Artículo Resultado de Investigación

Higher Education, South-South Cooperation and Brazilian Foreign Policy: Analyzing the Programa Estudante-Convênio de Graduação (PEC-G)

Educación superior, cooperación sur-sur y política exterior brasileña: Un análisis del Programa Estudante-Convênio de Graduaçao (PEC-G)

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Resumen

La Educación Superior es uno de los principales sectores de la Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (CID) dentro de la Política Exterior Brasileña (PEB). El Programa Estudiante-Convenio de Grado (PEC-G), institucionalizado en la década de 1960 y destinado a proporcionar a los estudiantes de países en desarrollo la oportunidad de graduarse en universidades brasileñas, es una iniciativa importante en este sector. El objetivo del artículo es retratar PEC-G a la luz de la Cooperación Sur-Sur (CSS) brasileña. Para eso, se presenta un diálogo entre la regulación del Programa, sus características actuales, los patrones históricos de la BFP y las suposiciones de la CSS. La historia de BFP demuestra que el Decreto que instituyó PEC-G ha resultado ser una política de control. A pesar de su ascenso hacia un enfoque cooperativo, el exceso de condicionamientos impuestos a los participantes, sumados a la soberanía del donante para establecer la agenda del Programa, terminan por distanciar al PEC-G del discurso oficial brasileño sobre CSS, lo que plantea dudas sobre el mismo.

Palabras clave: Política Exterior Brasileña, Cooperación Sur-Sur, Educación Superior, PEC-G.

Abstract

Higher Education is one of the major sectors in International Cooperation for Development (ICD) within the Brazilian Foreign Policy (BFP). The Undergraduate Student-Agreement Program (PEC-G), institutionalized in the 1960s and aimed at providing students from developing countries with the opportunity to graduate at Brazilian universities, refers to an important initiative in this sector. The article's objective is to portray PEC-G in the light of Brazilian South-South Cooperation (SSC). For such, it presents a dialog among the Program's regulation, its current characteristics, the historical patterns of BFP and SSC assumptions. BFP history demonstrate that the Decree which instituted PEC-G has turned out to be a control policy. Despite its rise to a cooperative approach, the excess of conditionings imposed to the participants, added to the giver's sovereignty in establishing the Program's agenda, end up distancing PEC-G from the Brazilian official discourse on SSC, raising questions about this discourse.

Keywords: Brazilian Foreign Policy, South-South Cooperation, Higher Education, PEC-G.

I Introduction

The International Cooperation for Development (ICD) assumed a significant role in the debate on Brazilian Foreign Policy (BFP) in the 2000s, when Brazil improved its capacity in offering cooperation projects within this context (Milani et al., 2015). South-South Cooperation (SSC), which conceptually implies rather a relationship of mutual benefits among partners than a linkage based on welfare, became an expressive instrumental category for BFP (Valença & Carvalho, 2014). During Lula da Silva's and Dilma Rousseff's mandates. education has become one of the most significant sectors in Brazil regarding the development of low and middle-income countries. Projects related to higher education stood out, most of its investments aimed at providing scholarships for students from Official Portuguese-Speaking African Countries (Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa, PALOP) and from the Latin American ones (Milani et al., 2015).

The first Brazilian government program of international cooperation to be implemented in Higher Education has over 50 years, though. The Undergraduate Student-Agreement Program (PEC-G)¹, regulated by the Federal Government in 1965 (MRE, 2017a), enables students from developing countries to study at Brazilian universities, in the expectation of return to their country of origin soon after they have obtained their degree.

Despite the traditional existence of this Program, no studies relate PEC-G to the BFP historical and paradigmatic contexts or, still, concern its analysis under the scrutiny of SSC. The article seeks to light on this issue and, for such, its objective is to portray PEC-G in the light of Brazilian SSC, having in mind the following question: "to what extent PEC-G characteristics and practices meet the conceptual assumptions of SSC?". PEC-G *praxis* is analyzed from documentary bases such as decrees and reports, as well as journal articles, master thesis, doctoral dissertations and book chapters published about the Program², in interaction with bibliographic bases related to BFP and SSC.

The essay is structured as it follows: After this introduction, comes a discussion of conceptual aspects on foreign aid and SSC. After that, a presentation of a BFP background, with emphasis on the patterns historically conducted. In the two next sections we outline PEC-G characteristics and analyze its perspectives as a program coherent with the SSC assumptions. Then, it finishes with the concluding remarks and references.

II Foreign Aid for Development and South-South Cooperation

Morgenthau (1962), who centers national interest and power in the analysis of international relations, shedding light on the political nature of Foreign Aid, argues that North-South relations have been legitimized on the assumption that the transfer of money,

¹ Programa Estudante-Convênio de Graduação, in Portuguese.

² In order to find the master thesis and doctoral dissertations, systematic searches were conducted at a Brazilian databank, the Banco de Teses e Dissertações Capes (http://bancodeteses.capes.gov.br/banco-teses/#!/), which stores all work developed in Brazilian graduate programs. The search terms used were: 1. PEC-G and 2. Programa Estudente-Convênio de Graduação. 25 studies, 19 master theses and 4 doctorate dissertations, were located and studied. In general, they were more interested in the PEC-G participants than in the Program itself. None of them focused on the relation among PEC-G, BFP and SSC.

goods or services from industrialized powers enables the economic development of recipient States. Along with this limited premise lies the predominant philosophy that the development process is free from conflicts and involves, essentially, the mobilization of aid, strategies and suitable solutions. There is also and understanding that the West is more advanced and uniquely suited to lead the rest of humanity by sharing its knowledge and technology with "less developed" regions.

The fact that the period after the first industrial revolution brought the western world economic development, through both capital formation and the accumulation of technical knowledge, has validated the theory that these two aspects, on their own, would provide the necessary impetus for underdeveloped countries to follow suit. This tendency was reinforced by the successful Marshall Plan, without considering that recipients, in this case, were among the major industrialized nations in the world, and whose disorder in its economic systems was temporary (Morgenthau, 1962).

It was within this context marked by the Cold War and a fast-economic growth that ICD gained space. Since the 1960's, countries of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have become known as traditional givers, while countries from third world, a highly heterogeneous group, were identified as recipients (Lancaster, 2007). ICD refers to a highly institutionalized and complex system, which articulates the policy of States and non-governmental actors, the norms set by international organizations and the belief that promotion of development within solidarity basis is a desirable solution to the contradictions and inequalities caused by capitalism at the international level (Milani, 2012).

The theoretical justification for foreign aid has been largely discussed, without reaching a consensus though. Lancaster (2007) considers that none of the existing theories explain well enough the intrinsic complexities of Foreign Aid's purposes, once they tend to neglect a significant element of analysis: the impact of domestic policies on decision-making processes. In this sense, the discussion put forward by Morgenthau (1962: 301) still proves relevant when claiming that "of the seeming and real innovations which the modern age has introduced into the practice of foreign policy, none has proven more baffling to both understanding and action than Foreign Aid".

The reasons for giving and taking aid vary significantly, but purely moral and humanitarian – the only non-political ones (Morgenthau, 1962) – are rare. Agreements commonly include implicit elements that are relevant to domestic interest. Reasons related to domestic security and economic and commercial objectives are recurrent, as well as power and influence purposes, such as alliance-making, ideology-alignment and political benefits; reputation and self-affirmation; reduction of environmental degradation; inhibition of narcotic flux; prevention of epidemic risk; the fight against terrorism and the reduction of international migration (Lancaster, 2007; Milani, 2012).

Even though asymmetrical relations of power produced in foreign aid context are rarely explicit, they do not only exist but create a series of expectations and embarrassment by the actors taking part in the process, intensified by the giver's sovereignty as it lays down the agenda and the circumstances under which the assistance will be given. As Milani (2012) observes, "the set of relations between the two types of actors (donors and beneficiaries) is also a reflection of the international political economy, that is, the asymmetries and hierarchies existing between the center and the periphery, between the North and the South of the international system".

An additional criticism is that even with the intensification of assistance, the problems and poverty in most developing countries did not diminished. There was no change that characterised the emergence of an alternative paradigm, one that would couple human development and democratization with sustainable resources management and poverty elimination. In fact, the perceived changes were mostly interventionist, as they included themes such as institutional development and political reforms in recipient countries (Steiner-Khamsi, 2009).

A scenario of discontent with the growing asymmetries in the international arena, questioning about the real effectiveness of the western model of development and harsh criticism regarding the assistance model of cooperation induced SSC to acquire relevance within the "Third World". The Bandung Conference (1955), in which 29 African and Asian countries met with the objective of mapping the future of a new global order, seeking detachment from the political and economic dependence on the United States and the Soviet Union; as well as the Non-Aligned Movement Conference (1961), in which many Latin-American countries joined forces with the African and Asian ones, refer to important prior historical SSC movements (Mignolo, 2017). The developments of such proximity among the Southern countries included the first regional and sub regional integration arrangements in the 1960s; the Group of 77 (G-77) (1964), the New International Economic Order (NIEO) and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Ogwu, 1982; Bry, 2016).

As Wallerstein (2006) observes, as different as the local situations of the Southern States were concerned, two questions were recurrent in their scope: 1. Their opposition to American hegemony and Soviet collusion with this hegemony; and 2. The disillusionment with the "old left" in all its forms, which had come to power in several parts, without, however, achieving the promised transformation of society (Wallerstein, 2006). At that historical context, the idea of SSC has, therefore, presented itself as an impulse to the emancipation, decolonization and collective self-confidence of the "Third World".

The first attempt to organize and institutionalize SSC within the United Nations took place in 1978, during the Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC), held in Buenos Aires, which defined the objective of deepening the national and collective selfconfidence of developing countries and improving their creative ability to solve their development problems (Bry, 2016). In 1980, the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation was created. However, a series of domestic problems by peripheral countries between 1980s and 1990s - such as the foreign debt crises, the transition of Latin America's democracy, the emergence of the neoliberal development model and the fall of Soviet Union -restricted their international performance (Leite, 2012; Bry, 2016).Over the years 2000, the economic recovery of emerging powers and its insatisfaction with the social impacts of emergency and structural adjustment programs contributed to both the guest for new international partnerships and the organization of coalitions, raising new perspectives for the cooperation within the South, as well as the emergence of new givers in the ICD (Mawdsley, 2012). Since then,

SSC has been used to refer to a set of actions established in relations among developing nations, such as formation of multiple geometries coalitions, collective bargaining in multilateral negotiations; regional integration arrangements; development assistance; exchange of policies, flow of trade and private investment (Leite, 2012). Milani (2012: 227, own translation) considers that much of the political argument that underpins SSC "is based on the assumption that developing countries can and should cooperate in order to solve their own political, economic and social problems based on shared identities [...] common efforts, interdependence and reciprocity. "Muñoz (2016: 9, own translation) adds that it is a matter of "avoiding imposing exogenous models, but adapting them to the partner's demands, with real practices, reciprocity, exchange of experiences, round trips".

The reciprocity and horizontality are inherent grounds for the construction of such concept (Muhr, 2016), which is introduced, at the discursive level, as a relationship based on mutual benefits among partners, built on the absence of conditions and away from any assistance-based attachment, as in the case of traditional aid (Lancaster, 2007; Muñoz, 2016; Bry, 2016) It is appropriate to consider, however, that SSC implies different meanings for different individuals and institutions and the only common ground in relation to its definition is the reference to its dynamics within the scope of developing countries (Mawdsley, 2012; Bry, 2016). Ogwu (1982) claims that a naïve interpretation conceives SSC as a way through which excluded nations from the international system can oppose the capacity rich countries have to penetrate their economies. The dominant argument is that the South will only be able to truly develop itself as long as it sets itself free from relationships of dependence. The basis of exchanges of these relations, therefore, is "solidarity towards the common goal of development" (Leite, 2012: 23, own translation).

Regarding the feeling that SSC might constitute as a path so that international relationships can take place on a less unequal footing, is not much realist to think it may be depoliticized. In addition, classifying as cooperative a relationship of exchange between Southern countries refers to an empirical question (Milani, 2012; Leite, 2012; Bry, 2016). Despite its potential to differ in practice from the North-South dynamics, "there is nothing automatic about South-South cooperation producing more sustainable, quality outcomes" (Riddell & Niño-Zarazúa, 2015: 31). The asymmetries evidenced in traditional aid are also present in South relations, including through soft power mechanisms (Chisholm, 2009). In addition, central countries themselves have supported cultural, social, and technological cooperation within the South as a means of legitimizing the centralized organization of economic and political power (Steiner-Khamsi, 2009).

In this regard, it is important to notice that the development process is not free from conflicts and implies challenges as to its specificities, the bureaucratic apparatus and each State policy. Morosini (2011, p. 108, our translation), when discussing the increment of academic SSC in Brazil, notes that "it is important to emphasize that all exchanges have double sides. South-South expansion may also be due to Brazilian commercial interests, that is, the same logic of Traditional International Cooperation may be used in Horizontal International Cooperation".

Therefore, the central questions are whether SSC is capable of freeing itself from the dynamics of power and interest set up in the North-South aid or whether it represents a new order of dependence (Ogwu, 1982); if the roots of the 1960s movement is still applied today in countries pursuing different economic and political paths, and how much of the SSC notion is left in the current projects (Bry, 2016). Social theory demonstrates that cooperation is a complex phenomenon, which includes material or immaterial; direct or indirect rewards (Leite, 2012). The picture also rises debates concerning the economic, political and social challenges faced by the participant countries, as the dichotomy for being a giver and facing domestic structural problems.

The controversy regarding the assumption that foreign aid is a tool of foreign policy (Morgenthau, 1962) also applies to the hypotheses related to SSC, intensified by the gap on empirical studies on the subject. As Milani (2012, p. 2013, own translation), states, SSC "implies, methodologically, going beyond the analysis of the promises and discourses of developing country governments, denunciations and proposals for partnerships of non-governmental actors". Therefore, empirical studies on SSC initiatives are therefore needed to measure the results achieved with these cooperation modalities, which can be done through case studies that critically investigate specific SSC projects against their principles and approaches (Bry, 2016).

III Historical background and objectives of the SSC in the Brazilian Foreign Policy

Brazilian Foreign Policy (BFP) was historically built upon a dominant enterprise: the country development, through autonomy and a major role within the international system, even though, at certain moments, such enterprise has been translated into an alignment, either automatic or pragmatic, with a certain power. There is a prevailing realist view on the international system, in which States operate on relative or absolute gains, that stems from a dynamic combination between the interests and the perceptions of its representatives (Soares de Lima, 1994; Pinheiro, 2004; Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007).

BFP may be analyzed from a paradigmatic perspective. Pinheiro (2004) argues that two paradigms endorsed BFP alternately: the *Americanism,* characterised by the search for alignment with the Unites States as a way to raise financial and technological resources in Brazil; and the *globalism,* that favors the diversification of foreign relations as a condition to boost its bargain within the international scenario.

SSC origins in BFP go back to the periods of weakening in the belief that Brazil enjoyed the status of *special ally* with the United States and that such alignment would confer Brazil the expected economic assistance. Despite the intensification of Brazil's qualitative and quantitative participation in SSC from the years 2000 onwards, at least two prior moments showed multilateralism evidences of Brazil's international insertion. The first, between late 1950's and early 1960's, favored the emergence of *globalism* as an international insertion proposal, in line with the country's developmentalist projection. This perception was reinforced by the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* (ISEB) and *Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe* (CEPAL) theses and systematized through Independent Foreign Policy (*Política Externa Independente*, PEI), during Jânio Quadros' (1961) and João Goulart's (1961-1964) governments (Pinheiro, 2000; 2004).

The second period took place during dictatorship, in mid-1970's. when the americanist paradigm restructured from Humberto Castello Branco's (1964 - 1967)gave way to Ernesto Geisel's (1974-1979) responsible pragmatism, which made globalism return as a dominant paradigm. From 1974 Brazil abandoned its ideological motivations in foreign policy and engaged itself in a pragmatic diplomacy. As a way to afford foreign debt and balance payments, the developmentalist model incorporated an export promotion policy, which would only be possible with the diversification of partnerships. The assumptions of globalism were kept during João Figueiredo's government (1979-1985), whose foreign policy acquired a universalist quality, due to the prioritization of the South (Pinheiro, 2000).

The exhaustion of the explanatory capacity of the *Americanism* and the *Globalism*, strengthened by the crisis of the nationaldevelopmentalist model and the increase of external vulnerability in the second half of the 1980s (Soares de Lima, 1994), led to the emergence of a third paradigmatic possibility in early 1990's: the *pragmatic institutionalism*, characterised by the strengthening of multilateral institutions and by both articulation and cooperation along with the international arena as a way to access to development and autonomy of action (Pinheiro, 2004).

Lula da Silva's (2003-2011) government discourse emphasized the need for change in relation to his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003). Nevertheless, this transition did not imply a paradigmatic rupture: BFP continued as tool of economic development and preservation and expansion of the country's autonomy, an idea that is inherent to middle powers' international relations (Soares de Lima, 1994). Preferences diverged, though. While Cardoso's foreign policy sought for *autonomy* through participation, Lula da Silva's was based on autonomy through diversification effort (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007). Therefore, the main differences between these two governments in BFP lie in the different interpretations and ideologies of their formulators regarding the possibilities and constraints of the international order.

Lula da Silva's foreign policy was conducted based on four major lines: Brazil's role as a lawyer for governance general reforms; its character of boosting power; its regional leading role in Latin America and its efforts to stimulate South-South relations. One of the tools for such aims was a change of role in relation to ICD, from recipient to giver. The resumption and strengthening of the relationships with African countries evolved into one of the main emphasis of that period (Vivegani & Cepaluni, 2007; Milani et al., 2015). Under presidential discourse that Brazil "has a moral and ethical commitment with the African continent"3, the country has become one of the most important actors in Africa's international policy. Despite

³ Discourse of former President, Lula da Silva, during his visit to Mozambigue in 2008.

the Opposition criticism of "waste of money on a continent with no future" (Visentini, 2010: 71, own translation), Brazilian companies gained space and strengthened their role in African countries, reinforcing Africa's contribution to Brazil as protagonist in the world.

Apart from immediate commercial aims, the Brazilian presence in the African continent; its activism in multilateral arenas and the formation of coalitions sought to balance out the North-South relations. This *autonomy for diversification* emphasized "the country's adherence to international principles and rules through South-South alliances, even regional ones, as well as agreements with non-traditional partners" (Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007, p. 283, own translation).

Official narratives on SSC over this period emphasized arguments such as solidarity, horizontality, non-interference, respect to state sovereignty, no use of political limitations on human rights and liberal democracy; share experience and public-policy practice (Milani, Conceição & M'Bunde, 2016). The defense of issues related to immediate interest was also reinforced, partly as soft power strategy (Valença & Carvalho, 2014). Therefore, despite the criticism about the commercial policy, considered highly ideological by the Opposition, Vigevani and Cepaluni (2007: 307, own translation) portray Lula da Silva's as "mostly pragmatic and realist, away from ideological reasons only".

Milani, Conceição and M'Bunde (2016), based on data from the *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* (IPEA) and from *Agência Brasileira de Cooperação* (ABC), present a panorama that shows Brazil's performance as a giver within ICD. Its main targets were Latin American (68,1%) and African (22, 6%) countries. In the latter case, the most recurrent were PALOP, with 76, 5% of the expenses. One of the major Brazilian performance sectors in the SSC scope is Education. Higher Education projects are the main ones, having the largest sum of money (over 97% of total money spent on educational cooperation) intended for scholarships awarded to PALOP students (undergraduate) and Latin Americans (graduate). 174 million dollars were set aside for this modality between 2005 and 2010 and, between 2009 and 2010, there was a rise in public expenses for such purpose.

The most traditional international cooperation governmental program in the field of Higher Education is the PEC-G, aimed at providing students from developing countries with the opportunity to graduate at Brazilian universities, with the condition that they return to their countries after they have finished their studies. Thus, it is expected from the Brazilian international cooperation a positive impact on partner countries' societies, even though such results are highly subjective (Milani *et al.*, 2015).

IV Undergraduate Student-Agreement Program (PEC-G)

PEC-G regulation took place within a controversial political context to the conduct of cooperation actions among developing countries. In March 1964, a military coup brought down President João Goulart. In the field of foreign policy, the *americanist* paradigm, with an ideological nature rather than pragmatic, characterised Brazil's performance during the first years of the regime. For President Humberto Castello Branco, back then, the economic development could only hope to be

achieved with a minimum of security (Pinheiro, 2004). His government "represented a real withdrawal, which abandoned Third-Worldism, multilateralism and the world dimension of Independent Foreign Policy and returned to an automatic alliance with the United States of a diplomacy within the hemispheric and bilateral scope" (Visentini, 1999:146, own translation).

This domestic security trend was absorbed in the Decree that created PEC-G. Its preamble states clearly that registering foreign students who are beneficiary of cultural agreements (student-agreement) is compulsory. Apart from this preamble, no mention of any cooperation indicative with developing countries can be found. The Decree is limited to lay down very strict participants' obligations and commitments:

> 1. Comply with the educational institution nomination I was appointed to by MEC; 2. Comply with the rules laid down by the educational institution I was enrolled at; 3. Prove, when demanded, I can afford my own expenses while studying in Brazil; 4. Do not get involved in the Brazilian domestic politics; 5. Return to my country within 3 months after my graduation is completed (Brasil, 1965, own translation).

Thus, the Decree that instituted PEC-G turned out to be control policy, edited in a discretionary fashion and aimed at identifying or locating foreign students in the national territory. After the Decree, various protocols were set between the Brazilian Ministry for Foreign Affairs (*Ministério de Relações Exteriores*, MRE) and the Brazilian Ministry for Education (*Ministério da Educação*, MEC): in 1967; 1974; 1986; 1987; 1993 and 1998 (MRE, 2017a). If on the one hand they made the Program more flexible in relation to certain rules

(by institutionalizing, for instance, the possibility of transfers among programs and failing one course more than once), on the other, they set restrictive criteria, such as compulsory pass in Portuguese language exam; compulsory admission to day-time or full-time programs and restriction on staying in Brazil after the end of the Program. On the Decree update (Brasil, 2013), the domestic security lost its strength and made room for norms related to the role of ministries and universities involved, applicants' prerequisites and participants' obligations.

Lack of data standard made available by MRE (2017a), especially from 1964 to 1998, hinders detailed analyses of the standards followed by PEC-G during this interval. In certain years, there is only information regarding participants' country of origin and attended programs; in others, there is only the number of places made available. It is possible, however, to infer that over this period Latin American students' participation was predominant, but very few (inexistent in some years) students from Africa. Another curious fact is the United States' participation, followed by the observation that "PEC-G had cooperation features that went beyond South-South Cooperation" (MRE, 2017a, own translation).

The pattern of the most recurrent countries participating in the Program have changed significantly over the years. According to MRE (2018), at present 59 countries take part in PEC-G altogether: 25 from Africa, 25 from South and Central Americas and 9 from Asia. Programs offering most places are Languages; Social Communication; Pedagogy; Management and Biology. Data from the period between 1980 and 1999 is not made available by MRE (2017a). Between 2000 and 2017, there was a selection of over nine thousand students, and Africa was the origin of most participants, with 76% of the selected. PALOP's participation stands out, especially from Cape Verde (3059 selected), Guinea-Bissau (1358 selected) and Angola (739 selected) (MRE, 2018).

Around 400 students enter Brazilian universities every year, but only 200 conclude their studies (MRE, 2017a). The increased participation of African countries between 2010 and 2015 is due to foreign policy priorities of that time. Besides both resumption and relation strengthening with the continent, BFP has also been characterised by the beginning of a closer contact with emergent powers, what explains South Africa's entry into PEC-G in 2010, even though the country has not yet sent any students (MRE, 2017a).

MRE (2017a) and MEC (2017a) do not mention the number of selected students that have finished their studies over the Program's 50-year-existence. It was only after 2012, with the Sistema Integrado de Monitoramento, Execução e Controle (SIMEC), an integrated control system implemented by MEC, that universities were able to record all data on a common basis. Amaral's research (2013) shows that, up until 2013, 2842 diplomas had been issued to African students. Still on the Program's numbers, one important aspect is that a significant part of the places made available is not taken. The study carried out by Amaral and Meneguel (2015) shows that universities offer around 3000 places every year, 700 candidates subscribe for the program, and around 300 to 400 are actually selected.

As for PEC-G entry criteria, we have: applicants must necessarily be over 18 and preferably be no older than 23, have already completed or at least be in their last year of what corresponds to the Brazilian *Ensino Médio* (High School) and go to the Brazilian embassy or consulate in their countries in order to apply for the Program, which is for free. Applicants must find out about available institutions and programs and they may suggest two programs and two cities of their preference (MRE, 2017b; Brasil, 2013).

On the list of documents applicants will need for the selection there are: high school certificate and transcript (with final grade equal or superior 60%); application form and Proficiency certificate in Portuguese Language for Foreigners (Certificado de Proficiência em Língua Portuguesa para Estrangeiros, Celpe-Bras), applicants' and their parents' birth certificates; physical and mental medical certificate; terms and conditions of admission and statement of financial responsibility, with demonstrated income that shows the signatory will be able to send the applicants 400 US-dollars every month. This statement aims at ensuring students will receive financial aid in order to pay for their travel expenses to Brazil, accommodation and stay during their programs and return to their countries of origin (MRE, 2017a).

It is important to note that the temporary visa IV, issued for PEC-G students, does not allow for work or any other kind of paid activity. They can only take part in curricular training, research or community services. However, according to Amaral (2013), despite the statement of financial responsibility, in many cases PEC-G students are not able to afford their stay in the country. This is due to the high living costs in capital cities and also because the financial agreement may fall through.

A study carried out on PEC-G student's academic life, in 2014, found that these students face problems related to: housing and food; financial resources for their stay; Proficiency examination; isolation and social integration; and previous knowledge about the country (MEC, 2017b). Empirical research on PEC-G and its participants corroborate such findings, especially for highlighting the problem of not belonging, exclusion, prejudice and racial discrimination, and problems of housing and living costs (Ngomane, 2010; Có, 2011; Bizon, 2013; Filgueira, 2014; Cabral, 2015; Okawati, 2015; Pizzinato *et al.*, 2017).

In certain cases, participants are eligible for a scholarship worth R\$ 622,00 (six hundred and twenty-two reals) from Brazilian government, for a period of one semester, with the possibility of renewal. There are three types of scholarships, not accumulative, given by MRE: Bolsa Mérito (Merit-based Scholarship), "awarded to student-agreement who achieves academic excellence after his first undergraduate year"; Bolsa MRE (MRE Scholarship), "awarded to student-agreement at non-federal IES who has demonstrated financial need after his first undergraduate year in Brazil"; and Bolsa Emergencial (Emergency Scholarship), "awarded in exceptional circumstance, that is, when students are in extremely financial need as a consequence of unexpected situations". Merit-based students are also eligible for an air ticket when returning to their countries (MRE, 2017b). MEC, in turn, offers scholarships to PEC-G students enrolled at federal universities through the Project Milton Santos de Acesso ao Ensino Superior (Promisaes) (MEC, 2017b). To apply for such type of scholarship, students should meet the academic performance standards set by the university they study at.

According to MEC (2017a), the pre-selection of applicants is conducted by the Brazilian diplomatic missions in partner countries, which forward the list of applicants and application forms, authenticated by an agent, to MRE. The final selection is entirely held in Brazil. Amaral and Meneghel (2015) affirm that the missions' role is to receive students' application forms and forward them to Itamaraty, in Brazil and that instruction is that agents should not interfere at any time during the process. *Divisão de Temas* Educacionais from MRE and Coordenação-Geral de Relações Estudantis da Secretaria de Educação Superior from MEC conduct the final selection, assisted by a committee indicated by the following institutions: *Fórum de Pró-reitores* de Graduação das Universidades Brasileiras; Fórum das Assessorias das Universidades Brasileiras para Assuntos Internacionais e Fórum Nacional dos Pró-reitores de Assuntos Comunitários e Estudantis. The results are announced by the Brazilian diplomatic missions in participant countries.

Brazilian representatives in partner countries are only responsible for the pre-selection, but they have an important role in the process. The research undertaken by Amaral and Meneghel (2015) on PEC-G diffusion seems relevant to justify the small number of applications in opposition to the number of places offered. The authors find that a large call for such opportunity depends on the interest and operational conditions of the Brazilian missions in each country. Although all information is available on the internet, access is small due to lack of centralization as well as limited access to internet in many African partner countries, making opportunities uneven. The research also points to the recurrent problem of document forgery by applicants, which justifies that every document sent to Brazil must be authenticated by a Brazilian agent.

As for the selection criteria, Amaral and Meneghel (2015) say that the responsible committee, which holds meetings every year in Brasília, considers mainly the compatibility between the intended area of study and the grades achieved by applicants in subjects related to the area during high school. Therefore, high school transcript comes to be the main criterion of analysis. In this regard, Djaló (2014), in his research with PEC-G students from Guinea-Bissau, highlights that, because some programs offer a limited number of places, students are compelled to choose programs that are not much of their interest.

Another important aspect is that students can only receive the diploma, transcripts and syllabuses in the embassy or consulate of their country of origin. The idea is to ensure students return to their own countries after completing their programs. PEC-G decree is explicit about this rule: "student-agreement is not allowed to overstay legal length of time as stated in the Foreigner Statute" (Brasil, 2013). There are two sides of the same rule. On the objective side, it may be argued that PEC-G contributes to stop brain-drain and enhance skilled labor recruitment in less developed countries, mainly as a consequence of international academic mobility. The second side of the rule, a more subjective one, is freedom of choice perceived by participants.

It also seems appropriate to discuss university role in PEC-G. Places are made available according to each institution interest; however, MEC can order additional places to meet the demands of PEC-G applicants, according to what is stated in the international cooperation agreement. MRE (2017a) informs that 110 federal, state, municipal and private institutions in Brazilian states, except for Rondônia, take part in the Program. Most of these universities are in the states of São Paulo (18), Minas Gerais (15) and Rio Grande do Sul (13).

Information on number of places offered and taken and available programs in each university is also provided. According to the Decree (Brasil, 2013, own translation), "ministries [...] will not interfere in academic matters, being exclusively dealt with by the IES". Nevertheless, there is some doubt as to how divergences will be solved between each university policy and the PEC-G policy, considering the administrative autonomy of these institutions and PEC-G's rules that are clearly laid down in the Decree, Bizon (2013) and Amaral and Meneghel (2015) highlight that universities could have a more significant role in the Program management, especially as far as applicants' selection is concerned, because it is the universities that guide and follower their academic life.

As far as reciprocity terms is concerned, it is possible, finally, to draw a parallel between the presence of South students at Brazilian universities and the internationalisation processes sought by both these institutions and the Brazilian government. Up until the recent racial guota system implementation, PEC-G students from Africa were the largest ethnic representatives found on campuses. The question is, however, whether Brazilian universities see these individuals as the ones to promote diversity and interculturality within the academic environment; crucial elements in the quest for domestic internationalisation (Leal & Moraes, 2016).

SSC as well as internationalisation of higher education is supposed to value the context. Thus, benefiting from gained experience through a program that goes back to 1960, whose beginning points to Brazil's own history, may represent a possibility for Brazilian universities, so that they can develop their internationalization processes from a perspective that is away from the academic capitalism premise and, at the same time, may contribute to PEC-G students' integration.

V Perspectives of the PEC-G as Program based on SSC premises

The question "to what extent are the Brazilian strategies for the South-South cooperation a real alternative for development?" (Milani, Conceição & M'Bunde, 2016: 17, own translation) seems relevant to the analysis of PEC-G in the light of SSC. During its 50-years existence, PEC-G, initially settled as a control policy, has progressed considerably. Reducing it to a merely assistant approach would not be proper, if we consider the opportunity of education at higher education level offered to millions from South countries.

Nevertheless, some of the Program's characteristics seem to distance it from the official Brazilian narrative emphasized on SSC. Within the field of technical cooperation, recipients are willing to learn from the experiences of countries with similar challenges to develop their own programs, that is, programs that match their own contexts and real needs. Brazilian initiatives related to famine and poverty, within Fome Zero context, for example, have achieved significant results as they share knowledge with South countries, enabling them to profit from such experiences (Fraundorfer, 2013).

In this sense, what has PEC-G taught other countries? A broad perspective of cooperation and development could consider, for example, besides offering places at Brazilian universities, some initiatives aimed at strengthening domestic Higher Education of countries involved. A perspective aimed at reciprocity and equality between both parts; in turn, would consider that Brazil can learn from their partners as well.

Besides, PEC-G turns out to be an extremely restrictive and selective Program due to the excess of requirements imposed by its rules: issues related to age; financial means for staying in the country, not being able to take part in paid activities; lack of autonomy for choosing an undergraduate program; restriction to daytime or full-time programs only; immediate return to country of origin; not being able to make use of certain rights given to Brazilian students; the large number of places not taken (probably due to lack of information in the country of origin and the difficulty in meeting all requirements); and even stricter rules, such as the way foreigners are treated in Brazil.

Bizon (2013) argues that making places available is just one important step of this public policy. Cabral (2015) considers PEC-G to be excluding as it privileges young Africans who have some economic capital (through the terms of financial responsibility) and some cultural capital (through high school transcript). Income, thus, becomes a crucial factor as to who will or not enter the Program. Based on such grounds, Leite's reflection (2012, p. 34, own translation) seems relevant: "Ultimately, classifying a certain South-South relation as cooperative is an empirical issue, which cannot be only analyzed as pure knowledge exchange between actors involved in technical cooperative initiatives, which, often times, are not achieved".

It is important to point out the absence of a direct dialog between Brazil and its partner countries' respective ministries of Education about PEC-G. When communication is needed, it does only take place through the Brazilian embassy or consulate (Amaral & Meneghel, 2015). SSC presupposes the involvement of both parts under equal and reciprocal conditions and implies in active participation of the recipient. In other words, cooperation does not take place if the other part is not understood as a partner. As for PEC-G, there is no (at least official) actors' participation from recipient countries, who are the ones to know their own conditions and demands better. Also, such demands do not necessarily match the development notion established by the Western world.

Apparently, Brazil is the one to lay down PEC-G agenda, similarly to what happens with North-South aid. It is not known, for example, whether the programs available meet the individual specificities of each of the 59 partner countries. The same way, there is no information as to the results achieved through the Program, what seems to point to the importance of monitoring and assessment.

It is imperative, thus, to reflect upon the kind of contribution given to South nations by Brazilian government through PEC-G concerning participant's real social transformation. Amaral and Meneghel (2015: 102, own translation) reinforce that "even though it is based on the model of no indication by the countries, there is, apparently, some sort of benefit for those students belonging to the African elite". An analogy with Haas' study (2007) about the relation between both migration and development seems appropriate. The author sees popular notion as misguided when considering that poorer people tend to migrate more often. Migration is a selective process: in order to migrate, people need, apart from human resources, financial and social, they need ambition. Thus, both the restrictions imposed by PEC-G and failures in the Program diffusion bring exclusion for those whose opportunity could imply development. Sen (2000) conceives development based on a broad perspective as he compares it to the expansion process of real freedom. The concept should be assessed considering the ability people have to control their own lives. If SSC seeks to stay away from the mainstream practiced by central countries, it is relevant that a broader concept for development grounds the establishment of policies for such aim.

Understanding PEC-G in the light of SSC requires considering the Brazilian standards of foreign policy-making along its history. Despite the emphasis given by Brazil to a SSC based on solidarity and reciprocity, the country has always endorsed a distinct approach in multilateral forums, aiming at a position of leadership within the South. Its major endeavor towards its own development, seeking autonomy and a significant role in the international system, has compelled the country to very often enter the international scenario in a pragmatic fashion. The change in the country's role within ICD during the years 2000, from recipient to giver, and its approach to the African continent, may be particularly understood as a tool of soft power. In this regard, the emphasis in discourse aimed at finding asymmetry with South countries should not be overlooked.

Social theory shows that cooperation is a complex phenomenon, which includes different rewards. An additional issue is raised: what indirect rewards has Brazil sought to get through PEC-G? Schardong (2012), for example, considers that when PEC-G ex-students return to their countries, they will be more open to

Brazil's foreign policy as well as willing to share their Brazilian cultural experiences. Morgenthau (1962) adds that, of all types of foreign aid, the only one not to assume a political character is the humanitarian one, shedding light on the centrality of national interest and power on international relations

VI Concluding remarks

The aim of this essay was to analyze PEC-G in the light of Brazilian SSC, having in mind the following question: ""to what extent PEC-G characteristics and practices meet the conceptual assumptions of SSC?". PEC-G was put into a contextual and paradigmatic perspective, through a dialog between its main characteristics, BFP historical standards and SSC premises. As this essay sheds light on the practices of a program institutionally framed as SSC, it contributes to the understanding of the current dynamics established in the scope of SSC, deconstructing, albeit to a limited extend, some romanticism around this concept.

Regarding the feeling that SSC might constitute as a path so that international relationships can take place on a less unequal footing, is not much realist to think it may be depoliticized. Despite its potential to differ in practice from the North-South dynamics, the asymmetries evidenced in traditional aid are also present in South relations, including through soft power mechanisms, which emphasizes the politicized nature of international relations. In the case of Brazil, BFP has always been a tool of economic development, preservation and expansion of the country's autonomy. In the 2000s, the proximity with the African countries contributed to Brazil as protagonist in the world.

Despite PEC-G clear ascension in a cooperative sense, the excessive conditionalities imposed and the sovereignty of the Brazilian government in setting the agenda and the circumstances in which the assistance will be given makes the Program both extremely restrictive and selective. This feature puts some distance on its configuration as a SSC model, at least as the one emphasized by the Brazilian official discourse, sustained on solidarity, horizontality, complementarity. Therefore, the central question is whether SSC is capable of freeing itself from the dynamics of power and interest set up in the North-South relations.

Foreign policy, as public policy, promotes internal institutional-bureaucratic articulations and arrangements, at the same time it elicits demands and conflicts of different domestic groups (Salomón & Pinheiro, 2013). History shows that Brazil's ties with the South took place when such closeness seemed appropriate, according to a dynamic conjunction of its representatives' both interests and perceptions. Thus, despite PEC-G traditional existence, there is no sustainability guarantee. The context in the years 2000 was favorable to SSC actions in Brazil, which was represented by a left-wing government during relative economic growth, with a strategy based on autonomy through diversification for its international insertion.

Contemporary issues, such as the world economic crisis, Brazil's political and economic disorder and significant changes in the course of BFP, especially after Dilma Rousseff's impeachment, point to hypotheses related to the conditions under which the country will be in order to keep up its capacity and will in offering international cooperation projects. Regarding Higher Education, a number of policies and actions during Lula da Silva's and Dilma Rousseff's mandates promoted the sector's development. This included the expansion and the creation of new Federal university institutions, some of them with integration vocation; the increase in the number of courses and enrollments; the hiring of professors and technical staff, as well as the creation of quotas aimed to democratize the university. Recent evidence, such as the stagnation of resources allocated to higher education for the next 20 years, and the growing transformation of the sector in a "big business", driven by commercial imperatives, point to a possible loss of importance given to SSC actions in the sector and PEC-G.

Thus, if PEC-G seeks to represent a positive legacy in relation to the South and its peoples, it is important that it incorporates a sustainable perspective, according to the partners and participants own's contexts and needs, which do not necessarily match the development notion established by the Western world. This would include actions such as a direct and deliberative dialogue between the partners, as well as a review on the current practices related to the participant's selection and permanence. Previous empirical studies demonstrate, for example, that in many cases PEC-G students are not able to afford their stay in Brazil, due to the high living costs in capital cities. Other problems faced by them include isolation and social integration; exclusion and racial discrimination. Such issues need to be worked not only by the Government but also within the universities, in a participatory perspective. Finally, if understood as a complex exchange process, SSC should stay away from reductionist approaches that lead to normative thoughts. Empirical studies are, therefore, necessary in order to allow the assessment of the results achieved through this cooperation model and shed light on future perspectives of PEC-G and other similar SSC programs.

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