

Book Review: Amorim, Celso (2017). Acting Globally: Memoirs of Brazil's Assertive Foreign Policy. ISBN: 978-0-7618-6881-1

Maria Berta Ecija

The book *Acting Globally: Memoirs of Brazil's Assertive Foreign Policy*, could be described as the transcription of Amorim's personal notebooks from the time he was Brazil's Minister of Foreign Affairs, under President Lula (2003-2010). During this period, Brazil's foreign policy became focused on building stronger partnerships with the Global South, diversifying its international partners and increasing its presence global affairs. The material contains in depth and exclusive narratives of specifically three foreign affairs Brazil was involved back then to fulfil such strategies: the peaceful resolution for Iran's nuclear issue, Brazil's and Middle East relations, and finally the Doha Round. Amorim succeeds to show those who are interested in Brazilian diplomacy and foreign policy, the backstage of the engines that move international politics, from details such as interpersonal conversations among great leaders and policy makers, to the great facts that take place in the negotiating rooms, with a striking ability to put Brazil in the middle of those occurrences and explain how the country can influence, shape and impact the international agenda by using its greatest diplomatic strength, the dialogue.

Chapter 1 is entitled *The Tehran Declaration: A Missed Opportunity?*- Perhaps there are two possible ways of interpreting the title chosen by Amorim- The Tehran Declaration, represents the international context that embedded Iran's nuclear issue. While the reference to a missed opportunity invites the reader to reflect to which extent in spite of the negative outcome of the initiative itself, this involvement in Iran's Nuclear matter confirmed Brazil's well known diplomatic ability to stablish dialogue with varied members of the international system, as well as the confirmation of the active aspect that Brazilian Foreign Policy was willing to adopt at the time, "based on the diversification of our partnerships and on the creation of a new regional and interregional mechanisms" (Amorim, p.97)

The chapter starts with a contextualization of Iran's nuclear issue highlighting its importance to Iran, and how this affects the other players of the international system. While Iran claimed the enrichment of uranium was being used for peaceful outcomes, there was a major international preoccupation of a nuclear bomb. Here, Amorim points out the main countries involved in the resolution of Iran issue, and what was their main concern. The

chapter is divided in sections that shows separately the main perspectives of each of these players: United States, Russia, China, France, Germany and Iran, how together with Brazil, Turkey was also trying to coordinate the interests of these actors. Within these sections, Amorim exposes the complex architecture of the backstage of these negotiations, such as conversations and meeting among leaders and their self-interest and views on the way of reaching a resolution. Among those insights, the greatest lesson is an in-depth explanation and exposition on Brazil's ability to negotiate peacefully with each of those actors as well as the confidence deposited on Brazilian diplomacy to ease the tensions resulted by the uncertainty and rivalry among those States.

In the end, it became unfeasible to come up with a common agreement among the parts due to the conditions imposed towards Iran, for the continuation of the enrichment of uranium. There was not an agreement regarding the quantity, timing and place, which Amorim details in this chapter. In spite in the failure in this extent, the coordination of a pacific outcome of the Iranian nuclear matter was important for Brazil because it allowed the country to get involved on a Security Council issue, that put Brazil as a key and advocate among great players for great international problems.

This chapter might be interesting not only for those scholars who are looking at Brazil's participation on the Iranian issue, but also, individuals who are interested on this matter in general, as Amorim exposes the interests and challenges imposed by each of those players. Moreover, there is a great amount of technical insights about what are the main drivers behind the enrichment of uranium negotiations, such as political, economic and even religious perspectives about the theme. Finally, people who want to understand more about 'swap agreements' will highly benefit from Amorim's explanations within this chapter, counting even with the contextualization and results of it, taken from the Iran's example.

Chapter 2- Brazil and the Middle East, this part of the book offers a historical background of the reasons that prevented diplomatic relations between Brazil and the Middle East countries, such as the case of Lamia Marouf and the idea of the reminiscence of unipolarity in the international world order. Indeed, President Lula was the first Brazilian leader to visit the region after Dom Pedro II, which illustrated how relapse were the relations. However, Amorim explains that in 2003, when President Lula started his mandate there were two determinants that would change such prospect: the President will and interest in foreign policy, consequently, enabling the mechanisms to put Brazil as a key actor to change global governance; combined with the ongoing idea at the time, of diversification

of partners, leading to the thought that international affairs could rely beyond the offers and opportunities of United States, Europe and Latin America. Therefore, the relations Brazil and Middle East are marked at the first moment by economic and commercial interests, but as suggested by Amorim here, it is important to read in between the lines.

The great strategy behind the commercial and economic ties among those actors, was of course related to some economic advantages, however, beyond that fact Brazil was interested in the shift of global governance, on the reform of international institutions- such as the ones responsible for trade and finance as well as those responsible for peacebuilding and international security. Therefore, the consolidation of new markets would contribute to the solidification of multipolarity in the international arena, resulting on international peacekeeping. Therefore, Brazil's relations with the Middle East at this point are a milestone that represent Brazil's efforts and ability to build alliances to be a key player on major international agenda issues, from trade and commerce to peacebuilding.

This chapter counts with comprehensively details about the trips Amorim made to the Middle East in order to strengthen the diplomatic relations with the region. It is also divided by sections, organised by country visits, and within each section, since this was a very decisive period within Middle Eastern politics- the Iraq war- not only his professional analysis on the region's conflict, but a narrative that tells the reader the history from an accurate point of view. Amorim describes the internal conflicts of the time, and briefly goes through descriptions of the consequences of the war. Consequently, this chapter is not only fundamental for those interested in the diplomatic ties Brazil-Middle East. But might be useful for those who are interested in studying Brazil's humanitarian aid, which is now and then mentioned by Amorim's comments of astonishment with the human rights violations in the region, as well as the revelation of Lula's personal interest for those causes, which put Brazil in the map of countries which enabled humanitarian relief.

Chapter 3, Doha and the Crucial Years, consists of the step by step of the preparation for the Doha Round. Rather than going through the details of the Doha Round in this review, which are carefully detailed by Amorim in this chapter, it is better to point out which components of this part are worthy looking at, and what might offer a different approach to the literature in the field. Throughout the book, Amorim now and then highlights the effort Brazil has been designating for multilateralism and the union among developing countries to change global governance. Here in this chapter, all the explanations regarding the aforementioned are exposed with real contextualization. Doha Round, according to him, was "a reflex of multilateralism in a formal way" (p.265). Other than the consolidation of

multilateralism, being Brazil a central player in this context, given the diplomatic ability the country had to bring almost all international actors to the negotiation table, was Brazil's own interests regarding trade.

Brazil had great interests in the liberalization of agricultural trade, however, it was necessary to reinforce the multilateralism within WTO, otherwise, the country will be host of the bilateral agreements made with the US and EU that gave little or no advantage do Brazil. This in great part explains why failure was not an option when it comes to the Doha Round, and the continued efforts made by Brazilian diplomacy to keep the negotiations flowing. Moreover, the WTO because of its link with agriculture, consequently, holds a great influence in food crisis- being this a subject of great interest and ingrained in the core values that guide the political agenda of Lula's government. Therefore, the WTO and the Doha Round within that context and as exposed in the book, have three determinant aspects for the foreign policy of the time: the economic aspect, related to trade and subsidies; global governance, in the sense of strengthening the role of the developing and even poor countries in international relations; and finally, a matter related to the humanitarian aspect that was promoted by Lula's government, especially when it comes to hunger and poverty combat.

All in all, the narrative of this chapter is rich in details regarding the main players of the Doha Round, especially those who were in direct contact with Brazil, for good or for worse- such as the US, EU, India, and some African countries as well. Also, this narrative might interest those who are looking at international organizations role in multilateralism and global governance, as there are several observations about WTO, so might be interesting for researchers on the field of International Organizations, trade, and even agriculture policies.

A possible criticism that can be raised against the material is the slow aspect of the narrative. At certain parts, there are too many details that end up diverting from the discussion. Other aspect to keep in mind for future editions is how the book is organised. As the book is divided in three big chapters, and considering this reading is academic driven, the headings of the subtitles should be clearer. The problem is that the headings are loose sentences. So instead of clarifying what will be found within each section, the reader needs to read the entire section to understand the meaning of the heading/title. Perhaps this was done with the intention of triggering the interest of the reader or to make the reading more dynamic, however, considering the scope of the content of the book which is highly academic and the type of reader which would consult the material, it would be better to have more specific titles for consultation purposes.

Overall, other than being a mandatory reading for those who are interested in Brazil and Middle East relations or Brazil's role on the unfolding of Doha Round, this book is valuable as a supporting and complementary material for those who want to understand Brazil's relations with many other actors. For instance, it is possible to find great insights on Brazil's challenge at the time to reach regional integration- MERCOSUL, especially when it comes to dealing with Argentina and in some extent Uruguay. In addition, throughout the book there are many examples of Brazil's relations with the United States, and how the first behaves to avoid the influence and dominance of the later, trying to build cooperative and constructive relations with the US instead. Also, in the last chapter about the Doha Round, other than a comprehensive explanation regarding international trade and incentives on agriculture, simultaneously, one can have an idea of Brazil's challenges with India within the G8 to reach a common ground, which can be useful for those interested in studying the great challenges behind reaching a successful negotiation. Furthermore, there is a great amount of information regarding bilateral agreements that were formed at the time with the members of the G20, taking advantage meetings that were happening due to the Doha Round preparatory summits. Moreover, within the Doha Round chapter as well, it is possible to find a lot of information regarding Afro-Brazilian relations, which were being strengthened at the time, especially on the field of agriculture and health. Finally, in each chapter of the book, there is an interesting approach given to the role of the media- on the national and international level- had at the time in supporting or criticizing the more active aspect that Brazil was adopting in global affairs. Those continuous observations and demonstrations of the role of the media were a great hit in this material, as they illustrate the impacts that the news have not only on world politics, but in the people involved in policy making. Being worthy for those in the field of media role in politics.

Considering the aforementioned, this book is a lecture for those who are interested in understanding why and how Brazil adopted this assertive foreign policy at the time, being explained with real world facts, by the person who was partly in charge of it, Celso Amorim.