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## The relations between Brazil and the African Continent: a summary of legislative debate between 2003 and 2016

*As Relações entre o Brasil e o Continente Africano: Uma Síntese do Debate Legislativo entre 2003 e 2016.*

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the legislative behavior regarding Brazilian foreign policy (PEB) towards Africa during the administrations of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff (2003-2016). It starts from the argument that the Legislature can synthesize the positions of various strategic sectors of society in its performance, resulting in an important arena for understanding the discussion about the political agenda for the continent through closer dialogue with domestic actors. This research examines documentary sources from the National Congress and diplomacy between 2003 and 2016. The results achieved suggest a debate within the Legislature on African politics, although still in a timid manner and supported by the actions of the Executive. Furthermore, the discussion on relations between Brazil and the continent reveals a particular intensification of the political polarization that has been guiding the political arena.

**Keywords:** Brazil-Africa Relations; Brazilian foreign policy; Legislative and Foreign Policy

**Resumo:** Este artigo analisa o comportamento legislativo quanto à política externa brasileira (PEB) para a África durante as presidências de Lula da Silva e Dilma Rousseff (2003-2016). Parte-se do argumento de que o referido Poder tem a capacidade de sintetizar em sua atuação as posições de diversos setores estratégicos da sociedade, resultando em uma importante arena para entender a discussão acerca da agenda política para o continente a partir de um diálogo mais estreito com atores domésticos. Esta pesquisa é realizada através do exame de fontes primárias do Congresso Nacional e da diplomacia correspondentes ao período entre 2003 e 2016. Os resultados alcançados indicam um debate do Legislativo acerca da política africana, embora ainda de forma

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tímida e apoiada nas ações do Executivo. Além disso, o debate sobre as relações entre o Brasil e o continente também sente a intensificação da polarização política que vem norteando o espaço político do país.

**Palavras-chave:** Relações Brasil-África; Política externa brasileira; Legislativo e política externa.

**Introduction**

The subdiscipline of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) contributes to International Relations with a significant focus on the stages of foreign policy formulation and execution, influenced by various domestic factors (Carlsnaes, 2013; Hill, 2003). In this context, this study seeks to answer how the Brazilian legislature behaves regarding Brazilian foreign policy (BFP) towards Africa during the presidencies of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff. It starts from the argument that the legislature synthesizes the positions of various strategic sectors of society in its actions (Figueira, 2011), resulting in an important arena for understanding the foreign policy discussion. This research is conducted through the examination of primary sources from the Brazilian National Congress and diplomatic communications - documentation corresponding to the period between 2003 and 2016.

This research starts from the concept elaborated by Hill (2003), according to which foreign policy is a set of foreign relations conducted by an independent actor, particularly by the State, through its internal capacity to mobilize interests and state and non-state actors in pursuit of an international strategy. Further conceptualizing foreign policy, one must recognize its nature as public policy (Milani & Pinheiro, 2013; Lima, 2000; Canson & Power, 2009; Faria, 2012). This means understanding that the processes of formulation and implementation have intrinsic elements to any political dynamics: the results are government choices with the support of coalitions, through bargaining, disputes, and agreements among representatives of various interests in society (Lima, 2000; Milani & Pinheiro, 2013).

This contribution to understanding foreign policy as public policy reveals a more recent face of Brazil, in which the Executive - more precisely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty) - despite its centrality in foreign policy formulation and implementation, works in conjunction with a plurality of actors. In this process, the legislators can intervene before or after the production, execution, and monitoring of foreign policy (Silva & Spohr, 2016; Anastasia et al., 2012). However, few of them show

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interest in international relations, with a prevailing context of ratification of Executive decisions (Silva & Spohr, 2016; Lima & Santos, 2001), a consideration not disregarded in this work.

Thus, this article is divided into four sections: the first presents a literature review on the Brazilian legislature as an actor in foreign policy; in a second moment, we discuss the interests and ideational aspects that permeate legislative action towards BFP for Africa, based on a literature review and qualitative content analysis of parliamentary activity transcripts. Subsequently, the practices of the relationship between the Foreign Ministry and the parliament are analyzed through qualitative content analysis of the series of diplomatic communication - the results of which are reported in triangulation with the content of the previous sections. Finally, the conclusions are presented.

**Actors: legislators and the Brazilian foreign policy**

The Brazilian coalition presidentialism model, widely discussed in the literature (Santos, 2002; Figueiredo & Limongi, 1998; Oliveira & Onuki, 2010; Amorim Neto, 2006), requires that the Executive and the Legislature build a consistent coordination base in a multipartisan context, shaping majorities in Congress to ensure governability. As a result of this practical model, coalition formation divides the Parliament between the governing coalition and the opposition, allowing the Executive to negotiate support directly with parties, party factions, or ad hoc alliances (Santos, 2002)<sup>3</sup>.

Specifically concerning Brazilian foreign policy, it is expected, based on the constitutional and regulatory framework of the legislative houses, that parliament acts as a check and balance on the actions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty). To achieve this, legislators have a range of mechanisms at their disposal. They are allowed to propose matters to the Executive branch, seek advice from the Committee on Constitution and Justice regarding their roles in foreign policy, introduce and discuss propositions through thematic committees, formally request information, summon authorities for clarifications and oversight, monitor and scrutinize the execution under the responsibility of the Executive branch (Silva & Spohr, 2016; Anastasia et al., 2012).

Silva and Spohr (2016) identify the Senate's Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Defense (CRE) and the Chamber of Deputies' Committee on Foreign Affairs

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to highlight that the object under analysis here encompasses legislative daily routines within these dynamics, rather than party programs and their ideological specificities.

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and National Defense (CREDN) as the main platforms for discussing Brazilian foreign policy in the Legislature. The former can request information, signaling preferences to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE), and approving the appointment of heads of diplomatic missions, ambassadors, and representatives to international organizations. The latter, on the other hand, makes recommendations; holds public hearings with intellectuals, diplomats, and other stakeholders engaged in specific agendas; receives the Chancellor for accountability and discusses bills. In short, it delves more deeply into ideational elements relevant to strategic choice. The standard procedure for approving international acts is that they first go through the Chamber of Deputies through its committees and plenary, and then the act follows the same process in the Federal Senate (Diniz, 2012).

In addition to the Committees, it is worth mentioning the existence of Parliamentary Fronts, through which various parties come together to discuss topics of societal interest under the coordination of a legislator and with a composition of at least 1/3 of members of the Legislative Branch, along with representatives from civil society and other branches of government (Brasil, 2019b). During the period under study here, several Fronts were organized to discuss Afro-Brazilian agendas, many of them with domestic focuses. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy (Table 1) how legislators understood the transnational nature of the discussion on Africa and race. From these Fronts, it is possible to discern the role of the Workers' Party (PT) in the coordination because out of the 10 identified, 8 were authored by PT deputies and had a good capacity to mobilize a substantial number of legislators from other parties, as systematically documented in Table 2.

**Table 1 – List of Parliamentary Fronts with Afro-Brazilian themes in the legislatures corresponding to the period between (2003-2016)**

<b>Year of Formalization</b>	<b>Parliamentary Front (ENG)</b>	<b>Parliamentary Front (POR)</b>	<b>Coordinator /President</b>	<b>Signatory Deputies</b>	<b>Signatory Senators</b>
2003	Defense of Racial Equality	Defesa da Igualdade Racial	Luiz Alberto - PT	N/A	N/A
2007	Racial Equality	Igualdade Racial	Carlos Santana - PT	N/A	N/A

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2008	Support for African Countries	Apoio aos Países Africanos (FPAPA)	Regis de oliveira - PSC	N/A	N/A
2008	Defense of Quilombos	Defesa dos Quilombos	Vicentinho - PT	N/A	N/A
2010	Defense of Capoeira	Defesa da Capoeira	Marcio Marinho -PR	218	0
2011	Front for Racial Equality and in Defense of Quilombolas	Frente Mista pela Igualdade Racial e em Defesa dos Quilombolas	Luiz Alberto - PT	201	9
2011	Defense of African Countries	Defesa dos Países Africanos	Edson Santos -PT	211	0
2013	Support for the creation of the Afro-Brazilian Museum in Brasília, Federal District	Apoio à criação do Museu Afro-brasileiro em Brasília-DF	Edson Santos - PT	213	0
2015	Defense of Traditional African-Descendant Peoples	Defesa dos Povos Tradicionais de Matriz Africana	Erika Kokay - PT	209	0
2015	Brazil-Africa Front with Popular Participation to Confront Racism	Frente Mista Brasil-África com Participação Popular de Enfrentamento ao Racismo	Benedita da Silva - PT	196	3

Source: Compiled based on Brasil (2019b).

**Table 2 – List of Parliamentary Fronts and the list of parties with signatory members  
Frente Parlamentar em Defesa dos Países Africanos (2011) /Parliamentary Front in Defense of African Countries (2011)**

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PROS, PP PMDB, PTB, DEM, PSB, PCdoB, PT, PDT, PSC, PSDB, PR, SD, PV, PMN, PSOL, PRB.
<b>Frente Parlamentar em Defesa dos Povos Tradicionais de Matriz Africana (2015) / Parliamentary Front in Defense of Traditional African-Descendant Peoples (2015)</b>
PT, MDB, PR, PP, PDT, DEM, PTB, PSD, PCdoB, PSC, PPS, PRB, SD, PSDB, PODE, PSOL, PSL, PSB, PPS, PROS, REDE, PODE
<b>Frente Parlamentar Mista Brasil-África com Participação Popular de Enfrentamento ao Racismo (2015) / Parliamentary Front Brazil-Africa with Popular Participation in Confronting Racism (2015)</b>
PT, MDB, PR, DEM, PP, PTB, PCdoB, PSB, PDT, PSC, PRB, PSD, PPS, SD, PODE, PSOL, PSDB, PR, PV, PHS

Source: Compiled based on Brasil (2019b)

Fonte de dados: Elaboração própria com base em Brasil (2019b).

Although the data above suggest the prominence of the Workers' Party (PT), it is important to emphasize the broader trend of building relations with the African continent, as evidenced by the bilateral parliamentary groups in operation since 1989 (Table 3). These bilateral groups formalize relations between the National Congress and foreign parliaments and are established through resolutions passed in the plenary of the Chamber of Deputies (Brasil, 2019b). In the 1990s, relations were established with legislators from countries with diverse profiles and locations within the African continent. The initiatives that have taken place since 2003 continue and expand the parliament's relationship with Africa.

**Table 3** – List of Bilateral Parliamentary Groups with African Countries until 2016

Year of Creation	Bilateral Parliamentary Group
1989	Brazil/Angola
1993	Brazil/South Africa
1993	Brazil/Morocco
1993	Brazil/Senegal
1997	Brazil/Egypt
1999	Brazil/Cabo Verde
2000	Brazil/Libya
2003	Brazil/Cameroon
2004	Brazil/Africa

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2005	Brazil/Algeria
2006	Brazil/Mozambique
2008	Brazil/Nigeria
2013	Brazil/Kenya

**Source:** Compiled based on Brasil (2019b).

Despite the diversity of initiatives, literature perceives legislative action as suboptimal when it comes to international affairs. Among other factors, it is argued that this may be due to the Executive's strength in shaping agendas and acting independently (Lima & Santos, 2001; Figueira, 2011; Diniz, 2012; Anastasia et al., 2012), or that foreign policy does not maximize electoral results for legislators (Diniz & Ribeiro, 2008). The Executive's agenda-setting capacity suggests an extension of the bureaucratic insulation thesis of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty) (Cheibub, 1985; Faria, 2012) and its implications for the limited domestic debate on foreign policy. After all, there is always the shadow of an Executive highly qualified for conceiving international relations without resorting to other actors, even though one might consider the impossibility of insulation to such radicality (Silva & Spohr, 2016; Diniz & Ribeiro, 2008).

From another perspective, Figueira (2011) argues that there is a historical tendency for limited legislative action, which can be observed in the Brazilian Constitutions since 1824. In the first Constitution, foreign policy responsibilities were primarily concentrated in the emperor's hands; in the second (1891), despite decision-making being concentrated in the Executive, all actions of this branch were to be subject to legislative approval, no matter how minor the adjustments or negotiations of treaties, conventions, and related matters. This did not persist in the following Constitution (1934), which excluded parliament from ratifying secondary adjustments. Subsequently, the Constitution of 1937 maintained the previous Constitution's provisions, but the Legislative Branch was dissolved, and it was only in 1946, under representative democracy, that responsibilities were restored. As for the sixth Constitution (1967), there were few modifications compared to the previous one; however, in the following year, the National Congress suffered the consequences of AI-5. Finally, the seventh Constitution (1988) carries remnants of the earlier ones, making the parliament merely a ratifier regarding Brazilian foreign policy. Considering this historical tendency, from the 2000s onward, relations between the two branches are believed to have intensified, but not enough to change the decision-making pattern (Figueira, 2011).



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Recognizing the limited legislative action as discussed in the literature, the following sections provide qualitative evidence regarding Brazil's African agenda. With the extensive use of primary sources, the aim is to provide information to understand the suboptimal performance of the parliament concerning foreign policy matters.

**Ideas and Interests: Politicization of Foreign Policy, Lack of Interest from the Opposition?**

Considering the information presented so far regarding the ways in which the Legislature acts concerning foreign policy, specifically regarding the relations between Brazil and the African continent, this section provides qualitative indications that align with the predictions of the literature on legislative behavior in foreign policy. It understands that, concerning the country's African policy, legislative behavior is influenced by the Executive's agenda (Diniz, 2012; Anastasia et al., 2012; Figueira, 2011).

Nevertheless, there is a flourishing of criticisms directed at the Executive, specifically the Presidency of the Republic, alleging the ideologization, politicization, or partisanization of Brazilian foreign policy. This debate was at the core of the polarization between the government and the opposition in legislative production, highlighting their distinct perceptions of the continent as a strategic option. Opposition representatives criticized the direction of the "active and assertive foreign policy" (Amorim, 2015) as a whole, claiming that this international strategy was permeated by partisan elements (Lima & Duarte, 2013), and Africa was allegedly following this trend (Santiago, 2018).

Ideologization, politicization, and partisanization are recurring terms in the literature, almost used synonymously to portray the opposition's criticism of foreign policy. In this sense, according to Belém Lopes (2013), partisanization would be the growing influence of political parties in shaping foreign policy (Belém Lopes, 2013). Similarly, the author refers to 'noisy politicization' to emphasize the positions of diplomats opposed to the foreign policy carried out by the Workers' Party (PT). Lima and Duarte (2013), on the other hand, acknowledge the use of the terms "ideological," "partisan," and "politicized" in the opposition's discourse to refer to the thesis of moving away from the pursuit of permanent national interests.

This thesis suggests that focusing on the South would automatically lead to distancing from the North, from the democratic-liberal tradition, and consequently from the interests of the Brazilian state (Lima & Duarte, 2013). According to Santiago's



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findings (2018), the discussion about the foreign policy profile reached parliament in terms of both the government and the opposition, even though legislative action is more complex than that. Although it does not aim to generalize, the author recognizes patterns in ideological behavior regarding foreign policy towards Africa. According to Santiago (2018):

In the case of the right-wing, legislators focus on the Brazil-Africa relationship concerning the commercial gains of this connection. The center, represented by the person of Deputy Gilberto Mestrinho of PMDB/AM, argues that black people do not need our culture and, therefore, Africa is clearly backward. Finally, left-wing parties, in relation to Africa, highlight the problems faced by South Africa during apartheid, celebrate African culture, particularly through the caucus of black deputies, specifically that of the PT (Santiago, 2018, 244, translated by authors).

It is argued that the argument about ideologization, politicization, and partisanization, as used by the opposition, represented a conceptual confusion (Lima & Duarte, 2013) and should, in fact, refer to the framing of foreign policy as public policy in a democratic context. As Milani and Pinheiro (2013, p. 30) point out, politicization means an intensification of the debate over ideas, values, and interests concerning political choices, as well as intra and inter-bureaucratic disputes, debates among different social actors about the best way to address their demands. It is possible to argue that such confusion also lies in the failure to recognize, or intentional omission of what Mouffe (2015) defines as the antagonistic dimension of the "political," namely, the us/them dichotomy and the indispensable conflictual nature required to conceive objectives of democratic politics. The problem for the opposition is to define one side as ideologized and characterize the "us" as technocratic or neutral, as it denaturalizes that foreign policy is constituted by language, ideas, and values related to the decision-makers' worldview in connection with interested actors (Hill, 2003).

Therefore, Lima (2000) argues that a fundamental part of foreign policy deserves to be understood as government policy because it depends on the ability of decision-makers and the electorally victorious political coalition to represent and reconcile multiple interests. Globalization and democratization have resulted in a reconfiguration of the nature of foreign policy, expanding this second aspect, as the country, in addition to representing collective interests on a global scale, must negotiate sectoral interests arising from the internationalization of domestic aspects (Lima, 2000). Moreover, it must

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deal with the internationalization of issues such as health, education, and development (Milani & Pinheiro, 2013).

Considering the conclusions of Foreign Policy Analysis (APE) regarding the characterization of Brazilian foreign policy as public policy, the discussion should point to new directions. As suggested by Milani and Pinheiro (2013), it is necessary to broaden the discussion about the participation of other actors beyond the Executive, reconsidering whether the current political and legal arrangement is suitable for the empirical and democratic reality of foreign policy as public policy.

In this regard, in a first step, expressions of parliamentarians in the plenary sessions of their respective houses were sought, considering this as the central platform for conveying ideas and positions of parliamentarians to their respective constituents, as well as to society in general. The statements were obtained through the website of the Chamber of Deputies, by searching for the word "Africa" in the database of speeches and debates<sup>4</sup>, and on the Senate's website using the same strategy, through the tool for searching for speeches in the plenary<sup>5</sup>.

One expression that reflects a critical perspective on African policy is seen in 2007, during the same period as Abdenur's interview when Deputy Pannunzio (PSDB-SP) complained in the plenary about Brazilian policy toward the IBAS (an articulation between India, Brazil, and South Africa) and the African continent because South Africa would be one of the main supporters of the dictatorial government of Mugabe in Zimbabwe: "President Lula, in fact, was the one who announced that Africa would also be a priority: but we do not accept the priority to honor a dictator" (Brasil, 2007). The deputy proposed a comprehensive review of Brazilian foreign policy, a pressure that was repeated throughout the Lula and Rousseff administrations, until the political crisis. The opposition sought to spread the idea that the PT had a particular preference for dictatorships, generalizing such a typology of regime to the entire continent, without any considerations about the diversity of countries, cultures, and political regimes (Brasil, 2010).

In line with this logic, in 2015, opposition deputies Onix Lorenzoni (DEM - RS) and Efraim Filho (DEM - PB) made a parliamentary request to Petrobras and its

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<sup>4</sup> Research tool available through the address: <https://www2.camara.leg.br/atividade-legislativa/discursos-e-notas-taquigraficas>

<sup>5</sup> Research tool available through the address: <https://www25.senado.leg.br/web/atividade/pronunciamentos>

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subsidiaries for copies of contracts signed between 2005 and 2015 for the execution of works and services in the African continent. However, the justification did not mention any evidence or indications, only a partisan discourse, reproducing a report from the *Época* magazine about the involvement of party lobbyists in presidential missions led by Lula da Silva.

Business diplomacy in Africa was central to the foreign policy of the Lula government. There was a leftist ideological component in the approach to Africa, evident in Lula and the PT's desire to help these countries overcome chronic social problems. However, Brazil also gained significantly, and no one benefited more than Brazilian construction companies. They began to do business in 70% of African countries. Even if this meant, for Brazilians, seeing Lula shake hands with dictators like Obiang Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, who has violently held power for 35 years, or Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, who was ousted during the Arab Spring. (Brasil, 2015b, 4, translated by authors).

The understanding of the African continent based on the thesis of ideologization often left the opposition mainly positioned between the center and the right, in a representation limbo, relegating two perceptions of Africa that had space within the Executive. These perceptions corresponded to the perspective of the business sector, attentive to commercial opportunities and integration into globalization, and that of black movements, seeking identity recovery as one of the needs for promoting racial equality. Consequently, the perception of the African continent was constructed from a very particular perspective, without support in society.

This disconnection occurred at a time when not only Brazil, but also emerging countries and the rest of the world were looking at the continent in a renewed way, recognizing a growing market, promoting cooperation, and acknowledging the resurgence of African identities. The opposition from the center-right focused its criticism on helping the poorest and financing dictatorial governments. This reveals a significant disconnect between discourse and the constitutional principles governing international relations: non-intervention, equality among states, self-determination of peoples, and cooperation among peoples for the progress of humanity (Brasil, 1988).

In this context, criticism was directed at the forgiveness of debts to African countries by the Brazilian government, which was a necessary step for the BNDES to provide support for the private sector's initiatives on the continent. In 2015, Senator Flexa Ribeiro (PSDB-PA) used relations with Africa as a bad example of a relationship that could happen again in Cuba: "We, Brazilians, are certain that this money will not return.

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Eventually, there will be an amnesty, just like the ones we have already approved for various African countries where Brazil invested resources and did not get a return" (Brazil, 2015a). Similarly, in 2013, Aloysio Nunes (PSDB-SP) referred to debt forgiveness as "amnesty for corrupt African dictatorships, riddled with unjustifiable interests" (Brazil, 2013b), omitting from the debate that the Brazilian entrepreneurs would benefit from that and, consequently, the country's economy. He also overlooked the fact that these loans had been a practice since the administration of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, from the same party as the senator (Lima, 2015). Within the government's base, a faction of the PMDB aligned with the opposition. Senator Jarbas Vasconcelos (PMDB-PE) characterized Lula da Silva's mission to the continent as "global racial marketing" (Brazil, 2014b). Meanwhile, Congressperson Édio Lopes (PMDB-RR) complained that choosing Africa was benevolence toward dictatorships (Brazil, 2013a).

In addition to the speeches in plenary, an attempt was made to evaluate the discussions resulting from public hearings in the Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Defense of the Chamber of Deputies, in the hope of finding a technical debate among legislators from various geographical backgrounds who have an interest in and expertise on Brazilian foreign policy. The documents evaluated in this stage were the result of research on the website of the aforementioned committee, in shorthand notes of open sessions. These documents encompass the files for the period under analysis made available on the website until December 2019.

Committees are important arenas in the face of the complexity of legislative production, to assess the balance of forces and social interests regarding specific agendas (Mancuso, 2007). To reach this conclusion, Mancuso (2007) analyzes the case of the Brazilian business community. According to the author, nearly 90% of this organized group prefers to resort to committee members, including the rapporteur, to request approval, rejection, acceptance of bills or amendments. Similarly, almost 80% of those interviewed by the author also participate in public hearings promoted in Congress to be informed of the main debates, demand direct action from lawmakers, or appeal for silences or to prevent the emergence of debate, conflict, and deliberation on controversial issues related to their interests.

In the context of this case studied, it is evident that in these specialized spheres, the PT and its base take a prominent role in Brazilian foreign policy for the African continent. Therefore, this is a good space to understand the perspective of the party and

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the government's base during the period regarding the continent. On the other hand, the opposition presents itself differently from the plenary, silencing or approaching specific discussions, which leads to the thesis that omission and silence are also a reflection of pressure from stakeholders such as the business community (Mancuso, 2007).

For the Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Defense (CREDN), among the scarce transcripts about Africa available on the website, there were debates and celebrations of the anniversaries of peace agreements in Angola (Brazil, 2012, 2013b), promoted by the government's base, revealing the symbolic nature of the continent for Brazil. In 2012 and 2013, hearings were held, inviting Brazilian diplomats and representatives of the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR). Representatives from African countries in Brazil, Portugal, Cuba, Russia, and other countries from the Global South were also present, bringing to the parliament the idea of Brazil as a leader among developing countries and a bridge builder between the north and the south (Burgess, 2013; Brazil, 2012).

In both years, the Federal Deputy Janete Pietá (PT-SP) proposed the hearings supported by other deputies, such as Edson Santos (PT-RJ), coordinator of the Brazil-Angola parliamentary group, as well as parliamentary fronts and former SEPPIR officials. The perspective of PT deputies reflected the views of Black movements, identity recovery, and the bridge between Brazil and the continent through cultural and social valorization, corroborated by the speeches of SEPPIR representatives and diplomats (Ribeiro, 2020). In this context, Deputy Luiz Alberto (PT-BA) pointed out that Angola and Brazil connect in everyday life, such as the case of Angolan capoeira in Bahia, which in the African country is called 'capoeira of resistance' (Brazil, 2012; 2013b).

Likewise, Benedita da Silva (PT-RJ), with the support of African diplomats, emphasized that Brazil has a long history of supporting Angola's independence, as well as struggles for autonomy and human rights in other African countries. She stated that the contemporary legacy of foreign policy was transforming these commitments into technical cooperation, technology transfer, among others. This perspective was also supported by opposition deputies Leonardo Gadelha and Marcondes Gadelha (PSC-PB), characterizing Brazil's actions as a natural soft power in its relations with Lusophone and African countries. PSC deputies praised the government base and government initiatives regarding African policy (Brazil, 2012).

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At different moments, however, there was an attempt to strike a similar tone to the plenary when Fernando Gabeira (PV-RJ) questioned the chancellor in a public hearing about the supposed inconsistency of Brazil reaffirming its support for the International Criminal Court (ICC) while also maintaining relations with Sudan, whose president, Omar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir, had recently been convicted by the organization. To do so, the deputy thoughtfully reflected on the country's commercial interests, particularly in the agricultural sector, to suggest that he still understood Brazil's need to maintain good relations with Sudan. In his answer, the chancellor argued that Brazil supported the autonomy of African countries to resolve their crises without interference from former colonial powers, a principle that would not compromise Brazil's status as a signatory to the ICC, as it would uphold its decisions (Brazil, 2009). During this hearing, the opposition aimed to introduce a series of arguments about the Sudanese dictatorial regime, while the government base countered with a positive agenda related to the African continent and the African diaspora, seeking further clarification about the Durban Review Conference against racism, although this did not lead to deeper discussions among other parliamentarians.

On another occasion, the opposition, represented by Cláudio Cajado (DEM-BA), requested a special hearing to discuss the export of engineering services and clarify controversies. The central figure in this hearing was the representative from BNDES, the director of the international area, accompanied by foreign trade professionals and consultants. Although the agenda suggested a certain degree of politicization, there was no immediate debate with the deputies following the presentations by the guests. In this hearing, Africa gained significant attention, as the BNDES representative highlighted his experience at the NEPAD <sup>6</sup> summit for the development of African infrastructure. Furthermore, he emphasized that the BNDES "does not engage in charity" but rather facilitates the export of high-value Brazilian products to the continent (Brasil, 2014a), providing an anticipatory response to the polarized environment.

**Practices: Relationship between the legislative and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.**

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<sup>6</sup> The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is an economic development program led by the African Union.

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Once the legislative production related to the African theme has been discussed, this section aims to analyze the relations between the parliament and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty) through a series of diplomatic communications between 2003 and 2016. These communications were available to the public until 2018, as stipulated by the Access to Information Law in November of that year. The series covers the archives of the intradocs system for the exchange of documents between Itamaraty in Brazil and its representations abroad, including inter-ministerial bodies, such as the legislature (Brasil, 2018).

Next, approximately 467 documents were filtered based on the following keywords identified through a literature review, along with their variants in the plural and acronyms, when applicable: Parliamentary Front, Parliamentary Group, Committee on Foreign Affairs and National Defense, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Special Office for Federal and Parliamentary Affairs. From this sample, it was found that about 30% of the documents were repeated, and there were also a series of procedural and administrative documents that contributed little to the purpose of this study, which is to understand the essential nuances of the legislature's participation in the development of Brazil's African policy. These documents represent part of the bureaucratic routine of foreign affairs.

Simultaneously, the reading and analytical/descriptive coding of the documentation were carried out (Gibbs, 2009). After reviewing the coding, as performed at the end of the researcher's exposure to the documentation, 23 documents remained, which were analyzed based on common codes among them, as presented in the table below. The selection of codes considered the existence of at least three pieces of evidence supporting the argument <sup>7</sup>(Gibbs, 2009), as well as the results of triangulating the documentary findings with the literature. The codes are not entirely disconnected from each other; they are linked, constructing a narrative about the daily practices of the relationship between the Legislature and diplomacy<sup>8</sup>.

**Table 4 - Codes Used in the Section**

Code	Classification
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<sup>7</sup> The analytical codes are understood as themes resulting from the researcher's identification of a presumed point of interpretive convergence among a series of sources. The descriptive codes are those that in communication expose activities that were carried out or that were not, according to the description provided in the document. When all codifications are combined, we have, therefore, an interpretive conclusion (GIBBS, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> The documents that directly contributed to the development of this text had their headers described in footnotes, making it easier for subsequent identification in the respective source.



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Parliamentary Diplomacy	Analytical-Descriptive
Limits of international interest	Analytical
Polarized perception	Analytical
Brazil as a leader of the Global South	Analytical-Descriptive
Continuities between Lula and Dilma	Analytical

**Source:** our own elaboration based on Brazil (2018).

As mentioned, there is a considerable volume of bureaucratic and protocol content, including communications regarding requests for visits by representatives of African countries interested in learning about the Brazilian Congress<sup>9</sup>. However, these communications do not provide details on how these experiences unfolded. The lack of detailed information raises some reflections. Primarily, it is observed that, in practice, the interaction between the Executive and the Legislature in the context of Brazilian Foreign Policy (PEB), especially concerning Africa, still needs to be further developed. Additionally, it is possible that there are classified communications with a higher level of secrecy that are not yet available to the public, which could change the landscape. On the other hand, the evidence already indicates that the Brazilian Parliament is focusing on Africa. It is important to note that, by analyzing the Itamaraty documentation, we are also examining the narrative constructed by the foreign ministry regarding the daily interaction between the Executive and the Legislature, as well as the relations between Brazil and the African continent. However, this emphasis also allows for a balanced analysis of the legislative debate discussed in the previous section.

The interest of African countries is related to the leadership profile that Brazil managed to establish in the Global South during the period under analysis. It is important to highlight that the deepening of relations between Brazil and Africa was made possible by a combination of domestic and international factors, the result of which was amplified compared to other periods (Silva, 2015). This occurred within the context of a foreign policy project aimed at positioning Brazil as a leader in the Global South (Amorim, 2015; Burges, 2013; Silva, 2015).

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<sup>9</sup> FROM SERE TO CRE SENADO FEDERAL ON 28/05/2013;FROM SERE TO CRE SENADO ON 27/04/2015; FROM SERE TO ASSESSORIA INTERNACIONAL E CERIMONIAL DA C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS ON 19/11/2014.

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It is evident that this identification also extends to the Brazilian Legislature, as African countries recognize it as a model to be exported in terms of institutions and the conduct of public policies. This can be observed in examples such as the report from the ambassador in Cape Verde in 2012 when he learned of the visit of parliamentarians from that country to the Brazilian Congress. According to the visitors, contacts were established with the aim of seeking consultancy to modernize the National Assembly and support for the training of its technical staff. Furthermore, they reiterated the recognition of Brazil as an agent with the potential to promote development on the African continent and expressed interest, primarily, in the Parliamentary Front for Racial Equality, bilateral parliamentary cooperation of a broader nature, and the model of the Parliamentary Code of Conduct and the Ethics Council<sup>10</sup>.

On another occasion, the Embassy in Luanda reported the significant impact<sup>11</sup> of local media on negotiations for a visa agreement between countries, highlighting its recognition because of cooperative efforts within the parliamentary sphere. Following this trend, South Africa was one of the countries, like Angola and Cabo Verde, that sought support from the Brazilian parliament. In 2008, there were two separate visits with the aim of gathering information on how parliamentarians dealt with national policy and drug control legislation<sup>12</sup>. On another occasion, they discussed issues related to racial equality, gender, and African roots with the Parliamentary Front for Racial Equality and the President of the Chamber<sup>13</sup>. Furthermore, the Brazilian parliament received significant invitations to participate in discussions on public policies, such as the meeting of the PALOP on child labor<sup>14</sup><sup>15</sup>; and the debate on AIDS in Mozambique<sup>16</sup>. Although these elements do not establish a causal relationship, they raise important indications of Brazil's leadership in the Global South and in relation to certain African countries.

Despite reasonable engagement in parliamentary diplomacy with the continent, there were still some limitations due to disinterest among lawmakers or lack of information about international affairs. In a management report from the Brazilian Embassy in Mozambique submitted to the National Congress, it was emphasized that,

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<sup>10</sup> FROM SERE TO SENADO FEDERAL ON 10/10/2012.

<sup>11</sup> FROM BRASEMB LUANDA TO SERE ON 26/12/2012.

<sup>12</sup> FROM SERE TO C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS ON 01/07/2008.

<sup>13</sup> FROM SERE TO COMISSÃO DE TURISMO E DESPORTO DA C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS ON 24/02/2006.

<sup>14</sup> FROM SERE TO BRASEMB PRAIA ON 18/04/2012.

<sup>15</sup> FROM BRASEMB PRAIA TO SERE ON 04/05/2012.

<sup>16</sup> FROM SERE TO C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS – Deputy TELMA DE SOUZA – ON 03/04/2006.

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despite the pioneering and extensive relationship between the two countries and the substantial Brazilian investments, both public and private, there was still much room for improvement in parliamentary matters. This was particularly evident considering Mozambique's interest in greater exchange, which was not adequately reciprocated by their Brazilian counterparts<sup>17</sup>.

On another occasion, the same Embassy had already reported that the President of the International Relations Committee of the National Assembly sought the Brazilian representation to request mediation with the National Congress due to difficulties in reaching out the parliament<sup>18</sup>. In addition to these complaints, there was another grievance addressed to the Chief of the International and Ceremonial Advisory Office of the Chamber of Deputies by the Special Secretariat for International Relations and Ceremonial (SERE). For the second time in Brazil, the President of the National Assembly of Côte d'Ivoire was seeking agenda to be received in the Congress<sup>19</sup>. These examples demonstrate that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to play a significant role in foreign policy at least by mediating relationships among parliamentarians when low activism prevailed.

The limits to international interest are related to the lack of knowledge among parliamentarians about opportunities to build a network of international affairs. It can be said, at the very least, that there is underutilization of these opportunities. During the visit of the President of the National Assembly of South Africa, Deputy Maleka Mbete, the President of the Chamber, Arlindo Chinaglia (PT-SP), expressed concern about the proliferation of parliamentary forums and advocated for the existence of a single international organization that would bring together legislative bodies and regional parliamentary associations<sup>20</sup>. On the other hand, there are reports of Brazilian parliamentary delegations participating in the assemblies of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)<sup>21</sup>, where Brazil limited its involvement to the Latin American and Caribbean Group (GRULAC), missing out on opportunities for dialogue with Africa, unless in 2008,

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<sup>17</sup> FROM BRASEMB MAPUTO TO SERE ON 16/06/2015.

<sup>18</sup> FROM SERE TO ASSESSORIA INTERNACIONAL E CERIMONIAL DA PRESIDÊNCIA DA C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS ON 14/05/2013.

<sup>19</sup> FROM SERE TO CHEFIA DA ASSESSORIA INTERNACIONAL E CERIMONIAL DA C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS ON 19/11/2014.

<sup>20</sup> FROM SERE TO BRASEMB PRETÓRIA ON 24/04/2008.

<sup>21</sup> Heterogeneous from a party-ideological point of view.

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Brazil coordinated support from neighboring countries for Namibia's candidacy for the presidency of the IPU<sup>22</sup>.

Another demonstration of underutilization occurred during the parliamentary mission led by Senator Heráclito Fortes (DEM-PI) in 2008 when the delegation, consisting of representatives from the government and the opposition, visited São Tomé and Príncipe. When received by parliamentarians from the host country, the Brazilians suggested cooperation for the qualification and modernization of the local parliament<sup>23</sup>. However, they were informed by the other hosts that such cooperation was already in place, and that two years earlier, the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies had sent a technical mission to implement a digital recording system for speeches in plenary sessions and parliamentary committees in São Tomé and Príncipe. They were also reminded of efforts for parliamentary integration through the CPLP. Furthermore, during the same occasion, Senator Marconi Perillo (PSDB-GO) suggested that each Brazilian state establish cooperative relations with an African country, reinforcing the opposition's perspective that Africa was a continent with many challenges, and Brazilian relations should involve a sort of charity assistance.

Furthermore, signs of alleged politicization emerged but delicately aligned with the interests of strategic actors, such as the business community and black movements. During Nilson Mourão's (PT-AC) visit to Sudan in 2009, opportunities for cultural exchange focusing on racial equality and soccer were discussed. From a partisan perspective, the top leadership of the local government acknowledged that many ongoing social policies in Brazil were the result of a specific program by the PT<sup>24</sup>. However, it is important to highlight the posture of the visiting legislator, who, despite the receptivity, did not refrain from questioning the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court against the President and visited critical areas of displacement and political tension.

An important episode during the period encompassing parliamentary diplomacy, Brazil's leadership profile in the Global South, and the different perceptions of the African continent was the aforementioned mission led by Senator Heráclito Fortes to the Atlantic region of Africa, which included Angola, Nigeria, Senegal, Cabo Verde, and São Tomé

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<sup>22</sup> FROM SERE TO SENADO FEDERAL ON 16/05/2007; FROM SERE TO C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS ON 18/10/2007; FROM SERE TO C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS ON 21/10/2008; FROM SERE TO C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS ON 25/04/2011.

<sup>23</sup> FROM BRASEMB SÃO TOMÉ TO SERE ON 20/05/2008.

<sup>24</sup> FROM SERE TO C MARA DOS DEPUTADOS – Deputy NILSON MOURÃO – ON 17/09/2009.

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and Príncipe. This mission aimed to strengthen ties and deepen understanding of the countries prioritized in the BFP under the government of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva<sup>25</sup>. During the mission, the parliamentarians had the opportunity to hear from Nigerians and Brazilian businesspeople about business opportunities in the oil sector.

In Dakar, Senegal, the parliamentarians were able to explore the market potential for Brazilian rice exports, as well as Senegal's interest in technical cooperation in agriculture, sports, and energy generation. In Angola, the delegation visited projects undertaken by Brazilian companies such as Odebrecht and Andrade Gutierrez, and the deputies met with the Association of Brazilian Entrepreneurs and Executives in Angola (AEBRAN), which requested better support for small and medium-sized businesses interested in the continent and the simplification of visa procedures and export operations. In Cabo Verde, discussions revolved around cooperation to combat drug trafficking, and both in Cabo Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe, the importance of cooperation for maintaining democracy was reaffirmed.

On the same occasion, local partners sought to emphasize that many actions are hindered by the slowness of the Brazilian parliament, which frequently neglects the approval of bilateral cooperation agreements. This was evident in the case of the protocol signed with Nigeria in 2005, which remained stalled in the National Congress until 2008. Brazilian lawmakers committed to expedite the process, as well as answered to similar complaints in São Tomé<sup>26</sup>. Such delays have impacts on both the state and the elite interested in expanding their international activities in the African continent, as reported by the Embassy in Mauritania<sup>27</sup> during a meeting with representatives from Tramontina and PB Construções companies. When the visitors suggested the possibility of the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES) providing support to companies interested in the local market, the ambassador reminded them that there was an ongoing process of renegotiating the public debt between the Ministry of Finance and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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<sup>25</sup> FROM SERE TO COMISSÃO DE RELAÇÕES EXTERIORES DO SENADO FEDERAL ON 16/06/2008; FROM BRASEMB ABUJA TO SERE ON 28/05/2008; FROM BRASEMB SÃO TOMÉ TO SERE ON 20/05/2008; FROM BRASEMB LUANDA TO SERE ON 23/05/2008.

<sup>26</sup> The absence of information about the entry into force of these agreements in the chronology of Brazil-Nigeria relations on the Itamaraty website is noteworthy. Additionally, we found news from 2018 regarding discussions about bilateral agreements between the Brazilian and Nigerian Foreign Ministers, Aloysio Nunes and Geoffrey.

<sup>27</sup> FROM BRASEMB NOUAKCHOTT TO SERE ON 15/01/2014.

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Parliamentary diplomacy proves to be an important mechanism for moderating criticism, as legislators encounter feedback not only from African partners but also from other actors. Similarly, in 2011, during the parliamentary mission to London funded by the National Confederation of Industries, a group of senators from various parties received compliments from the President of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the British Parliament, Mr. Richard Ottaway, for Brazil's increased presence in Africa.

### **Conclusion**

In this study, we aimed to analyze the legislative debate on Brazilian foreign policy towards Africa between 2003 and 2016. We have highlighted the existence of institutional instruments that grant the Legislative Branch the capacity to, as an actor, monitor and intervene in Brazilian foreign policy before, during, and after Executive decisions. Besides the Foreign Affairs Committees, lawmakers have at their disposal other platforms that allow actions on an individual or party basis, through government or opposition coalitions, or even through Parliamentary Fronts and Groups.

Regarding foreign policy towards the African continent, we identified continuous interests through interactions with and via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Itamaraty) and through the creation of Parliamentary Fronts and Groups. This phenomenon predates the period analyzed here. In addition to this structure, it is worth noting that the debate on Africa in the parliament suggests a dispute over the alleged ideologization of foreign policy. However, this clash often blurs with what the literature describes as an expansion of the discussion on foreign policy, considering its nature as public policy to incorporate it into the democratization and globalization phenomena that have been prevalent since the late 1980s. Parliamentary activity on the analyzed topic, however, still has the potential for expansion and presents a certain contradiction with the profile of foreign policy as public policy, as legislators' interest and knowledge about the issue still seem limited.

Concerning the perception of the government's base, especially left-wing parties and consequently the Workers' Party (PT), they remained concerned with maintaining consistency with the Executive's agenda. On the other hand, the opposition is associated with a mixed perception of Africa, while producing a generalized discourse in both houses of parliament about the continent as a place of dictatorships and associating South-South cooperation with mere charity. However, in the Foreign Affairs Committees, this group

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remained silent or approached the government moderately. The position of the opposition leads to some considerations. First, about the obsolescence of the perception of Africa as a continent of woes, which is not entirely supported by domestic social actors or the international context. In an external context, there is no way to characterize relations with the continent as an act of charity at a time when emerging powers establish horizontal relationships in this space, connections that are responsible for mutual benefits.

Regarding ruptures and continuities between Lula and Dilma, it was initially assumed that, with the political crisis in the final years of the PT administration, criticism of Africa as an ideologically driven choice could have intensified, but this was not confirmed. It can be suggested that relations with Africa did not significantly mobilize the Legislative Branch, as is expected for the foreign policy agenda. On the other hand, it also suggests that, even in the face of the crisis, interested actors had enough weight to ensure that technical discussion, rather than mass discourse, prevailed in the more specialized instances of parliamentary debate.

We conclude this work by encouraging research that can provide further details and discussions about the organized representation of the Black population in the Brazilian parliament - historically and currently underrepresented - and their engagement in discussions about foreign policy towards the continent. Finally, literature lacks studies that address the specific content produced by Parliamentary Fronts and Groups and differences between the content produced through the multiple resources that lawmakers have to influence foreign policy.

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