An interesting way to visualize the changing world perspective about Africa in the 21st century is by analyzing two covers of the British journal The Economist: the cover of May 2000 entitled “The hopeless continent” and the cover of December 2011 under the title of “Africa rising” (Veiga and Rios 2014, 4-5). It is possible to add another cover of this journal to the list, the cover of March 2019 called “The new scramble for Africa”. Three covers showing three different views on the African continent: the first presents an Africa with no prospects for the future and plagued by conflicts and hunger; the second considers an Africa with accelerated economic growth; and the last one shows the race of world powers for a part in this region of new human and economic prosperity (Veiga and Rios 2014, 4-5; The Economist 2019b).

The world is increasingly interested in Africa. In addition to the traditional foreign actors in the region – the United States, France, the United Kingdom –, other countries – such as China, India and Turkey – are investing heavily to conquer areas of influence on the continent. Following this interna-
tional trend, as of 2003, Brazil made a considerable economic and diplomatic effort to also build a prominent role in relations with the 54 African countries (Veiga 2013, 4-8; Veiga and Rios 2014, 2-3, 20-21; The Economist 2019a).

However, as much as there is growing international attention in relation to the economic development of African countries, there is insufficient Brazilian academic interest in an economic perspective of relations between Brazil and Africa. There is a limited number of updated academic productions focusing on trade between Brazil and the African continent that tries to understand deeply how this connection is characterized and that seeks to explain the variations of this trade in recent years.

On the other hand, from a diplomatic perspective, it is generally sought to justify – or not – the costs of maintaining a consular structure based on the possible economic returns that can be brought by that initiative to that country (Gallaga 2013, 1; Charleaux 2018, 1). An illustration of this trend was the preparation of Report No. 16, 2016, by the Brazilian Federal Senate, which analyzes, among other points, a possible correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies and the performance of Brazilian exports (Brasil 2016, 34-39).

In order to contribute to the academic deepening of these themes, the objective of this paper is to assess, considering the diplomatic and economic dynamics that have marked the new phase of Brazil-Africa relations since 2003, whether there is a significant correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies in African countries and the increase in Brazilian exports observed for these countries. It is noteworthy that this analysis does not seek to base Brazilian foreign policy on purely commercial objectives, since Brazilian international interests go beyond simple economic logic.

In section 2, the foreign policy for Africa of the three Brazilian presidents active between 1995 and 2016 is analyzed and data are shown on the 19 embassies of Brazil opened in African countries from 2003 to 2013. In section 3, on the other hand, data on exports and imports between Brazil and Africa are considered, which are compared from two perspectives: the value of Brazil-Africa trade and the African percentage share in Brazilian foreign trade. In section 4, data from the previous sections are used to analyze whether there is a correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies in African countries and the increase in exports to these states after the beginning of the diplomatic mission.
Brazilian foreign policy for Africa between 1995-2016

The period between 1995 and 2016 covered in this section encompasses the government of three presidents: Fernando Henrique Cardoso (FHC) (1995-2002); Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010); and Dilma Vana Rousseff (2011-2016). Costa Filho (2018, 81) defines this period as unique in Brazil’s foreign relations “since the Cardoso administration inaugurated a period of unprecedented presidential involvement in foreign policy and the Lula administration, in turn, elevated the relations with Africa to an unparalleled level”.

The foreign policy of the Cardoso government, while it was considerably active in relation to Europe and South America, was not very expressive in African countries (Vilela and Neiva 2011, 72-76; Costa Filho 2018, 81-84, 89, 92). As Costa Filho (2018, 81-84) explained, the main objective of the Brazilian government in relation to Africa was to update its relations with the continent, taking advantage of the more favorable economic context on both sides of the South Atlantic and the existing relations between the two. However, this did not mean prioritizing foreign policy for African countries (Costa Filho 2018, 81-84).

In fact, President Fernando Henrique visited only 3 countries in Africa between 1995 and 2002 (South Africa, twice, Angola and Mozambique, once each) (Costa Filho 2018, 83). It is noted, therefore, that the focus of the presidential agenda was related to Portuguese-speaking countries (Angola and Mozambique) and to a large African economy (South Africa). In an analysis of the importance and frequency of foreign policy issues during the FHC government, Vilela and Neiva (2011, 76-91) concluded that the African continent was one of the least mentioned regions in official pronouncements made at the time. It is not surprising, therefore, that the data obtained from the Department of Africa (Departamento de África, DEAF, in portuguese) (Mello 2019) shows that at least four Brazilian embassies in African countries were closed during this period4, as highlighted by Souza and Souza (2019, 122-123) in a compilation on the establishment and closure of Brazilian embassies in Africa.

With the inauguration of President Lula in 2003, Brazil-Africa relations took a prominent position in Brazilian foreign policy. “The renewed emphasis on South-South cooperation as a priority vector for international insertion and political affirmation of Brazil in the global scenario and the

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4 The closed embassies were: Lusaka, Zambia, in 1996; Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 1997; Lomé, in Togo, in 1998; and Yaoundé, in Cameroon, in 1999 (Mello 2019). More detailed research is needed to ascertain whether there have been other Brazilian embassies in African countries closed during the FHC government and the reasons for each closure.
promotion of Brazilian economic and business interests” were the guides of foreign and economic policy that characterized this period (Veiga 2013, 1).

As stated by Ambassador Paulo Cordeiro de Andrade Pinto (2013, 58), contrary to what had been done until then, Brazil intensified its diplomatic efforts in a generalized way in the African continent, without giving priority only to the big African economies or only to the Portuguese-speaking countries. To this end, measures were taken to increase the number of official visits and meetings with African authorities (Pinto 2013, 58-60). Vilela and Neiva (2011, 76-91), mentioned above, concluded in their research that Africa became the second most cited region in statements by the Lula government, behind only South America. As informed by Melissa Cook (2013, 42), between 2003 and 2010 alone, 12 diplomatic and economic presidential missions were made to African countries⁵, a fact that exposes Lula’s presidential activism in relation to Africa (Costa Filho 2018, 81-84). In addition, the Department of Africa, formerly part of the Department of Africa and the Near East, was created in 2003 (Costa Filho 2018, 82).

This upward trend in Brazil-Africa relations is contained in a broader context of valuing South-South relations, which was a hallmark of the Lula government (Seabra 2014, 77-79). It is noteworthy that the growth trend of South-South relations, especially with Africa, was not restricted to the Brazilian experience, but was part of an international movement to expand diplomatic and economic relations, as was observed in initiatives conducted by countries like China, India and Turkey (The Economist 2019a).

Foreign policy in this period was raised to the center of governmental priorities in order to contribute to the ultimate goal of establishing Brazil as an emerging world power. For that, building alliances with the 54 African countries would be essential. This process sought to recognize the heterogeneity of the countries of the global south and to establish individual and specific relations between Brazil and these actors (Seabra 2014, 77-79).

On the other hand, Dilma Rousseff’s government reduced, in general, Brazil’s international performance, impacting the Brazilian engagement in Africa (Costa Filho 2018, 84). This administration retained initiatives implemented during the Lula government, “but with less intensity and without pro-activity, only seeking to maintain the extraordinary external and bilateral gains seen in the previous period” (Rizzi 2016, 156) with the continued appreciation of South-South relations (Seabra 2014, 79; Costa Filho 2018, 82).

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⁵ Between 2003 and 2014, for African countries, 28 visits were made to 23 countries by ex-president Lula, 67 visits to 31 countries by ex-foreign minister Celso Amorim, 3 visits to 7 countries by ex-president Dilma Rousseff and 20 visits to 13 countries by ex-foreign minister Antonio Patriota (Seabra 2014, 79).
Therefore, even though Africa remained an axis of interest for Brazilian foreign policy, there was a redefinition of priorities for international action in the Dilma Rousseff government (Pereira 2020, 20).

Such a change in foreign policy during the Dilma Rousseff government can be seen both by the reduced number of visits to African countries made during her government and by the reduced number of Brazilian embassies opened in that continent between 2011 and 2016 (Costa Filho 2018, 84-86; Mello 2019).

In any case, it can be seen that the efforts made between 2003 and 2016 had concrete diplomatic effects. In 2013, of the 37 Brazilian embassies in African countries, 19 had been opened or reactivated since 2003 (see Table 1 and Figure 1 below) (Pinto 2013, 59; Seabra 2014, 79). As stated by the British journal The Economist, Brazil is one of the non-African countries that has more embassies in Africa and is the Latin American country with the most diplomatic representations on the continent (The Economist 2019a). The data for African countries with Brazilian embassies are consolidated in the figure below.

Figure 1: Countries with Brazilian Embassies in Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Map of Africa showing Brazilian embassies opened until 2002" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Map of Africa showing Brazilian embassies opened between 2003 and 2013" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Green - Brazilian embassies opened until 2002; Orange - Brazilian embassies opened between 2003 and 2013.

**Source:** Department of Africa (Mello 2019) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Brasil 2020b). Elaboration by the authors.

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6 African countries with Brazilian embassies opened until 2002 are: South Africa, Angola, Algeria, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal, Tunisia and Zimbabwe (Brasil 2020b).
In Figure 1, we highlight the 18 African countries with Brazilian embassies opened until 2002 and the 19 African countries with Brazilian embassies opened between 2003 and 2013, totaling 37 African countries with Brazilian embassies in 2013. It is noteworthy that Brazilian diplomatic efforts also were, in a way, reciprocated by African countries. In 2013, of the 34 embassies of African countries in Brasilia, 18 had been implemented since 2003, making it the capital with the most African diplomatic representations in Latin America (Pinto 2013, 59). The data of the Brazilian embassies opened between 2003 and 2013 are consolidated in the table below.

Table 1: Opening of Brazilian Embassies in Africa (2003-2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening Order</th>
<th>Embassy</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Creation Decree Date</th>
<th>Opening Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>São Tomé</td>
<td>São Tomé and Príncipe</td>
<td>18/03/2003</td>
<td>17/07/2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yaoundé</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>10/02/2005</td>
<td>21/04/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dar Es Salaam</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>11/03/2005</td>
<td>16/06/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Addis Ababa</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>30/09/2004</td>
<td>20/06/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kinshasa</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>09/10/2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cotonou</td>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>06/12/2005</td>
<td>26/09/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Lomé</td>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>22/12/2005</td>
<td>16/11/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Khartoum</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>21/11/2005</td>
<td>04/12/2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lusaka</td>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>08/05/2006</td>
<td>31/01/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Malabo</td>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>21/11/2005</td>
<td>01/03/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Conakry</td>
<td>Guinea</td>
<td>08/05/2006</td>
<td>29/03/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Gaborone</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>19/06/2006</td>
<td>12/06/2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Bamako</td>
<td>Mali</td>
<td>11/10/2007</td>
<td>14/07/2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Ouagadougou</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>11/10/2007</td>
<td>22/10/2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Nouakchott</td>
<td>Mauritania</td>
<td>11/10/2007</td>
<td>11/05/2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 The date of the Decree creating the Brazilian embassy in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, has not been found. However, on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it is reported that the Brazilian embassy in Kinshasa was reopened (at least legally) in 2004 (Brasil 2019a).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opening Order</th>
<th>Embassy</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Creation Decree Date</th>
<th>Opening Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Monrovia</td>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>10/09/2010</td>
<td>25/02/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Freetown</td>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>26/01/2010</td>
<td>30/07/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Lilongwe</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>27/10/2010</td>
<td>06/06/2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Department of Africa (Mello 2019); Access to Information (Brasil 2015, 1-5). Elaborated by the authors.

Table 1 describes the order in which Brazilian embassies are opened in African countries. The data in relation to the opening dates of the embassies were obtained in consultation with the Department of Africa (DEAF) of the Itamaraty (Mello 2019). The dates of the Decree to create the embassies were obtained from the Federal Government’s Access to Information portal (Brasil 2015, 1-5). In Table 1, ‘Date of the creation decree’ refers to the date of publication of the decree in which the President of the Republic determines the creation of a Brazilian embassy in those specific cities and countries. In turn, ‘Opening Date’ refers to the date on which the first Brazilian diplomat accredited to the government of that country arrived in that state. As explained by the Department of Africa (Mello 2019), for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a Brazilian embassy will be politically open with the arrival of the first ambassador or commissioner to the country, regardless of the day of the week or the physical installation of the embassy. It is noticed that there is a difference between the date of the creation decree and the date of opening of the Embassy. This can be explained, among other reasons, by the legal and diplomatic procedures necessary for the opening of a Brazilian embassy in another country (Mello 2019).

As explained earlier, the embassies listed in Table 1 were the 19 Brazilian embassies opened in Africa between 2003-2013. It is important to note, as Costa Filho (2018, 85) pointed out, that the three embassies in African countries opened during the Dilma administration (2011-2016) had been created, by decree, during the Lula government (2003-2010), which again underscores the greater shyness of Dilma Rousseff’s foreign policy in relation to that of her predecessor.

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8 A complete list of decrees to create Brazilian embassies between 2000 and 2015 can be found in the following reference: (Brasil 2015, 1-5).
Brazil-Africa trade relations between 1997-2019

This section briefly analyzes trade relations between Brazil and Africa from 1997 to 2019, a period in which data from the Ministry of Economy (Brasil 2020a) on international trade are available. In this sense, Souza and Souza (2019, 120-137), in a recent study, presented an in-depth economic analysis of the variations in Brazil-Africa trade from 1997 to 2018 and established a possible correlation between the variation in the price of commodities and the value exported by Brazil to the continent, in addition to analyzing in detail the products traded and the volume of exports in the period.

In turn, Seabra (2014, 79-80) suggested that the strong Brazilian diplomatic movement for African countries, symbolized by the opening of Brazilian embassies in Africa, can be seen from another perspective, that of the economic benefits coming from the rapprochement between Brazil and Africa9. In fact, according to data from the Ministry of Economy (Brasil 2020a), it can be noted that there was a positive variation (however inconstant) in Brazil’s trade relations with African countries over the past 20 years. The values of Brazil-Africa trade between the years 1997 and 2019 are consolidated in the graph below.

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9 Seabra (2014, 79-80) and Veiga (2013, 5-9) also defined the potential for expansion of Brazilian companies in the region as another reason for Brazil’s rapprochement with African countries. However, this perspective will not be analyzed in this article.
From the data in Graph 1, it can be seen that there was a significant variation between 1997 and 2019 in trade between Brazil and African countries. Considering Brazilian imports first, it can be seen that they went from a very low level, of 1.8 billion dollars in 1998, to their maximum level in 2013, of 17.4 billion dollars, corresponding to an increase of 957% in the period (in nominal values). However, the Brazilian economic recession that started in the second quarter of 2014 significantly reduced the value of Brazilian imports from that continent, which in 2016 reached a level close to that recorded in 2004 (Institute of Applied Economic Research, IPEA, in its acronym in portuguese, 2019; Brasil 2020a).

10 Current values, that is, not updated by inflation for the period.
11 As an example of the variations that occurred in foreign trade, Ambassador José Vicente de Sá Pimentel (2000, 10) attributed the increase of about 22% of Brazilian imports from 1998 to 1999 to the purchase of oil from Algeria and Nigeria. On the other hand, he related the drop of approximately 19% of Brazilian exports to African countries to the reduction in sugar sales.
A similar logic applies to Brazilian exports, which in 1999 were US$ 1.3 billion and which grew continuously until 2011 – when they reached the maximum value of US$ 12.2 billions – which corresponds to a 917% increase in the period (in nominal values). After that year, there was a significant reduction in exports until 2019, with no recovery of previous levels of exports to African countries (Brasil 2020a).

Even with all the variations in this period, the trade balance between Brazil and Africa was in deficit in most of the years analyzed. Between 1997 and 2015, only for a brief period – in 2009 – Brazil had a slight trade surplus. As of 2016, the country started to have a significant trade surplus, however this is due more to the sharp drop in Brazilian imports from Africa than to the increase in exports from Brazil to the continent (Brasil 2020a).

**Graph 2: Africa’s participation in Brazilian foreign trade (%)**

![Graph 2](image_url)

**Source:** Ministry of Economy (Brasil 2020a). Elaborated by the authors.

Graph 2 shows, in an analysis similar to that made by Souza and Souza (2019, 127-128), about the importance of trade with Africa for the Brazilian trade balance. Graph 2 considers the percentage participation of
African countries in trade with Brazil from three perspectives: total Brazilian foreign trade (blue); total exports (orange); and total imports (grey).

Regarding total Brazilian exports, it can be seen that African countries registered a relatively timid participation throughout the analyzed period, varying from 2.44% in 2000 to the peak of 5.68% in 2009 and returning in 2019 to percentage export levels close to those observed in the 1990s. In turn, there was a greater variation in African participation in Brazilian imports, which increased from 3.16% in 1998 to 9.85% in 2004, gradually decreasing to 3.15% in 2019. African participation in total Brazilian foreign trade, on the other hand, behaved in an intermediate manner, varying from 3.1% in 1997 to 7.1% in 2007 and decreasing to 3.3% in 2019 (Brasil 2020a).

As weighted by Souza and Souza (2019, 128), the perspectives presented in Graph 1 (value of Brazil-Africa trade) and Graph 2 (African participation percentage in Brazilian foreign trade) allow us to reach alternative conclusions – in value and percentage – of the importance of Brazil-Africa trade over the analyzed period (Souza and Souza 2019, 128). For example, considering the percentage share, Africa's most important year in Brazilian exports was 2011 (according to Graph 1), while when considering the exported value, Africa’s most important year in Brazilian exports was 2009 (according to Graph 2). Anyway, it is observed that the importance of Africa for Brazilian exports culminated between 2009 and 2011.

It is noted that trade between Brazil and Africa had considerable variation in the analyzed period. There has been a large increase in trade flows since the late 1990s, but the importance achieved by this trade has been reduced in recent years. That said, it is worth seeking to understand whether the greater Brazilian diplomatic interest in Africa, discussed in section 2, may have had an impact on the increase in Brazil-Africa trade recorded in the 2000s.

Correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies and exports

In this section, the data presented in section 2, on the creation of Brazilian embassies in African countries, and in section 3, on the variations of Brazil-Africa trade, are combined. The objective is to establish whether there is any correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies in African countries and the variation of trade of Brazil – with a focus on exports, an element of greatest importance for the country’s commercial interests – with these countries.
With a similar objective, Report No. 16/2016 of the Federal Senate tried to establish a correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies with the performance of Brazilian exports and with the growth of the Brazilian Gross Domestic Product (GDP), focusing on the period between 2003 and 2015. The Report considered all existing Brazilian embassies and highlighted embassies opened worldwide since 2003. However, the results obtained were not conclusive, finding little or no correlation between the variables, and also considered other embassies in addition to those opened in Africa (Brasil 2016, 35-43). An alternative methodology is then proposed to that used in this report, considering only Brazilian embassies opened in Africa between 2003 and 2013 and focusing on Brazilian exports to such countries.

Therefore, all the data presented in the graphs in this section refer to the 19 countries where Brazilian embassies were opened between 2003 and 2013 (as shown in Table 1). In Chart 3, presented below, the data presented previously are associated and the years of opening of Brazilian embassies in African countries are related to the variation in exports from Brazil. Then, the methodology of the analysis is explained and the results obtained are interpreted.

Graph 3: Aggregate Brazilian exports to the 19 countries analyzed (FOB US $ Million)

Note: Red - period in which Brazilian embassies were opened in the countries analyzed.
Source: Department of Africa (Mello 2019); Ministry of Economy (Brasil 2020a). Elaborated by the authors.
In Graph 3, the aggregate value of Brazilian exports to the 19 African countries in which Brazil created embassies between 2003 and 2013 is defined on the vertical axis. On the horizontal axis, the periods analyzed in relation to the year of opening of Brazilian embassies. The ‘T’ time frame represents the year in which Brazil opened an embassy in an African country and serves as a reference for the other years of analysis, covering four years before and five years after the opening year, thus totaling 10 years of analysis.

Consider, for example, Brazilian exports to São Tomé and Príncipe. ‘T’, in this case, is the year 2003 (see Table 1). ‘T-1’ refers to the year 2002, while ‘T+1’ represents 2004. The same logic is repeated for the previous and subsequent years. The period considered for that country, then, is 1999-2008. For each country analyzed, the periods considered are different, given that it is based on the year of the opening of the Brazilian embassy in that territory. The values of Brazilian exports to the 19 countries analyzed were aggregated in these periods - from ‘T-4’ to ‘T+5’ - in order to allow a general analysis of the data.

The objective with this graph is not to assess the absolute value of the exports themselves, but the variation that occurred before and after the opening of Brazilian embassies in the countries analyzed. As the embassies were created in different years, normalizing the opening year – ‘T’ – was the solution found to allow for a clearer comparison between countries. This analysis also permits to focus only on the variation that occurred and not on the year in which it occurred (only in relation to the year the embassy was opened). In addition, the use of embassies’ opening years – unlike the year of the creation decree (see Table 1) – allows us to effectively analyze when the embassy’s diplomatic work began and if there is any correlation between this fact and the variation in Brazilian exports. Considering the year of the creation decree (most easily obtained) would create a bias in the analysis, because, as highlighted in section 2, the dates of creation and opening of embassies differ (occurring in different years, in most cases).

It can be seen that there was a tendency of increasing Brazilian exports to the countries analyzed after ‘T’, compared to the values of previous years. The value exported by Brazil increased from 224.9 million in ‘T-4’ to 1,248.5 million in ‘T+3’, followed by a slight reduction to 1,127.8 million in ‘T+5’. Therefore, in an aggregate manner, Brazilian exports to the countries analyzed increased after the year of the opening of Brazilian embassies in those states.

However, care must be taken here not to jump to conclusions. There is a correlation between the years following the opening of Brazilian embas-
sies – mainly the first three years – and the increase in exports from Brazil to these countries. However, it is not possible to guarantee, according to the data in Graph 3, whether this increase is due to the opening of the embassy – and the consequent facilitations in communication and commercial promotion – or to other exogenous factors (such as the variation in the price of commodities, the change in the value of the Brazilian Real in relation to the US Dollar etc.). Graph 4, presented below, aims to make this analysis clearer.

Graph 4: Aggregate Brazilian exports to the 19 countries analyzed (1997-2019) (FOB US $ Million)

Note: Red - year in which one or more Brazilian embassies were opened in the 19 countries analyzed.
Source: Department of Africa (Mello 2019); Ministry of Economy (Brasil 2020a). Elaborated by the authors.

Graph 4 shows the aggregated values of Brazilian exports to the 19 countries analyzed. However, differently from what was done in Graph 3, the temporal representation of the data is linear, starting in 1997 and ending in 2019.

This graph allows for a better analysis of whether there is any temporal coincidence that is associated with the frequent correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies and the increase in exports to those

12 See Table 1, the Brazilian embassies opened each year were: 2003 - São Tomé; 2005 - Yaoundé, Dar Es Salaam, Addis Ababa, Kinshasa; 2006 - Cotonou, Lomé, Khartoum; 2007 - Lusaka, Malabo, Conakry, Gaborone; 2008 - Bamako, Brazzaville, Ouagadougou; 2010 - Nouakchott; 2011 - Monrovia; 2012 - Freetown; 2013 - Lilongwe.
countries in the following years. It should be noted that there was an increase in aggregate Brazilian exports to these countries from 46.1 million in 2000 to 1,443.2 million in 2011, representing an increase of 2,027.4% over the analyzed period.

As explained by the analysis in Table 1, it is observed that there is a concentration of embassy opening between the years 2005 to 2008, in which 14 of the 19 embassies were opened. As Brazilian exports to these countries increased between 2000 and 2011, it is not surprising that the years after the opening of most Brazilian embassies were marked by an increase in exports from Brazil to these countries, since there was already a general trend in exports in this direction since the year 2000.

It is observed that there are 4 countries – Botswana, Liberia, Malawi and Sierra Leone – in which there is no clear correlation between the years following the opening of Brazilian embassies and the increase in exports from Brazil to these countries. In these cases, the years after the creation of embassies in general did not coincide with the period of increase in exports from Brazil observed between 2000 and 2011.\(^\text{13}\)

Therefore, there is a frequent correlation between the years after the creation of the embassies and the increase in Brazilian exports, however this upward trend was already observed in years prior to the openings. It is not possible, then, to confidently use this correlation as a causal element that associates the creation of Brazilian embassies in African countries with the increase in exports from Brazil. This increase was possibly caused by other existing exogenous factors (as already explained).

Finally, it is emphasized that the importance of Brazilian embassies abroad cannot be reduced to their contribution – or not – to the increase of Brazilian exports to the countries where they are located. Embassies have strategic importance in international dynamics and their function should not be simplified due to their possible economic role. As defined by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, maintaining a vast network of Brazilian embassies and consulates “is essential to allow the proper execution of foreign policy, ensuring Brazilian participation in the main themes of the international agenda” (Brasil 2019b, 1). The promotion of foreign trade is only one of the diverse functions of the consular network (Brasil 2019b).

As Gallaga pointed out, “establishing or maintaining an embassy is a clear sign to the host government of a commitment to deepening bilateral relations” (Gallaga 2013, 1). In addition, embassies allow diplomatic repre-

\(^\text{13}\) These embassies were created in 2007 (Botswana), 2011 (Liberia), 2012 (Sierra Leone) and 2013 (Malawi).
sentatives of the state to have personal contact with the socio-cultural and administrative context of the other country, in addition to promoting the political, economic, scientific and cultural interests of the country represented (Gallaga 2013, 1; Charleaux 2018, 1).

In this sense, Report No. 16/2016 of the Federal Senate recommended to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in its conclusions, to review the “allocation of diplomatic infrastructure around the world, privileging the location in countries of the south and north that have the greatest chance to generate economic and political dividends for Brazil” (Brasil 2016, 83-84). However, as stated by the report’s author, the economist Humberto Laudares, “saying that an embassy is not necessary, based only on assessments of economic criteria, is nonsense” (Charleaux 2018, 1), but that it would certainly be necessary to measure the performance of an embassy in all the functions assigned to it.

It was considered in the Report that an in-depth investigation of political and geopolitical elements was not carried out on the opening of new embassies. Furthermore, it was concluded that “the number of diplomatic posts in a country seems to respond to idiosyncratic criteria – perhaps political or historical – that do not necessarily reflect the dynamics of the global economy” (Brasil 2016, 42). Therefore, an analysis of purely economic factors is not enough to understand all the elements of the importance of embassies for national interests.

Conclusion

The variation on the brazilian foreign policy objectives and the country’s diplomatic efforts with no precedent for its relations with African countries – mainly during president Lula’s government – were the reason for the opening of 19 brazilian embassies in Africa between 2003 and 2013, more than doubling the number of brazilian embassies in the continent.

This period of diplomatic engagement occurred concomitantly with the increase of Brazilian foreign trade with African countries from the 1990s, which achieved its peak during the following decade. However, the commercial flow between Brazil and Africa in recent years returned to lower levels, both in value and in percentage.

These data were combined to allow the following analysis: is there a correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies in African countries and the variation in exports from Brazil to those countries? By evaluating
the data obtained, it was possible to verify that there is some correlation, but one cannot confidently attribute a causality between the increase in Brazilian exports and the establishment of Brazilian diplomatic missions in these countries, at the same time, this correlation cannot be denied. It is noteworthy that the analysis of diplomatic and economic relations between Brazil and Africa made in this article does not exhaust the necessary elements to assess the possible political and economic importance of an embassy.

From an alternative point of view, another possible analysis of the data presented is inferred: could the creation of Brazilian embassies in African countries be motivated by an already existing increase in exports from Brazil to those countries? In other words, what would lead to the opening of an embassy in a country could be the already existing increase in trade? Further analysis would be necessary to answer this hypothesis.

Furthermore, as concluded by Souza and Souza (2019, 135-137), the variation in the prices of commodities exported by Brazil to Africa would explain a significant portion of the variation in the value exported by Brazil and its difference in relation to the volume exported. Thus, as highlighted in section 4, there are other elements that may have impacted the increase in exports from Brazil to Africa in addition to the opening of Brazilian embassies in the region.

Finally, the reduced amount of academic production updated on the economic relations between Brazil and Africa is a factor that makes research on the subject difficult. More articles are needed, such as the one written by Ambassador José Vicente de Sá Pimentel (2000, 5-23) and the one published by Souza and Souza (2019, 119-137) that analyze the variations of Brazil-Africa trade from period to period and that establish probable causes for the observed variations. In this way, conclusions about Brazil-Africa trade will have more solid grounds to be based.

REFERENCES


ABSTRACT
This article analyzes whether there is a correlation between the opening of Brazilian embassies in African countries and the increase in exports from Brazil to those countries. The change in the objectives of Brazilian foreign policy and the diplomatic efforts of Brazil to deepen its external relationship with African countries were the reason for the opening of 19 Brazilian embassies in Africa between 2003 and 2013, more than doubling the number of Brazilian embassies in the continent. In the same period, there was a considerable increase in trade flows between Brazil and Africa, both in relation to the value traded and the African percentage share in Brazilian foreign trade. After 2011, however, there was a setback to lower levels of trade. It could be seen that there is some correlation between the opening of embassies and the increase in Brazilian exports, but a causality between the increase in Brazilian exports and the establishment of Brazil’s diplomatic missions in these countries cannot be confidently established. The analysis of diplomatic and economic relations between Brazil and Africa made in this article does not exhaust the elements necessary to assess the possible political and economic importance of an embassy.

KEYWORDS:
Brazil-Africa relations. Foreign trade. Embassies.

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