

REGIME EFFECTIVENESS AND DEMOCRACY PROTECTION: THE RESPONSES OF MERCOSUR TO THE IMPEACHMENT PROCESSES IN PARAGUAY AND BRAZIL

Efetividade de regimes e proteção à democracia: as respostas do Mercosul aos processos de impeachment no Paraguai e no Brasil

Alexandre San Martim Portes¹

Introduction

Democratization and regional integration are phenomena relatively new in South America. After decades of authoritarian regimes, new democratic orders and globalization brought the necessity of looking for partnership in the neighborhood. The Common Market of the South, or in the Spanish acronym Mercosur, was created in 1991, as an attempt to bring the countries in the region not only economically but also politically closer. Although initially a project lead by Brazil and Argentina, Mercosur has today three more members: Paraguay, Uruguay, and Venezuela. Bolivia is in the process of integration and Chile, Peru, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana and Surinam are associate members (MERCOSUR, 2017).

Even though Mercosur created institutionalized mechanisms to protect democracy in the region, two impeachment process happened in the group, generating controversies. One of the processes was in Paraguay in 2012, removing Fernando Lugo from the government, and the other in Brazil in 2016, impeaching Dilma Rousseff. The group reacted differently to each process, resulting in the suspension of Paraguay from the group in the first case, and accepting the domestic decision in the second. Since different responses were given to the impeachment problem, an important question emerges: can the regime of protection of democracy of Mercosur be considered effective, even when it had different reactions to the impeachment process occurred in Paraguay and Brazil?

The hypothesis to the question is that the regime, to be effective, should have given a similar response to problems that are also similar. It is important to underline that the analysis in this research is based on the norms and principles presented both domestically and regionally, and responses from the group based not on the legislation cannot be appropriately discussed. This means that responses from the

¹Graduado em Relações Internacionais pela Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) e mestrando pela Leuphana University.
Email: alexandresmp@gmail.com

regime derived from differences in power among the members or ideological disputes are not present in this analysis of effectiveness.

In the first part, a theoretical background for International Regimes and Regimes effectiveness will be discussed, also describing the methodological procedure. In the second part, the democratic regulations of Mercosur will be presented. In the third part, the impeachment process of Brazil and Paraguay will be described, as well as the reactions by the other members of the group. Lastly, an analysis of the processes and regime effectiveness will be executed.

The protection of democracy as an international regime

To comprehend the institutional structure of the protection of democracy in Mercosur and the responses of the group after the impeachment processes, the International Regimes Theory will be used as theoretical framework. Characterizing this group of norm and rules as an international regime can help us understand its purposes and functionality, as well as responses from the regime itself to ruptures in the democratic order.

The classic definition of an international regime is given by Krasner as:

“sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations. Principles are beliefs of fact, causation, and rectitude. Norms are standards of behavior defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescriptions or proscriptions for action. Decision-making procedures are prevailing practices for making and implementing collective choice” (KRASNER, 1982, p. 186).

Following this definition of regime, the rules of democracy and its defense in Mercosur could be seen as an international regime². The general principle of this regime is that democracy is a necessary condition for integration among its members. As norms, rules, and procedures, Mercosur has a protocol stating requirements in this regime and how to proceed if these regulations are infringed. Although this scheme is very simple, it elucidates the reason to use this theoretical approach.

The idea that international regimes matter and make a difference in international society is already a consensus in the literature (YOUNG, 2004). However, regimes act in diverse ways, resulting in different outcomes and dynamics, creating consequences for the regime itself, but also for its members and other regimes. Underdal (2004) argues that one way to analyze consequences of a regime is to study its effectiveness. He says that a regime effectiveness analysis is based “in terms of how well they perform a particular function or the extent to which they achieve their purpose” (UNDERDAL, 2004, p. 27).

Underdal also points that, to be effective, a regime must have influence over its member’s behaviors. That means that it must be robust enough to limit and control actions made by them. Additionally, he brings the concept of regime robustness, which means that it can “cope with challenges and surviving stress with its functioning capacity intact” (UNDERDAL, 2004, p. 30). In the same way, Hasenclever, Meyer, and Rittberger (2002) say that a regime lacks resilience when it changes with shifts of

²Sturaro and Frota (2012) also defined the regime of democratic protection of Mercosur as an international regime using Krasner’s definition.

power among its members or influential members decide that the current goals are not useful for themselves anymore.

As for a methodological approach in analyzing regime effectiveness, Underdal (2004, p. 31) proposes the use of three questions: (1) “what precisely is the *object* to be assessed?”; (2) “against which *standard* is this object to be evaluated?”; and (3) “*how* do we – in operational terms – go about comparing that object to the standard we have defined?”. Using this structure, the analysis of the efficiency of the regime of democracy protection of Mercosur facing the two impeachment processes will be conducted considering the following points: (1) the object of the analysis will be the use of the democratic clause as a response to domestic events; (2) the standard expected is the application of sanctions when the democratic order suffers a rupture; and (3) the procedure will be the analysis of domestic events, reactions from the group, and reasons given to them.

Concluding, the classification of the group of norms and rules that intent to protect democratic institutions in Mercosur as an international regime is necessary for methodological reasons. In this way, it is possible to analyze its fundamental ideas and principles, and compare them with the outcomes, making possible a conclusion about its effectiveness in dealing with the impeachment processes. Since two different cases are going to be analyzed, the main point of using this methodology is to compare the responses from Mercosur to the standard expected in both cases and, especially, if they are consistent.

MERCOSUR and its democratic norms

The creation of Mercosur is directly linked to the development of democracy in its member states. In the context of the third wave of democratization, South America left its authoritarian regimes behind. After several years of dictatorships, the first country of the group to have democratic elections was Argentina in 1983, followed by Brazil and Uruguay in 1985, and by Paraguay in 1989 (VAN DER VLEUTEN; HOFFMANN, 2010).

Although Mercosur aimed to reduce the trade barriers among its members, Sturaro and Frota explain that the project of integration led by Argentina and Brazil had goals which went beyond the economic scope. They also desired a better relationship between the two nations, creating confidence in a regional level, and consolidating democracy in the domestic level. According to the authors, at the moment of creation of Mercosur, there was already an implicit democratic clause, since it was a principle strongly reinforced by its the members. (STURARO; FROTA, 2012).

The authors called this existing structure as an implicit democratic clause because the first treaty that originated the group does not explicitly reinforce the protection of democracy. This foundational treaty, the Treaty of Asunción, was signed by Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Paraguay in 1991 and created the institutional basis for the common market among the countries. Simultaneously, it reinforced the ideas of cooperation in several fields and put the development of the whole group as a priority (MERCOSUR, 1991).

Still at the beginning of the history of Mercosur, a presidential meeting clearly stated the democratic values of the group. In this session, occurred in 1992 in Las Leñas, Argentina, all members agreed on the importance of democracy for the existence and development of Mercosur (MERCOSUR, 1992). This presidential statement was not a formal rule to follow. Nevertheless, it reinforced the necessity to keep democracy as the basis for deeper integration.

In Paraguay, political tensions lead to instability in the 1990s. At this point, the lack of an institutionalized mechanism to protect democracy made it complicated to deal with possible ruptures in the democratic order, since there were no regimented procedures to be followed. The first political tension in Paraguay occurred with the gain of popularity by General Lino Oviedo, creating tensions between him and the elected President Juan Carlos Wasmosy. In 1996, Oviedo attempted a coup against the president, but failed due to the control of the president over part of the armed forces, resulting in the arrest of Oviedo (VAN DER VLEUTEN; HOFFMANN, 2010).

Van der Vleuten and Hoffmann explained that Mercosur, even not having an institutionalized democratic clause, reacted to this attempt of a coup to maintain the stability and democracy in the region. The members of the group feared that such instability in such a new regional group could demoralize it in the international conjuncture. The authors also pointed to another crisis in Paraguay. In 1998, Raul Cubas Grau was elected president and freed Oviedo, creating another tension in the country, leading to mass protests and later the resignation of Cubas (VAN DER VLEUTEN; HOFFMANN, 2010).

Again, to overcome this second crisis, Mercosur had to use informal mechanisms. The formal democratic clause already existed, but it was supposed to come into force only in January 2002. The intervention in both cases was seen by the member states as necessary, since it could be examples of instability for the international community and could revive non-democratic values in South America (VAN DER VLEUTEN; HOFFMANN, 2010).

Pevehouse (2005) argues that Mercosur could not guarantee that the democratic order would remain in Paraguay. He mentions the weak presence of civil society and the strength of the armed forces in the country as reasons for internal instability. However, Mercosur members performed an intervention with a conditionality bargain, threatening to exclude Paraguay from the newly created group. Additionally, "it has also reinforced reforms by signaling to domestic and international observers that Paraguay is committed to reform" (PEVEHOUSE, 2005, p. 186).

As mentioned before, by the time the second crises in Paraguay happened, Mercosur had already created a democratic clause, called Ushuaia Protocol, signed in 1998. In its first article, it reinforces the necessity of democratic institutions for regional cooperation. Following, it mentions the procedures applicable in cases of rupture of the democratic order in any of the members, underlining that the members should meet to discuss among themselves and with the state affected by such a rupture. In the fifth article, it defends the use of several measures, if the discussions with the member affected in not enough to solve the problem. These measures are to be defined by the members and could be several kinds of sanction or even the partial or total suspension of the member from Mercosur. Lastly, the members must reach a

consensus about the sanctions, which should be applied until the affected member return to a democratic order (MERCOSUR, 1998). This protocol changes the institutional foundations of the group since it legitimizes sanctions and interventions directly performed by the group.

The Ushuaia Protocol suffered some modifications with a second protocol, called Montevideo Protocol for the Commitment with Democracy in Mercosur, also known as Ushuaia II. This protocol signed in 2011 aimed to reinforce the principles established by Ushuaia I, and, at the same time, expand and clarify its procedures and sanctions (MERCOSUR, 2011).

Finally, according to Sturaro and Frota (2012), the institutionalization of democracy in Mercosur suffered two more changes after the Ushuaia Protocol. The first one was the mandatory adhesion of the protocol also by the nations that only have an associate status, broadening the geographic range of the regime. Second, in 2005 was signed the Protocol of Asuncion on the Compromise to Promote and Protect Human rights, this time placing the fundamental rights, together with democratic institutions, as necessary for a successful integration.

In conclusion, the creation of these mechanisms to promote and protect domestic democratic institutions is crucial for the establishment of Mercosur, since the democratic regimes in the region are still very young. The attempt to assure that the democratic order is not going to be disturbed aims not only to strength and stimulate internal negotiations but also to the recognition of the group externally by other regional groups.

Impeachment processes in Paraguay and Brazil and the responses from MERCOSUR

For a better understanding of the reactions of Mercosur, it is important to comprehend how the impeachment processes happened, with which reasons they were carried on, and what kind of institutional rules were followed. In this section, both the Paraguayan and Brazilian cases will be explained, followed by the reactions from Mercosur.

The Impeachment Process in Paraguay

The impeachment process lead in Paraguay against President Lugo has its origins in a dispute for power control by the main parties of the country. Marsteintredet, Llanos, and Nolte (2013) explain that the party system in Paraguay traditionally counted with two main parties in its center: The National Republican Association, also known as the Colorado Party, and the Authentic Radical Liberal Party (PLRA). As mentioned by the authors, from 1947 until 2008, when Fernando Lugo was elected president, the Colorado Party was controlling Paraguay for more than sixty years. Lugo was running for president for the Patriotic Alliance for Change (APC), a coalition formed in 2007 by several left-wing parties together with the PLRA.

Although being the president elected, Lugo did not have a large base of support inside of the coalition, which was controlled mainly by the PLRA. Although he managed to achieve some of his goals, such as the renegotiation of the Itaipú Dam treaty with Brazil, other goals, as the land reform, faced impasses. Social conflicts related to land were already common in the country, but a guerilla group called

the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP) gained attention and put the president in the middle of the tensions between the right and the left-wing groups. In addition to his weak support inside the coalition, Lugo tried to isolate his Vice-President, who was a member of PLRA, creating tensions between them. Also, he distributed some position in government to the Colorado Party, as an attempt to reduce opposition. Lastly, his popularity started to decline, one of the reasons being the allegations of paternity while he was a bishop. (MARSTEINTREDET; LLANOS; NOLTE, 2013; SOUTO, 2012).

In June 2012, a landless group tried to occupy a contested land supposedly owned by a former Colorado senator. Marsteintredet, Llanos, and Nolte (2013) point that the events are still not clear, but the conflict between the police and the landless led to seventeen deaths. Lugo reacted to that removing the chief of the national police and the Interior Minister, naming a Colorado member to replace him. This maneuver created an additional tension between the president and the Liberals, who were not satisfied with this nomination. In this way, he achieved to put both parties against him, joining themselves in the impeachment process.

This process was led, theoretically, with no infringements to the Paraguayan law. Following the Constitution of Paraguay (PARAGUAY, 1992) in its Article 225, a process of impeachment is valid when the president has a "bad performance of his functions", argument which was used against Lugo. Souto (2012) points to the vagueness of this article, leaving space for different interpretations and conclusions. Equally important is that the article does not specify how long the procedure should last. In the case of Lugo's impeachment process, it lasted for less than 30 hours. On June 2012, he was impeached by the Congress, leaving his position to the Vice-President.

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The international community in South America reacted promptly to it, debating especially over the hurry of the process and the possibility of an institutional coup. On June 29th, in the opening of the presidential meeting of Mercosur, Cristina Kirchner, then president of Argentina, declared that her country saw the impeachment as a rupture in the democratic order, since it was too fast for Lugo to defend himself (NETTO, 2012). In this meeting, the members agreed on suspending Paraguay from the group.

The official presidential declaration of this meeting reinforces that the violation of the principles stated in the Ushuaia Protocol was the reason for the suspension, and Paraguay would return to the group when democracy was again reestablished (MERCOSUR, 2012). Indeed, on August 15th, 2013, a new president was elected in Paraguay, and the country could return to its regular membership in Mercosur. The President of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff, declared that the objective of the sanction was restricted to the recovery of democracy, and therefore no economic sanctions were applied. With a democratic election taking place, the sanction would be ended (RITTNER, 2013).

Although Mercosur understood the impeachment process as a sufficient condition to activate the Ushuaia Protocol, Frizzera (2013) argues that this decision is debatable. Theoretically, all rules specified in the Paraguayan constitution were followed and, as pointed before, no specific duration was required.

Fizzera also states that is hard to tell if there was a rupture in the democratic order when Mercosur does not define what democracy is. So here is space for different interpretations of democracy that can lead to various applications of the protocol, and, most important here, to different interpretations for a “rupture in the democratic order”.

Marsteintredet, Llanos and Nolte (2013) say that the Lugo’s impeachment is an example of an “interrupted presidency”, which is when “an elected incumbent is forced to make an extraordinary exit from power before the end of a constitutionally fixed term”. They argue that an interrupted presidency does not necessarily lead to a rupture in the democratic order, existing what the authors called a “gray zone” between constitutional mechanisms and coups.

Similarly, in an interview with the Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo, the historian Francisco Doratioto declared that the impeachment process represented a politic rupture, but not a coup. He points to the former press freedom and peaceful situation that remained in the country, even though the process being approved. All the procedure, according to him, followed the Paraguayan constitution (CASTANHÊDE, 2012).

Lastly, the suspension of Paraguay might be led by regional reasons. Marsteintredet, Llanos, and Nolte (2013) point that the reactions from Mercosur were not necessarily a demonstration of commitment to its democratic values. The suspension of Paraguay from Mercosur helped the other members of the group to approve the admission of Venezuela, which had not been approved only by Paraguay.

The decision of suspending Paraguay from Mercosur was a result of different causes. The interest of the members to keep the region safe from any undemocratic regimes and maintain the principles of the regional group is one part of it. But it is comprehensible that Paraguay provoked a deadlock to the entry of Venezuela in Mercosur, which could be contoured with the suspension. For this research, important is that the normative basis of the regime of protection of democracy lacks a precise definition of democracy, what makes it difficult to base the decision of the members only on the norms.

The Impeachment Process in Brazil

Not so differently from the Paraguayan case, the impeachment occurred in Brazil in 2016 was also complex and stimulated by domestic disputes of power. Since 2003, the left-wing Workers’ Party (PT) was governing the country, having in the charismatic leadership of Lula da Silva an important pillar for its support. After two terms, Lula chooses Dilma Rousseff as his successor, at first a surprising choice, since few voters knew her before the elections. Gómez and Veiga (2012) explain that Dilma was since 2003 an active member of Lula’s government, first as Minister of Mines and Energy (2003-2005), and afterward as chief of staff (2005-2010). Her participation in important projects was essential to reach the electors, raising her publicity. Most importantly, however, is that a continuity from Lula’s government was clearly stated.

Dilma Rousseff was elected President of Brazil in 2010 in the second round with 56% of the votes, winning it again the opposition party, whose candidate received 44% of the votes (BRAZIL, 2010). The difference of 12% of the votes shows that, although she was not so well known before the elections, she

could manage, together with Lula, to get a good result. Four years later, however, due to a declining popularity, the run for the presidency in 2014 was much more disputed. Nevertheless, Rousseff won once more the elections, but with a subtle difference of only circa 3% to her opponent (BRAZIL, 2014).

The Guardian (WATTS, 2016) showed that her low popularity was a result of two different aspects. The first one was the corruption scandals, which gained the population's attention with the "Car Wash" operation³. The participation of several members of the government in a massive corruption scheme involving the state-owned company *Petrobrás* and possibly the former president Lula generated dissatisfaction in the country. The second aspect was the economic crisis, which hit Brazil during Dilma Rousseff's first term and mobilized part of the population against the president.

The Brazilian constitution (BRAZIL, 1988) in its articles 85 and 86 clarifies the cases in which an impeachment process is acceptable. Although they are briefly mentioned in the constitution, they are also explained and detailed in the law number 1079 (BRAZIL, 1950). The impeachment process is possible when a crime of responsibility exists. They are the ones that are against the constitution, in particular against the existence of the federal union, the political, individual and social rights, the domestic safety of the country, the budgetary law, among others. Once the president infringes one of these cases, the Congress can suspend him or her, transferring the judgment to the Senate or the Court.

In the case of Rousseff's impeachment, she was accused of infringing the budgetary law. She did what is called "pedaling", which happens when the president uses resources destined for a particular use to other purposes, leaving the originally intended purpose uncovered for a period. This operation was against the budgetary law especially because it was not approved by the Congress, and this misuse of resources also led to a false impression of the financial situation of Brazil. Following this situation, the Congress started the impeachment process, resulting in the end of Dilma Rousseff's second term on 31st August 2016 (WATTS, 2016).

Dilma Rousseff's impeachment process was controversial, and different points of view emerged in this debate. In one side, we find the ones who agree with the process. They believe that she indeed committed an infraction to the budgetary law, and should be responsible for it. On the other side, there are the ones who argue that the impeachment process was politically motivated, aiming to the removal of an obstacle to power. Da Silva and Vasquez (2016) assert that Dilma did not perform well the political coordination between her party and its main ally in government (PMDB), party in which both her vice president and the president of the Congress are members. The growing dispute for power could have led to the impeachment, since a letter from the Vice President Temer was published in December 2015 exposing his dissatisfaction with President Rousseff (SADI, 2015). Another political reason for her impeachment was the opposition from some politicians to the "Car Wash" operation (WATTS, 2016).

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³ The Car Wash operation, known in Brazil as *Lava-Jato*, is an investigation lead by the Brazilian federal police since 2008. Since 2014, the main focus of the operation was the contracts made by *Petrobrás* and the bribery among the ruling parties in Brazil (WATTS, 2016).

If domestically the impeachment created an intense debate, internationally, the reaction was different. Although Dilma Rousseff declared that she would try to activate the democratic clause in Mercosur, an article for the newspaper *Valor Econômico* (RITTNER, 2016) shows that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil would not support it. The Minister Mauro Vieira declared that the Ministry should stand apart for any internal political dispute, and therefore would not negotiate an activation of the clause within Mercosur. Also, the possibility of receiving support from other members of the group was very low.

The countries in South America had different opinions about the process. As shown by the website *Agência Brasil* (YANAKIEW, 2016), Argentina declared to respect the decision taken in Brazil and decided to keep the regional integration based on the democratic institutions. Venezuela, on the other hand, supported Rousseff and criticized the impeachment. Paraguay was clearly against the activation of the clause (RITTNER, 2016).

From these different positions, it was clear that the lack of internal and international support prevented Dilma Rousseff from activating the democratic clause in Mercosur. Conclusions about the reasons for this absence of international support can here only be presumed. For example, the role of an economic readjustment in Brazil could be important for Argentina, or the unknown future of Venezuela in the group could also have affected the positions of members. For more accurate conclusions, further research is necessary.

Analysis of regime effectiveness

Using the methodological approach described in the second section and having the background of both impeachment processes occurred in Mercosur, it is possible to analyze the effectiveness of the regime for democracy protection in this group. For both Paraguayan and Brazilian cases, the object examined is the activation of the democratic clause.

For an appropriate use of the methodological scheme proposed, the concepts presented in the clause must be better defined. The nonexistence of precise definitions for “rupture in the democratic order” is a defect of this regime. Since Mercosur itself does not define democratic order, it is hard to expect a consistent behavior from its members. A consensus among the members is difficult when each should find a definition of democracy and rupture.

The comparison between the two cases to reach conclusions about the effectiveness of this regime can be done with two assumptions. First, it can be assumed that a situation when political conflicts lead to institutional maneuvers to change the ruling government and creating a debate about the legitimacy of this process cannot be considered a preservation of the democratic institutions. The expected standard behavior from Mercosur in this situation could be to activate the clause. In this assumption, we could accommodate both impeachment processes in the description above, but Mercosur performed the standard only once, in the Paraguayan case, showing regime ineffectiveness.

In the other side, assuming that the democratic order was maintained since all principles stated in the Constitution for the impeachment process were followed, we should expect the non-activation of the

clause as standard. It is again possible to accommodate both cases in this definition since, when looking to the regimentation, both countries followed the rules, and none should have suffered a suspension from the group. Once more, this standard was performed only once.

Concluding, it is possible to say that the regime could not be effective since it could not give standard responses. It is possible to infer that rules may not have played a major role in the decisions, showing a low commitment to the norms of the regime. Finally, it is important to include in further researches the role of distribution of power and ideologies in the group to understand this instability in behavior.

Concluding remarks

The two impeachment processes are interesting cases, since both were controversial, and generated different responses from the regime established by Mercosur. The inconsistent behavior of the group regarding the democratic clause demonstrates the lack of robustness of this regime. Important terms in the norms are not well defined, leaving space for different interpretations and decisions that may not be based on rules and principles.

Since the regime could not prove its effectiveness, it may be difficult for the group to deal with future questions involving democracy in the region. Additionally, not having a standard reaction to ruptures in democracy (or to debatable institutional maneuvers) may uncertain prognoses on future behaviors.

Lastly, as already pointed, in both cases here examined, it is possible to ask one more question: were the decisions based on the norms or in other factors? The answer to this question might explain the behavior of weak or not effective regimes when members do not necessarily take decisions based on the rules.

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RESUMO

Durante os governos de Cardoso II, Lula e Dilma, a política externa brasileira teve como eixo de atuação destacado a construção de uma integração regional que privilegiava a América do Sul em detrimento de uma integração entre toda a América Latina. Em um esforço de institucionalizar o projeto regional, o Brasil organizou, em 2000, a I Cúpula Sul-Americana, que evoluiu nos anos seguintes, também sob seu empenho, para o nascimento e a operacionalização da UNASUL. Uma das implicações claras desse projeto era a marginalização do México em relação à América do Sul. O artigo procura expor como a política externa brasileira lidou com esse país latino-americano desde 2000 até 2012, ano que viu o lançamento da Aliança do Pacífico contrariar aquela marginalização ao colocar o México em uma aliança com outros países sul-americanos. Verificou-se, no plano bilateral, um discurso diplomático que enfatizava a divisão da América Latina em duas partes e, no plano multilateral, negações de apoio a candidatos mexicanos para cargos de direção em importantes organismos internacionais. Nos dois cenários, foi marcante o uso de mecanismos institucionais para delimitar as disputas de inserção internacional entre os dois países.

Palavras-chave: Política Externa Brasileira; Integração Regional; México.

ABSTRACT

During the governments of Cardoso II, Lula and Dilma, Brazil's foreign policy focused on building a regional integration that favored South America to the detriment of an integration of all Latin America. In an effort to institutionalize the regional project, Brazil organized in 2000 the First South American Summit, which evolved in the following years, also under its commitment, for the birth and operationalization of UNASUR. One of the clear implications of this project was the marginalization of Mexico in relation to South America. The article seeks to show how Brazilian foreign policy has dealt with this Latin American country from 2000 to 2012, a year that saw the launch of the Pacific Alliance oppose that marginalization by putting Mexico in an alliance with other South American countries. At the bilateral level, there was a diplomatic discourse that emphasized the division of Latin America into two parts and, at the multilateral level, denials of support for Mexican candidates for leadership positions in important international organizations. In both scenarios, it was remarkable the use of institutional mechanisms to delimit the disputes of international insertion between the two countries.

Key-words: Brazilian Foreign Policy; Regional Integration; Mexico.