Comparing Brazil’s discourse for a permanent seat on the Council of the League of Nations and the UN Security Council

Key words: Brazil's Foreign Policy, League of Nations, United Nations

Abstract: This article seeks to broaden the understanding of one of the main objectives of Brazilian foreign policy: the campaign for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The current aspiration to rise to a long-lasting member status in the UN’s most exclusive body gained impetus in 1994 during the government of President Itamar Franco. However, it is possible to trace back the origins of this ambition in the Brazilian bid for a permanent seat on the Executive Council of the League of Nations, the first international organization aspiring to universality and the predecessor of the UN. The Brazilian bid lasted between 1920 and 1926 and culminated with Brazil's withdrawal from the League.

Introduction

Brazil's speeches at international forums generally attempt to stress the need to include in the main decision-making bodies of multilateral institutions worldwide the participation of peripheral countries, or regional representatives whose geopolitical expression can be projected more broadly. For that matter, at the time of the creation of the UN, after World War II, Brazil also engaged in a short campaign to acquire a permanent place in the Security Council. Boosted by the initiative of US President Franklin Roosevelt, Brazil's campaign unfolded from October 1944 to May 1945. In an even more far away retrospect, one can claim that the origins of Brazilian ambition to play a more prominent role in the international scene can be identified in its participation in the first international organization of universal scope, the League of Nations.

After World War I, Brazil launched a campaign to occupy a permanent seat on the Executive Council of the League. The Brazilian engagement in the League occurred during the period of 1920 to 1928 and the goal of achieving a spot in the club of victors was considered by many an unrealistic ambition, based on 'overconfidence and voluntarism' (Garcia, 2005: 139). The choice and insistence
on maintaining this foreign policy goal was linked to the mistaken perception of the international status enjoyed by the Brazil in the post-war scenario. The failure of the Brazilian bid culminated in its departure from the organization, which was announced by the Brazilian representative at the League, Afrânio de Melo Franco, on June 10, 1926 and took two years to be effected (Braga, 2008).

This article aims to provide an understanding of how Brazil, at different times in history, sought to project its perception of leadership in multilateral institutions, specifically the League of Nations and the United Nations, in the form of claims to permanent seats in the highest decision-making bodies of these institutions. The explanation will focus on the discursive level: how Brazilian representatives’ discourses conducted a policy geared towards the achievement of permanent places in both the Executive Council of the League and the UN Security Council.

The first historical period to be analyzed encompasses the First Republican governments of Epitácio Pessoa and Artur Bernardes (1920-1926). The second period deals with the contemporary administrations of Presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010). Despite significant contextual, political and ideological differences between the periods studied, official pronouncements demonstrated that there was a predominance of continuities underlying the arguments presented in those statements.

Brazil defended the UNSC reform on some occasions not comprised by this study, such as the discourse made by former President José Sarney at the 44th United Nations General Assembly in 1989, when he urged the creation of new permanent seats in the UNSC without veto power (Arraes, 2005). Nevertheless, only in 1994 a more assertive official campaign was put forward by the Brazilian Government to occupy a definitive chair in the Council, during the tenure of President Itamar Franco. His Foreign Minister, Celso Amorim, is considered one of the main architects of the initiative, which he would push again during Lula's administration.

Objective

This study will make a comparative analysis of the discourses of Presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, delivered at the annual opening sessions of the UN General Assembly, with those made by the Governments of President Epitácio Pessoa (1919-1922) and Artur Bernardes (1923-1926) within the framework of the League of Nations.

This comparison will allow to draw an assessment of the causes, motivations and chances of achieving that goal, as well as to infer the degree of autonomy that Brazilian foreign policy enjoyed from internal and external influences. The great distance between the two periods in policies, guidelines and internal governmental priorities would suggest the assumption that this was reflected
in the discourses conducting the Brazilian bids. Therefore, more traces of change than continuity should be found in the examined discourses.

The short campaign conducted by Brazil in 1945 was a result of the suggestion made by the President Franklin Roosevelt that Brazil could become the sixth member of the UNSC. It was not studied here as no public official discourses were made by Brazilian representatives in this regard, having the campaign remained mostly veiled (Garcia, 2012). Furthermore, Brazilian efforts in favor of getting a permanent seat on the UNSC ended during the San Francisco Conference itself, when the UN charter was approved and before the United Nations acquired its organic structure.

The timeframe covered by this work has its completion in 2010, with the end of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's government. So, it will not include the current government of President Dilma Rousseff, as it is still under way. Although this may hamper conclusive analyses, a preliminary look into the conduct of the campaign to a permanent seat on the UNSC would indicate that President Dilma's list of priorities may differ from those taken by her predecessor. The divergence in the tone and strategy used can be spotted in official mentions to be subject, as it as the case with an interview given by her former International Advisor, Guilherme de Aguiar Patriota, who said the candidature was treated in 'subterranean way', meaning that it has not been pushed so hard as before.

For the period of 1994 to 2010, the choice of centering the analysis on discourses made in the annual opening sessions of the UN General Assembly is justified because these are moments of great resonance in the international context, serving as representations of which were the priorities for the Brazilian foreign policy at those times:

'in these discourses it was revealed the keynote of Brazil's role in multilateral forums, the readings the Brazilian government made about the changes in the international system, as well as the positioning of Brazilian foreign policy' (Silva, 2010: p. 2)

For the second historical moment, in the 1920s, considering that it is not possible to use an identical sampling, as the tradition of discourses in the beginning of ordinary sessions of the General Assembly did not yet exist, it will be object of analysis the speeches of representatives delivered in various instances of SDN involving Brazilian candidacy to its Executive Council as a permanent member.

A comparative analysis between the discourses of more recent contemporary governments with those made at the beginning of the 20th century serves well to assist the evaluation of the

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Brazilian foreign policy principles that guided these initiatives. Thus, this article aims to enlarge the understanding of one of the main goals of Brazilian diplomacy, analyzing it historically by comparing it with a similar initiative in the past. In view of the pressing character of the current debate over the UN reform, it is expected that Brazilian diplomacy will continue to be engaged in this almost secular ambition. Therefore it becomes necessary to formulate studies that may assist in a deeper understanding of the campaign's origin, conduct and argumentative structure.

**Methodological considerations**

Studying the history of Brazilian foreign policy towards the League of Nations is of singular importance to the subsequent challenge of Brazilian diplomacy to achieve a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Comparing the discourses of the Brazilian representatives who conducted the policies related to this theme allows outlining an assessment of the common elements in both bids. It will thus help to identify discursive elements of continuity in the Brazilian foreign policy that transcend changes in domestic and international contexts.

Concerning this article's methodological delimitation, the hypothesis evaluated is that, despite differences between Brazil's internal realities and entirely distinct global scenarios, it is possible to identify, at the discursive level, a line of stability in the formulation of Brazilian foreign policy. The qualitative critical analysis of the discourses was based on the frequency the issue was mentioned, as well as the arguments and strategies implemented to support the candidacies.

It is important to note that both bids, the one from 1921 to 1926, at the League, and the UN bid, launched in 1994, are relatively recent historical periods. Even so, the work of comparative analysis was developed taking into account the concepts and terms most frequently used in the speech in the light of the historical context in which they were produced, regarding the scope of mentalities and contextualization of worldviews of the early 20th century. In this sense, the analysis aims to escape anachronism.

The discourses were interpreted in their content and compared employing historical discourse analysis methodologies, not linguistics. The speech analysts proposal, as presented in the field of Linguistics, focuses on the interest in the texts themselves and their approach is distinct from that of other social scientists,

>'whose interest in the language is generally limited to discover 'what really happened', or what is really the attitude of an individual with respect to X, Y or Z rather than see the speech as a path to another reality, discourse analysts are
interested in the content and organization of the texts'. (Bauer & Gaskell, 2002: p. 247)

The goal of this study is to perceive how differences in political, internal, external and economic contexts influenced the pronouncements. So, it is not meant to be an appreciation of the speech itself, but resembles the intent of social scientists and escapes the scope proposed by the methodology of linguistic discourse analysis.

Analysis of the Brazilian discourses for the bid to the League of Nations Executive Council

In view of the United States' absence in the League, due to the rejection by the U.S. Senate to ratify the Covenant, an annex of the Treaty of Versailles, Brazil became the only American country present on the League's Executive Council. During the first formal meeting of the Council, held on January 16th 1920, the discourse uttered by the Brazilian representative in the League, Gastão da Cunha, inaugurated the argument of Brazil being the representative of the Americas: '(…) I found an implicit mandate authorizing me to assure you, as the only American among you, that I feel highly honored to be the spokesman of the Pan-American conscience' (Cunha apud Garcia, 2006: p. 88). Therefore, since Brazil's first statements within the framework of the League's Executive Council and even before the goal of a permanent seat on the Council was officially established, the argument of the 'continental representation' by Brazil can be found.

The proposal of the Chilean representative, Agustin Edwards, made during the meeting of the 2nd Assembly, in 1921, that the Executive Council should be expanded to include permanent seats for Brazil and Spain, was received by Gastão da Cunha with surprise. Nevertheless, the Brazilian Ambassador soon adopted the cause and, from that moment on, Brazil's candidacy was incorporated in speeches, notes and other communications from the Ministry of External Relations. The arguments used by the Brazilian representative focused on the need to obtain more equitable geographical representation to the body.

The 'pacifist history' of the American continent was used as a credential by Brazil to be in the Council, as it could provide more neutrality and legitimacy to its participation in the Council. According to Gastão da Cunha:

'It's not fair that a continent [Europe] so contaminated of bellicose passions intends to remove from the deliberations of world peace a completely peaceful continent [America], which must therefore be presumed impartial in their advice and deliberations.' (op. cit., p. 354).
With the election of Artur Bernardes for President, the goal of achieving a permanent seat on the Executive Council gained unprecedented importance. A new representative was chosen to lead the Brazilian delegation in the 4th Assembly in September 1923. Afrânio de Melo Franco assumed the plea of the Brazilian Government to rise permanently to the Council stating that:

‘by the eventual absence of the United States, America cannot, with 18 Member States of the League of Nations, and truly the continent of peace, be left without permanent representation on the Council’ (Melo Franco apud. Rodrigues & Seitenfus, 1995: p. 299)

Thus, Melo Franco reiterated the argument used by his predecessor Gastão da Cunha that aimed to give to the New World a representative in the Council. Brazilian features were used to justify its candidacy:

‘Brazil would be the most qualified candidate of Latin America, given the size of its population and its territory, the volume of its financial contribution to the League (the 7the in importance) and its policy of affiliation to the ideals of the organization.’ (Melo Franco apud Garcia, 2006: p. 362)

One strategy by President Bernardes consisted in assigning Ambassador Raul Fernandes to execute an itinerant mission, in 1924, to major European capitals, promoting the national candidacy to occupy provisionally the 'American seat' on the Council. This proved fruitless, as the 'dignitaries of the countries visited do not intent to engage in such a delicate issue (...) and even less to show real support for our claim' (Rodrigues & Seitenfus, 1995: p. 307).

The majority of the Hispanic American States, however, did not corroborate to the Brazilian posture of arrogating the representation of the continent. On November 1925, the Latin American countries held a conference in Paris and decided it was best to advocate the creation of three non-permanent seats instead of one permanent (Leuchars, 1983: p. 130) and defended the introduction of a rotation system, 'which clearly demonstrates the dichotomy between Brazil and the rest of Latin America' (Rodrigues & Seitenfus, 1995: p. 303). After this, due to the clear impossibility of being the Pan-American representative, Brazil went on to defend the argument of occupying temporarily the vacancy left in the Council by the United States.

In the 6th Assembly, Melo Franco defended a remake of the Chilean proposal contemplating Spain and Brazil with new permanent seats on the Council. His proposal argued that, rather than two more vacancies being created, which stirred opposition from major powers that did not wished to view the Council enlarged, Brazil should occupy the place destined to the US and Spain occupy the one of Germany (Garcia, 2006).
In addition, the United States refused to corroborate the Brazilian formula and the argument of claiming, in an interim basis the US seat, without an increase in the number of members of the board and without the amendment of the League Covenant, had to be abandoned (op. cit., p. 368). The Brazilian Foreign Ministry, Itamaraty, even made a survey in Washington to try to get a delegation of competence from the US but it was not granted (Rodrigues & Seitenfus: 1995, p. 319).

Another strategy of the campaign conducted by Melo Franco was to hold conversations behind the scenes: 'The work for our success cannot be done in the turmoil of the sessions and for Government-to-government negotiations’ (Melo Franco apud Garcia: 2006, p. 375). Public meetings were used only to formalize what had been discussed and decided previously. Thus, when Brazil was asked by Germany, the Aide-mémoire of September 27, 1924, as its position in relation to the entry of this country in the League and, consequently, in the Council, this strategy became evident:

'Rio de Janeiro intends to keep the game open and not discuss that issue Government-to-Government. The Brazilian strategy is clear, as in a bilateral relationship with the great powers the chances of success of their claim would be scanty.’ (Rodrigues & Seitenfus: 1995, p. 312)

With the failure of the strategy of being the 'Pan-American representative' and of the formula of occupying the vacancy left by the USA, Brazil went on to emphasize the need to grant a truly universal character to the League, which would only be achieved by means of a geographical distribution of its seats: 'the universalization will only be achieved through regionalization' (Rodrigues & Seitenfus: 1995, p. 319). However, in view of the non-acceptance by other Latin American countries to be represented by Brazil, the Brazilian government argued it did not need a designation, since Brazil needed no authorization 'to accept the role of defender of the continent' (op. cit., p. 320).

Analysis of the Brazilian discourses for the bid to the United Nations Security Council

Ideological and programmatic differences between the Workers Party (PT) and the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) are notorious. Former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva was one of the main opponents of Fernando Henrique Cardoso governments. The argumentative reasoning of the PT program was focused on the need to change the policies implemented by the administration of President Cardoso (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007). There is no consensus in the literature, however, as to whether there was a prevalence of changes or continuities in foreign policy conducted by these Presidents during their respective terms (Vilela and Neiva, 2011). The search for similarities in
Brazilian international discourses in this article is limited to the UN reform, more specifically to the postulation to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

The survey of the speeches found numerous similarities between the conduction of Brazilian foreign policy for obtaining permanent seat by both Presidents. Although they were driven by different objectives and political mindsets, both governments have granted a prominent position to that goal, as it can be evidenced by the reiterated mention of this topic in the Brazilian discourses delivered at the UN General Assembly opening sessions. The arguments used to justify the country's candidature were also similar. The need to obtain greater representation to the Council was the most quoted, being present in the vast majority of the pronouncements, followed by an appeal to confer greater effectiveness, legitimacy and democratic representation the decisions made by the UNSC.

Another argument, presented specifically by Cardoso's government, consisted in assigning to Brazil the condition of representative of Latin America and Caribbean. The discourse delivered by his Ministry of External Relations, Luiz Felipe Lampreia, at the 52nd session of the General Assembly in 1997, demonstrated this: 'Brazil is determined to play the role of permanent member representing Latin America and the Caribbean' (Correa, 2011: p. 759). In the pronouncement before the 58th ordinary session of the General Assembly on September 23, 2003, Lula limited himself to leave this implicit when, talking about the UNSC enlargement, he argued that Brazil was ready to 'reflect the perceptions and aspirations' (op. cit., p. 841) of the continent and thanked the support received in Latin America, which stimulated him to persist in the defense of a Security Council more adequate to contemporary reality.

The shortcomings of the UN highlighted by Cardoso and Lula, as well as the threats arising from the inability to reform it, are also similar in both administrations' discourses. The main risks perceived to the performance of the UN and its Security Council were anachronism, bureaucracy, sluggishness, lack of credibility, inaction, inability to generate consensus, obstructionism and excessive politicization, as Lampreia's 1996 speech illustrates: 'We have to correct the tendency to produce meetings whose sole result is to generate new meetings or rhetorical sense resolutions. We must end the image of a UN sluggish, lethargic and unable to meet the challenges of the times' (op. cit. p. 741).

With regard to Brazilian credentials to occupy a more prominent role in world affairs, there were fewer similarities between Cardoso and Lula. This happened because the elements used to justify Brazil's aspiration reflected differences in foreign policy priorities and distinct economic and political contexts, both in internal and international spheres. The Cardoso government mentioned the maturation of Brazilian democracy; the modernization of its economy; the dimension of its internal
market; the ability to attract external investments; the country's ethnic diversity (multiculturalism); its disarmament initiatives; and its history of peaceful behavior.

The Lula administration, on the other hand, emphasized Brazilian contacts with the Arab world; its peace efforts in Haiti; the strengthening links with Africa; the actions of the IBAS, the G-20 and the BRICS meetings; the deepening in the integration with South American countries; and the participation of Brazil in international peace and security negotiations in the Middle East as factors that demonstrated the country's ability and willingness to be a global player.

The Cardoso government approached more frequently the subject of the UN, as evidenced by the table (below) showing the number of occurrences that the term 'United Nations' – including their synonyms – was mentioned in the pronouncements of both Presidents. Despite having a significant higher frequency than the one presented by Lula, during its eight-year mandate, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso did not made it explicit the subject of the Security Council reform in two pronouncements: the one of the 54th (1999) and the 55th (2000) ordinary sessions of the General Assembly. This did not occur in the discourses delivered during the two presidential terms of Lula.

It can be observed that Lula innovated in the commitment that granted the achievement of Brazilian candidacy. This was reflected in his frequent presence at the General Assembly sessions. Unlike its predecessor, who was represented by his Foreign Minister in seven out of his eight years of government, Lula made personally the pronouncements of six General Assembly ordinary sessions, just delegating his duty to Minister Celso Amorim on two occasions. The importance that President Lula gave to attending the General Assembly opening sessions and pronouncing personally the speeches can be considered an indicative of the prominence his government gave to the Brazilian election as a permanent member of the UNSC.
Summary table of references to the UN, the Council and the respective reforms:

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Source: Table drawn up by the author. Brasília, October, 2013.

Conclusion

The candidatures conducted by Brazil in the 1920s and the 1990s-2000s have shown several nuances and variations. They had the influence of several factors, including the mindset and political priorities of the Brazilian Presidents. As it was shown, the pledge for a permanent seat on the Executive Council of the League, although started under the administration of Epitácio Pessoa, only
gained real relevance during Artur Bernardes's presidency. In addition, during the 16 years of the second period analyzed (1994-2010), the campaign engaged distinct efforts and initiatives under Cardoso and Lula's governments. Also, global and internal conjunctures, as well as other historical peculiarities, influenced the pleas in a unique and singular manner.

Nevertheless, despite differences within each historical period and between them, the comparative analysis of the pronouncements made in the defense of the Brazilian campaign to attain permanent seats in the bodies responsible for peace and security in the League of Nations and the United Nations demonstrated the existence of some continuity pervading the two historical moments. The main continuities can be found in the following elements:

The proposal for an enlargement of the Council, with the inclusion of new members, was defended in the League with an argumentation focusing on the need for the American continent to be represented, considering that the US did not join the organization. Then, the argument shifted to the abrogation of being the representative of the Latin American countries in the Council and then to Brazil temporarily occupying the place of the US. In all these cases, Brazil advocated giving greater representation to the American continent in the board responsible for international peace and security.

In the more recent quest for a permanent place in the UNSC, during the Cardoso and Lula governments, the argument of representativeness was also present but with a distinct nuance. The aim to render the Council more representative focuses not on the geographic character of this representation, but on the geopolitical and economic dimensions of the countries that should gain more space in the Council. This change is due not only to the fact the American continent is already represented in the UNSC by the US, but also to the spread of new alliances among emerging economies, which made governments' discourses defend the need to include developing countries in UNSC permanent seats.

The credentials presented by Brazil to qualify itself as a global player in the game of international politics varied between the historical periods and within the contemporary one. Brazilian internal features enumerated to support the candidacy for the League emphasized the country's population (35 million inhabitants) and its territorial dimension (Rodrigues & Seitenfus, 1995: p. 298). The Cardoso government also presented domestic elements to justify Brazil's credentials: mature democracy, modern economy, multiculturalism, a huge internal market and investment attraction capacity. Therefore, internal factors chosen to justify Brazil's pledge to occupy a prominent role in high profile global institutions dealing with international peace and security were not the same throughout the periods.
In what concerns the external credentials listed to qualify Brazil's candidature, the main elements mentioned in the 1920s were its respect for international rules, its internationalist experience, such as being a precursor of arbitration, a supporter of disarmament and a country with no international disputes (op. cit., p. 320). There is some resemblance between the features listed in the 1920s and the ones used by Cardoso. The President from PSDB also highlighted Brazil's effort in disarmament and the country's peaceful history as elements reinforcing Brazilian credentials to acquire the status of a permanent member at the UNSC.

The discourses pronounced by Lula's administration pointed to a distinct line of credentials to justify Brazil's bid. The ones that refer to internal features focus on the country's success in the improvement of social indicators, in particular progress attained in fighting extreme poverty and hunger. The country's external credentials were supported by initiatives of regional integration and a rapprochement towards developing countries in Africa, in the Arab world and beyond.

The strategy used in the 1920s campaign was based on 'prudence and the game on the sidelines' as 'golden rules to run the show' (Rodrigues & Seitenfus: 1995, p. 320). Brazil's refusal to discuss it in bilateral negotiations was due to the belief that it would put it in a disadvantaged position. In the recent period, both Presidents Cardoso and Lula developed an extensive presidential diplomacy, but just the former used the platform of bilateral meetings to garner support for the national bid to the UNSC (Brigido, 2011).

In addition, during the League of Nations campaign, Brazil tried to forge an alliance with Spain to claim for the inclusion of both countries on the Executive Council. Similarly, in the more recent period, the campaign conducted by the PT administration also sought an alliance with other candidates for permanent seats at the UNSC. The Group of Four (G-4) was the consolidation of this coalition among India, Japan, Germany and Brazil, created in 2004.

Brazil's ambitions to improve representation in top security institutions, alongside the major powers, were based on similar arguments, despite important differences of internal realities and international circumstances. This shows important pervading continuity elements in the country's foreign policy and it 'is an important indicator of the persistence of certain beliefs about what should be our role, status and belonging at the international level' (Melo and Silva: 1998).

This article aimed to understand how significant contextual, temporal differences, ideological and political between the governments of the First Republic of Epitácio Pessoa and Artur Bernardes and the contemporary ones of Cardoso and Lula influenced, at the discursive level, policies designed to achieve permanent positions on the Councils of the League and the United Nations. The analysis of the pronouncements demonstrated that there were no significant ruptures in the arguments presented in the campaign. The main distinctions found were in the credentials chosen to justify the
country's bid, having greater difference in the credentials presented by the PT government in relation to the others.

Bibliographic references


