The role of beliefs, ideas and perceptions in foreign policymaking process – the Brazilian case during Lula da Silva’s term*
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Abstract
This paper aims to discuss the influence of the factors from systemic, domestic and individual levels on Brazilian foreign policy making, in particular the goal of Brazil’s international projection during the two terms of President Lula da Silva (2003-2010). The argument developed emphasizes the importance of carrying out a multi-level analysis in order to understand Brazilian foreign policy making, in a moment characterized by changes in international and domestic systems as well as in government leaderships. All of these elements were crucial to recover the «Brazilian power» ambition.

1. Introduction
It was when Brazil had defined the South American region as its foreign policy priority that started to develop international insertion strategies beyond the regional area. The search for a relevant place in the international system has been a dominant feature of the Brazilian foreign policy and it was also a constant during the two terms of President Lula da Silva, between 2003 and 2010. Actually, throughout the time, Brazilian foreign policy direction did not suffer deep ruptures and it has been marked by a continuity of

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principles and goals, or «compulsory scenarios» in the words of Gélson Fonseca. However, of course, there were some changes concerning the hierarchy of priorities and objectives.

The underlying question of the present paper aims to discuss the influence of factors from systemic, domestic and individual levels on Brazilian foreign policy making, in particular the goal of Brazil’s international projection during the two terms of President Lula da Silva (2003-2010).

The argument developed emphasizes the importance of carrying out a multi-level analysis in order to understand Brazilian foreign policymaking, in a moment characterized by changes in international and domestic systems as well as in government leaderships. All of these elements were crucial to recover «Brazil power» ambition.

By this way, it is assumed that foreign policy is a process influenced by several constraints and is adopted Laura Neack’s approach which considers that «the study of foreign policy needs to consider how certain goals arise and why certain behaviors result. Thus our focus is on how goals are decided upon. We will explore the factors that cause a state to declare and embark on a certain foreign policy course. (...) In summary, the ‘stuff’ of our foreign policy study includes processes, statements, and behaviors».

So, this paper includes a short theoretical framework that emphasizes the evolution of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and the importance in adopting a multilevel analysis looking for causes that explain the inter-relation among the 3 levels – systemic, domestic and individual. The paper entails the study of each level and I will present here the main elements of each level.

I think that it is also important to mention that the goal of this paper (and even with the comparative dimension) it is not to evaluate the causes for the success or failure of Brazilian foreign policy options; nor to present the differences between the dynamism of Lula da Silva and the passivity of Dilma Rousseff. As I referred before, the main

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goal is to understand the influence of variables from the different levels on foreign policy making.

2. Foreign Policy Analysis’ levels

Like International Relation Theories, also FPA was not immune to the evolution of the international system neither the domestic dynamics, both led FPA «to expand its own outlook to account for an increasingly diverse range of non-state actors, such as global environmental activists or multinational corporations (MNCs)»

So instead of bearing in mind just causes from the systemic level FPA started to underline the importance of complement it with elements from the individual level – ideas, beliefs, perceptions – as well as from the domestic level – stressing not just the role of institutions and public opinion, but also several elements related with State organization and society. Hermann and Hagan explained this point very well: «scholars who focus on understanding the foreign policy process have made progress in identifying the conditions under which these factors do matter and in specifying the nature of their effects. (…) they have explored how leaders perceive and interpret constraints in their international and domestic environments, make decisions, and manage domestic political pressures on their foreign policy choices»

Webber and Smith underline the importance of the international level, because, as they say, it refers to the interaction with other States as well as to issues related to international hierarchy reflected in the statute each State has in the international system, that is, the way how it is perceived by other States.

So with this framework it is expected to highlight the importance of conciliate the three level of analysis as presented theoretical by some authors. As Peter Trumbore and Mark Boyer refer «’At the national level, domestic groups pressure the government to adopt policies they favour, while politicians seek power by building coalitions among these


4 ALDEN, Chris e ARAN, Amnon – Foreign Policy Analysis. New Approaches, 2012, p. 3

constituents.’ Meanwhile, at ‘the international level, governments seek to satisfy domestic pressures while limiting the harmful impact of foreign developments’»\(^6\).

Laura Neack’s approach refers to the political process itself, because «regardless of government or regime type, what is important to the analyst is identifying the domestic political process by which winners and losers are determined on any given foreign policy issue».\(^7\) The international level, on the other level, is highlighted because it is where «the challenges and opportunities for foreign policy largely arise»\(^8\), so «for any government, status will be a key concern in confronting the international context»\(^9\).

By his turn, Christopher Hill arguments that foreign policy analysis should not be done assuming that factors are always external and independent of the perceptions and knowledge of the actors\(^10\).

Once again, Laura Neack underscores the importance of the individual level in the interaction of domestic and external levels\(^11\). Likewise, Hermann and Hagan assume that international system constraints and opportunities «only have policy implications when they are perceived as such by the leaders whose positions count in dealing with a particular problem»\(^12\). Leaders are defined by Hermann & Hagan as “pawns”\(^13\) and by Neack as the nexus in the interaction of the domestic and external political systems\(^14\).

These views are crucial for the foreign policy analysis in a globalized system in which the levels are not independents and autonomous – and where, I think, Lula’s Brazil fits perfectly.

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7 *Ibidem*, p. 98
8 WEBBER, Mark e SMITH, Michael – *Foreign Policy in a transformed world*, 2002, p. 31
9 *Ibidem*.
13 *Ibidem*, p. 129.
3. Lula’s foreign policy: «greatness ambition», «Brazil power» and «haughty and active foreign policy»

The study of Brazilian foreign policy history allows conclude that there is a continuous goal based on the ambition of «Brazil power» and on the belief of the country’s «greatness».

This goal was developed during the 1970’s when Brazil started to believe that, as an in-development country could influence the international agenda setting.

This goal is also related with what Matias Spektor defines as the «autonomist project» and with Brazilian international identity.

This project and identity are also related with the understanding about the Brazilian relation with the US. Some of the doubts of the beginning of the XX century concerning the way of conduct the foreign policy remain nowadays, specifically in what refers the degree of cooperation with the US. Also during Lula’s term (which coincides with Bush and Obama’s terms) the relation was preserved and in some domains, was deepened, but never considered as strategic or fundamental. Some of this introversion is a result of the main principles of Brazilian diplomatic thought which make difficult to develop an open and close relationship with the US. This love and hate relationship comes also from the history, being the relationship with the United States characterized as ambivalent, because the US are understood «as the best potential ally for the country, as well as its most likely antagonist in case of conflicts».

Thereafter, the willingness to project a «Brazil power» was not always accompanied by coincident actions, and despite the growing international presence of Brazil during the democratic period, the Brazilian «greatness ambition» was delayed to be achieved. However, since the late 1990’s, during FHC’s term, Brazil had started an international


revelation process which had been consolidated with President Lula da Silva through his participation in multilateral and international forums, relations with Great Powers and an active diplomatic exercise as well as his statements concerning the international agenda issues\textsuperscript{21}.

The analysis of Lula da Silva’s speeches discloses the existence of an optimistic view about Brazilian capabilities. In 2002, even as elected-president, Lula visited the US and it was visible his intention to develop politics able to influence the international agenda\textsuperscript{22}.

The ability to influence international decisions and the self-recognition of that ability has been started to be done in a non-dissimulated and more active way. At the regional level, the discourse and attitudes were characterized by some contention in order to avoid a misunderstanding related with hegemony in the neighbourhood.

Paradoxically, the focus on the international scene had been accompanied by a «regional activism»\textsuperscript{23}. Brazilian external behavior rested upon the dilemma between the neighbourhoods recognition of Brazilian capabilities and power, and Brazilian resources and global ambition. For such, the desire to stabilize the region had worked as a requisite for its international projection ambition which coexisted with Brazilian South-American identity. Lula develops an integrated identity including elements from the regional identity and from a global one\textsuperscript{24}.

4. The study of Brazilian foreign policy levels

Foreign policy is not just a result of international opportunities and constrains, but also of the interaction between the external and domestic dimensions. By this way, the


domestic level provides some elements that are useful to understand options made, as
James Rosenau refers «domestic factors may be of considerable significance even if
they are not primary sources of foreign policy, and on some issues they may well be
dominant»

The 2003 Brazilian election had represented the PT power’s arrival. For the first time
this party would not be in the opposition and, despite be presented as the great party in
the Congress it could not obtain the necessary majority to avoid the traditional
coalitions building – a situation that made difficult the policy negotiations and the
consensus building.

4.1. The analysis of the internal level should take into account:

a) The existence of a presidential system that puts the President in front of the
legislative initiative not only concerning foreign policy but other domains;

b) The Congress and political parties low level of participation in foreign policy
making;

c) The task of foreign policymaking is shared between Itamaraty, namely the
Ministry, and the President, what made possible the exercise of a presidential
diplomacy. However, despite the multiplication of actors that in an indirect and
asymmetric way influence foreign policy making, Itamaraty continues to be the
central actor in this domain

d) The role of the public opinion and media. Since late 1990 society started to be
closer of the foreign policy debate. It was only during Lula’s term that one
assisted to a profound change, despite being a residual influence started to be
more evident

e) Economically, the launch of the economy (because Brazil was recovering from
the crisis of the late 1990’s, having a high external debt and being subject to the
IMF rules) and of social politics, was not exactly coincident with PT ideas.
These policies were crucial to Lula’s re-election in 2006. The 2008 international
economic crises did not affect Brazil directly, and China’s economic high

policy, Ontario: Free Press, 1967, p. 4
growth provides Brazil an important exportations destiny of commodities which had an important role on its economic recovery.

f) The constant corruption cases including political high individualities, such as the President. However these suspicions had not an immediately effect on Lula’s popularity rankings.

4.2. The international level study had considered:

a) 9/11 effects on US foreign policy and EU internal challenges that put these powers looking to their own navel, despite the conflicts and poverty contexts on Africa and Middle East;

b) The Goldman Sachs report in 2001 that trigger the international image change in countries like Brazil, Russia, India or China based on their economic emergence.

c) The international economic crisis that did not have a negative impact on Brasil, contrary to what had happened in US or European countries. On the contrary, Brazil has taken advantage of the opportunities provided by the crisis – Brazil was invited to take part of an enlarged G8 and G20 has been consolidated.

d) The weight of multilateral mechanisms was reinforced and reformulated. The role of United Nations and UNSC had continued to be discussed. This issue was central on Brazilian foreign policy. The search for a place on UNSC was a key-issue on Amorim’s strategy.

e) IBSA group was central on the interaction with the Global South, and on the collective behaviour in multilateral organisms, such as the WTO.

f) Iraq war was Lula team’s first international event. Celso Amorim had a clear idea about the war because he had represented Brazil in the Iraq UNSC panels. On the contrary of US, Brazil was against the war that started in March 2003. Celso Amorim stated that «Iraq war had created a situation – I do not want to say opportunity (...). So, I could say that this effort to influence the international agenda setting has been felt since the first moments of this Government»27.

g) The decision to project Brazil in the international scene was followed with a regional strategy, what may lay down on the party ideals.

4.3. The individual level study considers:

some of the ideas, beliefs and interests of Lula’s foreign policy trio: Celso Amorim, Minister of Foreign Affairs; Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, Itamaraty’s Secretary General; and Marco Aurélio Garcia, President Special Adviser.

The analysis does not include the cognitive frameworks; instead it gives emphasis to the decision-makers ideas that may allow to a better understanding of their world views and perceptions about Brazilian capabilities. As Neack refers, «national leaders are said to play a two-level, dual, or nested game between the demands of the international system and those of domestic politics»28. The analysis rests upon:

a) The diplomatic trio, in Planalto and Itamaraty, had a clear view about Brazilian foreign policy course. The view included the main traditional diplomatic principles, despite some adjustment in order to focus the international protagonism ambition throughout partnership diversification and the use of the multilateral organisms. Rather than a rupture with former foreign policy direction, during Lula da Silva’s term it was developed a new foreign policy style narrowly related with the new government leaderships – which lay down on the ambition, prestige and influence’s capability of Brazil;

b) The charismatic personality of Lula da Silva – it was central for what Brazil has achieved internal and externally29. Lula was a TV star. His foreign policy was internally criticized but externally acclaimed. He was much more ideological on the domestic level and much more pragmatic on the external side30.

c) The interaction between Lula and Celso Amorim had played an important role how the foreign policy goals had been formulated, «Amorim said ‘Brazil is one of the world greats, Brazil will be seated in all the tables where decisions would be taken’. The “vira-latas” complex had changed thanks to Amorim»31. Amorim is an experiment diplomat in multilateral organizations and in government posts.

28 NEACK, Laura – The new foreign policy: power seeking in a globalized era, p. 27.
30 Ibidem.
31 Interview done by the author to a Brazilian diplomat, alto funcionário do Itamaraty (I), Brasília, April 17th 2012 (request of anonymity).
His ideas are present in his speeches during the 1990’s as well as during Lula administration\textsuperscript{32}. Amorim’s view rested upon the notion of prestige – «for him this was the main gain in foreign policy, that is, do more than you have. If you have X so you will try to do Y. And Lula support him, he also has that approach, he managed foreign policy with the resources that he had not!»\textsuperscript{33}.

d) To Pinheiro Guimarães and Marco Aurélio Garcia is due the focus on the regional dimension, despite their world view in which Brazil also has the natural right to exert a prominent role. Pinheiro Guimarães had also a natural position against the US and Garcia was an expert on regional issues even the political-party issues of South American due to his role played on the Party since its foundation\textsuperscript{34}.

5. Final remarks

This paper focused on the interaction of the 3 levels of FPA, stressing how individual ideas, values and interests were crucial to instrumentalize and maximize the opportunities created by the international system and by the domestic context.

On the one hand, a focus on the international level – characterized by a transformative moment and openness to new powers – helps to explain the recovery of the Brazilian belief on its «greatness destiny». On the other hand, a focus on the domestic level – with a growing economy and the reduction of poverty and inequality allows understanding the existence of a room of manoeuvre for the pursuit of a more active foreign policy on which a growing part of society start to be interested.

At the same time, the features of the political system – the Presidential power concentration, including foreign policy direction, and the exercise of a presidential diplomacy despite foreign policy-making sharing between the President and Itamaraty –

\begin{itemize}
  \item Interview done by the author to a Brazilian diplomat, alto funcionário do Itamaraty (II), Brasília, April 18th 2012 (request of anonymity).
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\end{itemize}
undoubtedly bring to the discussion the individual level. At this level the trio that goes along with the President was determinant to define the main foreign policy goals. The analysis of the speeches and behaviours is pertinent to understand of how goals were decided, namely the search for an influential role in the international system.

Moreover, it is the articulation among the three levels that explains the course correction of Brazilian foreign policy during Lula’s term. As it was referred, region has been defined officially as the foreign policy priority, but, in practice, Brazilian official discourse and behaviours focused on country’s international projection.

In view of the analysis, if domestic economic and political stability were favourable to the implementation of social policies which allowed to continue and accelerate social stability, also international system characteristics facilitate the definition of a more active foreign policy. For such foreign policy leadership’s ideas, beliefs and interests were *sine qua non* condition. With a stable domestic context and with a permeable international system, but without the ambition and the beliefs of the individuals, for sure, the foreign policy goals definition would be much more constrained and, probably, limited to the South-American region. This behaviour allowed the consolidation of Brazilian stance as an emerging power in the international system because it strengthened its global dimension and influence ability which started to co-exist with a non-dissimulated protagonism and a regional interdependence.

Farther, the focus on the role of the individual is valued when one observes the course followed by President Dilma Rousseff. In spite of being important not undermine the features of domestic and external levels that suffered deep changes. At the same time, it is possible to observe an unfinished emergence during Lula da Silva’s terms and for that Brazil as still a long way to do in order to abandon its emerging power condition. As a result, it is still valid the expression that Brazil is «the country of the future» and remains the search for a prominent place in the international system contrary to what the evolution during Lula’s years had foreseen.
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