

THE PROCESS OF LINKING THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE NUCLEAR- WEAPON-FREE ZONES: GEOPOLITICAL AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR BRAZIL¹

Elias David Morales Martinez²

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the different proposals to consolidate the Southern Hemisphere as a nuclear-weapon-free area, and focuses on the most recent initiative from the process of linking of three Nuclear- Weapons-Free -Zones (Latin America, Africa and South Pacific). In this process about the realization of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Southern Hemisphere consolidation process, the implications of consolidation of this are for Brazil are analyzed, taking into account the geopolitical and strategic constraints experienced currently by the country.

Keywords: Nuclear Disarmament; Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zones. Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Southern Hemisphere. International Security. Nuclear Security.

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² Doctoral degree holder. Professor at Federal University of ABC (UFABC), São Paulo (SP), Brazil. davidmorales.ri@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

In 1996, Brazil submitted a proposal to the UN General Assembly to establish the Southern Hemisphere as a nuclear-weapon-free area. This proposal, although approved, failed to significantly alter the nuclear powers' behavior in restricting the presence of their nuclear arsenals in the extensive region in question.

From the year 2000, a new proposal was made to effectively consolidate the Southern Hemisphere as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Through the process of linking the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones of Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco), Africa (Treaty of Pelindaba), and South Pacific (Treaty of Rarotonga), this initiative aims to effectively materialize the nuclear denuclearization of the Southern Hemisphere.

A fact that draws attention is that Brazil has been one of the countries mostly interested in the international community taking such a position. Moreover, the country has been working for the recognition of this geographical space by meeting the contemporary objectives of its foreign policy, searching for an international insertion as a regional and middle power.

However, there are several contemporary aspects that have been configured from the Brazilian praxis and that should be considered together with the initiative of recognition of the Southern Hemisphere denuclearization. These dynamics represent challenges and opportunities for the improvement of the strategies that Brazil should implement for a greater political projection in the South Atlantic as an area of enormous potential for international influence.

Initially, the process of establishing Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones during the Cold War and Post-Cold War periods will be discussed. Next, the different Brazilian initiatives to consolidate the Southern Hemisphere as a denuclearized area will be analyzed and then, with a more solid foundation, it will be possible to discuss the latest proposal that addresses the process of linking the Latin American, African and Pacific Zones. Finally, the implications of the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Southern Hemisphere consolidation for Brazil will be approached, taking into account the geographical, political and strategic advantages that the country currently experiences.

NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE ZONES

Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones – NWFZ are geographic spaces in which states that are located within the region and with full territorial jurisdiction make the commitment to banning the presence of nuclear weapons and not allowing testing, acquisition, manufacture, introduction and installation of such weapons in their respective territories.

In this sense, a NWFZ has as its immediate objective the integral strengthening of regional security and also the increase of trust among the countries that compose the denuclearized region. Moreover, NWFZs give, through protocols directed at the nuclear powers, guarantees for the respect to the denuclearization status assumed by the region, non-use of nuclear weapons, and against their use as a threat to the member countries of the demarcated zone (CARREÑO, 2003, p. 3; MARZO and ALMEIDA, 2006, p. 103; MARTINEZ, 2012, p. 55).

Generally, NWFZs are established from the initiative of the countries that make up a particular region to self-proclaim territories in which all nuclear weapons are prohibited and banned. This agreement materializes through an international treaty that recognizes this status indefinitely, and it is also recognized by resolution issued by the UN General Assembly.

NWFZs establish a system to control and verify nuclear installations for peaceful purposes subject to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system. This generates a certain level of trust among the countries that compose the region by ensuring security and promoting the social and economic development of the member states. As NWFZs do not prohibit the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the possibility of increasing international cooperation and scientific and technological development in this area is encouraged.

NWFZs are part of the universal disarmament regime along with other international community-built mechanisms that specifically address nuclear weapon control. It is interesting to note that most of these political arrangements took place practically during the Cold War period, precisely because of the perception of imminent threat and very high vulnerability that nuclear proliferation represented for countries.

The Antarctic Treaty, which was signed in 1959 and came into force in 1961, established that the region comprised by the South Pole should be declared free from any armament and arms-related activity.

There is much debate about whether or not this agreement actually consolidates a NWFZ. The literature on this subject points out that there is a huge difference in the case of Antarctica, since it is not densely inhabited by humanity. It should be emphasized that for a NWFZ consolidation, it is necessary the political will of the countries that make up a certain region to proclaim themselves free from nuclear weapons; however, this was not the case in Antarctica, since it does not have its own sovereignty nor exercise full territorial jurisdiction.

The Outer Space Treaty, signed in 1967, which has been in force since the same year, prohibits placing in orbit around the Earth any weapon of mass destruction. The Seabed Treaty, signed in 1971, which came into force in 1972, also establishes that states will not place any weapons of mass destruction on the seabed and will not manufacture platforms for their placement, parking or deposit. Similar to Antarctic cases, these last two treaties are also not considered NWFZs because they are not inhabited by humans.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, known as the NPT, was an initiative of the nuclear powers that at the time decided to be more restrictive to prevent other countries from developing nuclear weapons for their own security. The NPT indeed constituted a scheme that clearly differentiated countries into two groups: on the one hand, those who could develop and maintain under their own control such weapons, and on the other, countries that could under no circumstances develop their own nuclear weaponry.

In this respect, Goldemberg (2004) argues that in addition to dividing the world into two groups, the NPT was in fact a totally asymmetric treaty, as the solution considered was to disarm the unarmed while the others remain armed without limitations. Similarly, Magnoli (2004) expresses that what happened in relation to the NPT was a division between “those which have and can” and “those which do not have and cannot.” Even so, there is a consensus among experts that the NPT involves huge strategic and political interests, and it is presented to promote global security by preventing new countries from building more nuclear weapons.

However, unlike the NPT, the NWFZ mechanism was not initiative of the nuclear powers but of the countries that chose not to develop nuclear technology for war purposes but had a strong perception of insecurity in the face of the emergence of the nuclear age. It is

noteworthy that the NWFZs were widely discussed well before the NPT negotiations. Martinez (2008) analyzes the origins of the NWFZs since the first proposal made by the former USSR in 1956 at the UN General Assembly, which was directed towards Central Europe, also discussing Romania's proposals to denuclearize the Balkans, the Rapacki Plan for Central Europe, the Gomulka Plan for the whole Europe, the Undén Plan for Europe and Eurasia, and the Kekkonen Plan for the Scandinavian countries. Nevertheless, none of these initiatives were successful, but the seeds of what would be fertile in other parts of the world had been already planted. According to Petrov 1987, p. 124-125),

[...] for the first time, a new concept was introduced, which involved a set of measures to limit nuclear weapons of any kind in different regions of the world. **The idea of creating nuclear-free zones gained popularity quickly. Peoples of the world considered it an effective means of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons which, at the same time, enabled reduction of tensions,** development of universal use of nuclear energy, strengthening of international and regional security, and limitation of the arms race.³ **(Emphasis added).**

In 1967, the first NWFZ was formally established in Latin America through the Treaty of Tlatelolco as a result of a diplomatic feat that had Mexico as the propellant of the agreement. But before that, there were other initiatives that failed for political and economic reasons. Costa Rica led the first proposal in 1956, followed by Chile in 1957, and Brazil led two proposals, one before and the other after the 1962 missile crisis (Martinez, 2008, p. 78-85).

It was only in 1986 that the second NWFZ was established, this time in the Asia-Pacific region. The agreement was established through the Treaty of Rarotonga, which was signed exactly 40 years after Hiroshima and Nagasaki tragedy. Subsequently, the Treaty was extended to other oceanic regions and came to be known as the Pacific Treaty. The third NWFZ established was in 1995, covering Southeast Asian countries through the Treaty of Bangkok. This Treaty is composed of ten countries

³ Free translation.

in the region that are part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The fourth NWFZ to be constituted was through the Treaty of Pelindaba, which denuclearized the African continent in 1996, coming into force in 2010. Finally, the fifth NWFZ established was through the Treaty of Semipalatinsk, establishing five denuclearized countries in Central Asia. The Treaty was signed in 2006 and entered into force in 2009.

The case of Mongolia is well distinctive and falls into a special category because it is a single country that declared itself free of nuclear weapons. In 1992, through a national law (Mongolian Law), the country declared that its territory would be free of any nuclear weapons, and this nuclear-weapon-free status was recognized in 2000 by the United Nations. It is not considered a NWFZ because there is no regional agreement with other countries; however, if its geographical position between two major nuclear powers (China and Russia) is observed, it was possibly the only way Mongolia had to assure its security (MARTINEZ, 2012, p. 55-56).

As can be seen, there are five formally established NWFZs, and three of them are fully inserted in the Southern Hemisphere: Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco); Oceania (Treaty of Rarotonga), and Africa (Treaty of Pelindaba). Regarding these three NWFZs, Oceania NWFZ is the only one that is fully inserted in the Southern Hemisphere, but the African and Latin American NWFZs extend beyond the boundaries defined by Ecuador's imaginary line, besides having most of their territories in the Northern Hemisphere. This is why when one speaks of the Nuclear-weapon-free Southern Hemisphere (NWFSH) by linking the Tlatelolco, Pelindaba and Rarotonga NWFZs, the contiguous zones are also involved, that is, the portions of those zones that are in the Northern Hemisphere.

But this idea of a NWFSH, as mentioned above, was initially proposed thanks to Brazilian Engineering Diplomacy in the 1960s, and which, after various attempts, was endorsed only in 1996 by the United Nations through a General Assembly resolution. Below, the process of Brazil's initiative will be seen in detail.

BRAZILIAN INITIATIVES IN THE NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE SOUTH HEMISPHERE CONSOLIDATION PROJECT

The idea of a NWFSH is intrinsically related to the effort to establish a NWFZ in Latin America and Africa in the 1960s. Due to the failures of proposals of Costa Rica (1958) and Chile (1959) to demilitarize

Latin America through peaceful treaties, reducing weapons capabilities to a minimum, in 1960 Brazil acquired an important role in the denuclearization process of the region.

Martinez (2008, p. 82-85) describes how Brazil has been taking leadership and getting involved in order to establish a true NWFZ in Latin America. Brazil was the first country to propose changing the region to denuclearized status according to the proposals that had emerged in Europe in the past but which failed to materialize. In fact, the Brazilian proposal was made at two different times, one before and the other after the tragic episode of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

In the first proposal made by Brazil, the possibility of declaring Latin America and Africa a NWFZ was contemplated, thus involving the enormous South Atlantic. This Brazilian proposal was strongly influenced by the reaction of African countries to France's nuclear tests in the Sahara Desert in 1960.

For the African countries, the 1960 French tests were a violent aggression against the continent, since conducting such activities in a territory that declared itself detached from the typical Cold War East-West confrontation was not justified. Moreover, there was the argument that the consequences of such tests to the population were still unknown at the time. Thus, African countries have succeeded in introducing these concerns into international scopes, such as the UN Disarmament Commission in Geneva and the UN General Assembly.

For Oliveira (2004) and Redick (1997), African countries' interest in constituting a denuclearized zone in their continent motivated Quadros' and Goulart's governments to propose a denuclearized zone also in Latin America. Besides, this strategy worked as strong pressure for the South African regime to renounce its nuclear program, which posed even increased risk to the security instability in the Southern Hemisphere.

Due to such a situation, the UN, in 1961, at the XVI General Assembly, supported a resolution that emphasized the fact that Africa remained on the brink of nuclear arms race and should be considered a NWFZ⁴. Brazil supported this resolution, which was more about encouraging countries in the region to establish themselves as a NWFZ from the free will of all member countries.

This Brazilian leadership position, both regionally and internationally, was a clear example of what was known as the Independent

⁴ Refer to: UNGA Resolution 1652 (XVI) of November 24, 1961.

Foreign Policy of Jânio Quadros' government, and which had as its principles

[...] expansion of Brazilian exports to any country, including socialist ones; defense both of international law and of self-determination, in addition to non-intervention in other nations' internal affairs; it was a policy of peace, disarmament and peaceful coexistence, support for decolonization of all still dependent territories, and the autonomous formulation of national development and external aid use plans (VISENTINI, 2007, p. 233).

Therefore, the Brazilian interest in African security was typical of a policy focused on this region, which also considered Latin America. According to Saraiva (1994), this policy was useful to seek greater autonomy regarding the international relations of the time and to increasingly try to escape from the automatic alliance with the West in order to achieve new national models of development.

Thus, a year later, on September 20, 1962, a month before the Missile Crisis, the Brazilian ambassador Alfonso Arinos de Melo Franco proposed at the XVII UN General Assembly that the previous year Resolution on encouraging Africa to become free of nuclear weapons should also be extended to Latin America. This proposal was not approved, precisely because it was considered too broad, as it contemplated the general and complete disarmament of all types of weapons, which implied notorious difficulty for countries to agree.

However, Brazilian motivations were reinforced by the incidents that occurred in October 1962, when there was an imminent risk of nuclear confrontation between the USA and former USSR regarding the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba. Then, on October 29, 1962, Brazil presented a new and more limited proposal, which considered only Latin America. As Gálvez argues,

the Brazilian antecedent was a resolution draft that the country submitted to the First Committee of the General Assembly during the XVI Session, with the dual purpose of preventing the proliferation of

nuclear weapons and contributing to the solution of the so-called “missile crisis” that had happened in relation to Cuba (GALVEZ, 1996, p. 3).⁵

This second Brazilian proposal was supported by Bolivia, Chile, and Ecuador, but it had to be reviewed again, which meant a delay in the delivery of the document in extended time. Unfortunately, due to the bureaucratic processes of the UN General Assembly, such an initiative did not have enough time to be publicized and discussed in plenary session. Without reaching an adequate number of delegates and lacking consensus and support, the Brazilian proposal was not directed to voting (GRAHAM, 1997).

However, although Brazilian initiatives were unsuccessful, they were the beginning of a process that would later end up with the adoption of the Treaty of Tlatelolco as the first NWFZ in the world. Subsequently, Mexico took the lead in this initiative, as there was a change of political regime in Brazil in 1964, which would cause the country to take a different path towards its foreign denuclearization policy, assuming new posture in favor of the emergence of pro-nuclear political elites and other segments that favored a parallel nuclear plan.

This position was maintained throughout the period of military governments and, curiously, only in 1996, during Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s democratic government, Brazil again proposes the effective NWFSH consolidation in the UN General Assembly⁶. The resolution entitled “Nuclear-Weapon-Free Southern Hemisphere and Adjacent Areas” was adopted by 129 votes to three, with 38 abstentions.

The three votes against were from nuclear potencies: France, the USA, and the United Kingdom. The decision to vote against such a resolution was mainly motivated by the claim to the principles of the Law of the Sea, which established the guarantee of freely sailing the high seas. According to Martinez (2008) and O’Brien (1998), for those nuclear powers, a formally established NWFSH would prevent the free navigation and especially the transit of nuclear weapons during military naval maneuvers, which may be carried out, since linking Tlatelolco and Rarotonga Zones would cause the whole South Atlantic to be under this nuclear-weapon-ban regime.

It is worth mentioning that the Brazilian proposal relied solely on

⁵ Free translation.

⁶ Refer to: UN Document A/C.1/51/L.4/Rev.1 of 7 November 1996

China's support among the nuclear powers. Nevertheless, due to the high number of abstentions (38), mainly from the countries allied to nuclear powers, which voted against, as well as the countries allied to Russia, which abstained from voting, the Resolution in question, despite having been passed by 129 votes, has failed to demonstrate a significant political, formal and relevant repercussion in the international context to date (MARTINEZ, 2012, p. 57).

For this reason, in recent years a new initiative has emerged aiming to establish a link between the Latin America, Africa and Pacific (Oceania) NWFZs in order to declare the Southern Hemisphere a completely nuclear-free area, including the transit through the high seas of the South Atlantic.

THE PROCESS OF LINKING THE NWFZS TOWARDS THE NUCLEAR-WEAPON-FREE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE CONSOLIDATION

Since UN Resolution 51/45 B, dated December 10, 1996, on the NWFSH was adopted, some countries have been deeply concerned by the low impact such resolution had on the International System. With regard to the leadership for the NWFZ promotion, New Zealand and Brazil stood out among many countries for their diplomatic work undertaken in the late 1990s. The two countries shared a leadership partnership within the UN Assembly to obtain the largest number of votes in favor of the NWFSH.

In 1997, during the UN Disarmament Commission meeting, New Zealand stated that the creation of formal links between the NWFZs, besides being complex, would be very difficult because of the large number of players with their respective interests. However, there could be the possibility of developing political ties so that the Brazilian initiative would cease to be a bittersweet victory, enabling greater cooperation between the zones (O'BRIEN, 1998).

Thus, in 2000, New Zealand and Brazil raised a proposal to hold an international conference of NWFZ States Parties within the UN. This proposal was well received by the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL), which initiated the necessary procedures to lead this conference. Maybe because Latin America is the first formally established and fully effective NWFZ, it has created in OPANAL's leadership a commitment to position itself as an articulator in the process of linking and integrating the other NWFZs. This

still represents a challenge for the Tlatelolco Regime, which is to stand as a unifying axis in order to establish international impact and repercussion with regard to the formal establishment of the NWFSH (MARTINEZ, 2012, p. 57-58).

The First Conference of States Parties and Signatories of Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones took place in Mexico City in 2005, with the support of OPANAL, which has its headquarters in the same city. At this time, the 130 participating countries negotiated and adopted the NWFZ Statement on Principles and Commitments. It is a document of understanding and principles with regard to the promotion of nuclear disarmament by each of the participating states.

Strategies to harmonize joint positions were agreed at this first meeting of NWFZ States Parties so that NWFZ countries could pursue coherent policies in international gatherings on nuclear weapons disarmament and non-proliferation, achieving results closer to their common needs. Besides, there was discussion on cooperation mechanisms that would be implemented between the NWFZs to successfully consolidate the NWFSH through a process of linking the Southern Hemisphere NWFZs (Tlatelolco, Pelindaba and Rarotonga). But for this to happen, it was recommended that, at first, political strengthening of each of the zones in their respective regions should be sought (OPANAL, 2005).

It is possible to observe that the process of linking the NWFZs started in a very shy way, through good understanding and recommendations made to obtain a gradual involvement of the different players. These arguments are supported by the 1996 UN Resolution, which establishes the Southern Hemisphere as an area in which nuclear weapons are prohibited.

The simplicity of the NWFZ Conference in 2005 was surpassed five years later when the Second Conference of States Parties and Signatories of Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones was held in New York City at UN headquarters, preceding the Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This second version of the NWFZ States Parties Conference, which was attended by more than 100 countries, incorporated Mongolia as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free State (NWFS) in the same category as a NWFZ, besides internally reinforcing and ratifying the decisions agreed in the first edition of the Conference held in 2005 (OPANAL, 2010; MARTINEZ, 2012, p. 57).

In 2015, the third Conference was held to discuss the possibility of revising the treaties that establish the NWFZs to verify, formalize and

standardize the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. At this time, the discussion was on how to find cooperation mechanisms among all NWFZs to improve decision-making policies in international negotiations, consolidating a strong and cohesive bloc with regard to the requirements of nuclear powers (OPANAL, 2015).

Two points draw attention in relation to the discussions and final agreements on the gradual process of linking NWFZs to actually consolidate the NWFSH. First, the fact that the NWFZ Conference has always preceded the NPT review negotiations, with the purpose of articulating previously agreed consensus on the positioning of the NWFZs in forthcoming nuclear weapons disarmament and non-proliferation negotiations that would be discussed immediately within the negotiation framework of the Conference of the Parties to the NPT. Second, how this enabled greater participation of observers from different institutions and organizations, mainly delegates from the European Union, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Moreover, it is possible to find further advances in the final document adopted by the Second NWFZ States Parties Conference, and which deserve to be highlighted. It should be mentioned that the validity of the first Declaration made in 2005 as a result of the First NWFZ States Parties Conference is reaffirmed and, accordingly, the NPT is recognized as the cornerstone of the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime; however, it is specified that, in fact, the NWFZs reinforce the NPT and help prevent proliferation at different levels. Opposition is expressed against improvement both of nuclear weapons and of development of new nuclear weapon technologies. Thus, the need for reducing weapons until their complete elimination is reaffirmed (OPANAL, 2010, p. 1-3).

Regarding the process of linking the NWFZs to consolidate the NWFSH, there are three aspects in the Declaration that should be emphasized. First, the celebration of the entry into force of the Treaty of Pelindaba in 2009, which in fact represents the connectivity between the three NWFZs that are part of the Southern Hemisphere. Second, the intensive appeal to initiate denuclearization in various parts of the world: Central Europe, the Korean Peninsula, and the Middle East, in order to achieve the ideal of a world free of nuclear weapons. Third, there is a deep concern about the problem of transporting radioactive material by

sea and navigable waters, and a review of verification and supervision mechanisms is required in order to fulfill commitments made through international regimes dealing with this issue, especially the IAEA and the International Maritime Organization.

These last three aspects represent an advance in the process of linking the NWFZs for the NWFSH consolidation, as they are addressed not only by NWFZ States Parties but also by other countries, either nuclear or not, which perceive the NWFSH consolidation as a threat to free navigation on the high seas, which would greatly change their strategic perceptions, and also entail a revision of their security doctrines.

In the case of Brazil, the NWFSH may represent more than the materialization of an old project that has recently been developing shyly. On the other hand, it may represent new strategic challenges that need to be incorporated into its foreign policy in order to obtain formal recognition by the international community and the nuclear powers, since this project of linking the Southern Hemisphere NWFZs has been increasingly configured.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR BRAZIL

There is a common perception among the countries that compose a NWFZ and that also participate in other international nuclear weapons prosecution treaties with regard to the diminishing role of nuclear weapons in security and strategic projection calculations. O'Brien (1998) argues that it is crucial to understand that these countries feel much safer as long as their respective regions are free of the presence of such weapons. But this is not the case for a much smaller group of countries that consider the maintenance of such weapons of mass destruction a source of national security.

The South Atlantic has been characterized by its low bellicosity rate compared to the North Atlantic. It is also relevant to say that the Southern Hemisphere has significantly more ocean and much less land, and the theme of free navigation through international waters is fundamental to the interests of the nuclear powers, which consider to be fair and necessary the displacement of their war arsenals (including nuclear ones) through different latitudes in the Southern Hemisphere.

This issue of the transit of nuclear weapons on the high seas has been a constant concern for the international community, and it is a relevant issue in the case of Brazil's projection as an emerging country.

One of the principles for establishing a NWFZ is precisely a geographical delimitation in which the member states exercise full sovereignty in their territory. In this sense, the territorial sea with width of 12 nautical miles is part of the full states' sovereignty.

The Convention on the Law of the Sea has established that a coastal state cannot prevent the "innocent passage" of ships from other countries across the territorial sea. Consequently, the transit is independent of the prior authorization of the state exercising sovereignty over this stretch of sea. Such innocent passage must be rapid and uninterrupted and must not threaten the coastal state's peace, public order and security. Similarly, the Convention provides that warships shall have the principle of the same right to innocent passage as other ships subject to certain restrictions imposed by the sovereign state (MARTINEZ, 2008, p. 363).

Article 19 of the Convention on the Law of Sea defines innocent passage as a ship passing through the territorial sea without penetrating inland waters or stopping at a mooring or port facility outside inland waters. In the same manner, submarines with innocent passage through the territorial sea must sail on the surface and fly the flag of their home state. Finally, in article 21, the coastal state may adopt laws that regulate innocent transit in relation to the preservation of the state's environment, reduction and control of pollution (Souza, 2001, w / p).

In this sense, the Treaty of Tlatelolco rules stipulated that the passage or not through the territorial waters of ships containing nuclear weapons would be under the responsibility of the coastal state. Regarding this issue, Mexico and Costa Rica have prohibited transit through their territorial waters (Martinez, 2008). In general, the NWFZs maintain the high seas freedom, but the Treaties of Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok have determined that each signatory state decides on this issue through domestic law. In the case of New Zealand, the Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act prohibits visits by nuclear-armed ships. Other countries, such as the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, restrict the passage of nuclear weapons through their territorial sea precisely because they are not considered "innocent" (O'BRIEN, 1998).

This whole issue of nuclear weapons transit through the Southern Hemisphere is sealed and maintained under mechanisms of high confidentiality by the nuclear powers, taking into account that such weapons are carefully guarded and kept confidential, which entails a matter of maximum security. Brazil's strategic positioning in the South

Atlantic and the NWFSH consolidation process necessarily involve an analysis of Brazilian foreign policy in relation to these themes.

Brazil is considered an emerging power not only for its growing economy, but also for its political characteristics, especially in relation to some regional leadership in its area of influence. The country has invested through its foreign policy in strategies to consolidate itself as an international player.

Lafer (2007) discusses how Brazil developed a vision full of general interests about the world and, therefore, found itself in need of generating its own perception about the international context. This is deeply related to the logistic paradigm that Cervo (2008) presented as the main feature of the last years of Brazil's international insertion. This paradigm strengthened the country's decision-making autonomy in favor of concretizing diversified national interests and reducing asymmetries in the international context in order to strengthen its position as a major political and economic player.

Therefore, it is worth reflecting here on the meaning that the South Atlantic has for Brazil and the political dimensions it offers for a country's strategic praxis in the international context. Penha (2011) highlights the contribution made by scholars of Brazilian geopolitics in the last decades, and points to a continuous country's interest in maritime aspects focusing on the enormous South Atlantic basin.

Castro (1997) argues that due to the country's geographical situation, the Brazilian pivot is the South Atlantic, strictly related to the defense and international projection beyond South America, its area of influence. In this sense, Brazil owns a supremely strategic area for maritime transit through the Caribbean and the North Atlantic to the South and more southern destinations. Trade flows in this region are intense, which arouses the powers' interest in keeping moving through the region.

In this regard, Brazil, after the Falkland Islands conflict, has implemented a foreign policy for the South Atlantic characterized by constructive pragmatism. This, manifested in the detachment from a strategic inclination in favor of the USA, has the purpose of getting closer to its neighbors as well as to the African countries due to the extension of its coast and its geographic salience in relation to the West African coast (CASTRO, 1997; PENHA, 2011).

When understanding Brazil's intention to consolidate itself as a regional power, it is interesting to note how the country's projection in the

South Atlantic was manifested through multi-sectoral cooperation and strengthening of peaceful development policies. In the words of Penha (2011, p. 98):

Brazilian geopoliticians' attitude to project Brazil as a power in the South Atlantic has encountered numerous economic, technological and military obstacles, but some of the postulations, such as the idea of an "Atlantic frontier" linked to the "territorial sea" initially, and Africa afterwards, as well as the Antarctic projection, would be retaken as guidelines of the Brazilian foreign policy.

It was no coincidence that Brazil led within the UN the conformation of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic (ZOPACAS) in 1986. The Zone encompasses all South American countries with coastline in the South Atlantic and the entire West coast of Africa, delimiting exactly the same space as that composed by the linking of the Latin American and African NWFZs.

Penha (2011) analyzes the way in which Brazil can be considered as middle power mainly related to the maritime dimension. For the author, what characterizes a middle power is the degree of autonomy in relation to another greater power. As mentioned above, in recent years, Brazil has manifested and acted more independently by not automatically aligning with the United States, the hemispheric power. However, in the analysis of Hill (1986), Brazil would constitute a middle sea power but would not present, until then, a permanent military infrastructure exchange. This reality began to change with the turn of the century and especially with the military agreements signed with France in 2009 and with the US in 2010.

Such military agreements are related to the guidelines set forth in the National Defense Strategy, which prioritizes the Brazilian Navy's performance to avoid the use of maritime territory to concentrate enemy forces that threaten the country's security (BRASIL; MINISTERIO DE DEFESA, 2012, p. 20). Equally, the Strategy selects major targets to protect and defend, which are precisely the port bases and the oil extraction platforms. As lower priority, it is the country's capacity to participate in international forces as well as acting promptly against any external threat or international crisis.

For this reason, the 2009 military agreement with France established a milestone for the development of Brazil's navy defense strategy at a higher level than the conventional one. The project involved the purchase of four conventional submarines as well as technology transfer for the construction of a nuclear submarine in Brazilian territory. This represented an increased projection for Brazil in the international context, considering that the country has always defended the maintenance of strategic ships because it has a wide coastline, besides large oil reserves in the so-called pre-salt. Therefore, Brazil foresees at least the parallel use of six submarines to safeguard the entire South Atlantic coast.

On the other hand, the military agreement signed between Brazil and the USA in 2010 follows the common interests of both countries with regard to hemispheric security. Similarly, it corresponds to a new regional geopolitical configuration that reveals unfolding of political strategies with strong content of defensive realism.

The agreement with Brazil, although not incorporating controversial issues, is more a Defense Cooperation Agreement, very similar to other agreements that the USA has signed with several countries. Nonetheless, the geopolitical configuration of the agreement is very significant, since it entered into force after the activation of the 4th US Naval Fleet in the South Atlantic in 2009. This subject suggests that a process of resumption of stronger US presence in this region is underway. Thus, the agreement signed is not a response to a specific threat, but the establishment of a close relationship translated into a sign of increased cooperation, with reciprocal regional gains.

For Brazil, the agreement represents a "Logistic Globalism" platform. The agreement means to complement the "military equation" in Latin America set up since October 2009, when Brazil signed the military agreement with France, contemplating the trade of ships for military use and technology transfer for their manufacture. Therefore, the agreement with the USA has an important impact and goes beyond simply exchanging military personnel and conducting joint training and maneuvers so that to continue the Brazilian project to strengthen its war industry. This action consolidates Brazil as a possible supplier, not only for Latin America, but also for several regions based on the implementation of its international multi-sectoral policy. As it was possible to see so far, the process of linking NWFZs to consolidate the NWFSH presents parallel opportunities and profound challenges for Brazil. Coincidentally,

there is a close link between the Brazilian policy of establishing itself as a middle power and the Southern Hemisphere consolidation as a nuclear weapon-free area. There are many aspects that require greater attention from countries and their foreign policies. The case of the nuclear weapons transportation on the high seas; the strategic platform that the South Atlantic means to Brazil in terms of cooperation and development involving its neighbors and the African countries; increased need to make the extensive coastline secure; discoveries of pre-salt oil reserves, and the establishment of military agreements with the USA and France have a profound impact on the NWFSH consolidation project, precisely because of what the current context means to Brazil and taking into account all these dynamics that have influenced Brazilian behavior in the regional and international contexts.

The process of linking the Southern Hemisphere NWFZs is to Brazilian foreign policy a new perception of how the international regime of disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons can favorably evolve. However, due to its international role and projection as a middle power, Brazil has made both domestic and international commitments to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes only. In this regard, Brazil will be able to continue with its strategy of international insertion through its characteristic pragmatism and logistic globalism. This will allow the country to consolidate its regional leadership in South America and project itself in another area in the South Atlantic, which may be a platform to continue its consolidation as an effective global player in the different dimensions of the international context.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The process of linking the Southern Hemisphere Zones (Tlatelolco, Pelindaba and Rarotonga) started in 2000 and with three States Parties Conferences (2005, 2010, 2015), and it has been characterized by presenting more defined and viable action plans than the United Nations Resolution on the Nuclear-Weapon-Free Southern Hemisphere. In spite of taking very slow steps, there is greater countries' involvement and even more since the Treaty of Pelindaba came into force, which allows the full incorporation of African countries into the evolving regime.

At the Third Conference of States Parties and Signatories to Treaties that Establish Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones, the potential of this

regime was highlighted, considering that 117 countries are protected by their respective regional disarmament treaties. In this regard, need of taking advantage of the significant number of countries that ban nuclear weapons through production, transfer and transportation in their respective regions was considered.

Nevertheless, it still relies on the resistance of the nuclear powers (with the exception of China) to recognize space under this category. The main argument is that such a condition undermines the rights established in the Sea Regime when it comes to the free navigation and transit of ships and armaments on the high seas. Therefore, the NWFSH consolidation process is much more directed towards achieving a fully political than legal meaning in the international dimension.

For Brazil, as an emerging middle power, the NWFSH means maintaining its area of influence secure, as well as ensuring external threat control on the extensive South Atlantic coast. This represents challenges such as granting or not innocent passage to ships that carry nuclear weapons through the Brazilian maritime territory; knowing how to discern the military presence of nuclear powers near the continental sea, and ensuring the defense of oil exploration platforms in Brazilian waters, as well as the defense and protection of seaports.

Opportunities include further deepening the cooperation agreements established through the ZOPACAS, especially greater contact with neighbors across the ocean, that is, the West Coast African countries. Besides, there is the possibility of implementing its maritime and naval defense policy through logistic improvement using conventional and nuclear submarines, necessary to safeguard the extensive Brazilian coast in the South Atlantic.

The Treaty of Tlatelolco provides Brazil with the regional security of banning the presence of nuclear weapons on the mainland. However, Brazil also tends to ensure the same security in maritime territory and this is strengthened through the NWFSH consolidation. The strategic dimension of oil reserves further encourages the development of new security strategies, such as the military agreements recently signed with France and the USA.

Thus, the South Atlantic is a propitious platform for the country to project itself as middle power beyond the regional level, with greater motivations to position itself as a peaceful and pragmatic global player in the twenty-first century international context.

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