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SEAN BURGES, *BRAZILIAN FOREIGN POLICY AFTER THE COLD WAR*, UNIVERSITY PRESS OF FLORIDA, GAINESVILLE 2009, PP. 248

In this work, the author Sean Burges analyzes the main achievements of Brazilian foreign policy between 1992 and 2002. The choice of such a decade to be analyzed, according to the author, refers to the ten years (hitherto) of greatest achievements in Brazil.

This decade in question is also called “The Decade of Fernando Henrique Cardoso”. He was a foreign minister from 1992-1993, finance minister from 1993-1994, and president of Brazil from 1995-2002. The Canadian scholar tries to understand “how” and “why” Brazil carving its space into the international scenario as a consensual hegemony. Burges does that examining official documents and from several interviews with Brazilian diplomats. And this method can be understood as his first mistake, since diplomats and official documents only disclosure what the Brazilian government wants to show. Meaning: not necessarily the “reality”.

After the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union Burges, the international scenario was going through a complicated phase of fast pace changings and growing in internationalization. Facing new challenges Burges claims the Brazilian government embarked on a Foreign Policy in a “quiet style of leadership on South America”. Still, Brazilian diplomacy was seeking to keep the country’s autonomy in the international sphere without foreign interference.

According to this author, during Fernando Henrique Cardoso's “decade” Brazilian foreign policy was seeking this so-called “quiet leadership” in South America because being explicit would incur costs. Here is one more problem in his analysis, Brazil is very important to regional stability. However, during the two mandates of Cardoso, the main goal of the country’s foreign policy wasn’t to have leadership in the region. It’s important, but it was clear that at that moment Brazilian foreign policy was directed towards carving a niche among the great powers, not among other countries of the Global South.

At the beginning of the 1990s, Brazil was suffering from a huge economic crisis. Said that the country couldn’t afford any kind of leadership in the

subcontinent. Although Burges puts clearly the difference between a classic type of hegemony and a consensual type of hegemony, only after an economic plan the country started to get on its feet again. There are no doubts that Brazil needed a stable region to grow and to pursue its own interests, but it sounds an exaggeration to assert that the country was pursuing any kind of hegemony in this hemisphere. At that moment Brazil needed more support than it could offer, that's why the then-president was seeking to be among the most developed countries. Back in the 1990s, Brazil was carving its space in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and BRIC.

The most interesting part of this book is the way Burges takes into account historical elements to build up his argument. But one of the problems, as mentioned here before is that the author relies heavily on 58 interviews, especially with diplomats and on some documents released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although he was not very successful. After all, the Ministry claims the importance of regional affairs for example. However, it's clear that regional affairs are important, which is another interesting aspect of the book because during the two terms of Cardoso economic security can be pinpointed as the ultimate goal of the then-president.

When Burges points that the main goals of Itamaraty are the preservation of Brazilian autonomy and to keep foreign interference far from the country it simply seems redundant because that's basically the "mantra" of Brazilian foreign policy for decades. The author makes another mistake in his analysis, he leans too much on what Fernando Henrique Cardoso did as a sociology scholar. Cardoso is a great scholar in the area of dependency theory, but as a leader of Brazil, he acted in a very liberal way in economic terms. That's a simple mistake to commit when trying to understand this period of Brazilian foreign policy it can seem contradictory but Cardoso focused on taking the country out of economics problems mainly.

The book is permeated by the notion of consensual hegemony and structural power. Then one more problem comes to the surface. Although Brazil tries to be a leader in the subcontinent, even claiming it's made in a consensual way he forgets, according to Burges based on the history of the region. He forgets that in South America Brazilian consensual hegemony and/or leadership is far from being easy to achieve especially because of our history. Brazil not always played like a good neighbour, the country was a "bully" in the past. In this sense to reach this position, the country would have problems with other neighbours who also consider themselves as "natural" leaders in the region like Argentina and Venezuela. Burges is unsuccessful in exploring and recognizing deeply these issues. This question deserved more attention.

Another aspect regarding regionalism in South America is that Burges put that it began with the leadership of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. However, during

his two terms, this *quasi* regionalism is carried out mainly by the private sector. Because as asserted before at that time the state still didn't have the will either the resources to be truly present in the region. So it was a very modestly regionalism with some increase in exchanges between Brazil, Argentina, and Bolivia.

At last Burges treats the first term of the former Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. According to Burges one aspect linking Cardoso and Lula administrations is the idea of "South America". In fact, during Lula's administration, South America had an important role for his foreign policy. However, for Fernando Henrique Cardoso it doesn't seem to had been so prominently the way Burges asserts. For Lula, regionalism was more important, but not only to South America but also to the so-called Global South. Lula *de facto* sought this consensual hegemony in the South, investing more in the region, and also in political terms.

It's also important to highlight that during Lula's terms the Brazilian economic situation was different from the previous years. Lula was able to collect what Fernando Henrique Cardoso planted. That's why regionalism could be incremented for example, so the social programs.