

REVISITING NPT MEMBERSHIP: BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA ON THE NUCLEAR ISSUE IN THE 1990S

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ABSTRACT

The conflict between Brazil and Argentina during the Cold War created a nuclear race in the South American context. While the Great Global Powers attempted to freeze power internationally and prevent the advance of military development in smaller countries, Argentina and Brazil competed for regional leadership and saw the dominance of the atomic sector as the key to that achievement. Thus, both countries denied the Non-Proliferation Treaty, questioning its ambiguous and unclear propositions. This paper intends to analyze why, in the 1990s, Argentina and Brazil broke with the long road of denial and resistance towards the acceptance and signing of the NPT. Through the analysis of primary sources – speeches, treatises and government notes – and the consolidated bibliography on the subject, we will analyze the change in the perception of the Foreign Policy of both countries in the International System against the implementation of neoliberalism in South America and how this implementation was important for the two countries to sign the NPT. At last, this paper seeks to understand the reasons that led Argentina and Brazil to adhere to the NPT and the importance that the United States and neoliberalism had in such process.

Keywords: Brazil. Argentina. United States. NTP.

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INTRODUCTION

The relations between Brazil and Argentina were governed by a historical rivalry, and even the rise of military regimes, which had similar ideas, in both countries, was not able to interrupt it. However, a long process that started with the Itaipu agreements (Tripartite Agreement) and that led to the creation of Mercosur and the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), changed this relationship, resulting in cooperation ties and friendship between neighbors. After the long decade of crisis and economic stagnation, the 1990s brought neoliberalism to Latin American countries, which caused a change in internal policies that altered the way foreign policy was thought. In addition, while the Soviet Union was dissolving, the Western bloc was concerned with maintaining the *status quo* on US bases and working to halt the advance of atomic arsenals, while major countries carried out explosions and nuclear tests. In this sense, Western and, mainly, North American pressure towards countries that had not yet adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was increasing.

In this context, due to the countless international changes arising from the alteration in the current international situation and also due to the changes that neoliberalism has engendered in the correlation of strength in Latin America (of which Argentina and Brazil were their closest areas of influence), Argentina and Brazil were politically constrained at the international level. This constraint was one of the conditions that led the two countries to break – although with reservations – with the denial of the NPT and to sign it later (Argentina in 1995 and Brazil in 1998). Therefore, the research problem of this work lies in understanding the motivation of the two countries to sign the NPT after almost half a century of refusal to do so. The objectives, based on this, deal with the understanding of the need for the NPT to be signed, since the Treaty of Tlatelolco already ensured the commitment to disarmament and the prohibition on the manufacture and/or acquisition of atomic bombs. In addition, the objective is also to understand the role of the United States and Neoliberalism in the process of signing the NPT.

Although the two countries have engaged multilaterally in an option that offered greater possibilities for maneuver (Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America - Tlatelolco), this was not enough for the United States to cool down the pressure on Brazil

and Argentina for accession to the NPT. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which came into force in April 1968, demarcated an interdiction zone (South America, the Caribbean and Mexico)³ of any type of nuclear device, stipulating well-defined rules and positions for all members in terms of obtainment, production and reproduction of atomic energy for peaceful purposes, creating a (the first in the world) nuclear weapon free zone. Therefore, the guiding hypotheses about the research problem deal with the changing balance of forces in the International System (end of the Cold War, establishment of neoliberalism, predominance of the USA), which culminated in the need for Brazil and Argentina to sign the NPT to continue their nuclear research projects, while transmitting security to neighbors. In addition, the political weight resulting from the signing of the NPT would take Brazil to an advantageous position in the group that called for the complete denuclearization process of the great powers. The adhesion, on the Argentine side, would lead the country to the possibility of raising funds and investments that could solve its economic crisis.

Therefore, in order to understand the importance of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (Tlatelolco) for the nuclear issue of cooperation and conflicts between Brazil and Argentina, it is necessary to analyze the context of the emergence of both treaties. Subsequently, we will see why the rejection of one treaty and the option to adhere to the other, as well as the questions – permanent until today – that will support this decision. Furthermore, an attempt is made to outline a panoramic approach to the options that the International System has delegated to the nuclearized states, which ended in the decision of Brazil and Argentina to fully adhere to both multilateral options and the role that the United States and neoliberalism played in this function. This research, therefore, will be constructed, methodologically, through the Comparative Historical Research, using *process tracing* (COLLIER, 2011) to build a chain of causal events that, at the end of the work, will serve to demonstrate whether the hypotheses raised here may or may not be validated.

³ Brazil was one of five countries (with Chile, Mexico, Bolivia and Ecuador) to begin in April 1963, through a Joint Declaration, the negotiations that created the Treaty of Tlatelolco (OPANAL, 2017).

THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY COMPARED TO THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO

The context of the appearance of the NPT dates back to the end of World War II (1945), when the American nuclear attack on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki surprised the world with its strength and capacity for destruction. At the end of the conflict, a nuclear arms race began, first led by the United States and the Soviet Union, but which later were joined by other industrialized countries. Under this bias, Le Guelte (2005) points out the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 as an important milestone in the consensus between the two superpowers (USA and USSR), that if another nuclear power came into conflict with them, the current bipolar balance could be shaken to such an extent that diplomacy would not be enough to control a nuclear crisis. Thus, at first, the objective of building a multilateral body of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons – which is at the heart of the NPT – was to maintain the control that Washington and Moscow had over countries in their orbit of influence (LE GUELTE, 2005).

Even though a nuclear race between Washington and Moscow was impossible to avoid, Sheniman (1987) argues that it was necessary to create a multilateral body or program that would establish nuclear safeguards. Thus, in 1957 the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was created. With autonomous bases within the United Nations (UN), the agency was based on three pillars: nuclear verification and security, technological transfer and security (FISCHER, 1997). The agency would have two central objectives, according to the second article of its statute:

“The Agency shall seek to accelerate and enlarge the contribution of atomic energy to peace, health and prosperity throughout the world. It shall ensure, so far as it is able, that assistance provided by it or at its request or under its supervision or control is not used in such a way as to further any military purpose (AIEA, 1956, p. 5)”⁴

There was an international concern about proliferation, especially after France carried out its first nuclear explosions in 1960, followed by China in 1964. It was feared that other states would be able to manufacture nuclear weapons, as several maintained independent atomic research –

⁴ For the full text of the Statute: <https://www.iaea.org/sites/default/files/statute.pdf>

and in some cases received foreign aid – such as India, Italy, Germany, Israel, Japan and Sweden. In the meantime, Argentina and Brazil were still far from a unilateral development of a nuclear bomb, but they were progressing in an accelerated way with their projects. In this sense, given the first step in the search for a multilateral establishment on the uses of nuclear energy, years later, in 1968, at the initiative of the United States, the Soviet Union and the United Kingdom, the core institutional element for a non-propagation of nuclear weapons regime was established, the Non-Proliferation Treaty (SHENIMAN, 1987).

According to the IAEA, the basic objectives of the NPT are: to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons of a nuclear nature; promoting cooperation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy; the contribution towards a path of disarmament in general (ORGANIZAÇÃO DAS NAÇÕES UNIDAS – ONU, 1968). In this sense, some operational clauses of the treaty (there are a total of eleven) deserve mention: article 1 refers to the non-distribution of armaments and nuclear war technology; article 2 deals with the prohibition of receiving technologies for war purposes in the territory of the signatory countries; Article 4 concerns research for peaceful purposes; Article 6 guarantees a multilateral effort in the search for disarmament; Article 10 mentions the possibility of abandoning the agreement and establishes that twenty-five years after the entry into force of the said treaty, a meeting of the signatories would be necessary to decide whether the NPT would remain in force (ONU, 1968).

It is evident that the North American and Soviet interest in concluding such a treaty has as main role the non-proliferation agenda of military atomic technology, even though it deals with a sensitive issue in the search for power of that time: the technological interest in peaceful development of nuclear means. Thus, with the restrictions of nuclear weapon ownership to the powers that had carried out tests with atomic explosions until 1967 (five in total), one of the purposes of the NPT ends up becoming a kind of institutionalization of the non-proliferation of nuclear technology for military purposes. Therefore, the NPT establishes two categories of countries, namely: nuclear (United States, USSR, United Kingdom, France and China) and the rest of the countries as non-nuclear (BATISTA, 2011). Pursuant to Article 9: “For the purposes of this Treaty, a nuclear armed state is one that has manufactured or exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device before January 1, 1967” (ONU, 1968, np).

The purpose of the NPT, in Wrobel's (1993b) view, would be centered on limiting the military capacity of industrialized countries at the time, such as Germany and Japan. Thus, as long as these industrialized nations – and not yet nuclear ones – accepted the rules of the game, deterrence from developing countries would be sought with the aim of discouraging them in the pursuit of atomic empowerment as a way of compensating for their arduous external insertion. In addition, the postponement of disarmament and access to peaceful technologies on the use of nuclear energy to the detriment of the importance given to the topic of non-proliferation appears as one of the main criticisms of the treaty.

Concatenated with the criticisms, focusing on the text of the treaty, we also observe that there is a great asymmetry between the premises given to nuclear and non-nuclear States. The wording is vague when considering the nuclear states, since there is only the need to establish negotiations aimed at ending the current arms race. Therefore, according to the text of the treaty, we can assume that the only legal regulation that is binding on these States is the prohibition on the transfer of atomic weapons, or the assistance in the manufacture, transfer and control for non-nuclear members. Paradoxically, this rule does not apply to nuclear states, making possible an exchange or transfer relationship, thus establishing the so-called vertical proliferation (ONU, 1968).

From this perspective, the rules that refer to non-nuclear states are too specific and restrictive. Under the treaty, these countries must commit themselves not to obtain, in any way whatsoever, atomic technology for military use, in addition to being obliged to submit to IAEA safeguards, subjecting all their material and all their nuclear activities to the inspections by that agency. Also, from the moment of ratification of the NPT, countries commit to not providing equipment or supplies to any non-nuclear State, even if they are not members of the NPT, which is not conditioned to the agency's safeguards (ONU, 1968). On this point, Zajec (2010) writes:

In order for the concessions freely granted by non-holders to be compensated, it would be necessary for holders to reduce – progressively, but generally – their arsenals, disclose their civil nuclear technology and adopt very restrictive employment doctrines, so that non-holders do not feel threatened. None of these three points has ever satisfied non-holding states, but,

despite numerous debates, the NPT has managed to forge legitimacy (ZAJEC, 2010, np).

This dichotomy between nuclear and non-nuclear states was one of the main reasons why Argentina and Brazil denied adherence to the treaty. In the conceptions of a rising Middle Power⁵ (SENNES, 2003), in which the question of nuclear dominance was essential to project its power regionally and make itself seen in the international sphere, Brazil did not have a future that was not promising in autonomous nuclear development of the country. In the same measure, Argentina, more developed and independent in this matter, would not seek a path that would detach itself from its objectives of surpassing Brazil and taking its position as a privileged South American. Thus, the search for an alternative to the NPT found its refuge in the Treaty of Tlatelolco. By establishing a multilateral treaty that would completely cover Latin America and abstain from nuclear weapons, Brazil and Argentina found a way to demonstrate to central countries that nuclear development was possible without subjugation and coercion. In addition, as he quotes (ROSA, 1999):

The Treaty of Tlatelolco [...] goes far beyond the NPT as far as Latin America and the Caribbean is concerned, by ensuring by international law the total absence of nuclear weapons in this region of the planet. For him, the five nuclear powers which signed it are obliged to respect the status of this region as denuclearized. It is permanent and must remain in force indefinitely, representing a concrete contribution to peace.

It is notorious that the NPT brought within it very asymmetric characteristics, which partially limited the pursuit of nuclear research by non-nuclear states, while allowing the so-called nuclear states to improve nuclear development. This shows, moreover, that the promotion of nuclear

⁵ For Sennes (2003), Middle Power is a country with intermediate capacities that has the possibility of transforming them into real power. The insertion of a Middle Power, for the author, would be dual: on the one hand it would have an intermediate position in the International System (in the condition desystem-affecting *states*) and, on the other hand, it would participate intensely in the regional and sub-regional systems in which it finds itself. We use here the concept of Sennes (2003) because the author brings together, in addition to the intermediate capacities analyzed by the different theoretical currents that work with the concept, the question of the “will” to show itself as a Middle Power, that is: to have ambition for regional “domination”. Countries must have a political “will” to make (and show) the country a Middle Power.

disarmament has been relegated to the background, while the centrality of the Treaty has been on non-proliferation. In this way, determined also by the intrinsic character of systemic competition, the two superpowers try to maintain the *gap* that exists between nations using tools as a restriction in the dissemination of nuclear scientific knowledge (GUIMARÃES, 2007).

Le Guelte (2005) states that industrialized countries that would later be able to develop nuclear weapons, such as Italy, Germany and Japan, initially refused to sign the NPT, as they considered it unacceptable for their country's sovereignty, affirming that this treaty would lower them to the second tier of countries in the International System. Furthermore, they have not ruled out the possibility of developing autonomous nuclear programs. Under the same bias, the issue of sovereignty was also essential for Brazil and Argentina, which saw in the NPT a threat to their autonomous development projects, at the time, in progressive ascension (WROBEL, 1993a). Although the text of the Treaty referred to in Article 4:

Nothing in this Treaty shall be interpreted as affecting the inalienable right of all Parties to the Treaty to develop the research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, without discrimination, and in accordance with Articles 1 and 2 of this Treaty (ONU, 1968).

Guimarães (2007) traces a panorama of Argentine and Brazilian denials to the NPT. In this sense, he explains that the NPT was seen as an instrument of institutionalization of the status quo in force at the international level, while Brazil and Argentina tried to achieve greater prestige. Thus, the understanding of emerging countries in relation to the NPT was that the treaty generated a regulation of the unequal division of power in the International System instead of generating a contribution to world peace and equality. Furthermore, these countries questioned the NPT's ability to vertically prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Namely: Brazil and Argentina did not see the NPT as an instrument capable of stopping the military bellic advance (or the development of nuclear technology for non-peaceful purposes) of nuclear states. Thus, the Treaty would end up increasing the systemic advantages of the nuclear powers, which would be able to continue increasing their power vis-à-vis other states, by restricting the number of countries with such technologies.

To close this thought, the speech at the UN by João Augusto de Araújo Castro, Brazilian ambassador who was for many years the main articulator of a non-proliferation regime for nuclear weapons:

The cult of power and the reverential fear of force have become so respectable that they now inspire some of the basic documents of relations between men. Take, for example, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is based on a theory of differentiation between responsible adult and non-adult nations. The fundamental premise of this document is that, contrary to historical experience, power generates moderation and power brings responsibility [...]. The widespread assumption is that the danger lies in the unarmed countries and not in the vast and ever-growing arsenals of the superpowers. Danger is now an attribute of the weak and not of the strong. By conferring special powers and prerogatives on nations that attained adult status in the nuclear age, this Treaty could accelerate rather than impede the power race. In the world of nations, as in the world of men, everyone can henceforth strive, in spite of all difficulties, to become powerful, strong and successful. The Treaty enshrines power and is an institutionalization without disguise of inequality between States (CASTRO, 1970, p. 10-11).

In view of this, the treaty of Tlatelolco gave more autonomy to the actions of Argentina and Brazil in the nuclear sphere, even allowing peaceful explosions (although they never happened), which were considered fundamental in the full development of such technology. In this way, adherence to the NPT would jeopardize the medium and long-term goals of South American neighbors while increasing the technological gap between the central powers. The Brazilian diplomatic argument at the time was:

[...] the developed (countries) are increasingly distant from the underdeveloped. The international legal structure itself begins to reflect certain trends towards the establishment of these growing differences, between large and small powers. Among countries that have the technology, they dominate the atom, conquer space, progress in geometric acceleration and, on the other hand, countries that barely advance, using rude techniques, in a relative

underdevelopment that gets worse every year. [...] Externally, it is necessary to resist – and firmly resist – all attempts at institutionalization, under legal forms, in international treaties, of our present economic and technological minority (MAGALHÃES PINTO, 1967, p. 10 apud TEIXEIRA, 2007, p. 53 -54).

The Brazilian and Argentinean option for Tlatelolco and the negative effect of the NPT went through the 1970s and 1980s. When the first signs of understanding between the two countries began to take more solid bases, Argentina and Brazil felt the need to show the central powers that both would not produce a nuclear device and that the nuclear race in the Southern Cone was over. Thus, in 1990, in the declaration of a “common nuclear policy”, it is agreed that the two countries will:

take, once the Safeguards Agreement is concluded with the International Atomic Energy Agency, the initiatives leading to the entry into force of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco), with regard to both countries [...] (BRASIL, 1990, p. 3).

With the declaration of the “common nuclear policy”, Brazil and Argentina ended the cycle of rivalry and competition in the atomic area that governed the foreign policy (bellic) of the two countries in recent decades. In view of this, the two countries began to outline common policies for the use and maintenance of nuclear materials and to engender technical and diplomatic teams in the search for the mutual improvement of the area. The years that followed this declaration were marked by the Brazilian-Argentine intertwining in the nuclear field and by the peaceful search for prosperous results in the area. The path to adherence to the IAEA Safeguards, Tlatelolco and the NPT would also be a consequence of this new understanding, this new situation and the pressures that the 1990s brought to these countries, which will be discussed below.

NPT MEMBERSHIP AND ITS DEVELOPMENTS: EXPANSION IN THE WORLD SCENERY

The last decade of the 20th century began with the definitive collapse of the Second World, in 1991, after the upheavals brought about by the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989), which consequently resulted in the

end of the Cold War. That same year, Argentina and Brazil crystallized understanding on the nuclear pathways and broke with the mutual distrust that persisted for centuries⁶. With the signing of the Treaty of Asunción, which gave birth to Mercosur, the two countries engaged in a strategy of regional approximation in a world where globalization was increasingly ascending. However, even in the midst of articulation of understanding, it is in the decade 1990 that the two countries will break with the historic rejection of the NPT as a way of seeking international recognition. In the same measure, it is in this meander that the ratification of the Treaty of Tlatelolco will take place (CERVO; BUENO, 2014).

The early 1990s bring with them the new democratically elected presidents, Fernando Collor de Mello in Brazil, and Carlos Menem in Argentina (elected in 1989). Early in the term of office, in July 1990, Menem made an invitation to Collor to visit Buenos Aires, and the two signed a joint statement reaffirming the understanding between the two nations⁷. Months later, in November of the same year, Collor and Menem signal that their new governments will continue the path of understanding hitherto traveled, reiterating the protocols signed, with a joint presidential declaration, in which they express their commitment to a common nuclear policy (ABACC, 1990a).

In this joint declaration, the two countries also delimit the creation of a Common Accounting and Control System (SCCC) to be applied “in all nuclear activities of both countries” (ABACC, 1990b) – this was an old demand from Argentina, already proposed in the 1985 agreements, which can be seen in a declassified secret official document⁸. This system would be used to unify the control of the entire nuclear area in Argentina and Brazil, in order to provide transparency to the processes and facilitate the subsequent submission of safeguards to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In this way, the bases were laid for the creation of ABACC, which would take place the following year.

In July 1991, a new bilateral agreement (Guadalajara Agreement) was established for the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy in the

⁶ Bandeira (1995) provides an overview of the historical rivalry and competition in relations with the two countries, while Teixeira Marinho (2017) summarizes the nuclear race led by the two actors in the Southern Cone. For a more complete view of nuclear cooperation between the two countries, as well as their respective programs, see Mallea (2012).

⁷ https://www.abacc.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/1990-Comunicado-Conjunto-de-Buenos-Aires_PT.pdf

⁸ <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/117521>

city of Guadalajara. In this agreement, the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) was created, with a view to applying and better administering the SCCC. In December of the same year, a quadripartite agreement was signed between ABACC, the governments of Argentina and Brazil and the IAEA. This agreement was intended to consolidate the safeguards system in place in both countries. On that occasion, the Brazilian president spoke in a solemn tone about the importance of such an agreement for international relations and how this agreement should be used as a mirror for a worldwide disarmament process (BRASIL, 1991; ARGENTINA, 2017). In the words of the President:

Today, Brazil and Argentina are writing yet another page in history, not only of their fraternal and promising bilateral relations, but also of relations between all countries determined to live in prosperity and peace.

In today's ceremony, Brazil and Argentina give new impetus to the global disarmament process, an essential basis for building a stable and solid system for maintaining international peace and security.

Peace is a dynamic process of promoting harmony between nations, strengthening mutual trust and understanding, which will arise from a shared vision of equity and justice in international relations. The Brazilian-Argentine initiative contributes to the advancement and improvement of this process" (BRASIL, 1991, p. 185-186).

At the same time, in an attempt to increase the reach of neoliberal doctrine, the United States formulated, in 1989, the Washington Consensus, which was to be signed by Brazil under Fernando Collor's government and also adopted by the Argentine leader Carlos Menem. Based on the idea of decentralizing the state apparatus, opening markets and privatizations, the Consensus opened the doors of Latin American countries to multinational companies and the influence of foreign capital. The union of Argentine and Brazilian presidents with neoliberal ideas brought former international actors to the table, such as the United States. As Mello puts it (2010, pg. 79), for the Brazilian case:

After important decisions were taken in the area of proliferation and in the administration of the Brazilian nuclear program in the period between 1988 and 1994 – such as the restructuring of the Satellite

Launch Program, the approach to the United States under the Collor government in negotiations on the topic, the privatization of military industries under that government, among others –, the main issue that was raised internationally for Brazil was the Treaty on the Non- Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In this sense, the Gramscian view of countries' subordination, expressed in Ramos (2012), fits perfectly in that period, by highlighting the historical relationship that Argentina and Brazil had with the NPT and the present North American force:

the history of such groups is “disaggregated and episodic”, with a “tendency towards unification” that is always “broken by the initiative of dominant groups (...). In reality, even when they appear victorious, the subordinate groups are only in a state of defense, under alert”. That is, although these groups have shown discontent throughout their history and, through their mobilizations and engagements they generate some kind of change, in fact their political activities are, to a large extent, limited, thus resulting in a certain inefficiency. In this process of “spontaneous” political engagement, what is perceived is the inability of such groups, despite their demonstrations and revolts, to overcome their condition of economic and cultural subordination, which occurs, in large measure, due to the lack of a leadership and a conscious organization capable of giving direction and coherence both to groups and their political engagements (RAMOS, 2012, p. 259/260).

Although both Brazil and Argentina did not have this internal view of subordination⁹ – they did not see themselves as such – the neoliberal axis installed in the 1990s brought with it the idea of reducing the presence of the State in decision-making, which led to less predominance of national interests in the formulation of foreign policy – contradicting the period when the Brazilian military, with the Brasil-Grande-Potência project, and

⁹ The issue of subordination is intrinsically linked to the issue of autonomy. Autonomy in international relations, at least with regard to Latin America, has always been the result of great debate. Saraiva (2014) addresses the issue of autonomy in Brazilian foreign policy, outlining the Brazilian concept and vision on the subject. Simonoff (2003), on the other hand, synthesizes the interpretation of the concept in studies and in the area of Argentine foreign policy.

the Argentine military were in power. Even with the nation's exaggerated boastful tone, the military were developmentalists who thought about the aggrandizement of their countries and avoided foreign investments that would make the nation's development impossible; and the NPT, for the nuclear issue, was one of them.

From this perspective, the acceptance of the NPT takes a path contrary to the idea that Sennes (2003) advocated for the Middle Powers (both for Brazil, which fits this terminology, and for Argentina that sought it) when analyzing the relationships that these must have with a Great Power. That is: the relations, when taken by a Middle Power in relation to a Great Power, must be cautious, always seeking to be free of its direct influence – both internally and regionally –, avoiding bilateral relations. Even though signing the NPT was a “multilateral” option, North American influence was central to the countries' decision-making. Furthermore, both lost – or chose to lose – the influence they had as contestants of the Treaty.

The North American (re)onslaught in the International System, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, as a way of reaffirming world leadership had a major impact on emerging countries. Because of its greater resource capacity (economic, military, political, diplomatic), the United States sought to reshape the new international scenario at its discretion, in order to maximize gains for its strategic objectives. In this context, understanding the North American objectives has become essential for countries like Argentina and Brazil, which have structural weaknesses that are very large compared to developed countries, when it comes to reformulating their foreign policies in order to ensure their own survival. This bias, conditioned to changes in the internal scenario, with the abandonment of developmentalism and the support of neoliberalism, had an impact on the formulation, both Argentine and Brazilian, of external policies of rapprochement with North American hegemony (GUIMARÃES, 2005).

In the meantime, the only point that had not yet been remolded in the years that followed the accession of economic-financial-political neoliberalism by Brazil and Argentina, and the rapprochement with the United States, was the NPT. Namely: the option of international insertion of the countries (autonomous or not) was consistent with internal policies, sometimes pragmatic, sometimes subordinate. In the Brazilian case:

[...] an autonomous development model based on import substitution industrialization corresponded to

an autonomous, pragmatic and multilateralized foreign policy. On the other hand, a policy of abandoning the economic model of previous development would correspond to a new international insertion of Brazil. This means that our diplomacy would be, to a certain extent, subordinated to the political and economic objectives of the leading countries in the international system, not because of their imposition, but because of domestic political choice. In this sense, maintaining the posture of refusal to the NPT, in the post-Cold War framework, would even be contradictory to the policy of FHC and the predecessor Collor, of adapting to the new international agenda proposed by the remaining Cold War superpower (GUIMARÃES, 2005, p. 82)

Argentina took the path of external rearticulation. The country's economic situation, which for years faced problems like the Brazilians, or even more serious ones, got out of control. Hyperinflation was controlled by the peso-dollar parity in 1991, but this ended up discouraging private investors, since it became more advantageous to acquire from outside what was previously produced domestically at lower prices. Thus, the external debt started to govern economic life, and loans with international creditors – such as the IMF – and with Latin American neighbors were necessary to try to balance the internal accounts. In this way, the government's understanding was to maintain good relations with the international financial system in order to maintain economic ties and contributions to the country. In this sense, Argentina began, little by little, to review its foreign policy vis-à-vis the United States and, in this way, it was pressured to rethink the questions that were made to the NPT (LEDESMA, 2007).

Under an Argentine bias, Diez (2011) states that the Argentine government considered accepting the NPT by the following criteria:

- a) The differentiation between ESAN and EAN¹⁰ was not discriminatory, but it recognized a fact and, from there, sought the complete elimination of nuclear weapons;
- b) The possible danger to our technological secrets could be contained through different mechanisms. In fact, the agreements signed bilaterally with Brazil included obligations greater than those provided for in the NPT;

¹⁰ Author's abbreviations for "States without nuclear weapons" and "States with nuclear weapons", respectively.

c) When manifesting a supporter, and then signing, the CTBT; our country has put aside any possible claim on its right to carry out peaceful nuclear explosions; d) Finally, we came to the conclusion that the lack of access to nuclear development, or to the technology created by other countries, at a stage of increasing interdependence, was a result of our absence from the NPT, and not the other way around. Therefore, entering into this treaty, our country would supposedly benefit from better cooperation with other states (DIAZ, 2011, our translation)¹¹.

The economic and social pressure that Argentina was experiencing at that time was essential to review its strategic position and foreign policy. However, it was necessary to change a hard-built diplomatic heritage, which had clearly brought gains to the country's development and to that of an autonomous nuclear policy. Throughout the 1980s, the approach to the United States was seen as harmful, especially in the matter of nuclear sovereignty. However, US investees in the country only grew with the Argentine dependence against the dollar, and the country was forced to gradually revise its strategy. Thus, the instability in relations between the two countries seems to have moved towards understanding in the Menem's management, a fact that could not be verified previously. In the words of Minister Adolfo Saracho, Argentine ambassador specialized in nuclear matters:

Historically, Argentine relations with the United States have been characterized by instability. In recent times, since the beginning of the military government, Argentine nuclear policy has become a focus of pressure from North America, in the few situations of dialogue maintained. As of February 1984, a certain shift in the attitude of the United States began to be established, not only by our recent democratization,

¹¹ a) *La diferenciación entre ESAN y EAN no era discriminatoria, sino que reconocía un hecho y a partir de allí se apuntaba a trabajar hacia una eliminación completa de las armas nucleares; b) El posible peligro para nuestros secretos tecnológicos podían ser contenido a través de distintos mecanismos. De hecho, los acuerdos firmados bilateralmente con Brasil incluían obligaciones mayores a las dispuestas en el TNP; c) Al manifestarse partidario, y luego firmar, el CTBT; nuestro país dejó de lado cualquier posible reclamo en torno a su derecho a llevar a cabo explosiones nucleares pacíficas; d) Por último, se arribó a la conclusión de que la falta de acceso al desarrollo nuclear, o a la tecnología creada por otros países, en una etapa de creciente interdependencia, era más bien como resultado de nuestra ausencia al TNP, no al contrario. Por ende, ingresando a este tratado nuestro país supuestamente se beneficiaría de una mejor cooperación con otros Estados (DIEZ, 2011)*

but also by the image achieved by President Alfonsín. The moment when the talks on the nuclear issue are actually carried out can be fixed in 1985, when the Ambassador for Nuclear Affairs Richard Kennedy travels to Argentina, in a fundamentally sounding and opening position visit, although it is important because it marks the resumption of the dialogue, the guarantees required for any transaction continued to be excessive and disadvantageous for our country" (SARACHO; BENINSON, 1986, pg.10 apud LEDESMA, 2007, our translation)¹².

Escudé (1992) points out that the NPT would have been one of the main reasons for distrust and disagreement with the North Americans. Using diplomatic means, the United States assured Brazil and Argentina that the change from the NPT would be necessary to ensure financial viability, which was very important for Argentina. This North American policy forced the Menem administration to face a dilemma: the choice to maintain the negative to the NPT would diminish the country's economic and international credit possibilities, but there was an option to modify Argentina's international image by accepting the Treaty and, thus, to take a pro-American stance that would enable it to gain. In this way, Menem's orientation moved in a symbolic sense to gradually change Argentina's view of the Western world, especially in relation to the United States.

However, it is important to realize that, when aligning with the United States and conforming to the NPT, Argentina and Brazil had the hope not only of facilitating access to transfers of financial resources, but of creating a link of transfers of high technology, such as that of supercomputers, which could serve to boost their internal projects not only of a nuclear nature, but in Medicine, Engineering, etc. (CASTRO, 2006). However, the guarantee given by Brazil, in 1988, in its new Federal

¹² *Históricamente, las relaciones argentinas con los Estados Unidos se han caracterizado por su inestabilidad. En los últimos tiempos, desde comienzos del gobierno militar, la política nuclear argentina se constituyó en foco de presiones por parte de Norteamérica, en las escasas situaciones de diálogo mantenidas. A partir de febrero de 1984 comienza a establecerse un cierto giro en la actitud de los Estados Unidos, no solo por nuestra reciente democratización sino por la imagen lograda por el presidente Alfonsín. El momento en que se reentablan efectivamente las conversaciones acerca del tema nuclear podrían fijarse en 1985, cuando el Embajador para Asuntos Nucleares Richard Kennedy viaja a la Argentina, en una visita fundamentalmente de sondeo y apertura de posiciones, si bien cobra importancia porque marca la reanudación del diálogo, las garantías exigidas para cualquier transacción siguieron resultando excesivas y desventajosas para nuestro país* (SARACHO; BENINSON, 1986, pg.10 apud LEDESMA, 2007).

Constitution¹³, that it would relegate the nuclear issue only for peaceful purposes, as well as the ratification and entry into force of the treaty of¹⁴ Tlatelolco in the country, in 1994, and also in Argentina in the same year (OPANAL, 2017), was not enough for the United States. Brazil also subserviently considered renouncing its project to develop an atomic submarine, an old dream of the military. In the words of Foreign Minister Francisco Rezek, the change in the positioning of Brazilian nuclear policy:

If the North American government, whose good understanding of Brazilian projects is important for us to develop high technology, “disliking”, say, the nuclear powered submarine project, then we should negotiate and the very disposal of this idea [of the nuclear submarine] is not excluded. It is not excluded insofar as the cost-benefit ratio leads us to do so. It is a question of knowing what we will lose if we take the project forward, in spite of a country that can transfer high technology to us. I think we can gain from other high-tech topics. It costs me to believe that the traction of a submarine is so important that it justifies the waiver, inevitable waiver by Brazil, of other forms of technological assistance that we can obtain and hope to obtain in the short term (CASTRO, 2006, p. 90-91).

The Brazilian and Argentine views on the technological issue regarding adherence to the NPT are, in fact, close. Marcelo Valle Fonrouge (2003), Argentine ambassador, in a historical resumption of his country on the nuclear issue, expresses the Argentine view at the time, by saying that joining the NPT would bring substantial gains to Argentina, mainly in technical-scientific terms:

From a practical point of view, adherence to the NPT does not increase the obligations already assumed internationally by Argentina, while remaining outside the Treaty raises doubts for that Community about the country’s objectives. Doubts that will eventually result in restrictions on access to nuclear technology

¹³ By Article 21 of the 1988 Federal Constitution, Brazil must: “exploit nuclear services and facilities of any kind and exercise a state monopoly over research, mining, enrichment and reprocessing, industrialization and trade in nuclear ores and their derivatives, in compliance with the following principles and conditions: a) all nuclear activity in national territory will only be admitted for peaceful purposes and with the approval of the National Congress; [...] (Article 21, item 23, CF / 88).

¹⁴ DECREE No. 1,246, OF SEPTEMBER 16, 1994 (BRASIL, 1994).

and materials. In this sense, joining the NPT means opening the doors of international cooperation in technology, which represents one of the interests of the Argentine nation (FONROUGE, 2003, pg. 41, our translation)¹⁵.

Thus, Ledesma (2007) points out that the approach to the United States, by the Argentine government, meant a *“change in the ordering criteria of foreign policy”*, which resulted in changes of all kinds in government decision-making. One of these changes would have been the Argentine entry, forming a multilateral alliance, alongside the North Americans, against Iraq in the Gulf War. This attitude effectively marked the Argentine option for a foreign policy allied to North American interests, as it broke with the traditional neutrality to the war conflicts of which the country was not a part. In this context, within the Argentine strategy of reconstructing the way in which the Western world saw it, the signing of the NPT in 1995 marked, in fact, the new alliance with the West, breaking with the previous foreign policy and, also, with the nuclear policy that its predecessors advocated (LEDESMA, 2007).

Also according to Castro (2006), Argentina received US aid to sign an agreement to build an experimental reactor with Egypt. The author states that the United States would withdraw from competition in international bidding if the non-proliferation matter was fully accepted by Argentines. In this way, the National Atomic Energy Commission (CNEA) signed an agreement with Egypt, which earned approximately US\$ 32.5 million. *“Due to these contacts with Egypt and the USA, President Menem started to defend non-proliferation, announcing, since December 3, 1993, his intention to seek ratification of the NPT by the national congress”* (CASTRO, 2006, p.101). In this sense, the author states that Menem’s decision to defend non-proliferation and join the NPT was also based on Argentine difficulties in accessing cutting-edge technologies, which developed countries had and denied them. On the Brazilian side, the government interpreted Argentine membership as a stimulus to membership itself, as Brazil wanted to give impetus to an aerospace program, which required

¹⁵ *Desde un punto de vista práctico, adherir al TNP no aumenta las obligaciones ya asumidas internacionalmente por la Argentina, mientras que mantenerse al margen del Tratado siembra dudas a esa misma Comunidad sobre los objetivos de un país. Dudas que en definitiva se traducirán en restricciones al acceso de tecnología y materiales nucleares. En tal sentido, la incorporación al TNP significa abrir las puertas de la cooperación internacional en materia de tecnología, que representa uno de los intereses de la Nación Argentina* (FONROUGE, 2003, p.41).

technological transfer, whose political, economic and military results would be exceptional.

Brazil, now with its main ally in nuclear terms subject to the Treaty, realized that if something did not change, it would soon have to adhere to the agreement as well, to assert its claims that, although they did not have direct contact with the nuclear issue, they needed Western endorsement. As an example, the Brazilian demand for change in the UN Security Council and the search for the request for a seat on the Council (ARRAES, 2005). In this context, 1996 was a remarkable year. Through an official letter sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, the United States informed that “the internal legislation of the United States of America obliges the Executive Branch to impose sanctions on third countries that cooperate in the matter of uranium reprocessing” (CASTRO, 2006, p.99), such as Brazil and Argentina. The Brazilian government interpreted this message as pressure for the signing of the NPT (CASTRO, 2006), as from that year, it became dependent on the import of uranium and the main sellers and commercial partners in this matter were the USA and Germany, which demanded the signing of the treaty for making sales (VARGAS, 1997).

Despite so many external limitations, Brazil, still in 1996, signed a nuclear development agreement (research related to thorium) with India, overcoming the dependence of the United States and Germany. However, since 1995 India has carried out nuclear tests, which has further shaken the relationship between Brazil and the Western powers. As Malheiros explains (1996):

The United States is always concerned with monitoring and controlling all projects that can bring development and independence to third world countries. Brazil-India cooperation in the nuclear area would be a highly worrying issue for the USA if it worked (MALHEIROS, 1996, p. 197).

However, the situation in Brazil in the face of the revelations of the Indian nuclear weapons arsenal in 1998 worried the international community, and the relationship with the NPT had to take an innovative path: acceptance (CASTRO, 2006). In this sense, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso expressed, in a speech to the National Congress, that Brazilian action in ratifying the NPT would bring significant gains internationally:

[...] the commitment to the peaceful use of nuclear energy projects Brazil's image, increases our influence on major international issues and facilitates the promotion of scientific and technological development. The agreements signed so far are a perfect legal guarantee that Brazil will not develop the nuclear weapon. Ladies and gentlemen, the question that naturally came up to the Government concerned precisely making our commitments to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation even clearer by joining the NPT (CARDOSO, 1997, p. 670).

FHC's speech was congruent to the idea expressed by Sennes (2003) about the role that Brazil-Middle-Power has to take multilaterally when seeking alliances and collective actions, which enable the accumulation of power necessary to be more present in the international scenario. However, Bandarra (2016) states that Brazil had already assured the international community when it joined the GSN¹⁶ in 1995, its appreciation for the exclusively peaceful use of nuclear energy, as well as established rules and mechanisms, through the Quadripartite agreement, for safeguards and accounting of nuclear materials that were provided for in the NPT. In addition, the ratification of the Treaty of Tlatelolco definitely included Brazil in a multilateral mechanism for peaceful purposes and subject to inspection, which prohibited the production of nuclear weapons, via the Organization for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (OPANAL) (BANDARRA, 2016). That said, Brazil broke away from its position of isolation, following Argentina, and accepting to be a "rule-maker" within the non-proliferation regime, ratifying the NPT in 1998. As mentioned by Schenoni and Escudé (2016):

With its 1998 decision to sign and ratify the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty – following Argentina's lead, whose 1994 accession to the NPT had left Brazil in an isolated and awkward position – Brasilia conformed more than ever to rule-taking status vis-à-vis a crucial dimension of the security realm. It formally accepted an inferior status vis-à-vis the five nuclear states recognized by the Treaty, and did not break the rules

¹⁶ Nuclear Suppliers Group is a multinational organization concerned with reducing nuclear proliferation, controlling the export and transfer of materials and technologies that can be applied in the development of nuclear weapons and improving the protection of existing weapons (BRASIL, 2011).

as did India, North Korea and Pakistan. Nothing has changed since, and it is hence indisputable that Brazil is to this day a rule-taking state when it comes to international security (SCHENONI, ESCUDÉ, 23 mar. 2016, apud BANDARRA, 2016).

In this sense, it appears that the Argentine-Brazilian adhesion to the NPT was consistent with the conceptions of foreign policies developed by the civil governments that succeeded the military governments in both countries. This took place, in Argentina, with Peripheral Realism (ESCUDE, 1992), while in Brazil the “autonomy through participation” prism was followed¹⁷(FONSECA Jr, 1998). Escudé (1992) states that the realistic bias of thinking about Foreign Policy brought about significant changes to those perceived before the 1990s, so that it sought to “eliminate the self-destructive effects of confrontational tendencies with great Western powers that had accompanied Argentine foreign policy since the 1930s” (CERVO, 2007, p. 221). On the other hand, in Brazil, diplomacy sought national autonomy through participation in international regimes (SILVA, 2008), or else, through “pragmatic institutionalism” (PINHEIRO, 2000) when combining an autonomy strategy through the increase and active participation in regimes and international organizations). Although with differences in interpretation, the authors converge in the interpretation that there was, in Brazil and Argentina, a strong change in the international insertion matrix in the early 1990s.

The government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso guided the use of “autonomy through participation” (LAMPREIA, 1999; FONSECA Jr, 1998) in order to replace the reactive agenda of Brazilian foreign policy in the years before the 1990s. Thus, this agenda advocated that the country should enter the various multilateral facets and help in the elaboration of its norms as a means of expanding the power of defense of national interests in the context of a post Cold war period, which required a higher International insertion profile. Therefore, acceptance of the NPT represented the possibility of participation in current international non-

¹⁷ Before that, the country was projected internationally, according to Fonseca Jr. (1998), through “autonomy through distance”, which presupposed the automatic non-acceptance of the rules of the game, challenging the rules and principles of the main international organizations, and forming a diplomacy that opposed the freezing of power in the international system, as well as the liberalizing agenda of the great powers (mainly the United States). The debate on the various forms of autonomy can also be found in VIGEVANI, OLIVEIRA AND CINTRA (2003)

proliferation organizations, such as the IAEA, in addition to the much-desired technological transfer from developed countries (SILVA, 2008). According to Lampreia (1998):

Another case, also, of autonomy through participation, is that of the NPT. I worked at the Brazilian delegation, in Geneva, in 1968, when the NPT negotiation concluded, and we have always governed ourselves, throughout our entire career, all of us, by the concept that the NPT was, fundamentally, a bad agreement, an unbalanced agreement. Of course, when signing this treaty, Brazil lost freedom, so to speak, to make the atomic bomb. And Enéas, for example, if he reaches the presidency – something that no one expects – he will have a certain difficulty in overcoming these international commitments already signed. But the fact is that we continue to find the NPT to be a wicked treaty. It happens, however, that this position of principle increasingly created a problem of credibility (LAMPREIA, 1998, pg. 91 apud SILVA, 2008, 323)

Bandeira (2004) states, however, that adherence to the NPT was used as a bargaining mechanism for Brazilian foreign policy in terms of contact with the United States. In other words: FHC's government did not have a conflict relationship with the United States, so, while denying the FTAA, pushing it to negotiate with Mercosur, it joined the NPT as a way of smoothing relations. From this perspective, Bandarra (2016) states that the barriers to access cutting-edge technologies had already been removed, when Tlatelolco came into force in Brazil and Argentina and the use of IAEA safeguards through the Quadripartite Agreement.

Consequently, even though difficulties of an economic nature existed in the development process of the Brazilian and Argentine nuclear programs, these countries obtained uranium enrichment technology with predominantly autonomous programs. Thus, even if Argentina and Brazil sought, or not, the execution of an atomic artifact or a nuclear project for military purposes and generated a nuclear race in the Southern Cone, joining the NPT in the 1990s totally dispensed with the possibility of such an achievement. In addition, the motivations for such a signature were primarily political and not technical, in which the international context was an essential determinant in the formulation of foreign policies in both countries (CASTRO, 2006).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In view of the research problem of this work, which was to analyze the reason for the signing of the NPT by Brazil and Argentina after decades of refusal to do so, it is essential to note that signing the Treaty was due to a congruence of internal and systemic order factors, with a notorious political and non-technical bias. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, while creating a nuclear weapon-free zone in Latin America and the Caribbean, with specific and clear clauses, gave more autonomy in the process of developing nuclear energy for the signatory countries; while the NPT constrained autonomous development, conditioning the spread of *savoir faire* to limiting safeguards, while freezing power internationally and it was unclear in defining a means by which nuclear weapon holders would be forced to disband of their arsenals. Both Argentine and Brazilian diplomacy had always been very clear in repudiating such a treaty, anchoring itself in Tlatelolco to assure the international community that its research purposes were peaceful. Therefore, the practical and technical terms already found their anchor in Tlatelolco, so it is not necessary to accept the NPT.

In the meantime, we realize that the central hypothesis of the work that Argentina and Brazil would join the NPT to continue their nuclear research projects due to the systemic changes that occurred since the 1990s is not proven. We note that adherence to the Treaty was due to a clear political bias, in which Argentina sought foreign aid and international partners that could lift the country from the economic fragility it was in since the military's departure from power in 1983, while Brazil chose to do so through an internal political reorientation (Autonomy through Participation), with a view to integrating the largest number of international regimes to thereby increase and project its power. Furthermore, with the creation of ABACC, in 1991, and the consequent submission of their research to the international safeguards of the IAEA, and with the full adherence of both States to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, the technological diffusion by the central countries – which was so popular and one of the main arguments for joining the NPT – was released by the American Congress, with no technical reasons to make it necessary to join the NPT.

From this perspective, it is clear that the search for cooperation and technical assistance that changed relations in the 1980s was no longer

the focus and objective of signing the NPT. In addition, it became evident that the signing of the Treaty did, in fact, bring more losses than gains for Brazil – the Treaty of Tlatelolco would be more advantageous and with less political-diplomatic costs. For Argentina, the signature made it possible to receive external economic aid and to consolidate some international agreements, with North American aid, which generated good profits for the country (in accordance, therefore, with Peripheral Realism, which aimed to erase the negative image of past while proposing greater alignment with the Great Powers). Therefore, it is noteworthy that the historical rivalry, present in the relations between the two countries, did not cease to exist in this period, but it was notably in a second plane (since the mutual distrust in relation to the nuclear race was resolved with the creation of ABACC), and that the Brazilian ambitions of projecting itself as Middle Power in the region were maintained – Brazil continued to be the political and economic nucleus of the Southern Cone. However, the signing of the NPT, in the logic of a Middle Power that claims to be the hegemonic center of the region, marked an inflection of this stance, by subjecting its questions to the imposed international order, prostrating itself to the interests of global hegemony, the United States. In contrast, the adoption of neoliberalism and the interests present in Autonomy through Participation are beyond the goals of a country, whose intention was to solidify itself as the Middle Power of the region, as they give way to the Great Power (USA) – in an attempt to restore the Brazilian image, putting the country back in the international system after decades of international insertion via autonomy through distance – in its territory of action, South America.

REVISITANDO A ADESÃO AO TNP: BRASIL E ARGENTINA DIANTE DA QUESTÃO NUCLEAR NOS ANOS 1990

RESUMO

O conflito entre Brasil e Argentina ao longo da Guerra Fria criou, no contexto sul-americano, uma corrida nuclear. Enquanto as Grandes Potências globais tentavam congelar internacionalmente o poder e impedir o avanço de desenvolvimento bélico em países menores, Argentina e Brasil competiam pela liderança regional e enxergavam, na dominância do setor atômico, a chave para essa conquista. Assim, ambos os países negaram o Tratado de Não-Proliferação de Armas Nucleares, questionando suas proposições ambíguas e pouco claras. Esse trabalho pretende analisar o porquê de, na década de 1990, Argentina e Brasil romperem com o longo caminho de negação e resistência perante a aceitação e a assinatura do Tratado. Por meio da análise de fontes primárias – discursos, tratados e notas de governo – e da consolidada bibliografia existente sobre o tema, analisaremos a mudança da percepção da Política Externa dos dois países no Sistema Mundial frente à implementação do neoliberalismo na América do Sul e de como essa implementação foi importante para que os dois países viessem a assinar o TNP. Finalmente, o trabalho busca entender os motivos que levaram a Argentina e o Brasil a aderirem ao TNP e a importância que os Estados Unidos e o Neoliberalismo tiveram em tal processo.

Palavras-chave: Brasil. Argentina. Estados Unidos. TNP.

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