Since the 1930s, it was formulated the main interpretations of modern Brazil (CANDIDO, 2006, pp. 9-21). Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*; Caio Prado Júnior, *Evolução Política do Brasil*; and Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande e Senzala*, represented the main references of interpretation of Brazil. As proposed by Ianni,

This is the time in which it is developed some of the key interpretations, or classical same, of Brazilian history. They reflect theoretical suggestions developed by the European and North American thought, where it is possible to find both Simmel and Weber as Boas and Marx, among many others. But also Brazilian intellectuals are more prepared to think about the dilemmas of society. They seem more contemporary of his time and place. They were able to explain the traditions, the Portuguese heritage, the slavery, the obstacles

³ The arrival of the Portuguese in the Americas, in some parts of the coast of the territory that present day constitutes areas of Brazil, dates from 1500. At the time, the indigenous population that occupied and dominated the coastline were the Tupi-Guarani. The country became independent in relation to Portugal in 1822.

⁴ The law declared free the children of slaves born from the year 1871. The children would be in the hands of the Lords of their mothers until the age of eight, when lords could choose to receive state compensation or utilize the services of the young to turn 21 years old.

and the possibilities of formation of the people, while community of citizens (2004, p. 25).

After this intellectual tradition, associated with evidence of modernization present in Brazil's development process, follows up a whole new generation of studies aligned to the bases of the Brazilian social thinking, discussing: the formation of the people, the problems of culture, militarism, democracy, capitalism, the state and the nation. One may highlighted, among others, the works of Raymundo Faoro, Antonio Candido, Florestan Fernandes, Celso Furtado, Nelson Werneck Sodre and Helio Jaguaribe (IANNI, 2004, p. 26).

Taken as a whole, the works explained the basis for national formation unmasked institutions, actors and values and at the same time built the perspectives and conceptions of the national project. The historical reconstruction provided a multiple view of the nation, discussing the present, exorcising the past and imagining the future of the country. Each in their own way, all engaged in explaining the conditions and possibilities of modern Brazil (IANNI, 2004, p. 31).

From the perspective of our intellectual tradition, political, cultural and institutional debate of our historical formation demand, regarding the international dimension, Brazil's place in the community of nations. It is an intricate set of elements that confer specificity to the country's development process, a subject both essential and complex positioning modernization as a core value of nationality founding (FELDMAN, 2009, p. 536).

The modern idea of Brazil is indicative of the political-institutional exercise converted into the direction of international integration projects in the country. Seen from the perspective of diplomatic activity, foreign policy action can express and often, envision modernization imperatives (FELDMAN, 2009, p. 537).

In the case of the Brazilian external sector, one may identify in achieving the national goals the way foreign policy activity was associated with the modernization process in Brazil.

2.2 Foreign Policy as modernization engine

According to Feldman (2009, p. 3), the backwardness-modern dilemma is a central axis able to offer a picture of explanatory factors on the history of Brazil associated with International historical contexts. Concerning diplomatic activity, the national question highlights as a deep sense of progress is established in the projects and Brazilian international insertion models that extend and reach our time.

In the way of understanding the conditions modernization, consolidation of the state's political institutions and the nation found itself subjected to controversies that modeled the national interest from the relationships established in the field of foreign affairs (CERVO, 2008). Foreign policy sets, ultimately, a policy understood as working for the national development.

In this regard, one must recognize that between 1864 and 1945, the transformations that Brazil meets on foreign affairs would leave significant marks and equally relevant in shaping the

territory and the promotion of national interest in the political tradition of the country.⁵ Strictly speaking, one cannot understand this intense process of institutional innovations and state intervention mechanisms without discussing the weight of the international framework in reshaping the national development project.

Among the few studies and analyzes that address the issue, the contributions of Lafer (2002), Ricupero (2000) and Feldman (2009) refer to the construction of a modern nation, whose foreign policy would assume the role of defining national values. Therefore, Brazil's experience as part of the international cultural concert necessarily bind the future of the country to civilizing projects inspired by the European and North American models. In foreign policy, such a conception, however, was revised in the late twentieth century. The international counterpart was converted to lever national construction, soon materialized in development and modernization strategies (LAFER, 2002, p. 17).

In the idea of modern Brazil, state and nation compose a relationship that involves assessing the different possibilities of political project and projection of the country in the international arena. The huge historic vulnerabilities of the country in economic and financial matters are key variables of strong restrictions or instabilities applied to its development process (Furtado, 2007, p. 225). On the other hand, these dimensions shape important values going along with the historical conduct of Brazil concerning foreign policy objectives, namely sovereignty and modernization (Feldman, 2009).

In the case of foreign affairs, it can be said that the Brazilian diplomatic activity offers a broad understanding of elements regarding the continuity of the country's modernization imperatives. In this case, one should identify to what extent a national development project in modern bases can be understood through foreign policy conceptions.

In this sense, the initiatives that Brazil took part and its consequences in domestic and foreign plans should be understood in the deepest sense of this development dimension. The questions of territorial sovereignty, trade and international finance are part of the need to maintain power, operating as a modernization tool historically adopted by the Brazilian government, especially in the economic perspective.

In this regard, in recent decades the country has reoriented its international insertion in the light of the rise of countries like China, India, Russia and South Africa, through the effort of integration and regional stability as well as initiatives with other emerging economies in global scenario. This is the so-called "South-South diplomacy" that reviews the traditional paradigms of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, whose action of foreign policy was more strongly linked to the developed world, notably the United States and Western European countries.

3. Brazil in the late twentieth century

⁵ The growing military involvement in the spheres of policy making in the country. In Brazil, a coup on March 31, 1964 overthrew the democratic government of President João Goulart and established an authoritarian regime. The period of military dictatorship lasted 21 years (1964-1985).

From the 1990's, the process of globalization translated into deeper political, economic, commercial and security among countries. In that period, the end of the Cold War⁶ led to the reshaping of strategies of international projection, as well as to a resetting of priorities in the States political agendas, under the hegemonic projection of the United States.

In what concerns Defence, the end of the communist threat changed the international order profoundly, since it required that regional, hemispheric and global security principles, paradigms and schemes be revised. In fact, not only the emergence of new players and subjects in the international scenario but also their changing perceptions of non-conventional threats rendered the bipolar order defence mechanisms obsolete.

At the hemispheric level, Latin American countries consolidated their transition towards democracy and adapted their economic policies to the neoliberal prescriptions of the Washington Consensus⁷, while the United States set the priorities on the collective security agenda: international drug trafficking, migration and environmental protection. Although Brazil did not regard security as a high priority nor did it share the American stance on the deployment of the Armed Forces to combat drug traffickers, its Foreign Service chose to tackle the issue in the South American context.⁸

Due to the difficulty to reach consensus within the Organization of American States (OAS), Brazil took a course of political action oriented towards bilateral and multilateral initiatives, especially at the subregional level. The need to secure political stability in South America and to succeed in the creation of Mercosur made the implementation of trust-building measures a priority of Brazilian diplomacy under former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

Throughout the 1990's, Brazil placed greater emphasis on the multilateral path by adopting the main international regimes on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and by building an international image based on democracy, free trade and human rights. The main foreign policy guideline at the time - "autonomy through participation" - was deemed the best way to increase its influence on the political processes underway.⁹

During President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's second term, however, Brazil and the world had already gone through a series of financial crises, chiefly in emerging markets (Thailand, Asia, Russia and eventually Brazil in 1998/99), which caused deadlocks in the complex multilateral trade talks for the liberalization of goods and services held under the auspices of the World Trade Organization. Thus, it was evident that the role of the developing countries needed to be

⁶ The order of the Cold War (1947-1989) prevailed in the international system between 1947 and 1989. This was a historical period characterized by a bipolar balance of power around the new superpowers of the post-war period: the United States and Soviet Union. The rivalry between the two countries exceeded the military and diplomatic sphere, also being expressed as opposite models of social and economic organization.

⁷ Set of measures sponsored by major international funding agencies - the International Monetary Fund and World Bank / IMF - with a view to economic stability through fiscal discipline, and trade and financial liberalization in developing country markets.

⁸ VAZ, Alcides Costa. "O Brasil e o Sistema Interamericano", in LESSA, Antonio Carlos e OLIVEIRA, Henrique de Altemani (orgs.). *Relações Internacionais do Brasil: temas e agendas*, v.2, São Paulo: Saraiva, 2006, p. 70.

⁹ VIGEVANI, T.; CEPALUNI, G. "A política externa de Lula da Silva: A estratégia da autonomia pela diversificação", in: *Contexto Internacional*, p. 273-335, vol. 29, No 2, julho/dezembro, 2007.

redefined. The prevailing foreign policy concepts in Brazilian diplomatic thought would soon be reviewed.

A second turning point was to reshape dramatically the approach to security issues on the international stage: the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. At that juncture the United States applied a global anti-terror policy that transformed the perception of States and non-State players alike on the role each of them could play to protect and pursue their interests.

In this transitional context, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva started his first term in office. There was more room in the international scenario for emerging players, so Brazil took a leading role in setting an agenda for the reform of the global decision-making bodies. The world was witnessing a rapid power reconfiguration, even if it happened basically on economic grounds. In that sense, Tullo Vigevani and Gabriel Cepaluni sustained that the core of the Brazilian foreign policy would go through "a quick fix" or "programme change", without necessarily shifting away from its historical goal: the country's economic development.

The foreign policy of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso supported the idea of "autonomy through participation", as opposed to the pursuit of "autonomy through distance" adopted until the end of the Sarney administration, while Lula da Silva sought to bring Brazil to the forefront of the international stage by strengthening autonomy and diversifying the Brazilian partners and strategic options. Although one can trace the country's change of course back in the Cardoso administration, the strategy implemented by Lula da Silva could be called "autonomy through diversification", which emphasizes South-South cooperation in order to reach greater balance in relation to the North, while making adjustments, increasing the country's prominence in world affairs and consolidating changes in the foreign policy programme. (CEPALUNI, VIGEVANI: 2007, p. 282-83)

The foreign policy guidelines had to adapt to this search for a more prominent role and greater influence in international affairs. By the same token, a higher priority was ascribed to the relations with neighbour countries and other emerging States- "South-south diplomacy", as well as to global policy objectives, such as the reform of the United Nations Security Council and permanent membership therein.

This enterprise demanded a broad comprehension of the new social, economic, political and institutional situation in Brazil, which is characterized by a higher level of participation and interest of different sectors of the society in contemporary international relations and its impact on the country's development.

4. Ways of development: South-South Diplomacy

The diplomatic agenda set forth by the government under President Lula contributed significantly to the resetting of Brazil's external action. Since the Cancun WTO talks in 2003, efforts have been made with the aim of building coalitions with other emerging countries and deepening regional integration in South America.

Still in 2003, Brazil joined other emerging economies from Africa, Asia and South America to form the G-20. The group's main subject of interest is agriculture, the key topic in the Doha

Development Agenda. In fact, since the previous ministerial conference (Doha, 2001), WTO members had been trying fruitlessly to reach an agreement with regard to the agenda established at the Qatari capital, the axes of which were precisely development and agriculture. The weight of the G-20 in the agricultural output and trade is quite relevant, with this group of countries accounting for 60% of the world population and 70% of the world rural population. (OLIVEIRA, 2005).

In that same year, India, Brazil and South Africa created the IBSA forum. The cooperation agreement among the three countries was signed in 2003 and represents a milestone in South-south cooperation. Unlike purely commercial or political cooperation agreements, the IBSA forum addresses several topics such as democracy poverty alleviation, public policies on education and science, technological cooperation, trade and investments.

In 2005, the Community of South American Nations (CASA) – present day South American Nations Union (UNASUL) - was established. It is chiefly in the regional context that Brazil concentrates its strategic presence, taking into account not only the close historic ties, but also the favourable conditions to play a more active, influential role.

The importance assigned to the neighbouring countries had a decisive impact on the debate about the interamerican system, which remains under the direct influence of the United States. For the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the strengthening of regional mechanisms of political coordination provides for a cooperative and non-exclusivist approach (allowing autonomy vis-à-vis the USA), by promoting multilateralism, democracy, human rights and development.

The so called BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) first set up their institutional framework in June 2009, when the group held its first Summit Meeting in Ekaterinburg. The concept of BRICS, which was originally designed to identify a group of countries with promising economic outlooks in the upcoming decades, was afterwards seized by those countries to designate a political coordination body encompassing countries with great representativeness in their respective regions (DA SILVA, 2010).

Consequently, the Brazilian Foreign Ministry sought to increase its presence in areas not so intensively covered in the 1990's by approaching the Andean countries in South America, Southern African and Arab countries and also China, India and Russia. Moreover, The deeper cooperation with these countries allowed for the establishment of alliances varied in shape, like the G-3, G-20 and the BRICS, and these alliances contribute to building strategic partnerships.

According to Maria Soares de Lima, the emphasis placed by the Lula administration on multilateralism is connected with the fact that Brazil is perceived in the international system as a medium power "which regards mediation between the powerful and the weak as its main contribution to international stability and the recognition of its international projection not through the use of force, but through parliamentary diplomacy" (LIMA, 2005).

Indeed, from the recognition of convergent interests, Brazil seeks to maintain balanced relations with both major extra-regional powers (USA, China, Russia, France, India), and with its neighbors, avoiding difficulties associated with lack of strategic autonomy. Thus, the Lula government emphasized his role in bilateral and multilateral horizontal axis, designing an autonomous position of Brazil in multilateral forums, such as large state, which would seek by bargain and not for good behavior, gain greater visibility in the international balance of power (Pecequilo, 2008).

By strengthening its alliances with developing countries, Brazil breaks away gradually from the influence of traditional powers, providing greater autonomy in their strategies of foreign policy action as an engine of development given the international constraints of the period on economic, trade and international finance.

5. Final Comments

The experience of Brazil as part of the Western world necessarily bind the country's future to the development paradigm inspired by the European and North American models. Throughout the twentieth century, this condition was reflected in the wider horizon of the Brazilian national question, especially in large events that characterize the legacy and the development path in modern bases in the country throughout his political, economic, intellectual and social formation.

In the early twenty-first century, with the ongoing changes in the international scenario, the review of foreign policy guidelines presented overwhelming changes in favor of a renewal of Brazilian initiatives, especially through coordination with developing countries. It was an international insertion where the foreign policy keynote has been performing diplomatic actions that promoted the development needs regarding new strategy models. The diversification of international partnerships through "South-South diplomacy" has become emblem of the new Brazilian approach of international action.

This conception of foreign policy has changed the Brazilian development framework. This new dimension implies a corresponding vision of nationality and, consequently, on both the ideological paradigms of identity and the international cooperation strategies of the country.

The development challenges follow as major objective of the foreign policy of Brazil. Given a scenario increasingly complex in terms of contemporary international relations, the question to what extent the country will be able to sustain the economic and social assets conquered after the review of development and international insertion models, whose result contributed effectively to assert the modern and universal identity of the Brazilian State.

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