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BRAZIL'S ASPIRATION IN THE UN SECURITY COUNCIL: THE PURSUIT OF A PERMANENT SEAT AND THE LAUNCH OF THE RWP AGENDA

A ASPIRAÇÃO DO BRASIL NO CONSELHO DE SEGURANÇA DA ONU: A BUSCA DE UM ASSENTO PERMANENTE E O LANÇAMENTO DA AGENDA RWP

ABSTRACT: This paper has the following research question: Why hasn't Brazil further advanced the Responsibility while Protecting (RwP) agenda and, instead, eventually abandoned its proactive instance on the matter? The investigation is based on a qualitative approach which aims to deepen the debate around RwP, the Brazilian interests in the security area, especially the pursuit of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, and the reasons and implications behind the abandonment of that proposal. While multiple explanations have been brought up, this paper discusses the hypothesis that the moderation of the country's ambitions, particularly in the security field, played a fundamental role in the change of the Brazilian behaviour towards the RwP.

Keywords: Brazil; United Nations Security Council; Permanent Seat; Responsibility while Protecting.

RESUMO: Este artigo possui a seguinte pergunta de pesquisa: Por que o Brasil não impulsionou a agenda da Responsabilidade ao Proteger (RwP) e, em vez disso, eventualmente abandonou sua instância proativa na questão? A investigação baseia-se em uma abordagem qualitativa que objetiva aprofundar o debate sobre a RwP, os interesses brasileiros na área de segurança, com destaque para a busca de um assento permanente no Conselho de Segurança da ONU, e as razões e implicações por trás do abandono daquela proposta. Embora múltiplas explicações tenham sido levantadas, este artigo discute a hipótese de que a moderação das ambições do Brasil, particularmente no campo da segurança, teve um papel fundamental na mudança do comportamento brasileiro relacionado à RwP.

Palavras-chave: Brasil; Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas; Assento Permanente; Responsabilidade ao Proteger.

1 Introduction

Since the beginning of the 20th century, Brazil has increasingly participated in the international stage, seeking to become a responsible and active actor and to be recognised as an important partner in several areas, such as environment and sustainability, development cooperation, and humanitarian intervention. This dynamism of the Brazilian foreign policy can be traced back to the leadership and pragmatism brought to Itamaraty by José Maria da Silva Paranhos Júnior, also known as Baron of Rio Branco, who was Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1902 and 1912 and is considered the patron of the country's diplomacy.

The Baron of Rio Branco was the first diplomat of the young Brazilian Republic to effectively define a foreign policy strategy for the country, and his principles and guidelines influence Itamaraty until today. In this context, Burns (1967, p. 196) affirms that “the influence of Rio Branco on diplomacy has been profound. In fact, to understand the diplomacy of the largest Latin American nation during this century it is essential to know that statesman and to understand his work”. He revolutionised Brazil's foreign policy through the establishment of four main pillars: peaceful coexistence with South American neighbours; peaceful conflict resolution and respect to International Law; improvement of Brazil's image and prestige abroad; and implementation of a pragmatic Americanism.

During this period, well aware of its military limitations, Brazil sought to increase what would later become known as soft power¹ and aimed to exercise the role of a regional leader in the international stage. To achieve this goal, the country shifted its political axis from London to Washington and began cultivating its relationship with the United States, foreseeing that the newly emergent world power could become an essential partner for its diplomatic aspirations (Burns, 1967).

One of such aspirations, which would be present during the brief existence of the League of Nations and continue to be pursued after the United Nations was established, is the attainment of a permanent seat in the Security Council alongside the great powers. This ambition has persisted throughout the years in Brazil's foreign policy and can be checked in a multitude of international initiatives the country has promoted. However, during the past decade, it has been considerably moderated, weakening, in turn, other projects directly or indirectly related to it. One of these impacted endeavours was the advancement of the Responsibility while Protecting

¹ According to Nye (2004), soft power rests on the ability of a country to attract and shape the preferences of others, and it lies primarily on three sources: culture, political values, and foreign policy.

(RwP) debate, which gained both the attention and the interest of the international society, but failed to go beyond the condition of a proposal, in part, due to the Brazilian relative neglect of the concept afterwards.

In light of the abovementioned context, this paper will address the following research question: Why hasn't Brazil further advanced the RwP agenda and, instead, eventually abandoned its proactive instance on the matter? The main objectives of this investigation are to further deepen the debate around RwP, connecting it to the discussions about key Brazilian aspirations in the security field with a particular focus on the interests involving the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), as well as to contribute to the understanding of the reasons and implications behind the abandonment of the proposal, including in terms of the future of the country's diplomatic strategies.

Multiple explanations have been brought up and become commonly associated with this change in the Brazilian position towards RwP, such as lack of perseverance from the country to resist initial criticism from great powers, weak support from key actors, complex and problematic domestic context, and high diplomatic costs to advance the proposal. Nevertheless, while they are all plausible and valid, as well as may play a role in the Brazilian changed behaviour, they do not go into the heart of the problem. Therefore, the hypothesis advanced in this study is that the core of this issue is the moderation of Brazil's overall international ambitions, especially in the security agenda with matters related to the pursuit of a permanent seat in the UNSC.

In order to deal with the topic at hand, it is considered that a qualitative approach best fits the research pursued here. As Goertz and Starr (2003, p. 15) explain, "the goal of qualitative methods often differs from that of quantitative ones. A corollary to the intensive examination of one or a few cases is the desire to explain why things happened the way they did in those cases". In this regard, this investigation will mainly rely on a historical and explanatory analysis based on published materials and bibliographical data, such as academic papers and books, news articles, and available opinions or statements, in both Portuguese and English.

With that said, this paper will be divided into three main sections, besides this introduction. First, it will promote a historical analysis of the Brazilian ambitions in the context of the League of Nations and the United Nations, bringing to the discussion some relevant aspects of the country's foreign policy. Second, it will contextualise the concepts of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and RwP, as well as discuss Brazil's abandonment of its proactive instance on the RwP agenda and explain its connection to the weakening of the

country's claim for a permanent seat in the UNSC in the 2010s. Finally, it will provide concluding remarks about the discussions held throughout the text.

2 Brazil and its Historical Pursuit of a Permanent Seat in the United Nations Security Council

2.1 The League of Nations, Brazil, and its Partnership with the United States

The League of Nations, headquartered in Geneva and established in 1919 in the aftermath of World War I, is widely considered as the first international organisation with a permanent universal scope and integrated voluntarily by States to constitute a system of collective security while promoting cooperation and guaranteeing peace. According to Azambuja (1995), the notion of collective security back then had a mix of idealism and pragmatism and can be considered as one of the main international contributions of the United States at the time, for it served to counterbalance the realism and the scepticism of European great powers.

In this regard, the League was structured around three main organs – the General Assembly, the Secretariat, and the Council, which had both permanent and non-permanent members – and tried to ensure States would observe international law rules, as well as avoid engaging in war to solve their differences. Nevertheless, despite its contributions to the formation of the League of Nations, the United States ended up not participating in it, which was a major blow to the organisation.

The relationship between the League of Nations and Latin America was important from the start, and many countries from the region, including Brazil, joined the organisation and supported its pacifist ideals. However, these countries gradually lost interest in it, as they felt it was not truly concerned with their aspirations. In 1926, under the presidency of Arthur Bernardes (1922-1926), Brazil became the second country to abandon the organisation, following Costa Rica in the previous year, and the reason for this Brazilian reaction was an objective one: the frustration for not getting a permanent seat in its Council (Garcia, 2000).

Brazil's participation in World War I, though small and limited, was a demonstration of how the country wished to become – and be perceived – as a protagonist in the international stage, even if a regional one. Notwithstanding, Latin American countries did not support the Brazilian case for a permanent seat in the Council, and neither France nor England took the country's intentions seriously (Santos, 2003). For Garcia (2006), there was a clear mismatch

between Brazil's expectations to get a permanent seat in the Council, a situation which would further elevate the country's international status, and the reality of international politics.

It is worth noting that a non-permanent seat in the Council had been granted to Brazil, which was the only nation from the whole American continent to be represented there – at the time, there were no specific rules for such temporary seats, and, as a result, the country was annually re-elected to continue in its position, assuming a place which was originally from the United States as the representative of the Americas (Garcia, 2000). This scenario was both beneficial and problematic to Brazil, and, in the end, its campaign for a permanent seat was launched – and failed – exactly because, in the absence of specific rules, it began to face competition for a place in the Council.

The country's withdrawal from the League of Nations can be seen as another confirmation of its relative distancing from Europe and approximation to the United States. In this regard, Hirst (2009) argues that Brazilian diplomats anticipated that an Eurocentric global order would soon be substituted by an American one, with the United States becoming a powerful actor and, therefore, a valuable ally. Indeed, the first to build a strategy based on this perception was Rio Branco, who was able to develop a “non-written alliance”² with the rising power and avoid the interventions other Latin American nations suffered under the “Big Stick”.³

As Bueno (2003) recalls, the constant effort to increase Brazil's prestige in the international stage during the first half of the last century was based on the understanding that the country occupied a distinctive position in Latin America, and, as a result, it should have a leadership role in foreign affairs. Unsurprisingly, when the United States implemented its “Good Neighbourhood”⁴ policy during the 1930s and the 1940s – amid World War II, it needed

² Expression coined by Burns (1966). The non-written alliance consisted in a pragmatic alignment between Brazil and the United States' interests in the beginning of the 20th century, with the former supporting American policies in the continent, and the latter supporting Brazilian diplomatic goals.

³ This policy was captured by Theodore Roosevelt and, based on an updated interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine called “Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine”, it promoted an aggressive and imperialist foreign policy strategy throughout the American continent. As Burns (1966) demonstrates, it was a very unpopular policy in Latin America, but Brazil did not feel menaced by it and, instead, was seen by the Americans as an important oasis and regional ally of relative stability among other nations going through political and socioeconomic turbulences.

⁴ This policy was led by Franklin Roosevelt and resulted in a strong penetration of American culture in Brazil. As Moura (1984) explains, it was during the 1930s and the 1940s that Brazilians began to incorporate English words in its vocabulary, to drink Coke, to watch Hollywood movies, and to listen to jazz and other American rhythms. Certainly, American cultural penetration continued through spontaneous movements in the following decades, but the policy which originated these contributed in a decisive way for the bilateral approximation. Some landmarks of this period are the success of Portuguese-Brazilian singer and actress Carmen Miranda in the United States, and, in particular, the creation of Brazilian fictitious character Zé Carioca by the Walt Disney Studios, which launched “Saludos, Amigos” in 1942 and “The Three Caballeros” in 1944, making Brazilians feel represented on the big screen alongside the well-known and charismatic Donald Duck and Goofy.

to strengthen its soft power and guarantee its political influence in the region – there was a new wave of close exchanges between the American and the Brazilian parties, this time extrapolating the political sphere and reaching the cultural one. These initiatives aimed to show how the United States and Brazil were good cooperative partners and to stimulate this view on the public.

2.2 Brazil and the United Nations Security Council

When World War II was reaching its end, given this track record with one of the superpowers of the period, Brazil supposed it was a matter of time for it to receive the international acknowledgement it considered it deserved. Brazilian diplomats, under the leadership of President Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945), believed one way to give this recognition to their country was to concede it a permanent seat in the UNSC, correcting, in their view, the mistake made during the 1920s in the context of the League of Nations (Garcia, 2012). Indeed, the great powers did consider giving it the sixth permanent seat in the UNSC; however, they also did not want to excessively expand the Council, and, while Roosevelt was personally sympathetic to Brazil's candidacy, the American Department of State did not endorse it (Garcia, 2012).

To the United States, it would make sense to include Brazil in the UNSC. As Garcia (2011) argues, amongst other factors, Brazil was the most well-positioned nation in Latin America to assume a sixth permanent seat, could be a reliable ally to secure and strengthen American interests in the Council, and would serve Roosevelt's idea to have regional powers represented. Nevertheless, the European powers were afraid that Brazil's accession would generate pressure to include other smaller regional powers in the Council, and its political and socioeconomic future was too uncertain at the time.

After all, between 1930 and 1945, part of the Brazilian Armed Forces was able to consolidate itself inside the military institution, which, in turn, strengthened its power in the society through the idea that politics should be eliminated inside the army, in order to be practiced externally in favour of the institution (Carvalho, 2005). Indeed, as Carvalho (2005) notes, the same institution that sustained Vargas in power for 15 years was responsible for his deposition, in a coup supported by both civil and military elites in Brazil. This also helps to explain the origins of the political, economic, and social structures – in particular, the rise of the army as some kind of “political category” – which resulted in the establishment of the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil between the 1960s and 1980s, as well as the challenges and

adversities the nation has faced since then regarding its relationship with the military and their participation in politics. Moreover, due to the dictatorial regime of Vargas' administration during this period, there was a clear contradiction between the country's participation in World War II, alongside the United States and the democratic values it upheld, and the domestic political reality, a situation which also impacted Brazil's strategy in the international scene (Corsi, 1996).

In order to avoid repeating the failed attempts promoted in the context of the League of Nations – and all the critiques which followed that crisis – Brazil decided to make the case for a Latin American permanent seat in the UNSC, believing that, should it be approved, Brazil would be the one to occupy it (Garcia, 2011). Ultimately, based on the logic to steer clear of another embarrassment involving the permanent seat and in light of an increasing lack of interest from the United States to assist with the strategy, Brazil withdrew its “indirect candidacy” through Latin America and accepted the possibility of a non-permanent seat, which was later confirmed (Garcia, 2011).

After the United Nations was established, the ambition to get a permanent seat in its Security Council became stagnated until the late 1980s, due to changes in the Brazilian foreign policy, as a result of the abovementioned civil-military dictatorship, and to the fact that Brazil and Latin America as a whole were no longer a priority to the United States. In the late 1980s and 1990s, in light of the highly unequal and anachronistic distribution of power amongst international actors, developing countries proposed initiatives to further democratise the international order, and the Brazilian foreign policy accompanied this trend (Cervo; Bueno, 2012).

The consequences of such demands coming from the global South were soon felt in the United Nations, which was demanded to be more representative, democratic and, ultimately, legitimate. Brazil had had several terms in the Security Council as a non-permanent member since 1946, but, when it came back for a new term in 1988-1989, discussions involving the reform of the Council gained traction, as many States considered that the expansion of non-permanent seats from six to 10 in the 1960s was not enough to reflect the new international dynamics (Garcia; Coelho, 2018).

In 1994, Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs Celso Amorim, who would also serve President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003-2010) in this same position, let the Brazilian intentions in the Security Council very clear. In a speech addressed to the UN General Assembly, he opposed the admittance of only Germany and Japan as permanent members in a

future reform, reinforced the idea that Latin America should have a representative in the Council in case of its expansion, and affirmed that “we have clearly stated our readiness to assume all responsibilities required of countries eligible to occupy permanent seats” (Corrêa, 2013, p. 707).

In the following year, under the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002) and during the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, which provided a favourable momentum for reform, Brazil adopted a more nuanced strategy, declining to launch an open campaign for the permanent seat, but demonstrating it was ready for such responsibility, in case it was chosen to assume the position (Lampreia, 1995). Nonetheless, the agenda was not advanced, and the topic would only return with full strength under the presidency of Lula, who was personally invested in diplomatic matters.

Between 2003 and 2008, the number of diplomats grew around 40% in less than 15 years, and Lula created another 35 embassies, as his “administration did not hide that the expansion of its diplomatic body abroad obeys a political logic, with the ambition for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council serving as one of its main backbones”⁵ (Folha, 2009). Moreover, in 2004, the Brazilian leadership of the military command of the United Nations Stabilisation Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) contributed to the country’s arguments that it could take more responsibility in the security field, and the creation of the G4 – composed of Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan – put more pressure for the reform of the UN in its 60th anniversary (Garcia; Coelho, 2018).

Despite a generalised movement to discuss the reform of the Security Council and, more broadly, of the United Nations during the 2000s, nothing really flourished beyond the realm of ideas. As Garcia and Coelho (2018, p. 7) explain, “the Brazilian candidacy peaked with Lula’s first term, de-escalated in the ensuing years, and stayed alive during President Dilma Rousseff’s administration, though mostly in an underground fashion in the eyes of the public” – though, in 2015, she participated in a summit of G4 leaders, the second ever to take place, after the one from 2004.

⁵ Free translation from Portuguese to English made by the author. In the original piece: “o governo Lula não esconde que a expansão de seu corpo diplomático pelo exterior obedece a uma lógica política, que tem na ambição por uma vaga de membro permanente no Conselho de Segurança das Nações Unidas um de seus principais sustentáculos”.

3 The Rise and Fall of the Responsibility while Protecting (RwP) and the Weakening of Brazil's Security Agenda

3.1 Consolidation of R2P and Conceptualisation of RwP

It was under Rousseff's administration that the RwP concept and agenda were launched, flourished, soared, and weakened. Nevertheless, before addressing these issues, it is worth taking a step back to briefly deal with the consolidation of R2P. As Evans and Sahnoun (2002) argue, the debate about intervention for human protection was quite present during the 1990s, especially due to strong critiques involving the UN's instance on the crises in Somalia (1993), Rwanda (1994), and Bosnia (1995), but, in the beginning of the 21st century, the international community began to discuss not a "right to intervene", but a "responsibility to protect".

Indeed, Evans and Sahnoun (2002) promoted a compelling argument about the change in terminology, which moved from "intervention" to "protection" and shifted the approach to sovereignty from "control" to "responsibility". In 2005, when the United Nations was celebrating its 60th anniversary, its member States reached an agreement during the World Summit to support R2P. In this regard, Welsh (2019, p. 53-54) explains the three pillars which constitute the R2P:

The first, set out in paragraph 138 of the Summit Outcome Document, is the primary responsibility of states to protect their own populations from genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing, and the responsibility to prevent the occurrence of these acts. The second, in paragraph 139, is the pledge by States to assist each other in fulfilling their protection responsibilities. And finally, as members of a broader international community, states declared their readiness to take collective action, in a timely and decisive manner, if any state were "manifestly failing" to protect its population from atrocity crimes.

The concept is not free of critiques. Some have mentioned R2P is unworkable because it lacks clear standards and could be expanded to embrace intervention on many instances (Pape, 2012), others, that it is nothing more than a slogan without any real meaning or utility (Hehir, 2010), and there are also those who affirm it is just another form of State response dictated by rational calculations based on self-interest (Murray, 2013). While this last point can still incite relevant and positive debates in the international society, the United Nations (2009, p. 8) has already tackled the first one and stated that R2P "applies, until Member States decide otherwise, only to the four specified crimes and violations [...] To try to extend it to cover other

calamities [...] would undermine the 2005 consensus and stretch the concept beyond recognition or operational utility”.

The second abovementioned critique deserves a brief, but deeper discussion. To reduce R2P to a mere slogan is to undervalue its normative impact, and constructivist theory can help clarify its relevance. In this sense, Finnemore (1996, p. 154; p. 178) has conducted excellent research in which she shows that “shifts in intervention behavior correspond with changes in normative standards articulated by states”, as well as concludes that “by the twentieth century, not only does multilateralism appear to be necessary to claim humanitarian justifications but sanction by the United Nations or some other formal organization is also required”. Furthermore, it is worth noting that “norms rarely evolve in isolation. Rather, they can intersect with other principles to gather force” (Grech-Madin, 2021, p. 87), and this is particularly important because R2P arose out of political considerations before becoming a consistent, complex norm embedded in the international security system associated with humanitarian law (Welsh, 2019).

Truly, the case of Libya was an important landmark for the evolution of the debates around the responsibility to protect. In 2011, the UNSC adopted Resolution 1973, which called for all necessary measures to protect civilians and marked a change in the attitude toward the concept, as it was the first time the Security Council authorised the use of military force for human protection purposes against the will of a functioning State (Bellamy, 2011). In this context, some Council members, including Brazil, remained sceptical about the use of force and abstained in the vote of the resolution, and the discussions began to focus not on whether to act, but on how to act (Bellamy, 2011).

Truth be told, Brazil had been reluctant to even adopt the language of humanitarian “intervention” since the end of the Cold War, fearing the return of some kind of colonial attitudes in a unilateral world under the hegemony of the United States, and it has historically been sceptical regarding the use of military force to resolve international security matters (Stuenkel; Tourinho, 2014). It is important to note that, in 2011, Brazil was serving as President of the UNSC, and this year was also the first one in which all BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) were members of the Security Council.

Therefore, Brazil had reasons to be confident about its leading position on debates about R2P and to engage in the normative arena, given its opportunity to receive more recognition in the field and boost its international prestige and soft power. As Stuenkel and Tourinho explain (2014, p. 391-392), when France, the United Kingdom, and the United States indicated they

would not stop until there was a regime change in Libya, Brazil reacted to what it saw as an abuse of the mandate in the country:

Led by Antonio Patriota himself, Brasília drafted a concept note entitled *Responsibility While Protecting: Elements for the Development and Promotion of a Concept*. The document was intended as an addendum (and not a substitute) to the concept of R2P and established three main contributions to international public debate about the concept. The proposal contained no revolutionary ideas, and was articulated based on long-standing elements of debates about humanitarian aid and the use of force: the principle of ‘do no harm’ (*primum non nocere*) and the articulation of the use of force as a last resort (*ultima ratio*).

In addition to a genuine desire to further contribute to the development of R2P and enhance its procedures of monitoring, assessment, and accountability, Brazil wanted to be perceived as a bridge-builder by the international society, especially within a potentially reformed UNSC (Stuenkel; Tourinho, 2014). Indeed, the RwP initiative shows how normative debates originating from emerging powers could challenge the status quo, and it also “represents the culmination, to date, of Brazil’s engagement with questions of intervention and of normative aspects of its quest for greater global influence”, as well as “marks the first systematic, conceptually grounded attempt by a developing-world voice to bridge the increasing gap between mounting acceptance of R2P’s principles and growing discontent over the manner of its implementation” (Kenkel; Stefan, 2016, p. 41; p. 42).

Throughout the years of 2011 and 2012, Rousseff and Brazilian diplomats made various statements about RwP, which provoked an intense political debate among the States. The initial response to the proposal was so remarkable that it surprised Itamaraty, which had to deal with both praise and criticism – in this latter case, particularly from the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, which felt RwP was a direct criticism of the way they had conducted the Libya intervention. However, in the following months, most early critics dropped their opposition to the concept and were convinced by Brazil’s proposal (Tourinho; Stuenkel; Brockmeier, 2016).

With that said, “RwP effectively succeeded in widening the debate about R2P [...] The global response to the idea of responsible protection became most visible in February 2012. At the time, Brazil hosted a meeting at the UN with the objective of further debating its idea” (Tourinho; Stuenkel; Brockmeier, 2016, p. 142). Nevertheless, despite an immense surge in its popularity and legitimacy, as well as the successful contributions made by RwP to the normative trajectory of R2P, especially in terms of implementation, RwP has remained a more

abstract proposal since 2011-2012, due to both international factors and the fact that Brazil stopped pushing the agenda (Tourinho; Stuenkel; Brockmeier, 2016).

3.2 The Weakening of Brazil's Case for a Permanent Seat in the Security Council and the Country's Retreat from the RwP Agenda

The relative abandonment of the RwP initiative by Brazil is a curious case which deserves to be further analysed. Since this retreat began to be perceived, many scholars have tried to come up with explanations to this new Brazilian position, most of them in a quite valid way. The case raises even more curiosity when one considers that, although, in the previous decade, Brazil had emphatically expressed its intention to get a permanent seat in the UNSC, it rarely proposed concrete diplomatic initiatives in the Security Council (Benner, 2013), so the RwP ended up being an immense wasted opportunity to effectively prove the country's potential and value there.

Alongside Japan, Brazil was the country which had most terms as a non-permanent member of the UNSC, having been elected in 10 occasions as the Latin American representative until the launch of the RwP agenda: 1946-1947; 1951-1952; 1954-1955; 1963-1964; 1967-1968; 1988-1989; 1993-1994; 1998-1999; 2004-2005; and 2010-2011 (Ziemath, 2016). Ziemath (2016) highlights that, for this last term, and for the first time, Brazil was accompanied not only by the BRICS countries at the Security Council, but also by the G4, reflecting what could be its dynamic if new permanent members were to be added.

According to Kenkel and Stefan (2016, p. 43), “despite frequent election to the Security Council, prior to the submission of the RwP concept note, Brazil did not consistently play a prominent role in peace operations or in UN debates on intervention”. At the same time, as Hirst (2015) argues, the reiterated presence of the country in the UNSC allowed it to mature its positions in face of the neo-interventionist normative formulations pushed forward by Western powers.

The fact is that, despite the strong pursuit of a permanent seat in the UNSC during the 2000s, Brazil did not grab the opportunity the RwP agenda presented to strengthen its claim. One of the explanations commonly presented is that, in her speech at the UN General Assembly in September 2012, Rousseff failed to offer any new way to advance discussions involving RwP, and another one is that Brazilian leaders evaluated the costs and benefits of the situation and decided it was not worth it to follow such a strategy (Benner, 2013). In this sense, Spektor (2012) argued that Brazil was not used to participate in the intense clashes which mark the

definition of rules about security issues, indicating it was not well-prepared for the criticisms it received and the challenges which arose from the proposal.

Regarding Rousseff's speech, while it may have contributed to slow down the international euphoria associated with RWP, given the lack of any new advancements in the topic from its sponsor, it hardly serves as a main and direct cause for the subsequent Brazilian retreat. Similarly, the cost-benefit analysis would be a plausible explanation for the weakening of the country's initial proactiveness and support of the proposal, but it fails to tackle the reason for an almost absolute abandonment of it, with only sporadic mentions about it in the following years – just when criticisms had diminished, and the concept not only gained more support, but also came to be considered one of the most important developments in the R2P debate. Moreover, while Brazil did receive criticism when it launched RWP, it was also strongly criticised after it retreated from dealing with the proposal, so disapproval also cannot be a significant reason for the revision of the Brazilian position; otherwise, it would have maintained at least a minimally accepted level of engagement on the matter, in order to mitigate the problem.

For some Brazilian diplomats, the main cause for the country's retreat was that, after 2011, it was no longer a member of the UNSC, a challenging situation for Brazil to make its voice to be heard like before regarding security issues and for it to influence the shaping of norms (Kenkel; Stefan, 2016). Furthermore, it is argued the advancement of RWP was possible, in large part, due to Patriota's personal interest and entrepreneurship on the subject – he left the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs in August 2013 – given Rousseff's notorious disinterest in Brazilian foreign policy and international relations (Kenkel; Stefan, 2016). Tourinho, Stuenkel and Brockmeier (2016, p. 143; p. 149) also point out the difficult international context at the time:

While the Brazilian government continued to insist on the importance of the issue, the promotion of RWP as a concept had ceased to be a priority by mid-2012. [...] In fairness, it was not an easy context: the Syrian crisis made the discussion toxic in policy circles, and there was limited appetite in much of the global south to support a proposal that effectively, if implicitly, recognised the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention under certain circumstances. In Europe, few were willing to explicitly challenge French and British positions and side with a southern emerging power perceived to have very specific interests in Security Council reform.

Despite some challenges in the international stage, however, Stuenkel and Tourinho (2014) recognise that, still in 2012, RWP gained substantial backing from traditional R2P supporters and was an essential aspect of the debate about R2P, a reality which later minimised

the impact of such an international context on Brazil's position. Additionally, it is worth noting that, from 2013 onwards, the Brazilian and the international economic and political landscapes went through relevant transformations, and the challenges faced by Rousseff were greater than those faced by Lula (Saraiva, 2014). Notwithstanding, this scenario did not stop Brazil from pursuing other objectives beyond the security agenda that it considered fundamental for its global insertion, such as hosting the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, when it led discussions and commitments involving environmental matters, and launching the New Development Bank in 2014 during the VI BRICS Summit, which was held in Fortaleza, Brazil.

As for the other arguments, it is relevant to consider that, even though more efforts might be needed to achieve a goal while being outside the Security Council, this does not incapacitate a State and its diplomats to push for an agenda. Such an argument could even be considered an evasion of responsibility, and it has not stopped Brazil from promoting its advocacy in a wide range of issues throughout the years, from sustainable development to human rights.

Undoubtedly, even the more technical or institutional work promoted by Itamaraty – which is part of the State and may be impacted by different political scenarios, including the diverse shifting groups governing the nation – has, naturally, political foundations. Nonetheless, even if the RWP proposal was advanced in large part due to Patriota's personal interests, Brazil began to retreat in its position before he left the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, even if this was not the case, Itamaraty has a solid institutional capacity and would be perfectly capable to promote the agenda, if it really was a priority, both in political and technical terms.

Here lies the problem: Seeing the Rousseff administration – under which RWP saw its birth and relative demise – as a constant in terms of the government's general political and ideological approach to foreign policy, it is possible to verify that the RWP was never a true priority for Brazil and did not enjoy an effective, systematic approach to it. In this regard, while all the abovementioned factors are valid and may have contributed to the relative abandonment of the RWP agenda, as demonstrated, they do not fully explain it. The root cause, it is argued here, lies in the moderation of Brazil's international ambitions in the international stage, a moderation which, first and foremost, impacted the country's aspirations in the security agenda. After all, as Kenkel and Stefan (2016) and Spektor (2012) indicate, and as historical developments have demonstrated, security debates and practices were not exactly the strongest part of Brazil's international presence –, especially, the aspiration related to the permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. This reality, in turn, ended up impacting the country's

behaviour towards RWP, weakening its willingness and ability to further advance the proposal, as well as undermining the political interests and goals which could benefit from it.

Undoubtedly, Rousseff inherited from Lula several clear and well-defined foreign policy strategies, but, while Itamaraty's key political goals remained relatively stable, at least formally, Brazil's behaviour and overall ambition went through some revisions, including a reduced proactiveness and global protagonism (Saraiva, 2014). Indeed, while Lula sought to incentivise and articulate Brazil's foreign policy and its global projection, Rousseff showed many times her preference to deal with domestic issues – as previously mentioned, her disinterest for international affairs was quite apparent – and, more importantly, for tangible short-term goals (Saraiva, 2014).

Since international prestige and recognition for participation in security matters are usually long-term goals which demand a wide range of efforts, the Brazilian aspirations associated with this field, in particular, were significantly moderated. As Saraiva (2014) argues, although the pursuit of a permanent seat in the UNSC was not forgotten during Rousseff's presidency, it lost momentum, particularly if compared to Lula's term. As Brazil became less proactive in the international stage and moderated its ambitions related to the security agenda in favour of other short-term goals, there would be no strong reasons to support and further advance the RWP agenda.

This is where a cost-benefit analysis should come into place: If the permanent seat was a priority in Rousseff's administration, the RWP agenda would also be, and it would be worth it to push for the proposal to be further developed, accepted, and internalised. The consolidation of RWP could have been a great opportunity for Brazil to establish itself as a leading norm shaper from the global South, contribute to an area historically dominated by Western powers, and get closer to its historical ambition in the Security Council.

The linkage between the quest for the permanent seat and the RWP proposal – and how the former impacts the latter – is so clear – and yet so underdeveloped – that, when the country launched the RWP proposition, even the media stated that “the concept of ‘responsibility while protecting’, presented by Brazil in the United Nations, can be the new weapon in its campaign to conquer a permanent seat in the Security Council”⁶ (Corrêa, 2011). This perception seems to indicate that RWP was not necessarily a goal in itself, but a means to achieve bigger, more important objectives in international politics.

⁶ Free translation from Portuguese to English made by the author. In the original piece: “O conceito de ‘responsabilidade ao proteger’, apresentado pelo Brasil às Nações Unidas, pode ser a nova arma do país em sua campanha para conquistar uma vaga permanente no Conselho de Segurança”.

4 Conclusion

The debate around RWP still is an important one, because it is a symbol of a developing nation's resistance to the normative dominance of great powers, particularly in a time when the global South has gained prominence in the international stage. Therefore, this paper sought to investigate why Brazil has not advanced the RWP agenda and eventually abandoned its proactive instance on the matter.

The main argument throughout the text was that the moderation of Brazil's international ambitions, particularly in the security agenda, and especially the one related to the permanent seat in the Security Council, was determinant to the country's changed behaviour towards the RWP proposal, impacting its consolidation and proper development as a norm. Because the main goal was not necessarily the full development of RWP, but something higher and more difficult to achieve, when both general and specific diplomatic aspirations were moderated, the proposal had its importance reduced.

Out of the Security Council in 2012, given the end of its 2010-2011 term, and with no intention to push for the permanent seat as before, Brazil proceeded to a controlled retreat regarding the RWP proposal. Indeed, the decline in the country's ambitions, especially those associated with security issues and the pursuit of a permanent seat, ended up undermining the advancement of and the investment on the RWP agenda. With that said, there are other relevant points to have in mind related to the discussion proposed here.

The three moments in Brazil's history when it put the biggest efforts to get the permanent seat were under Bernardes' presidency in the 1920s, under Vargas' presidency in the 1940s, and under Lula's presidency in the 2000s. To be fair, the matter was also pursued during the 1990s, but in a less clear and public way. In all these situations, Brazil had Presidents who personally supported and pushed for the country to become a regional or global protagonist, including in international security matters and particularly when it came to the quest for a permanent seat in the Security Council.

Besides the significance that a leadership has had to advance this historic objective, in all these moments, Brazil was in the spotlight, either openly promoting its candidacy for the permanent seat before the United Nations was established in the aftermath of World War II or being an active non-permanent member of the Council – in the 1920s, still under the League of

Nations, and in the 1990s and 2000s, already under the UN. Possibly, being in the UNSC and having a president personally invested in international affairs give a morale boost for the country to strengthen its claims and to be more vocal about its ambitions. At the same time, not having these two combined configurations seems to put its aspiration in a more dormant mode, with the nation waiting for the next opportunity to prove its value and renovate its position.

This paper does not have the intention to have the final word on this debate. Quite the opposite, as seen above, there is a gap to be filled by further research involving the Brazilian strategies in the security field, especially when related to the pursuit of a permanent seat in the UNSC, the RWP agenda, and the specific impacts the country's leaders and its presence in the Security Council have had on these matters. The future looks promising for conducting such an investigation.

On January 1st, 2022, after a 10-year hiatus, Brazil returned to the UNSC as a non-permanent member, and, for this 2022-2023 period – its 11th term at the Security Council – the Brazilian Ambassador at the United Nations, Ronaldo Costa Filho, has already stated that the UN reform will be one of the country's priorities (United Nations, 2022). Additionally, in October, the country went through presidential elections, which were won by Lula. In his first speech to the population as president-elect, amongst other matters, he stated that “we will fight again for a new global governance, with the inclusion of more countries in the UN Security Council and the end of the veto right, which undermines the balance between nations” (G1, 2022).

Throughout 2023, Brazil will still be in the UNSC, and it has again a President who is (or, at least, was, during his two terms in the 2000s) very proactive in foreign affairs. It will be interesting to examine if, and how, the country will effectively continue to pursue the permanent seat, as Lula's speech suggests. Moreover, it will be interesting to check if the country will maintain or change its current course regarding the relevance given to responsibility while protecting and international security issues in general, especially after a period marked by global tensions, such as the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War, and by strong domestic political, economic, and social challenges, in particular, the ones arising from the outrageous events of January 8th, 2023, widely referred as *intentona bolsonarista*.

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