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PANEL: Brazil's foreign policy

Brazilian Foreign Policy: South America and Regional Integration

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1) **Introduction**

South-American regionalism has been a priority of Brazilian Foreign Policy (BFP) since the restoration of democracy in the 1980s. However, in spite of the political will shared among heads of State in promoting a Meridional America which is founded in diversity within unity, three factors, in particular, have hampered Brasília's success in this project¹.

The first is the internal regional heterogeneity which characterizes the Federative Republic of Brazil. If BFP is understood as a public policy (Milani&Pinheiro, 2013) and, consequently, as being subject to the democratic procedures of the rule of law, it must be guided so as not to ignore the domestic need for development – notably those in the North and Northeast regions of Brazil. The decision maker is, thus, confronted by external choices which involve a single national interest, but which is multifaceted and distributed in distinct timings (Lafer, 2009). In an emerging country such as Brazil, conciliating short, medium and long terms when managing foreign policy is a significant challenge.

The second factor is the heterogeneity of South America. Brazil represents such a large share of regional GDP, population and territory that it is difficult to set up institutional arrangements beyond mere cooperation. That is, structures that involve integrational parameters implying decisions by majority vote and that could lead to deadlocks – by whichever criteria – between Brazil and its partners, the former possessing a weight that is unacceptable to its fellows, or, in opposite, refusing to undercut its strategic value as required by smaller countries.

The third factor, which is more contingent, refers to the economic crises currently affecting the international system. For instance, the Real devaluation in the late 1990s, as well as the strong economic shocks in 2008, make it difficult to carry regionalization processes on, especially those in the Southern Cone.

The combination of these three factors – which are not exhaustive – re-orientes BFP with regards to South America and regional integration. Though a goal is kept, that of autonomy through diversification (Vigevani&Cepaluni, 2011), it visibly assumes a more state-centric aspect. In other words, once the international scenario is changed, the teleological vision of an ever deeper integration between peoples, written in the Assunción Treaty, is put aside, while Brazil assumes a role in which states are more independent actors. As pointed out by Malamud (2011: 01) there is a “growing

¹ This political will has different motivations. We can highlight, among others, ideological solidarity on the one hand; and economic interest on the other.



divergence between the regional and global performance of Brazilian Foreign Policy”, being the latter more successful. The sluggish negotiation of a deal between the EU and Mercosur, and Brussel’s choice of establishing a strategic partnership deal with Brazil clearly illustrate this situation.

The creation of Unasur and of the BRICS seems to consolidate an understanding of a BFP chiefly focused on the state. The institutional design of the latter explicitly favors mechanisms for political cooperation, ignoring matters of deepening or creating interdependence – differing, therefore, from Mercosur (Vigevani & Ramanzini, 2014); while the BRICS are a forum of rising states, whose regional concerns do not stand out in a significant way.

The main goal of this study is to characterize BFP for South America concerning integration processes from 2008 to 2015. Specifically, it aims to:

- (i) Evaluate the influence of changes in government over BFP concerning South America;
- (ii) Analyze the interaction between the Executive and Legislative powers regarding BFP;
- (iii) Identify the effects of the 2008 economic crisis on the cooperation pattern of BFP in South America;
- (iv) Estimate the impact of Brazil’s development on the dynamics of regionalization in South America.

2) Theoretical framework and literature review

Since the last quarter of the 20th century, the boundary between domestic and foreign affairs has been blurred. The intertwining between the social, political and economic activities in both spheres has increased. Actions carried out abroad often have distributive consequences shortly after. Progressively, this brought a greater number of domestic veto players into foreign policy, who seek to safeguard their interests and that of their constituencies (Putnam, 1988). Seeing foreign affairs as a public policy makes it less a state policy and more a government policy, subjected, thus, to more frequent ideological shifts. Foreign policy would no longer be confined to high politics, carried out in the bureaucratic confines of the Ministry of Foreign Relations (*Ministério das Relações Exteriores* – MRE), and it would start to tackle low politics themes, which are shared with other actors from both the Executive and the Legislative branches (Milner, 1997).

2.1 – The actors of regionalism



Regionalism processes have been interpreted by different theoretical perspectives throughout history. Originally crafted to understand the integration dynamics in the European continent, such perspectives, often, lack the proper tools to grasp South American reality (Rouquié, 1998). As pointed out by Malamud (2005: 138):

The experience of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) does not fit mainstream theories of regional integration. The two major contemporary currents, namely liberal intergovernmentalism (Moravcsik 1998) and supranational governance (Sandholtz and Stone Sweet 1998), regard society as the point of departure for integration, as transnational actors increase their exchanges and subsequently call on national or transnational authorities to adjust regulations and policies to the new situation. These approaches draw on evidence collected from the unique case of the European Union (EU). MERCOSUR, however, arose from the political will of national governments, and only thereafter generated public demand for further integration (Malamud 2003)

In his definition of regionalism, Hurrell (1995) warns that the term encompasses not one, but several dynamics. He identifies five categories of regionalism, each one involving different actors and processes: regionalization, identity and regional awareness, interstate regional cooperation, regional integration and regional cohesion. The main features of each are summarized below.

Table 1: Comparison of the five categories of regionalism, their definitions, actors and forces

	Regionalization	Identity and regional awareness	Interstate cooperation	Regional integration	Regional cohesion
Definition	Growth of societal integration within a region; the often undirected processes of social and economic interaction	The shared perception of belonging to a particular community	Arrangements and regimes set up by states (formal and informal)	A subcategory of interstate cooperation. It involves specific policy decisions by governments designed to reduce or remove barriers to mutual exchange of goods,	If any of the previous four processes leads to the rise of a cohesive and consolidated regional unit. The region becomes decisive in relations with the rest of the world and the organizing principle of policies



				services, capital, and people	
Mainactors	Private and civilian (firms, markets and individuals)	Private or state	States	States	State, both internal and external to the region, and domestic societies
Forces	Flows of trade and people	Discourses, narratives, shared cultural elements, external "Others"	State action aiming to assert sovereignty so as to guarantee influence over the course of events	There is an emphasis in the economic processes, though it can be broader	The relevant factors it how regional interdependence can generate costs for the action of political actors

Source: Elaborated by the authors, based on Hurrell (1995)

Considering the plurality of dynamics under the mantle of regionalism, the author also points out that a variety of theoretical perspectives can be used to investigate it. For our study, we are particularly interested in domestic factors, which Hurrell summarizes in three. The first is state coherence, since the contrast between successful (EU, Mercosur, FTAA) and unsuccessful (Arab League, Organization for African Unity) regionalism experiences indicates that state capacity and viability of national units are basic requirements.

Secondly, the regime type in each country can impact its attitude regarding regionalism. This seems to be the case for South America during re-democratization, when it saw in regional integration a means to reduce the threat of armed conflict, thus stripping the military of an important power asset they held during the authoritarian periods².

The third domestic factor concerns preference convergence. Acharya and Johnston (2007) show that domestic factors, and in particular leaders' preferences, are determining variables in understanding how regional cooperation is undertaken in a region. Regional cooperation, particularly economic, stems primarily from a convergence of political preferences across states. We see this alignment taking place twice in South America recently: in the 1990s, the countries abandoned the imports substitution paradigm and embraced pro-market reforms and liberalization, being Mercosur itself and its open regionalism a pedagogical device of this transition

² "The challenges faced by new democracies in Argentina (1983) and in Brazil (1985) contributed to creating a sense of common vulnerability, especially in regard to the power of the armed forces [. . .] Both countries used to maintain reciprocal conflict hypothesis by the mid-1980s, which was seen by the newly-democratic authorities as a source of domestic and economic power for the military. In this sense, the deepening of economic, political, and military relations were perceived by the democratic leaders as a strategy to reduce military power and assert civilian control." (Battaglino, 2012, 145–6).



(Domínguez, 2007: 71; Medeiros et al. 2016: 107). In the 2000s, the disenchantment with the neoliberal promise triggered an electoral cycle of leftist governments that was accompanied by an updated regionalist corollary; blocs such as Unasur and Alba were created to promote political cooperation over regional integration (Soares de Lima, 2010: 157; Sanahuja, 2012).

Considering the important role attributed to domestic factors in regional processes, it is worth analyzing which internal actors are potentially relevant in the formation of BFP and Brazilian regionalism.

2.2 - MRE and the Presidency

For a long time, Itamaraty enjoyed considerable autonomy in elaborating and conducting BFP. According to Almeida, Onuki e Carneiro (2011: 8), the monopoly by a state agency with “strong *esprit de corps*, institutional memory, specialized training and specific competencies” was one of the factors that have contributed to characterize foreign policy as a state policy, coherent and stable in spite of the government changes. However, internal and external political processes have converged so that, from the 1990s on, BFP became less insulated.

Cason and Power (2009) indicate two flanks through which Itamaraty’s monopoly has been eroded: on the one hand, the rise in the number of actors involved, and, on the other, presidentialization. Concerning the pluralization of actors, the authors indicate how other ministries, such as the MDIC, have a growing influence in important themes, for instance exports through the *Câmara de Comércio Exterior* (CAMEX).

Presidentialization, in turn, is not a phenomenon exclusive to Brazil. It is a trend in many countries, which, faced with globalization and the growing complexity of world politics, empower their heads of state as more active representatives of the nation before international society (Rojas and Milet, 1999; Peña, 2005).

Since the 1980s, summits have become the prime forum for interstate cooperation. In Latin America too, face to face meetings between governors have been the preferred approach in solving regional problems and also for interacting with other blocs³. Some factors can explain the popularity of presidential summits in the region. Summit diplomacy requires negotiators with decisional authority in order to be effective, and powerful presidents are a South American constant (Cheibub et al., 2011). Typically *ad hoc* or little institutionalized, summits have difficulties in yielding binding results (Rojas & Milet, 1999: 300), but precisely for that they meet the concern shared between countries with maintaining autonomy (Whitehead & De Brito, 2005;

³ Examples of summits include: Continental summits: OAS, Ibero-American Summits and the Summit of the Americas. Regional summits: Rio Group (born from the fusion of the Contadora Group and the Grupo de Apoio), Mercosur Summits, Andean Community Summits, CELAC Summits, CARICOM, SICA, FTAA and Unasur. Besides those summits, Latin American countries participate regularly in extra- and bi-regional meetings (Whitehead & De Brito, 2005).



Vigevani&Cepaluni, 2011). Multiplying deals and cooperation agreements, though with little intention of implementing them all, does not seem to be pointless in South America, given that this interstate society is characterized by institutes such as the normative search for consensus (“*concertación*”, according to Merke, 2015), juridicism and lassitude in implementing agreements⁴.

The mustering of “coalitions of the willing” seems to be another distinctive mark of South American presidents for solving regional crises and mutual support during instabilities. This style is constant in spite of the ideological shift in South American governments, indicating that the softening of the non-intervention principle in defense of democracy is becoming a steady preference in the region (Domínguez, 2006; Tussie, 2016).

This indicates that presidents are a key figure in understanding South American regionalism. Mercosur was created and developed more out of the political will of presidents than out of gradual regional enmeshment, and they are still the main providers of decisions, enforcement and conflict resolution in the block (Malamud, 2005: 148).

Concerning BFP in particular, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) and Lula were particularly active presidents. FHC traveled 115 times to foreign countries between 1995 and 2022, while Lula did 245 visits during his eight years in government.

For both, South America and Europe were the most popular destinations, though Lula gave an unprecedented degree of attention to Asia and Africa (Ribas&Faria, 2011). Other figures also indicate greater activism in Lula’s terms: between 2002 and 2011, 75 new diplomatic outposts were opened (including embassies, consulates and representations), totaling 225 stations⁵. In contrast, DilmaRousseff only did 68 visits in her first term.

In summary, it is clear the BFP is less confined to Itamaraty and more actors are participating in its elaboration. However, we can see that the Executive – and particularly the Presidency – is the branch which has drawn the most prerogatives from

⁴ “For most states, there is a gap between state interests and the rhetoric of its government leaders. The gap in the Americas is distinctive for three reasons. First, governments rarely acknowledge the existence of the gap. Officials continue to talk as if there were no gap. Second, states continue and, over time, heighten the rhetoric regarding the salience and utility of continental or subregional cooperation, regardless of lax enforcement. Third, states continue to sign treaties and other less formal agreements that sometimes reduce the gap between formal obligation and actual enforcement but just as likely widen the gap. Governments find it useful to sign agreements that they expect never to ratify because, on balance, these help them to manage relations with other inter-American or subregional team players. There is, therefore, an inter-American interstate “society” with a life of its own, with delayed impact on actual behavior, which engages time and attention from government officials.” (Domínguez 2007, p.97)

⁵ “Embaixadas por toda parte”. Estadão. 31 August 2014. Available at <http://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/eleicoes,embaixadas-por-toda-parte,1551969>



the diplomats. In the following section, we will see if another actor, the Legislative, has also taken part in this process.

2.3 –Executive-Legislative relations

The previous discussion shows that, *in fine*, BFP towards South American integration is developed anchored in preserving national sovereignty. In fact, this tendency, coupled with the distributive character of some foreign policies, is what motivates the Legislative to take an interest to interact with the Executive in the early and/or later phases of foreign policy making.

Traditionally, the Legislative is distant from foreign matters, privileging domestic affairs. Though it is the branch of the state that should represent the diversity of opinions of the people, it does not show a great interest in its role of overseeing BFP, be it by the meager electoral returns this topic yields, be it by the small number of prerogatives that the Constitution gives it (Diniz&Ribeiro, 2008; Lopes, 2008).

In the literature, we find diagnoses of the Executive's preponderance in foreign policy making in general, and in regionalization processes, more specifically. The quantitative analysis carried out by Amorim Neto (2011) indicates that the number of ministries held by the governmental coalition is more significant than the number of seats in the lower house in influencing foreign policy, thus indicating a greater role for the Executive. A study by Ventura, Onuki, Medeiros et al. (2012) shows that approximately 90% of the internationalization of Mercosur norms has been carried out by the Executive, indicating presidents lead not only when the country must go towards its region, but also when it comes to bringing the region into the country.

Aware of this unevenness, other authors try to better understand how both powers interact. Diniz and Ribeiro (2008) argue that the Legislative plays a cooperative role with the Executive, but not necessarily of passivity. Analyzing the passage of 821 presidential messages to the congress on foreign policy matters between 1988 and 2006, they find that 89.2% were approved. If, on the one hand, that indicates that the Legislative plays primarily a ratifying role, it does not imply, on the other hand, that it is not interested in foreign matters. The usage of regimental procedures, such as urgency requests by party leaders, indicates that the Legislative can potentially try to slow down the rite, either due to lack of interest or due to actual divergence.

Feliú and Pinheiro (2016) analyze the proportion of favorable votes that presidential foreign policy initiatives receive in the congresses of eight Latin American countries between 1994 and 2014. They conclude that the main explanatory variables are the size of the governmental coalition, effective number of parties, and ideological distance. The findings indicate that, counterintuitively, large government coalitions, because they make the approval of the initiatives more certain, give opposition members



more freedom to vote against such projects so as to affirm their position. Following this theatrical rationale, smaller ideological divergences lead to greater disapproval of foreign policy initiatives, because when there is consensus on domestic matters, parties will assert their ideological credentials on external issues. Factors such as presidential popularity or the high/low politics of the policy did not have a statistically significant effect.

2.4 – Parties, ideology and the region: Venezuela as a case of regional spillover of partisan opposition

Political parties play an important role in foreign policy processes, as they are present in both the Executive and the Legislative. The South-American experience illustrates this dynamic, given that distinct electoral cycles have yielded different approaches to regionalism.

Santos (2006) argues that regional integration has been a more relevant issue for leftwing governments than for the previous neoliberal ones. While the latter sought a minimal state and commercial integration, the former pursued a developmentalist model, relying on a more active state, in order to fulfill integration goals beyond trade: physical, energetic and strategic. Onuki and Oliveira (2006) add some caveats to that reasoning, arguing that both ideological poles can favor integration, but preferring distinct approaches: the left favoring asymmetric, developmentalist and political alliances; the right privileging the dialogue with the greater economies and a commercial approach. However, this does not mean that leftwing governments favor greater degrees of supranationalism, since their developmentalist policies lead to more concentration, and not dispersion, of decision-making authority. Consequently, intergovernmentalism remains the preferred *modus operandi* in South America – whichever the ideological orientation.

The Brasília-Caracas relationship is an example of how partisan and ideological cleavages can have repercussions in regional processes, particularly in awakening greater parliamentary interest. Venezuela's entry into Mercosur, an international act which requires ratification by both houses of congress, was a moment of more engagement by the Brazilian Legislative. Goldzweig (2013) describes how, since the ratification of the accession treaty in 2006, the members of the congress have positioned themselves in relation to the new member's entrance. While the governmental coalition, along with President Lula, was enthusiastic about Venezuela's entry, the opposition repeatedly pointed out Chávez's actions which revealed the authoritarian nature of his regime, in violation of Mercosur's democratic clause, and which could be a source of instabilities to the bloc⁶.

⁶E.g.: The refusal to renew the concession of *Rádio Caracas Televisión* in 2007 and the approval in 2009 of a referendum allowing unlimited reelections.



The center-right parties DEM and PSDB⁷ were the main adversaries. They attempted to obstruct the initiative and voted against it in both lower and upper houses. However, on December 15, 2009, Venezuela's entry was approved in the Brazilian Senate by 35 votes against 27.

Under Nicolás Maduro, Caracas continued to be a point of strife between government and opposition in Brasília. On May 2015, one year after the disputed reelection of Dilma Rousseff, the wives of Leopoldo López, leader of the *Vontade Popular* opposition party, and Antonio Ledezma, mayor of Caracas – both imprisoned under charges of conspiring against the Maduro regime – were in Brazil to ask for support for their release. They were received by the leading figures of the PSDB.

In June of the same year, a group of eight senators, formed by the president of the External Relations Committee, Aloysio Nunes (PSDB-SP), and the senators Aécio Neves (PSDB-MG, defeated presidential candidate in 2014), Cássio Cunha Lima (PSDB-PB), Ronaldo Caiado (DEM-GO), José Agripino (DEM-RN), José Medeiros (PPS-MT), Sérgio Petecão (PSD-AC) and Ricardo Ferraço (PMDB-ES), left to Caracas with the goal of visiting political prisoners. The mission was aborted after the group's shuttle had been assaulted by demonstrators on the streets of Caracas. In response, Maduro had invited, at the same time, a “counter-group” of intellectual, union leaders and other public figures from Brazil to attest their support to the Bolivarian government⁸. On February 2016, deputies from Venezuela's National Assembly visited Brazil to once again call attention to the country's situation, and were received by the Minister of Foreign Relations, Mauro Vieira.

3) Methods & Data

This section summarizes the main characteristics of our research design in order to increase transparency and maximize results reproducibility (King, 1995; Paranhos et al, 2014; Janz, 2015). This research employs a mixed methods approach that combines three complementary methods: process tracing, statistical analysis and content analysis. Their combination will provide greater analytical leverage (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

First, through process tracing, according to George & Bennett (2005: 06):

the researcher examines histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is in fact evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case

⁷Democratas (DEM) and *Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira* (PSDB)

⁸"Venezuela pauta duelo político no Brasil". Estadão. 18 June 2015. Available at: <http://politica.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,venezuela-pauta-duelo-politico-no-brasil-imp-,1708540>



We wish to analyze the hypothesis that BFP concerning South American integration is marked by a deliberate inertia, which generates a progressive national disengagement. This detachment can be verified via the specific objectives we mentioned earlier.

Objectives (i) and (ii) will be investigated through content analysis of the following documents: (a) addresses by the President and the Minister of Foreign Relations regarding South America (2008-2015) and (b) minutes of the Committee of Foreign Relations and National Defense of the Chamber of Deputies and Federal Senate (CREDN). Objectives (iii) and (iv) will be sought via statistical analysis.

3.1 – Content Analysis

In order to understand how the Executive and Legislative approach foreign policy and regionalism, we used content analysis to interpret a vast amount of official documents in which actors pertaining to those branches express their views.

We used the software QDA Miner v.4.1.21 and WordStat 7, both by Provalis Research. We classified each individual document at QDA Miner according to four variables: (i) type (Speech or Minute), (ii) title, (iii) author, (iv) author's political party, (v) date, (vi) place (where the speech was made or where the minute was written), (vii) data source.

After this characterization of the corpus, we sent the documents to WordStat, which performed the content analysis. In WordStat, we elaborated a dictionary containing the categories we wanted to monitor. There were four categories related to foreign policy themes ("Environment", "International Security and Peace", "Human Rights and Democracy", and "Economy"). We have adapted these categories and their keywords from Vilela and Neiva (2011), hoping to replicate and update their findings to more recent years⁹. Our dictionary also had one specific category for "South American Countries", listing all 12 of Brazil's neighbors so as to verify which countries were the most cited. Lastly, we had a category for "Regionalism", which was subdivided into five subcategories: "Regionalism and Integration", "Regional Institutions", "Brazilian Organizations", "Brazilian Businesses", and "Leadership". In total, our dictionary had 185 keywords.

3.2 – Statistical Analysis

We estimate a linear regression model that is specified as follows:

⁹Vilela and Neiva analyzed 1,002 addresses (749 by Lula and 253 by FHC) using a dictionary with seven foreign policy themes and seven geographical regions.



$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \beta_8 X_8 + \varepsilon$$

Total trade is modeled as a function of inflation (X_1), unemployment rate (X_2), government budget balance (X_3) and general government debt (X_4). We also included Human Development Index (HDI) as control (X_5) and three dummies variables to identify Mercosur countries (X_6), Europe Nations (X_7) and Brazil (X_8) in order to assess regional differences. Data is available at the Quality of Government Institute (QOG) website¹⁰ and all quantitative empirical analysis was performed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20 and Stata, version 13. Regarding data organization, we adopted TIER 2.0 Protocol¹¹.

4) Results

4.1 – Content Analysis

In total, we downloaded 664 documents published between 2008 and 2015, being 378 (56%) addresses by the Presidents (Lula and Dilma) and by the Ministers of Foreign Relations (Celso Amorim, Antônio de Aguiar, Luiz Alberto Figueiredo and Mauro Vieira), and 286 (44%) minutes from the CREDN¹².

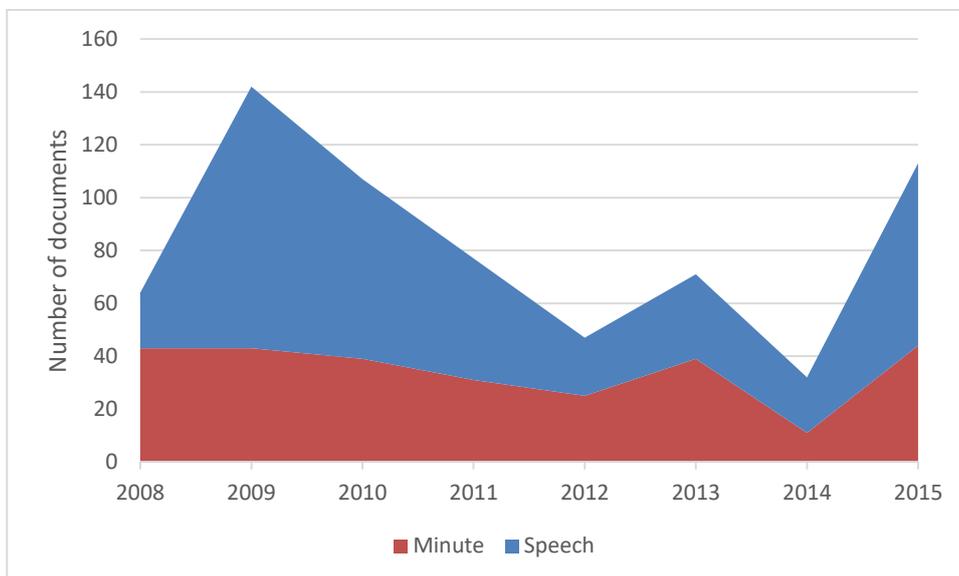
The year with the highest number of documents was 2009, registering 99 speeches and 43 minutes. It is interesting to highlight that this peak coincided with the wake of the financial crisis and the congressional vote concerning Venezuela's entry in Mercosur, which could imply that these episodes triggered greater activity from both branches. The lowest points were 2012 (22 speeches and 25 minutes) and 2014 (21 and 11), both coinciding with election years, being the lowest (2014) the presidential one.

Figure 1: Amount of official speeches and minutes (2008-2015)

¹⁰ See <<http://qog.pol.gu.se/data>>

¹¹ See <<https://www.haverford.edu/project-tier/protocol-v2>>

¹² Speeches were downloaded from MRE's site: <<http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/>> while CREDN minutes were from the Chamber of Deputy's site: <<http://www2.camara.leg.br/>>



Source: Elaborated by the authors

If we split the total amount of official speeches, we can see that presidents are much more vocal than foreign ministers, accounting for 71% of all addresses. Concerning the minutes, we see that they are signed predominantly by congressmen of the opposition party, PSDB, which accounts for 26% of the minutes. The parties PC do B, PSC, PDT and PT form a second-tier in the hierarchy. There was no information available regarding authorship for 15 of the minutes.

Table 2: Breakdown of speeches by author and of CREDN minutes by author's party

Speeches			Minutes		
Author	N.	% Speeches	Party	N.	% Minutes
Lula	153	0.42	DEM	6	0.02
Dilma	111	0.29	PCdoB	43	0.15
Total presid. speeches	269	0.71	PDT	38	0.13
Celso Amorim	31	0.08	PMDB	5	0.02
Antônio de Aguiar	35	0.09	PP	3	0.01
Luiz Alberto Figueiredo	8	0.02	PPS	3	0.01
Mauro Vieira	35	0.09	PR	1	0.00
Total MRE speeches	109	0.29	PRB	5	0.02
Total Speeches	378	1.00	PROS	1	0.00
			PSB	3	0.01
			PSC	40	0.14
			PSD	1	0.00
			PSDB	74	0.26
			PSOL	1	0.00
			PT	34	0.12
			PTB	3	0.01



PTN	1	0.00
PV	7	0.02
NA	15	0.05
Total Minutes	284	1.00

Source: Elaborated by the authors

After this characterization of the corpus, we sent the documents to WordStat, which performed the content analysis. In WordStat, we elaborated a dictionary containing the categories we wanted to monitor. There were four categories related to foreign policy themes (“Environment”, “International Security and Peace”, “Human Rights and Democracy”, and “Economy”). We have adapted these categories and their keywords from Vilela and Neiva (2011), hoping to replicate and update their findings to more recent years¹³. Our dictionary also had one specific category for “South American Countries”, listing all 12 of Brazil’s neighbors so as to verify which countries were the most cited. Lastly, we had a category for “Regionalism”, which was subdivided into five subcategories: “Regionalism and Integration”, “Regional Institutions”, “Brazilian Organizations”, “Brazilian Businesses”, and “Leadership”. In total, our dictionary had 185 keywords.

Analyzing the four foreign policy themes, we can see that “Economy” is by far the most frequent. This indicates that official speeches and CREDN minutes have substantially more economy-related terms. This result is similar to the one presented in Vilela and Neiva’s (2011) original article, indicating that this hierarchy of themes is preserved when we expand the scope of the analysis to include the Legislative and Dilma’s governments.

Table 3: Frequency of the foreign policy themes

	Frequency
Economy	8355
HumanRightsandDemocracy	2216
International Security and Peace	2176
Environment	1804

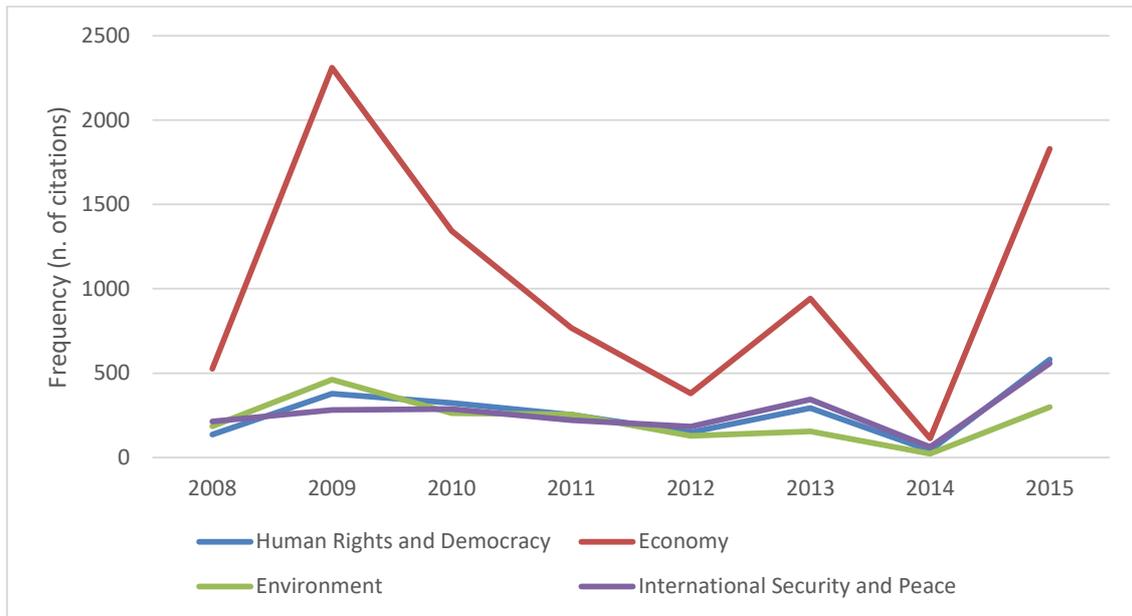
Source: Elaborated by the authors

If we monitor those themes across time, it is possible to see that Economy is consistently predominant. It leads by the greatest gap in 2009, which is probably an effect of the financial crisis. The other three themes do not show a stable hierarchy, as they switched between ranking positions for most of the time series.

¹³Vilela and Neiva analyzed 1,002 addresses (749 by Lula and 253 by FHC) using a dictionary with seven foreign policy themes and seven geographical regions.



Figure 2: Frequency of foreign policy themes (2008-2015)



Source: Elaborated by the authors

Concerning the South American states, the countries that were mentioned more often were Venezuela and Argentina, while the least were Guyana and Suriname. There were, on average, 166 citations per country. It is interesting to note that all top three countries are Mercosur members. Uruguay, on the other hand, had only 126 citations, being thus the only member of the bloc that was below the average number of citations. Even so, when we compare the average number of citations for the five Mercosur members (259) with that of non-members (119), it becomes clear that the former receive greater attention in BFP.

Table 4: Frequency of South American countries

	Frequency
Venezuela	324
Argentina	312
Paraguay	275
Bolivia	256
Colombia	208
Peru	165



Chile	157
Uruguay	126
Ecuador	66
FrenchGuyana	44
Guyana	39
Suriname	21

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Our “Regionalism” category had a total of 2844 citations. Curiously, nearly 26% of those citations were only in the last year of the series (2015). This category was composed of five subcategories. The most popular one was “Regional Institutions”, followed by “Regionalism and Integration”. While the former lists 13 regional institutions, the latter contains generic terms referring to regionalism processes.

Table 5: Frequency of Regionalism topics

	Frequency	(%)
Regional Institutions	1217	6.28
Regionalism and Integration	1068	5.51
Brazilian Organizations	504	2.60
Brazilian Businesses	44	0.23
Leadership	11	0.06

Source: Elaborated by the authors

As the table above shows, mentions to Brazilian public organizations were much more common than to businesses which develop region-wide activities. A comparison between the names of institutions reveals that both the Executive and the Legislative are much more concerned with the activities of state-owned enterprises than with private actors.

Table 6: Frequency of Brazilian Organizations

	Frequency
Agência Brasileira de Cooperação	373
EMBRAPA (or Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária)	69
BNDES (or Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento)	62

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Table 7: Frequency of Brazilian Businesses



	Frequency
OAS	9
Odebrecht	7
Andrade Gutierrez	1
Camargo Côrrea	0
Queiroz Galvão	0

Source: Elaborated by the authors

In summary, we can see that presidents and foreign relations ministers talk more frequently about foreign policy than congressmen. Yet, the overall decline in presidential or ministerial addresses from 2009 on indicates that Dilma has been less active than Lula in presidential diplomacy not only in terms of number of travels but also of discourses made. We also found that discursive activity was the least intensive in election years 2012 and 2014, showing that political actors in Brazil withdraw from the foreign field and focus on the domestic domain in those times¹⁴

We also found that regionalism is characterized chiefly by an economic dimension. This was seen, for instance, in the fact that the peak of discursive activity was one year after the 2008 financial crisis, and that the “Economy” category was by far the most frequent one.

The references to South American countries also revealed two important tendencies. First, Venezuela’s top rank shows that it receives a lot of attention from both the Executive and the Legislative (though arguably with different motivations). Secondly, the fact that Mercosur countries were cited much more often than non-members is indicative that this regional grouping is a focal point for BFP and that the dense commercial interaction between them is also accompanied *paripassu* discursive activity, potentially contributing to the symbolic outlining of a regional identity (see Mesquita, 2016; Meunier& Medeiros, 2013).

4.2 – Statistical Analysis

The dependent variable, trade, is defined as the sum of exports and imports of goods and services measured as a share of gross domestic product. Information for 177 countries is available. Trade average is 94.24 with a standard deviation of 47.83. Seychelles (202), Luxemburg (348) and Singapore (368) deviate a lot from the average, with extremely higher values¹⁵. Comparatively, Europe Union countries have a

¹⁴ The year 2010 deviated from that pattern, as it was a presidential election year and yet it registered many speeches and minutes. This is perhaps a sign that a president’s personal investment in foreign policy (in this case, Lula) can maintain a high-level of diplomatic activity even during election years.

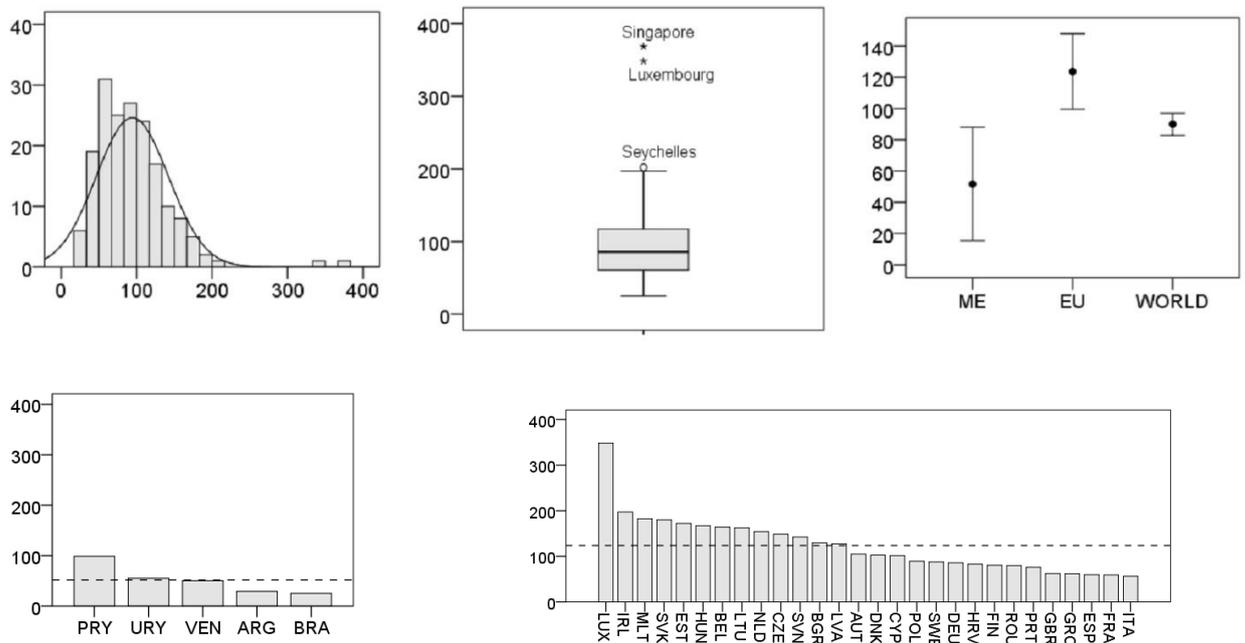
¹⁵ Assuming normality, the rules of statistical inference teach us that 99.7% of all observations will be between 3 and -3 standard deviation from the mean. The standardized values of trade are the following: Singapore (5,73), Luxembourg (5,31) and Seychelles (2,26). This means that Singapore is 5,73 standard deviation above the mean while Luxembourg is 5,31 standard deviation above the general average.



significantly higher level of trade than Mercosur (51.69) and other nations around the world (89.98).

Descriptive statistics (trade)

Figure 3: Trade as % of GDP



Source: Elaborated by the authors

Table 8: Regression coefficients

	B	S.E	Beta	t	P-value
Intercept	71.607	25.421		2.817	.006
Inflation	-.399	1.013	-.037	-.394	.695
Unemployment	.233	.628	.031	.370	.712
Budget balance	1.233	.615	.187	2.004	.047
Govdebt	-.002	.133	-.002	-.017	.987

Usually, cases with standard values higher than 3 or below than -3 are considered outliers observations that affect the model's estimates.



HDI	29.400	32.902	.093	.894	.373
Mercosur	-29.457	24.881	-.111	-1.184	.239
EU	30.870	11.773	.251	2.622	.010
Brazil	-34.102	52.213	-.058	-.653	.515

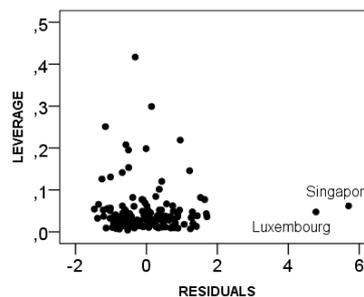
DV: total trade; R = .395; $R^2 = .156$; $R^2_{adj} = .112$

Source: Elaborated by the authors

As expected, there is a negative association between inflation and trade. In particular, one unit increase in inflation is related with a .399 decrease in total trade, controlling for all remaining variables. Regarding unemployment, we observe a positive correlation (.233). While budget balance (1.233) is positively associated with trade, government debt exerts a negative effect on it (-.002). Finally, controlling for development levels, Mercosur countries have an average disadvantage of 29.457 compared to other nations. Conversely, the EU has a positive difference of 30.870 when compared to other countries. Brazil has a lower trade level compared to the average countries examined (-34.102). Regarding statistical significance, Budget balance (.047) and EU (.009) showed levels that are usually employed in Social Sciences¹⁶.

The coefficient of determination suggests that our model only explains 15.6% of the variance of the dependent variable. We believe that one of the problems is measurement error since some variables are not reliable. For example, it is extremely hard to find standardized data on unemployment since countries define and measure it following diverging methodologies. In addition, data availability varies across time, which limits the range of comparison. Finally, diagnostic analysis suggests that Singapore and Luxembourg have high standardized residuals which mean that they are very different from the other observations in the dataset.

Figure 4: Diagnostic Analysis



¹⁶ However, since we are dealing with almost the population we decided to concentrate on the coefficients direction (positive or negative) rather than their level of statistical significance. See <http://amstat.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00031305.2016.1154108>



Source: Elaborated by the authors

5) Conclusion

The government transition that took place in recent months – though yet nuclear in terms of durability – points towards a possible shift in BFP and regionalism, more precisely to Mercosur. There is evidence that Decision 32/00, which establishes that “member states cannot sign new preferential agreements nor agree on new commercial preferences in commercial deals that are already in place within the ALADI framework that have not been negotiated by Mercosur”, should be reviewed rather speedily with José Serra as the new head of Itamaraty¹⁷. Actually, we witness a return to the trend of the FHC governments, when foreign affairs were conducted by a more independent commercial rationale.¹⁸.

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¹⁷See: MERCOSUL/CMC/DEC. N° 32/00: RELANÇAMENTO DO MERCOSUL - RELACIONAMENTO EXTERNO, art. 2. Disponível em: <http://www.sice.oas.org/trade/mrcsrs/decisions/dec3200p.asp> (Acesso em 27 de junho de 2016).

¹⁸See: “Itamaraty quer mudar regra para fazer acordo sem países do Mercosul”, Folha de São Paulo, 26 June 2016. Available at: <http://tools.folha.com.br/print?site=emcimadahora&url=http://www1....aty-quer-mercosul-flexivel-para-destravar-acordos-comerciais.shtml> (Accessed 26 June 2016).



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