A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LULA’S DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND AHMADINEJAD IN LATIN AMERICA

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Introduction

The administrations of Presidents Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013) represented a transformation in the foreign policy of their countries. They implemented a more assertive diplomacy with the purpose of expanding the international projection of their States through efforts on the diversification of their external relations. Both Brazil and Iran focused their attempts in the relations with the southern countries. Within this group of nations, the present article chose to analyze the efforts of Brasília in approaching the Middle Eastern countries and of Tehran regarding the Latin America.

The foreign policy of Lula is receiving great attention in the Brazilian academy. In a growing scale, one also finds works which approach Lula’s foreign policy for the Middle East. However, the foreign policy of Ahmadinejad for Latin America, which gathers great attention of researches outside Brazil,

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2 For the purpose of this article, the broad conceptualization proposed by Fawcett (2013) was adopted which includes the Arab States in the North Africa (Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia) and in the West Asia (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman and Yemen) and non-Arab States of West Asia (Turkey, Israel and Iran).

3 Breda dos Santos (2014), Casarões e Vigevani (2014), Holland (2013), Haffner e Holland (2012), Notari (2015), Oliveira, Silva e Souza (2015), Silva e Kunrath (2010), Silva e Pilla (2012), Santos (2015).

4 Arson, Esfandiari e stubits (2008), Brandon e Gray (2015), Daremblum (2011), Fouzi e Mirrabzadeh (2011), Hunter (2010), Johnson (2012), Lotfian (2010), Mena (2012), Pirsalami (2013), Katzman (2015), Warnaar (2013), Watson (2016).
does not spark interest amongst Brazilian academics. In the face of this gap, the present article presents a comparative study between the foreign policy of president Lula for the Middle East and of Ahmadinejad for Latin America.

In Brazil, the specialized literature in foreign policy has, historically, identified concepts and fundaments that not only are regular features of Brazilian externa actions, but that also work as ideational support for these policies. Added to this ensemble of works, for Amado Cervo (2008b), these concepts of national foundations are useful to establish a set of explanatory and evaluative data, being operational. Based on this perspective, the present study chose to investigate Lula’s foreign policy for the Middle East bearing in mind the traditional and historical concepts of Brazilian diplomacy. They are: universalism (Lessa 1998), multilateralism (Lessa 1998), South-South Cooperation (Lima 2005), autonomy (Saraiva 2013; Vigevani and Capeluni 2007) and pragmatism (Cervo 2008a).

Similarly, Iranian foreign policy has been influenced by ideational and historical factors, especially in the period after the Islamic Revolution (1979). Even though some of these concepts are associated with the ones mentioned above, they have their own specificities, linked to Iran’s local context. Bearing this in mind, Iranian authors were selected, bringing their own concepts for the analysis of Ahmadinejad diplomacy for Latin America: anti-imperialism (Nia 2012), South-South cooperation (Hunter 2010) and pragmatism (Ramanzani 2008).

Based on these concepts, it is possible to notice that both foreign policies of Lula for the Middle East and of Ahmadinejad for Latin America were guided by two principles in common: South-South cooperation and pragmatism, as well as an intense presidential diplomacy. Lula’s diplomacy, influenced by the ideas of universalism and multilateralism, executed a foreign policy which tried to engage all Middle Eastern countries, seeking to give them the same institutional mechanisms. On the other hand, Ahmadinejad’s diplomacy, motivated by the anti-imperialism principle, restricted its attention to the Latin American countries that also praised this value. Therefore, Tehran’s actions were centered in the bilateralism, characterized by little institutionalization and associated to the political wills of the leaders.

Methodologically, we employ the presentation of values, combined with a more empirical analysis, highlighting information regarding the commercial and institutional engagement of Brasília with the Middle East and

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5 The few existent studies that approach the Iranian foreign policy for the Latin America do not deal with this theme as central, but within the perspective of the Brazilian relations with the Middle East. Though, it is emphasized the work of Preiss (2011) who studies the bilateral relations between Brazil and Iran.
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Tehran with Latin America. Through the bibliographic review of primary and secondary sources, present trade flows, official visits and the opening of diplomatic missions, bilateral and multilateral initiatives, as well as the presidential diplomacy employed by Lula and Ahmadinejad. Supported by these informations, it was possible to accomplish a better comparison between the two diplomacies.

Conceptual and historical elements of Brazilian Foreign Policy

In Brazil, constitutionally, the President of Republic (Chief of the Federal Executive) develops and executes Brazilian foreign policy, operationalized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which has a chancellor indicated by the president); the legislative, in such case, has an advisory role (Sanches et al. 2006). Traditionally, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil (MFA) is recognized by its efficiency and high degree of professionalism, facts that lead it to hold an essential role on the conduction of Brazilian foreign policy (Pinheiro 2003). Hence, the president plans and supervises the Brazilian foreign action (Figueira 2009), supported by the MFA, and inserted in the political-economical environment. Furthermore, the president and the MFA are influenced in their visions of world by some concepts and historical principles of Brazilian foreign affairs.

Conceptual and historical elements of Brazilian Foreign Policy

Historically, Brazilian foreign policy employs a series of principles and practices that endured through time and present traces of continuity (Cervo 2008a). In a general view, the different administrations’ foreign policies have performed within these patterns boundaries, adding, however, new nuances and peculiarities. For Cervo (2008a), one important principle of Brazilian foreign action is pragmatism, understood as the evolution of the realism, which is characterized by the pursuit of the national interest through the diplomatic cleverness on the social and economical dynamics, as well as on the decision making processes of other governments.

Vigevani and Cepaluni (2011) complement the concepts of autonomy and universalism with other important and traditional orienting values of Brazilian foreign policy. Both concepts are, moreover, one of the remarkable characteristics of the Lula’s diplomacy (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2007). According to Lessa (2008), in its diplomatic history, Brazil supports universalism, which presents itself as the effort to achieve full participation in the world political game, based on the adoption of international multilateralism, by the promotion of the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the defense of a righteous world, that guarantees more opportunities for all States.
this tradition of autonomy and universalism is operationalized through the South-South relations. As Lima (2005) points out, Brazil in some of the most significant moments of its diplomacy history focused its efforts on operationalizing its pursuit of an independent foreign action through the South-South cooperation, especially during the Independent Foreign Policy (1961-64) and the Geisel administration (1974-79).

Even when South-South cooperation was not praised as an important mechanism of Brazilian foreign policy, Brasilia was involved in international forums and movements, in a smaller or greater way, that sought to redirect the construction of the international order during the Cold War, from an East-West vision towards a North-South one (Menezes and Ribeiro 2011). Lula’s rise would go back to this tradition when “seeking more direct strategies to enhance the autonomy of the Brazilian actions, strengthening the universalism through the South-South cooperation and the multilateral forums, and reinforcing Brazil’s proactive role in the international politics” (Saraiva 2013, 76, our translation). Chancellor Celso Amorim emphasized these principles in his inaugural speech in January 2nd, 2003:

*Our foreign politics cannot be confined to a single region, nor can be restricted to a single dimension.* Brazil can and must contribute to the construction of a peaceful and solidary world order, founded by the Law and the multilateralism principles, aware of its demographic territorial, economic and cultural weight, and of being a great democracy in process of social transformation (Ministério das Relações Exteriores do Brasil 2003: 2, emphasis added, our translation).

Considering Brazil’s South-South relations, we then proceed to the analysis of Lula’s foreign policy for the countries of the Middle East.

**Brazilian Foreign Policy for the Middle East: rapprochement and detachment**

The relationship between Brazil and the countries from the Middle East are characterized by periods of rapprochement and detachment, a reason that lead Brun (2016) to define them as discontinuous. The involvement of Brazil in the Middle East remained low until the first oil crisis in 1973, a fact that lead Brazil to search for an approximation with more countries that exported this commodity as Iraq and Saudi Arabia (Casarões and Vigevani 2014). During the 1970s and the 1980s, Brazil increased, considerably, its commerce with the region, guided, essentially, by its interests in oil and in the
serving of war products (Fares 2007).

Politically, during these decades, Brazil maintained itself close to Arab countries. The peak of this approximation was expressed in the Brazilian involvement in the United Nations’ General Assembly in 1975, defending that Zionism would characterize a form of racism (Brun 2012). However, from the beginning of the 1990s, there was a significant change in Brazilian behavior towards the Middle East (Silva and Pilla 2012).

Influenced by the euphoria of the end of the Cold War and the paradigm of globalization, the Brazilian foreign policy abandoned its Third World discourse and reduced its presence in regions such as Africa and the Middle East (Silva and Pilla 2012). Politically, this change may be seen in President’s Cardoso choice of not visiting any country during his administration (Oliveira, Santos and Souza 2015). Economically, this change in foreign policy was illustrated by the weight of the Middle East in the Brazilian foreign trade: in 1980 the region represented 20% of the total commercial transactions, yet, in 1999, it accounted for only 2,6% (Brun 2012).

When Lula came into power in Brazil, in 2003, Brasília not only recovered its interest in the Middle East as in the 1970s and 1980s, but it also surpassed the commercial emphasis that characterized this period with a more comprehensive and assertive agenda (Holland 2013). For Silva and Kunrath (2010), Lula’s diplomacy for the Middle East was guided by the pursuit of new economic and political partnerships with countries of the region, in the view of the Brazilian government’s desire to play a mediating role in the Middle-eastern conflicts and, globally, to build a multipolar order.

For that matter, added to the increase of the commercial relationship with the Middle Eastern States, Brazil sought a greater activism that can be observed in four events: 1) the tour in the region carried out by President Lula (2003); 2) the launch of the Latin America-Arab Countries Summit (2005); 3) the Tehran Declaration (2010); and (4) the recognition of the Palestinian State (2010) (Brun 2012, 43).

Regarding diplomatic traditions, the principle played a greater influence on Lula’s foreign policy for the Middle East was the idea of universalization. In his first speech during the General Assembly of the United Nations in 2003’, Lula clearly presented this ideal: “Apart from deepening the already relevant relations with our traditional partners from North America

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6 In this article, the terms Third World and South-South cooperation will be applied as synonyms.
7 President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva Speech, in the opening of the 58th General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, September 23rd, 2003.
and Europe, we seek to broaden and diversify our international presence” (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2003, 125, our translation). Vigevani and Cepaluni (2007, 2011) define that Lula’s foreign policy is characterized by the pursuit of autonomy through diversification in a way that his administration complemented the traditional principles of autonomy with an emphasis in the pursuit of different partners. Lula’s presidential visits to diverse countries in the Middle East were part of this diplomatic strategy of deepening Brazil’s relations with States from all continents, illustrating this universalist conception, placed equally within the effort of autonomous and sovereign insertion (Silva and Kunrath 2010).

Together with the universalist and autonomist ideal it is possible to find the connection with the South-South approach (Saraiva 2013). In agreement with Leite (2011), the tradition of South-South cooperation finds in the “Independent Foreign Policy”, in Geisel’s government and in Lula’s administration, three important moments of the Brazilian diplomatic history.

Dialoguing with the traditional concepts of Brazilian foreign policy, one finds the set of ideological beliefs of the Workers’ Party (PT). Among them, the perception that Brazil should become an actor of greater relevance in the international system possibly motivated the shift of perspective for the Middle East, as Brasília sought to take position in relation to the main tensions in that region (Brun 2012). Also, the historical ideals of PT of anti-imperialism, cooperation with developing countries and solidarity between people were the visible principles in Lula’s foreign policies (Almeida 2012). This understanding of the world by PT contributed to Brazilian foreign policy greater activism and more focus on cooperation with developing countries (Hirst, Lima and Pinheiro 2010). Specifically, regarding the Middle East, Brun (2012, 2016) identifies that the traditional concepts in the PT’s international relations’ perspective as the defense of the South-South relations and the historical position in favor of Palestine in the pursuit of its self-determinism, resulted in a natural approximation with the region’s countries.

However, it is important to mention that Lula’s foreign policy, although permeated with ideological elements, cannot be reduced to this variable: in fact, it has sought to be as pragmatic and realistic as possible (Vigevani and Cepaluni 2007). This position is also shared by Brun (2016) who argues that, despite the increase in the ideological influence in Brazilian relations with the Middle East, emphasizes its combination with persistent pragmatism. This can be observed in the search for the diversification of partners, as shown in the subsection below.

8 Lula has even met, in 1995, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization at the time, Yasser Arafat, in Colombia (Brun, 2016).
Foreign Trade between Brazil and the Middle East (2003–2010)

The effort of a greater approximation between Brazil and the Middle East embodied a considerable expansion of trade with the region. Brazil’s trade with the Arab countries increased from USD 5.48 billion (2003) to USD 19.85 billion (2010) (Silva and Pilla 2012). Santos (2015) complements that the developing of Brazil’s international profile during Lula’s administration and his travels with businessmen associated with the actions of Brazilian Arabian Trade Chamber, enabled Brazil to multiply trade three times more than its previous peak (2008).

In order to highlight this information, based on the data provided by the World Bank, the volume of Brazil’s foreign trade with the Middle Eastern countries is presented. In order to illustrate trade evolution, we present the data collected from 2003 (the beginning of Lula’s administration) and 2010 (the last year of his government).

Table 1: Trade information of Brazil with the Middle Eastern countries in 2003.

| Partner Name         | Trade Balance (US$ Thousand) | Export (US$ Thousand) | Import (US$ Thousand) | Import Partner Share (%) | Export Partner Share (%) |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| United Arab Emirates | 532,548.89                   | 551,333.45            | 18,784.56             | 0.04                     | 0.75                     |
| Lebanon              | 45,066.66                    | 54,923.06             | 6,856.41              | 0.01                     | 0.07                     |
| Turkey               | 279,141.10                   | 337,190.78            | 58,049.69             | 0.12                     | 0.46                     |
| Egypt, Arab Rep.     | 427,514.73                   | 462,132.73            | 34,618.00             | 0.07                     | 0.63                     |
| Israel               | -1,303,873.36                | 187,404.03            | 318,432.28            | 0.66                     | 0.26                     |
| Kuwait               | -36,29                       | 73,953.54             | 73,969.83             | 0.15                     | 0.10                     |
| Jordan               | 36,294.09                    | 37,116.87             | 822.78                | 0.00                     | 0.05                     |
| Morocco              | 24,504.81                    | 226,505.09            | 202,000.28            | 0.42                     | 0.31                     |
| Iran, Islamic Rep.   | 855,321.65                   | 869,163.68            | 13,842.04             | 0.03                     | 1.19                     |
| Qatar                | 23,403.58                    | 30,690.25             | 7,286.67              | 0.02                     | 0.04                     |
| Syrian Arab Republic | 59,411.10                    | 66,617.77             | 11,206.67             | 0.02                     | 0.09                     |
| Oman                 | 44,010.40                    | 44,011.65             | 3.25                  | 0.00                     | 0.06                     |
| Algeria              | -969,341.89                  | 13,705.20             | 1,123,047.09          | 2.32                     | 0.21                     |
| Tunisia              | 14,034.48                    | 56,343.38             | 42,308.90             | 0.09                     | 0.08                     |
| Mauritania           | 19,507.48                    | 19,540.05             | 32.57                 | 0.00                     | 0.03                     |
| Libya                | 26,651.88                    | 52,553.85             | 26,001.97             | 0.05                     | 0.07                     |
| Iraq                 | -237,369.97                  | 42,637.55             | 279,737.53            | 0.58                     | 0.06                     |
| Somalia              | 21,586.19                    | 21,631.88             | 45.69                 | 0.00                     | 0.03                     |

Source: World Bank (Online)

There is no data for Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Bahrain and Yemen for this year.
By analyzing the data, it is possible to conclude that Brazil expanded exports to all the countries in the region. Regarding imports, with the exceptions of Mauritania, Lebanon and Somalia, there was a growth with all the countries. Brazil also, during Lula’s administration, managed to reverse

10 There is no data for Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti for this year.
the historical deficit in trade relationship with the countries of the region. In 2010, Brazil had a deficit with only three countries in the Middle East (World Bank Online).

However, it is important to note that despite the significant growth in foreign trade, the participation of Middle Eastern countries is still very low in the total values of Brazilian transactions. The top three importers of Brazil, in 2010, Saudi Arabia (1st), Iran (2nd) and Egypt (3rd), represented, respectively, only 1.57%, 1.07% and 1% of the total exported by the country. This makes these three countries occupy, in that order, only the position of 18th, 23rd and 25th largest importers in Brazil. The situation is similar regarding imports. The three top markets in the Middle East for Brazilian imports are: Algeria (1st), Saudi Arabia (2nd) and Israel (3rd) and they correspond, respectively, only to 1.31%, 1.14% and 0.56% of the total of Brazilian imports. These countries occupy the 17th, 19th and 31st places between main Brazilian exporters (World Bank Online).

Similarly, the concentration in a few countries of most of Brazil’s trade flow to the region can be pointed out: the top three countries in Brazil’s export ranking accounted for 65% of Brazil’s sells to the Middle East in 2010. In the area of imports, the volume is still more concentrated, with about 94% of all Brazilian imports coming from three countries (Algeria, Saudi Arabia and Israel) (Santos 2015).

Furthermore, in 2003, the Middle East represented 6.37% of Brazilian exports, and 5.17% of imports. In 2010, it represented 4.51% of exports and 7.49% of imports (World Bank Online). In other words, in spite of the growth of the volume (as stressed above), the value not only remains low, but the region also reduced its participation in Brazilian exports.

Presidential Diplomacy, Heads of State and Government Visits and the Opening of Brazilian Diplomatic Missions in the Middle East

Lula’s foreign policy not only maintained its predecessor’s practice of using presidential diplomacy, but it also has given dynamism to action, improved by the unprecedented personal participation of the president in foreign affairs (Barnabé 2010). The former President, in partnership with Chancellor Amorim, took the lead in the execution of the foreign policy. Almeida

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11 These data take into account the geographical division of the World Bank for the Middle East which excludes Mauritania, Sudan, South Sudan, Djibouti, Somalia and Turkey
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(2012) considers Lula’s diplomacy extremely active, established much more by the charismatic figure of the former President than by the concrete Brazilian capabilities that would sustain a condition of global power. Due to exercise of Presidential diplomacy Lula had become the Brazilian Head of State who had spent more time abroad, visiting 263 destinies (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2011).

Regarding the Middle East, Lula was the first President to make an official visit to the region (Leite 2011). Lula has visited ten Middle Eastern Countries during his administration: Syria (2003), Lebanon (2003), United Arab Emirates (2003), Egypt (2003), Libya (2003, 2009), Palestine (2010), Israel (2010), Iran (2010) and Qatar (2010) (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2011). As presented by Silva and Kunrath (2010), the main motivation of Lula’s visits to the Middle East is a result of a political strategy which illustrates the attempt to promote the country as a mediator of the conflicts in the region, with the intent to expand its international projection and increasing the possibility of the country to become a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations.

Such an intense agenda of international travels to the Middle East was supported by chancellor Celso Amorim who visited the region in all the years of the Lula’s government, making a total of 44 visits (including multilateral meetings), with the exception of 2007 (Brun 2016). Amorim was the Brazilian chancellor who most visited the region (Brun 2016). These actions not only corroborate, but give a new life to the universalism in the Brazilian foreign policy.

On the other hand, Lula received 12 official visits from Heads of State and government from the Middle East: Palestine (3 times), Lebanon (2 times), Syria (2 times), Algeria (1 time), Qatar (1 time), Iran (1 time), Israel (1 time), Jordan (1 time), Kuwait (1 time), Libya (1 time), Morocco (1 time) and Turkey (1 time) (Brazil 2011). For that matter, it is highlighted that Brazil received in less than two weeks the leaders of three key countries in the geopolitics of the Middle East: Israel, Palestine and Iran (Brazil 2011).

This situation indicates clearly the conciliatory and universalist posture that the Brazilian foreign policy has been developing and that, in Lula’s administration, found great expression. Preiss (2011) complements that the circumstances above demonstrate the Brazilian interest and ability to become a relevant actor in the Middle East. Lula’s speech on the occasion of Ahmadinejad’s visit to Brazil on November 23, 2009, illustrates these points:

*We maintain an open and frank dialogue with all the countries in the region.* With this spirit, I have received, in the recent days, the Presidents
of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. To Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas I repeated the Brazilian position on the Middle East conflict. We defend the right of the Palestinian people to a viable state and a dignified life, alongside a secure and sovereign State of Israel.

But the search for an understanding, in this and other regional issues, requires the incorporation of new interlocutors genuinely interested in peace. To dialogue, it is necessary to build channels of trust, with detachment and courage. It is these same values and principles that must prevail in the search for peace in the Middle East (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2009, 184, emphasis added, our translation).

The universalist and aggregator discourse of Lula’s foreign policy, accompanied by the international prestige of the President, supported the pursuit for a greater international protagonism of Brazil, as the claim above exemplifies. This effort was also executed by the opening of diplomatic missions in the Middle East.

Brazil had opened embassies in Morocco, Oman and Qatar, and consulates in Turkey, Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories (Breda dos Santos 2014). A commercial office was also opened in the United Arab Emirates, and business missions were sent to Libya and Saudi Arabia (Leite 2011). This movement was part of the Brazilian strategy to expand its international relations and, in the end of Lula’s administration; the country opened 30 embassies12, as well as a Representative Office in the West Bank with the Palestinian National Authority (Leite 2011; Jakobsen 2016).

Bearing this in mind, considering the 24 Middle Eastern countries, Brazil maintained diplomatic relations with all of them; the country only does not held direct diplomatic missions in Yemen and Bahrain13 (Itamaraty Online). Therefore, the intensification in the opening of diplomatic missions lead by Lula’s administration and the agenda of receiving Heads of States from the Middle East correspond to the attempt of expanding the international projection of the Brazil as a global player seeking a universalist multilateralism (Saraiva 2013). Along the same line, Lessa (2017, 9) complements, arguing that Lula’s universalism, as well as the traditional commitment in being present in the most important international forums, developed “a variant regarding the extensions of the diplomatic channels, the geographic universalism and -the extraordinary growth of the number of diplomatic missions”.

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12 These refer only to those with their own physical structure. In addition to these, Brazil has opened five other facilities with representations in other countries (Jakobsen 2016).

13 The Brazilian embassy in Saudi Arabia respond for Yemen and the Brazilian embassy in Kuwait responds for Bahrein (Itamaraty Online).
Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation between Brazil and the Middle East (2003-10)

The bilateral cooperation, achieved by the signing of agreements, is another indicator of the measurement of the importance of a country or a region. During Lula’s administration 135 agreements were signed with Middle Eastern countries (Serpru apud Santos 2015). In comparison, the Brazilian government which appears in the second position in this matter is Figueiredo’s one with 17 signed agreements. Through an historical perspective, from all the agreement signed with the Middle Eastern countries, 37% of them were signed during 1946 to 2002 and 63% of them were signed during Lula’s administration (Santos 2015). The universalism of Lula’s foreign policy for the Middle East can be seen in the fact that Brazil signed bilateral agreements with all countries in the region (as shown in the table below).

Table 3: agreements signed between Brazil and the countries of the Middle East

![Table showing agreements signed between Brazil and the countries of the Middle East]

Source: Serpro apud Santos (2015), our translation.

Within these agreements, one highlights the ones with Israel: the bi-
lateral cooperation between Brazilian and Israeli companies; the opening of a Brazilian Air Force Office in Tel Aviv in 2003; and the prospection in the area of renewable energies. Brazil has also acted in projects of infrastructure in the United Arab Emirates, with the Gulf Monarchies, through Brazilian companies of civil construction (Holland 2013). In November, 2009, a mission of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Food Supply in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates was planned with the intention of prospect opportunities to the Brazilian agriculture. It is also important to stress the Agreement on Technical Cooperation between the Government of Brazil and the Government of the Jordan (2008) that involved the visit of the Brazilian Ministry, Sérgio Rezende, to the country in 2010 in order to begin the implementation of the terms of the agreement; and the selling of the Brazilian planes “Super Tucano” to Jordan (Holland 2013).

Added to the bilateral cooperation, Lula’s foreign policy for the Middle East was characterized by the efforts on multilateral agreements as the Summit of South American-Arab Countries (ASPA), the trade agreements between Mercosur (Common Market of the South) and the Middle Eastern countries and the Tehran Declaration (2010). These projects also denote the attempt of the Lula’s diplomacy to create a new arrange to counterbalance the international status quo (Cervo 2008a; Notari 2015).

The ASPA includes all South American countries, 22 Arab countries and was designed by Brazil. The 1st summit was held in May, 2005, in Brasília and in March, 2009, the 2nd summit15 was reunited in Doha, Qatar (Breda dos Santos 2014). The chancellor Celso Amorim16 states the goals of the group:

(...) Intensifying the dialogue at the highest political level. Will help, at the same time, to expand the cultural bonds, as well as other types links through a positive bi-regional agenda, unıting the people of these two great regions in the world. The key worlds that define these purposes are, thus, dialogue and cooperation. By fostering ties between our regions through concrete projects, we will be pragmatically contributing to the strengthening of South-South relations.

We share values and goals in the multilateral level. We can do more in areas of mutual interest, such as the reform of international financial in-

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15 The initiative is still in operation, the last summit (4th) was held in November 2015 in Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. The 5th summit will be held in Venezuela in 2018 (Itamaraty Online).
16 Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Celso Amorim, during the Arab League Summit held in Algiers, Algeria, on March 22, 2005.
Institutions, the fight against hunger and poverty, the reform of the United Nations and elimination of distortions in the multilateral trading system. Our voices will be better heard if we talk together (Ministério das Relações Exteriores 2005, 85-86, emphasis added, our translation).

In Amorim’s speech it is possible to note the five principles that guide Lula’s diplomacy for the Middle East: universalism, multilateralism, South-South Cooperation, autonomy and pragmatism.

For Breda dos Santos (2014), initiatives such as ASPA are an example of Lula’s “summit diplomacy”, instrumentalized in mechanisms of political coordination in multilateral forums and multi-sector cooperation. The constitutive document of the ASPA, the Brasilia Declaration, expresses the efforts to institutionalize this multilateral coordination. Priority is given to coordination in multilateral fora on disarmament, terrorism, Millennium Development Goals and international trade (Ministério das Relações Exteriores do Brasil 2005: 340, 342, 343, our translation). This level of institutionalization also represents a different in the face of the personalist perspective of Ahmadinejad’s diplomacy for Latin America.

Ferraboli (2014) analyzes the ASPA results and claim that in its first years, the summit has had a more vibrant feature, influencing in the duplication of foreign trade between the two regions. However, the inter-regional cooperation mechanism had been weakened in the last years, particularly as a result of Rousseff and Temer foreign policy retreat towards the Middle East and also due to the political and economic instability caused by the Arab Spring. Santos (2015) shares a similar perception when claiming that, although the ASPA has contributed positively for the expansion of the trade between the regions, the summit still needs some adjustment and is heavily affected by politics developments.

In addition to ASPA, we can mention that Brazil, in the trade arena, was committed to frame Mercosur within its strategy of diversifying Brazil’s trade relations via non-traditional partners (Notari 2015). Partially mediated by ASPA, a discussion on the creation of a free-trade zone, between Mercosur and: Israel, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Morocco and the Gulf Cooperation Council, was started (Santos 2015, 75). The will of deepening trade relations with Arab countries, including the ones with conflicts with the great Western powers as Syria; yet, not excluding Israel, certify the universalist element to the Brazilian foreign policy complemented with the motivation of an independent international insertion, even though, possibly, in opposition towards the Great

17 Of these, only the agreement with Israel is in operation (since 2010) (ITAMARATY ON-LINE).
Powers (Brun 2012).

This autonomist and, sometimes, combative dimension of Lula’s foreign policy reached its peak in its relations with the Middle East due to the mediation of an agreement between the Iranian president, Ahmadinejah, and the Turkish premier, Erdogan, in May, 2010, aiming to establish a resolution to the Iranian nuclear impasse, which led to the Tehran Declaration (Brun 2016).

According to this agreement, Iran would commit 1,200 kilograms of enriched uranium to Turkey, which would stockpile the material, while Russia and France would enrich it by 20% (insufficient for military use), returning it under these conditions to Tehran (Silva and Pilla 2012). Besides the autonomist dimension, the arrangement also exemplifies the moderate Third World position of Brazilian foreign policy, as stated by Foreign Minister Celso Amorim18:

Given the economic crises of recent years, a consensus emerges that the legitimacy and the effectiveness in international relations demand decisions taken in a democratic manner, with the participation of a large and representative group of countries. **World governance is being reconstructed. The world cannot be directed by small groups that call themselves decision makers.**

It is important to repeat the reasons that inspired two developing countries, non-permanent members of the Security Council, to dare to deal with such an issue in the sphere of international peace.

Turkey and Brazil were guided primarily by the goal - which, I am sure, is shared by all in this forum - of finding a formula that would guarantee the exercise of Iran’s right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, while providing guarantees that the Iranian nuclear program would have exclusively peaceful purposes (Ministério das Relações Exteriores do Brasil 2011: 249, 252, emphasis added, our translation).

The moderate aspect is illustrated by the Brazilian diplomacy effort on democratizing the international order through its own regulatory means and not subvert it as a whole.

Although the agreement failed and did not prevented new UN sanctions against Iran, the signing of the Tehran Declaration between Brazil, Turkey and Iran in May 2010 provided an unprecedented visibility to Brazilian di-

18 Speech by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Celso Amorim during the Disarmament Conference held in Geneva on June 15th, 2010.
plomacy, reaffirming its status as an emerging power with global aspirations (Brun 2012). After these considerations on Lula’s foreign policy to the Middle East, we will present the analysis of the Iranian foreign policy.

**Conceptual and historical elements of the Iranian Foreign Policy**

Before presenting and discussing the fundamental aspects of the Iranian foreign policy, it is important to clarify the main factors regarding the decision-making process in its foreign policy. In Iran, the most relevant figure in foreign policy is the Supreme Leader who has, for example, the competence to declare war or peace and has, also, the control over the armed forces (Flanagan-Rieffer 2009). After the Supreme Leader, the president has the second most important role in domestic and foreign policies, nominating the Chancellor and establishing the tone and the strategies of the foreign policy, yet, the president do not determine the general strategy of the foreign policy (Watson 2013). The President is also affected by the Supreme National Security Council and Parliament, which is commonly disputed by three political groups: Conservatives, Reformists and Neoconservatives (Flanagan-Rieffer 2009). The first and the second support a more realist diplomacy, seeking good relations with the West. The latter, on the other hand, stand up for a more idealistic foreign action (based on the Islamic Revolution ideals) and opposed to the West (Flanagan-Rieffer 2009). Ahmadinejad belonged to the latter which was the majority during his government (Warnaar 2013).

Therefore, following this logic, foreign policy actions executed by the presidency are represented by a balance of the positions of the Supreme Leader, the Supreme National Security Council and Parliament and all of them are affected by a series of historical values provided by the Iranian society (Hunter 2010).

Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, the hallmark of Iranian foreign policy has been its independence and anti-hegemonic character (Nia 2012). Both are provided by the country’s constitution. According with the article 152:

*The foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran is based on the rejection of any kind of domination, both its exercise and submission to it; the preservation of the all-inclusive independence of the country and its territorial integrity; the defense of the rights of all Muslims; non-alignment in relation to the domineering powers; mutual peaceful relations with nonaggress-
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The independent and anti-hegemonic ideals are also conceived within the world vision of the international relations. Article 154 of the Iranian constitution complements this subject, adding the the pugnacious and revolutionary bias of Tehran's foreign policy:

The Islamic Republic of Iran considers human happiness throughout human society as its ideal. It considers independence, freedom, and the governance of justice and truth as the right of all the people of the world. Consequently, while it completely abstains from any kind of intervention in the internal affairs of other nations, it supports the struggles of the oppressed for their rights against the oppressors anywhere in the world (Constitution of Iran 1992: 35, emphasis added).

At the governmental level, these principles have been improved and carried out by Iran’s Supreme Leaders: Ruhollah Khomeini (1979-89) and Ali Khamenei (1989-) (Darabinia, Marzband and Foroughiniya 2017; Warnaar 2013).

The foreign policy thought of Khomeini can be summarized in five grand axes: 1) Combating tyranny and colonialism; 2) Support for the oppressed and liberation movements; 3) Support for Muslims; 4) Peaceful coexistence; 5) Mutual respect and non-interference in the domestic affairs of countries (Darabinia, Marzband and Foroughiniya 2017: 35-36). Within these five axes, one can emphasize the convergence of anti-hegemonic rhetoric with political Islamism. In Khomeini’s words (2002, our translation): “The people from the Islamic Nation are the followers of the doctrine that can be summed up in two verses of the Koran: do not oppress and do not accept oppression”. The influence of the revolutionary ideal and the opposition to the great Western powers led to the conception of Iran as an independent and counter-hegemonic State (Moshirzadeh 2007).

Hunter (2010) complements by claiming that the combination of six factors had been responsible for shaping Iranian foreign policy, since 1979: 1) the past influence of great powers and anticolonialism; 2) the Third World discourse; 3) Islamist influences; 4) leftist ideas; 5) Arab radicalism; 6) Khomeini’s thought. On the other hand for Moshirzadeh (2007), three important concepts constitute the identity of the Islamic Republic: independence, justice and resistance.

Such aspects were formed throughout Iranian history and played an

sive states (Constitution of Iran 1992: 35, emphasis added).

19 Khamenei’s foreign policy positions will be discussed in the next section.
important role in the constitution of the identity of the Islamic Revolution, and then of the identity of the Islamic Republic. Moshirzadeh (2007) argues that the resistance discourse, part of the revolutionary identity, was central to the post-Revolution context, yet, it was not hegemonic during the period of 1989-2005. This rhetorical framework, however, was restored with the election of Ahmadinejad in 2005.

Added to this set of beliefs, there is the regular pragmatism of international relations. As Ramanzani (2008) indicates, the balance between ideology and pragmatism within the process of formulating Tehran's foreign policy has been persistent, intricate and complex throughout Iranian history. Instead of what common sense may indicate, Iranian foreign policy, despite its traditional, constant and eventually aggressive religious rhetoric, has been developed, over the last thirty years, by a realistic perspective rather than by a supposed irrationality associated with religious fervor (Flanagan-Rieffer 2009).

Therefore, the need to avoid the growing international isolation of Iran, combined with the sharing of some ideals such as anti-Americanism, has strengthened the approximation with some countries in Latin America. Before analyzing such policies, it is important to state that Iranian relations with the subcontinent of Latin America are not a novelty in Tehran's diplomacy following a trend of proximity and distancing towards the region.

**Iranian Foreign Policy for Latin America: pragmatism and ideology**

As a result of the geographic distance, cultural differences, lack of common preferences and the absence of conflicts, Iranian relations with Latin America had always been brief (Hunter 2010). Venezuela is the only exception due to shared interests in oil (Tehran and Caracas are founding members of OPEC) (Johnson 2012). This distant reality only changed since the Iranian Islamic Revolution in 1979.

Right after the revolution, Iran actively sought to engage itself in a Third World policy and found in Latin American countries, which shared an anti-American rhetoric, interesting possibilities. Therefore, Tehran came closer to Castro’s Cuba and Sandino’s Nicaragua (Lotfian 2010). Moreover, during the 80s, Iran sought to expand their relations with the subcontinent because: 1) the Iran-Iraq War; 2) US economic sanctions in response to the hostage crisis; and 3) the isolation of the country (Lotfian 2010). However, significant regional and domestic changes deepened by the end of the war
with Iraq, culminated in the rise of the Rafsanjani government (1989-1997) who adopted a foreign policy less guided by the principles of the Islamic Revolution and more pragmatic, which meant, among other things, a distancing from Latin America (Johnson 2012).

The Khatami administration (1997-2005), for its turn, tried a rapprochement with the subcontinent. In this period, the Iranian posture towards Latin America became more active and resulted in the growth of high level visits between the country and the region. (Hunter 2010). Recovering a past of relations with countries with an anti-US bias, Khatami strengthened the relationship with Cuba and Venezuela (Johnson 2012). In 2000, the Iranian President visited Cuba and, in 2001, Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez went to Iran (Warnaar 2013). In 2004, the Venezuelan president visited Iran again and, in 2005, Khatami traveled to Venezuela in order to launch a tractor factory built with Iranian aid and signing a free trade agreement with Caracas (Warnaar 2013).

The rise of Ahmadinejad to presidency of Iran, in August, 2005, marked an intensification of relations with Latin America. Guided by the shared opposition to the US, which connects Tehran and some Latin American countries with leftists governments, and the Third World discourse, Iran planned the strengthening of its presence in the region (FARAH, 2008). Loftian (2010) infers that the reasons for the Iranian expansion in the Latin America are: 1) the post-revolutionary anti-imperialist tradition and the need to find allies who share this view; 2) the political imperative of seeking support for the Iranian nuclear program; and 3) the traditional pragmatism of economic gains, especially oil exports. Within these three elements one emphasizes that the most important one is the second as a result of the UN sanctions to the Iranian nuclear program, suspected of non-peaceful uses.

This new orientation of Iranian foreign policy counted on the convergence of two international conjunctural variables: the rise of oil prices and the rise of governments of Marxist and anti-imperialist inspiration in Latin America. The first allowed Teheran to have better conditions to undertake a more assertive position in the subcontinent, with numerous high-level visits, bilateral agreements and promises of investments (Warnaar 2013).

Similarly, the anti-US sentiment and the desire of Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua to seek a more

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20 The UN Security Council has imposed four sanctions on Iran through resolutions: 1,737 (2006); 1747 (2007); 1,803 (2008) and 1,929 (2010). Among its main deliberations are the freezing of assets of people and institutions linked to the Iranian nuclear program, restrictions on arms purchases by Iran and Tehran’s investments abroad (Katzman 2017).

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independent foreign policy have enhanced relations with Iran (Arnson and Esfandiari 2008). The speech below from the Supreme Leader, Khamenei in 2007\textsuperscript{21}, could, easily, fit in the rhetoric of Latin America leaders of the nations mentioned:

> The arrogant powers compared the world to a global village, and the US calls itself the head of the village in order to be able to do whatever it wants. Now if a nation or a political personality says or does something contrary to their wishes, they put all kinds of charges against him. This is the nature of our enemies (Khamenei 2007, 4, our translation).

This ideological affinity enabled Iran to diversify its international relations in order to avoid not only its growing isolation, but also to find alternative economic markets that would represent a relief to the sanctions received because of its nuclear program (Lotfian 2010).

**Foreign Trade between Iran and Latin America (2005-2013)**

In commercial terms, in spite of the growth of Iranian exports to the region during the government of Ahmadinejad, the total amount still is proportionally low, and foreign trade remains concentrated in a few countries. For Mena (2012), one of the direct effects of the Iranian incursion into Latin America has been the growth in trade volume. Although this volume added up in some cases, generally it had been erratic, and clearly it does not play an important role for Iran and its partners in the region yet.

According to the World Bank data (online), Iranian exports to Latin America and the Caribbean, during 2005 to 2011\textsuperscript{22}, increased in almost 400\%, from USD28.610 billion (2005) to USD 111.738 billion (2011). However, it is important to highlight that this amount only represents 0.05\% of the total exported by Tehran in 2005 and 0.09\% in 2009. Imports, for its turn, declined by 19\% in the same period, from USD 938.720 billion (2.43\% of total imports) to USD 762.843 billion (1.12\% of total imports).

Regarding bilateral trade results generated by the Iranian rapprochement with Latin America, these are also very modest as the data

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\textsuperscript{21} Speech by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to the residents of the province of East Azerbaijan (Iranian province) on 17 February 2007.

\textsuperscript{22} In the World Bank database, Iran’s foreign trade data was only available by the year 2011. Presented in: <http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/IRN/Year/2011/Trade-Flow/EXPIMP>.
presented below shows:

Table 4: Foreign Trade of Iran with Latin America [2005]

| Partner Name | Trade Balance (US$ Thousand) | Export (US$ Thousand) | Import (US$ Thousand) | Import Partner Share (%) | Export Partner Share (%) |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Venezuela    | 9,897.47                     | 13,292.68             | 3,395.22              | 0.01                     | 0.02                     |
| Brazil       | -825,459.23                  | 2,897.99              | 826,357.14            | 2.14                     | 0.00                     |
| Colombia     | 386.10                       | 536.67                | 140.57                | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Costa Rica   | -905.76                      | 17.18                 | 922.91                | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Cuba         | -791.44                      | 885.69                | 1,677.03              | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Chile        | -2,572.84                    | 1,139.55              | 3,712.39              | 0.01                     | 0.00                     |
| Panama       | -261.88                      | 1,258.89              | 1,521.68              | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Ecuador      | -5,139.93                    | 184.68                | 5,324.58              | 0.01                     | 0.00                     |
| Argentina    | -2,374.40                    | 525.82                | 2,900.22              | 0.01                     | 0.00                     |
| Uruguay      | -52,774.96                   | 58.75                 | 52,833.71             | 0.14                     | 0.00                     |
| Peru         | -687.19                      | 316.23                | 1,003.43              | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Jamaica      | -12,622.37                   | 49.50                 | 12,671.87             | 0.03                     | 0.00                     |
| Paraguay     | -3,119.99                    | 20.69                 | 3,140.68              | 0.01                     | 0.00                     |
| Honduras     |                             | 42.40                 |                       |                          | 0.00                     |

Source: World Bank (online)

One notices that in 2005 Iran had a trade deficit with all its partners with the exception of Venezuela and Colombia. Also, we can observe that in addition to the reduced transaction amount, Tehran maintained a trade relationship with only fourteen of the thirty-two Latin American countries. As the data below shows, there was no significant evolution in these trends until the year 2011.

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23 There are no data from Bolivia, Guyana and Suriname, and about the trade with Central American countries only five of the twenty countries in the region appeared in statistics with Iran for this year.
Table 5: Foreign Trade of Iran with Latin America\textsuperscript{24} (2011)

| Partner Name | Trade Balance (US$ Thousand) | Export (US$ Thousand) | Import (US$ Thousand) | Import Partner Share (%) | Export Partner Share (%) |
|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Venezuela    | 64,715.54                    | 64,794.26             | 78.72                 | 0.00                     | 0.05                     |
| Cuba         | 5,387.30                     | 5,758.58              | 401.28                | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Brazil       | -597,355.09                  | 17,173.94             | 614,529.03            | 0.90                     | 0.01                     |
| Colombia     | 4.25                         | 827.10                | 822.85                | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Argentina    | -114,784.90                  | 3,531.17              | 118,316.07            | 0.17                     | 0.00                     |
| Peru         | 93.50                        | 268.01                | 174.50                | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Ecuador      | -2,858.05                    | 182.24                | 3,040.29              | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Costa Rica   | -127.18                      | 32.06                 | 159.24                | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Uruguay      | -7,081.76                    | 295.80                | 7,377.56              | 0.01                     | 0.00                     |
| Panama       | -3,234.37                    | 269.35                | 3,503.71              | 0.01                     | 0.00                     |
| Chile        | -9,906.48                    | 682.10                | 10,638.56             | 0.02                     | 0.00                     |
| Honduras     | -349.58                      | 29.18                 | 378.73                | 0.00                     | 0.00                     |
| Bolivia      |                              | 232.45                |                       | 0.00                     |                          |
| Paraguay     |                              | 6.20                  |                       | 0.00                     |                          |

Source: World Bank (online)

Examining these data, one verifies that the lack of intensity in Iranian trade with the region remains and we can also notice the fact that these transactions did not take place within more than a half of the countries in the region. This trend seems to show that Tehran’s goals towards Latin American were much more focused on a political character than on an economic one.

While in 2005, Iran’s top three partners Latin America were Brazil (1st), Uruguay (2nd) and Venezuela (3rd); in 2011 they were Brazil (1st), Argentina (2nd) and Venezuela (3rd). As observed, despite the considerable growth of Iranian exports to Caracas, the biggest Tehran’s markets in the regions still are the countries which did not receive the greatest attention by Iranian diplomacy, as it will be discussed.

\textsuperscript{24} There are no data from Guyana and Suriname, and about the trade with Central American countries only three of the twenty countries in the region appeared in statistics with Iran for this year.
Presidential Diplomacy, Heads of State and Government Visits and the Opening of Iranian Diplomatic Missions in Latin America

Making use of an intense Presidential diplomacy, the Iran of Ahmadinejad had undertaken a series of actions in the subcontinent in order to increase its influence in the region. Likewise, the President received many visits from Latin America leaders. One of the most important characteristics of Ahmadinejad’s Presidential diplomacy was to seek for a greater projection and visibility for his actions, for example, his enthusiastic declarations on Tehran’s new approach to the Latin American countries. During his first visit to the region, in 2007, Ahmadinejad claimed that: “fortunately, a great anti-imperialist coalition has been formed in this region” (Brun 2008, 37).

Guided by the shared anti-US rhetoric and the imperialism of the great powers, the Iran of Ahmadinejad based its relations with Latin America on his dynamics with Venezuela. For that matter, the personal relations developed by Ahmadinejad and Hugo Chávez contributed a lot to the situation. The Iranian president constantly referred to Chávez as his brother, illustrating their compromise against imperialism (Hunter 2010). The speech by Ahmadinejad in June 22nd, 2010, during his visit to Caracas, illustrates this dynamic:

(...) I also thank the great lord, God, who gave me this opportunity to travel to Venezuela and have the opportunity to meet my brother, my dear brother, President Chávez, a great revolutionary who is resisting against imperialism today, against the great imperialism defending the rights of its people, in the same way as the rights of Latin America and all the independent peoples of the world (Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de Venezuela 2013: 859, our translation, emphasis added).

Farah (2008) agrees, and argues that the expansion of Iranian relations with Latin America was supported by the personal friendship of Ahmadinejad and Chávez. It would be through this personal relation that the contacts of Tehran with the Equator of Rafael Correa and the Bolivia of Evo Morales would happen, as a result of the convergent interests of Iran and Venezuela (Farah 2008).

An agenda that, naturally, brought Latin American leaders closer to Ahmadinejad refers to the sharing of anti-US rhetoric and anti-imperialism (the first inspired by Marxism, and the second from the values of the 1979 Revolution). The Nicaraguan president, Daniel Ortega, helped this articula-
tion stressing that the Iranian and Nicaraguan revolutions are “twin revolutions, with the same goal of justice, freedom, sovereignty and peace (...) despite the aggressions of imperialist policies” (Farah 2008, 15).

Within this common rhetoric against the great powers imperialism, Ahmadinejad, in a visit to Venezuela in January 9th, 2012, declared:

(...) Throughout history, independent peoples have fought against all this arrogance. **Today, the Venezuelan people and the Iranian people are together and on a path of struggle against all the greed of arrogant imperialism.** The hegemonic and dominant system is in decline, since it took on a much more aggressive face, trampling all human values (Ministerio del Poder Popular para Relaciones Exteriores de Venezuela 2013: 514, our translation, emphasis added).

The sharing of these ideals enhanced the visits between Ahmadinejad and some Latin American leaders. Considering this fact, we list below the visits made by the Iranian President, and the ones received by former Iranian President in the 2005-2012 period (Johnson 2012):

**Ahmadinejad Visits to Latin America:**
- Bolivia (three times), Brazil (once), Ecuador (twice), Cuba (once), Nicaragua (twice), Venezuela (six times).

**Visits from Latin American leaders received by Ahmadinejad:**
- Bolivia (twice), Brazil (once), Ecuador (once), Guyana (once), Nicaragua (three times), Venezuela (nine times)

Considering both lists of nations visited and that payed visits to Iran, it is clear that the rapprochement strategy towards the subcontinent had a strong ideological component. All the above mentioned administrations can be characterized, in a higher or minor degree, by a Marxist inspiration and a sympathetic perspective in relation to the Third World, that is also supported by Iran. Moreover, the governments of such countries shared with Iran a critical view regarding American foreign policy and the support for a fairer international order (Mena 2012).

The statements made during the exchange of visits between President Evo Morales from Bolivia and the President of Iran, are an example of these
ideals. During the visit of Ahmadinejad to La Paz\textsuperscript{25} in September 27th, 2007, both leaders issued a joint declaration

- The Presidents congratulate themselves on the positive trends that have risen in Latin America with the emergence and consolidation of democratic governments, in opposition to neoliberalism.
- Maintenance of the process of revitalization and strengthening of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.
- Support the right of countries to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes within the framework of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty as a mean to significantly contribute to the economic and technological development needs of the peoples (La Prensa Online, our translation, emphasis added).

As well as the anti-hegemonic and Third World rhetoric, the document expresses the Bolivian support to the developments of the Iranian nuclear program, one of the most important demands of Ahmadinejad’s diplomacy.

The personalism (frequently associated with the anti-imperialism) is another important characteristic of Ahmadinejad’s diplomacy and this trait can also be observed in the following Khamenei speech, during the visit of President Evo Morales to Iran in September 1st, 2008:

\textbf{His attitude of paying attention to ordinary people and the poor} is a very valuable attitude, which is a source of honor for the nations. (...) The recent developments in Bolivia are pleasing and for sure the hegemonic powers will pressure on you once they do not like such attitudes, but resistance against those pressures will bring victory (Khamenei 2008, 1, emphasis added, our translation).

However, the approach conditioned by ideological preferences limited Tehran’s actions to a part of Latin America and also lacked institutional components, since it was dependent on the continuity of specific regimes in power in some States.

Following the same path, Farhi (2008) stresses that the depth of this relation in untenable since this interaction is much more based on a political opportunism than on long term economic or military partnership. Similarly, Farah (2008) discusses that Iranian relations with Latin American countries in general lack transparency and are built on the personal dynamics between Ahmadinejad and Latin American leaders. These personal relations signif-

\textsuperscript{25} Ahmadinejad was the first Iranian President to visit Bolivia

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icantly had overpowered formal and institutionalized policies, traditionally managed by the Legislative and by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Economics.

Regarding diplomatic relations, there was a growth in the opening of embassies in the region during the Ahmadinejad administration: Colombia, Ecuador, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile and Nicaragua (Warnaar 2012). Added to these, there are those already in place in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba and Venezuela (Johnson, 2010). Therefore, Iran has diplomatic representations in eight out of twelve Southern America countries and it is one of the Middle Eastern countries with more representation in the region (Mena 2012). On the other hand, Bolivia, for its turn announced the change of its Middle Eastern embassy from Cairo to Tehran and the non-mandatory of passport and visa for the entry of Iranians in the country, the latter measure was also adopted by Caracas (Mirabzadeh 2011).

**Iran’s Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation with Latin America (2005-13)**

In the context of investments and bilateral cooperation, Tehran also sought to deepen the relations with the region. According to Farhi (2008), Iran sought to attract investments, to export technical and engineering services, to promote other markets for their exportation, diversify its markets of imports and expanding their products exchange. Fouzi and Mirbzadeh (2011) complement by informing that most part of the exports of technical and engineering services were directed to Latin America.

As Farah (2008) points out, Venezuela served as the “entry” to Iran in Latin America, reinforcing the Chavista leadership while Iran gained space in its attempt for the end of its international isolation. The high oil price was used as a political instrument by both countries in order to guarantee an international insertion, understood by them as revolutionary (Brun 2008). The table below summarize the most important Tehran movements in the pursuit of intensifying their relationships with the Latin American countries.

**Table 6: Relevant cooperation and investment agreements between Iran and its main Latin American partners:**

- **Bolivia:** in his first visit to the country, Ahmadinejad promised to invest one billion dollars in development projects. Agreements have also been signed for cooperation in the areas of hydrocarbons, mining, industry, agriculture, water, forestry, culture, science and technology.
Cuba: water supply projects, inauguration of production of anti-hepatitis vaccines in Tehran with the cooperation of Cuban experts, celebration of joint Iran-Cuba commissions. Creation of a joint venture in the scope of the communication between Cuba and Iran in 2011.

Ecuador: in 2007, a delegation of Ecuadorian businessmen, under the coordination of the Vice Ministry of Trade and Integration, visited Iran in order to prospect new business. During a visit to Tehran in 2008, Correa signed 12 cooperation agreements with Iran. The following year, Quito received instructors from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards to conduct training in conjunction with the Ecuadorian army.

Nicaragua: agreements were signed in the area of infrastructure, energy, health and construction, including the promise of Iranian funding for the construction of ports, health centers, houses and factories.

Venezuela: Iranian investments in several sectors of the country’s economy, including the construction of a tractor factory and two binational automobile factories. There was the opening of the Tehran-Caracas airline, the celebration of joint Iran-Venezuela commissions. Iran has been assisting Caracas in uranium exploration. About 200 agreements have been signed in a wide range of areas.

Elaborated by the author, based on Fernández (2008), Fouzie Mirabzadeh (2011) Johnson (2012), Maradiaga and Meléndez (2008), Montufar (2008), Warnaar (2013).

As the chart above shows, Iran focused on the countries that shared anti-American ideals. Fouzi and Mirabzadeh (2011) claim that the main reason for the expansion of Iran relations with some Latin American countries is the shared criticism to the American unilateralism and the intention of creating an anti-imperialist alliance. Farah (2008) states that Iranian relationship with Latin America is, essentially, political and not economical, given that most of the Latin American trade with the US, far exceeds the one with Tehran.

Nevertheless, economically, the countries that Iran developed relations are not in a position to help the country (Hunter 2010). Within this reality, it is important to emphasize that trade relations between the subcontinent and Iran still suffer with the great geographical distance that results in an increase of the transaction costs (Watson 2016). Regarding the issue of Iranian investments, Asnson and Esfandiari (2008) add that apart from the lack of reliable statistics, there is the problem of considering what was promised and what was accomplished in the region.
Tehran’s presence was not significant regarding other countries in the region. With the elections of the leftists governments in Paraguay (2008) and Uruguay (2005), Iran sought to approach these nations, yet, it had not an expressive result (Hunter 2010). The relations with Argentina oscillated in extremes. On the one hand, there is the political tension generated by the Argentinian accusation that Iran was involved in a terrorist attack that killed at least a dozen of people in a Jewish center in Buenos Aires in 1994, which Tehran denies (Hunter 2010). On the other hand, both parts are motivated to increase bilateral trade: for Buenos Aires, the agreement is beneficial and for Iran, it represents a possibility to enhance the political relation with Argentina (Johnson 2012). These complex relations led to the fact that, despite cold political relations, Argentina became Iran’s second main trading partner. (Arnson and Esfandiari 2008).

Besides, since the ideological variable helped to deepen the relationship with some of Latin American nations, it also contributed to the detachment of some others. As Hunter (2010) points out, the overly ideological tone of Iranian diplomacy for Latin America set Tehran apart from the more moderated countries. Such circumstances may be noticed in the minimal trade with countries as Colombia, Peru and Chile as in the absence of more assertive political actions with those countries and other in Latin America.

In relation to Brazil, the country was positioned as the 8th Tehran’s destination of imports in 2011 (World Bank Online). Both countries also cooperate in the oil field, and Iran benefited from the Brazilian expertise on oil explorations in deep waters (Warnaar 2013). According to Johnson (2012), despite the considerable trade volume between the two countries, Brasilia-Tehran relations have been moderate until the end of 2008: during 2000-2007 period, Presidents Khatami and Ahmadinejad visited Latin America six times and in none of this occasions Brazil was in the agenda.

Discussing this point, Brun (2008) claims that Iran figures as an important Brazilian trade partner, yet, Brasilia seeks to position itself within a more pragmatic perspective interested in maintaining good relations with all its trade partners, thus preserving some distance from Tehran, which can be seen by the absence of Ahmadinejad’s visits to the country during his first visits to the region. Also, Brun (2008) stresses that important countries of the region, as Argentina and Brazil, maintained a distance from Iranian proposals that had an anti-American characteristic.

However, since Ahmadinejad’s visit to Brazil in November 2009, the nuclear issue has been central in the bilateral relationship, and Brazil has sought to develop a less cautious position on the Iranian nuclear dispute (Johnson 2012). Brazilian support for Iran had been developing over time and
the Brazilian activism illustrates the converging interests of both countries regarding the international supervision on the nuclear energy (Johnson 2012). Preiss (2011) points out that Iran and Brazil share similar agendas, due to the closeness of their decision making independent positions both in the regional and in the international levels. This new path of bilateral relations possibly reached its peak with the signature of the Tehran Declaration in May 2010, a Brazilian and Turkish initiative with the purpose of putting an end to the Iranian nuclear dispute. Although the resolution has not been implemented in practice, the agreement was presented as success by the parts involved, and it also showed the greater participation of middle powers in the international system (Warnaar 2013).

Although there are actions of bilateral cooperation with some Latin American countries (especially the ones with Marxist inspiration), the status of multilateral cooperation is really low. As stated before, the ideological and personalist perspective, that characterize the bilateral relations, had contributed for the enhancement of Iran´s institutionalized relationship with Latin America. In this field, Tehran´s only achievement that can be mentioned is its relationship with the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA).

However, even when one considers a more institutionalized relation, we see, once more, the presence of the ideological and personalist component of the political leaders involved. According to Watson (2015), Iran and ALBA had been signing several agreements and the bloc is an important source of diplomatic support, considering Tehran´s efforts to reduce its isolation. ALBA countries, in turn, benefit from Iranian investments (Watson 2015). After discussing Lula’s foreign policy for the Middle East and Ahmadinejad polices, a comparative analysis follows.

**A Comparative analysis of Lula’s foreign policies for the Middle East and Ahmadinejad´s policies for Latin America**

It was possible to observe similarities and differences between the two diplomacies in their efforts for the mentioned subcontinents. Table 7 presents a comparative overview of external policies:
Table 7: Conceptual, operational and resulting elements of Lula’s diplomacy for the Middle East and Ahmadinejad diplomacy for Latin America.

| Similar | Foreign Policy Principles | Foreign Policy Strategy | Foreign Policy Results |
|---------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
|         | Pragmatism                | Presidential Diplomacy  | Economic              |
|         | South-South Cooperation   |                         | Retrained economic gain |
|         |                           |                         | Political             |
|         |                           |                         | Growth of international projection (Brazil) |
|         |                           |                         | Retrenchment of international isolation (Iran) |

| Different (Brazil) | Foreign Policy Principles | Foreign Policy Strategy | Foreign Policy Results |
|--------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
|                    | Universalism              | Multilateralism/        | Diplomatic/Institutional |
|                    |                           | Institutionalism/        |                       |
|                    |                           | Autonomy                |                       |
|                    |                           | Moderated Third World    |                       |
|                    |                           | discourse               |                       |
|                    |                           |                         |                       |
|                    |                           |                         |                       |
| Different (Iran)   | Anti-imperialism          | Bilateralism/            | Diplomatic/Institutional |
|                    |                           | Personalism/             |                       |
|                    |                           | Radical Third            |                       |
|                    |                           | World discourse          |                       |

Source: Elaborated by the author

The principles and traditions of both foreign policies played a greater role in the results of Lula and Ahmadinejad’s diplomacies. Pragmatism allowed a realist reading of the international system and its power distribution, supporting a new direction for foreign policies. The focus in developing regions was also promoted by the concept of South-South Cooperation, valued by both diplomacies. Similarly, pragmatism and South-South cooperation were complemented by a revisionist perspective of the international order provided by the PT ideology (moderate revisionism) and the Iranian Islamic Revolution ideals (militant revisionism).

In this sense, Brazil and Iran, seeing themselves as unsatisfied middle powers, decided to expand their influence in regions where they had little relevance. Brasília, seeking to become a permanent member of the UN Se-
curity Council, had chosen to define itself as a mediator in the Middle Eastern conflicts, stressing its international influence. Tehran, in the other hand, fearful of its isolation and possible international intervention, had decided to intensify its relations with Latin America, seeking a greater political support for its nuclear program.

In the pursuit of these goals, the Brazilian and Iranian Presidents employed an active Presidential diplomacy, supported by the weight of their images, which they carried out in several international travels and accepted commitments. However, the strategy of Presidential diplomacy worked through two distinctive methods: Lula gave an institutional tone and sought to employ multilateral means; Ahmadinejad focused on a personalist approach and bilateral relationships.

Based on their political leaderships, Lula and Ahmadinejad also sought, through the Third World rhetoric, to develop a favorable environment for the growth of their presence in the aimed regions. The first, through a moderated and universalist discourse, focused on the necessity of cooperation between the countries of the South and the adoption of some practices of Northern States. The latter addressed a binary world view, and in that sense, irreconcilable between oppressive states and oppressed states (Warnaar 2013).

As a result, radical Third Worldism played a more decisive role in Ahmadinejad’s diplomacy for Latin America than on Lula’s moderate Middle East diplomacy. The Iranian perspective engaged only governments that shared its anti-imperialist rhetoric. On the other hand, Brazilian foreign policy, motivated by universalism, comprehended all of Middle Eastern nations, including those advocating a militant Third Worldism, such as Iran itself and Syria.

Therefore, Tehran easily expanded its actions on the Latin American states that were governed by leftist regimes (Pirslami 2013). In this sense, the ideological perspective, at the same time, led to the rapprochement with some governments (Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Bolivia) and prevented the universalization of such Iranian actions to the governments that did not share these ideals (Mexico, Colombia and Chile).

In Brazil, universalism may be seen in the economical level (trading increasing with most part of the Middle Eastern countries) as well as in the political level (establishment of new cooperation agreements with all the States in the region) (SANTOS, 2015). Also, the traditional concept of multilateralism can be added: Brazil was committed itself with the creation of multilateral mechanisms, with an institutional character, as it could be seen in ASPA and in the attempts to sign free-trade agreements between Mercosur and the countries in the region.
Iran, on the other hand, developed an agenda for Latin America which was characterized by a selective and bilateral approach, conditioned by the political orientation of each government, as well as the specific interests of each President, characterizing these relations by a personal and non-institutionalized twist. Given the lack of institutionalization of such relations, there are lots of uncertainties regarding the maintenance of the agreements and the established agendas between Iran and its partners (Lotfian 2010).

In the trade area, both countries also achieved a considerable enhancing of their relations with the regions mentioned. However, despite this growth, the total amount of transactions between Brazil and Iran is, still, minimal. In Iran’s case, a component of fragmentation also needs to be considered since the increase in foreign trade was not uniform in all or at least in most countries of the region, unlike Brazil. Once more, the influence of the anti-imperialist and universalist principles can be found.

The universalist ideal in Lula’s foreign policy may be observed as well in the reinforcement in the continuity and in the enhancement of its relations with Israel, an attitude that also showed Brazilian foreign policy defense of the value of dialogue (Cervo 2008a). Apart from the attempt to act as a mediator of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Brazil, aware that its approach to the countries of the Middle East (especially Iran) could be viewed negatively by Israel, attempted to intensify relations with Tel Aviv. So, one can list these efforts: Lula’s visit to Israel in 2010, the five visits of the Chancellor Celso Amorim to the country and the signature, in 2007, of an agreement of free trade agreement between Mercosur and the government of Tel Aviv. Also, during Lula’s government, Israel was the second Middle Eastern country with which Brazil signed more cooperation agreements (Brun 2012; Santos 2015).

Finally, we can infer that both diplomacies, despite taking into account its different strategies, achieved similar results: both reached an increase in their international projection. Brazil improved its prestige in the Middle East and had enlarged its global player credentials. Iran slightly managed to reduce its international isolation, guaranteeing the support of some Latin American countries for its nuclear program. However, these political gains came accompanied by the maintenance of a marginal commercial relationship with the considered regions.

Conclusion

In both administrations of Lula and Ahmadinejad, Brazil and Iran sought a new perspective in their foreign policies respectively paying greater
attention to the Middle East and Latin America. They were guided by a Third World’s philosophy in distinct tones and employed different strategies (with the exception of Presidential diplomacy) and the results of such policies are more political than economic. When addressing the case of Brazil, the principles of cooperation between developing nations, provided by the international relations ideals of the PT, were added to the universalist tradition of Brazilian foreign policy, allowed Brasilia to present a broader and multilevel diplomacy towards the region. These actions were compatible with Brazilian goals to be a champion of the dialogue among peoples. For its turn, Iran combined pragmatism to reduce its international isolation, through the establishment of new alliances, with the traditional weight of the Islamic Revolution ideology in the development of its foreign policy. As seen, this variable both limits and makes possible Tehran´s foreign policy actions, as it can be seen in the partnerships with other countries strongly opposed to Washington.

Regarding both foreign policies operationalization, they relied on a strong presidential diplomacy with Lula and Ahmadinejad engaging and publicizing its most relevant actions. However, while Brazil acted multilaterally aiming at the institutionalizations of its relations, Iran focused on bilateral relations, characterized by a stronger personal identity.

If the economic results of this period were not that relevant (both the Middle East and Latin America place in each foreign trade balance, remained low), political results were more significant. Lula's assertive foreign policy allowed the country to play a protagonist role in the Middle East, as seen in its participation in the Tehran Declaration. Although this enlargement project suffered some resistance (in particular of extra regional powers), Brasilia reached some relevance nonetheless. However, Brazilian’s foreign policy active and assertive actions, led to the quenching of its relations with Israel, US skepticism and heavy criticism from the Brazilian media.

Addressing the Iranian case, Tehran partially succeeded in reducing its international isolation. Ahmadinejad succeeded in spreading his anti-imperialist agenda to several Latin American countries, gaining support for its nuclear program, even among moderate countries such as Brazil. However, it’s important to stress that this support is provided by countries with a more critical orientation towards the international order and that this depends on the elected governments, which contributed to the instability and the feeble institutionalization of these arrangements.

An important issue that can be addressed in future studies relates to the continuity (or not) of all the agendas and actions of cooperation put forward by Lula and Ahmadinejad for the Middle East and Latin America. Due to the multilateral and institutionalized diplomacy by Brazil’s President, and,
on the other hand, the personalist style exercised by the Iranian President, the trend maybe that Lula’s initiatives present themselves as more solid than Ahmadinejad ones.

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ABSTRACT

The article compares Lula’s foreign policy to the Middle East with Ahmadinejad’s to Latin America. Methodologically, the historical concepts of each diplomacy is combined with empirical data on trade flows and diplomatic actions. It is argued that the implementation of foreign policies involved similar (presidential diplomacy) and distinct means (universalism and multilateralism by Brazil, and personalism, bilateralism and low institutionalization by Iran). The results of diplomacies also resembled: although the economic implications were modest, Brasilia politically increased its global projection capacity, while Tehran relatively reduced its international isolation.

KEYWORDS

Lula’s Foreign Policy; Ahmadinejad’s Foreign Policy; Foreign Policy Analysis.