

# Brazilian Theological Diplomacy: A one-day report behind the scenes of the UN

By Jamil Chade

Neither allies like Israel and Chile have had the courage to support Brazil

GENEVA - In 20 years running through the corridors of the UN and other international entities, traveling with presidents and going to summits, I can say that I have witnessed some rather unfavorable moments in Brazilian foreign policy.

But what I saw happening on Thursday in the United Nations meeting rooms in Geneva is unlike anything these two decades of school have presented to me.

Although I myself was a critic of Lula's silence on human rights abuses in Iran, Cuba or North Korea, although Dilma Rousseff went wrong in maintaining his unrestricted support for Maduro's government, although the PT promoted his own cadres and left great names of national diplomacy leaning on irrelevant consulates around the world, although the expansion of Brazilian companies around the world occurred in part with bribes, there was minimal coherence with the tradition of national diplomacy.

In any continent and within all international entities, Brazil was recognized for its effort to build bridges, dialogue and create a situation in which it would present itself as an interlocutor. In some situations, this strategy worked. In many others, no.

But there was a logic that went back to the DNA of Rio Branco's diplomacy.

Sovereignty would be defended by strengthening peace, dialogue and unrestricted defense of the multilateral system. And not for its destruction.

Today, Brazil has given up this coherence and tradition. By transposing the ultra-conservative values of the ruling group into foreign policy, disregarding the multiplicity of the Brazilian population and ignoring its international commitments, Itamaraty began

to put into practice an ideological-religious diplomacy. And that started to undermine the consensus even within the West.

In recent days, diplomats have received clear instructions from Brasilia to veto in UN texts and resolutions any use of the word "gender," a term recognized in international treaties signed by the Brazilian government itself since the 1990s.

They were also instructed to make an attack on any indication that a misinterpretation of a religion could be an obstacle to equality between men and women. That is, the manipulation of a religion should never be considered as a problem.

They also attacked the concept of reproductive rights and, of course, led a fierce fight against any reference in the texts that might possibly breach a supposed positive analysis of abortion. No, the sections originally proposed by the resolutions did not advocate abortion. This was only in the way the Brazilian government interpreted them.

With this arsenal, Brazil was speaking on Thursday of the defense of human rights and protection of women.

Today, resolutions would be negotiated at the UN so that in July the texts can be put to the vote. But what I witnessed was a deep embarrassment.

## **Indignation**

While the Brazilian diplomats asked for the floor and began to list all vetoes on the parts of the resolutions, what was seen in the room was a mixture of astonishment, ironies and incomprehension on the part of the foreign delegations.

In one corner, representatives of Uruguay did not disguise the scare, while others quickly placed the plates with the names of their countries so they could intervene against the Brazilian proposals.

One EU representative laughed, while another from his own delegation sighed at what he was hearing. Through telephone messages, delegates in the room exchanged impressions on how to react to Brazil. Among the NGOs, the comments by the ear bordered the revolt.

As the vetoes announced by Itamaraty continued, the surprise gained a connotation of indignation. In one corner of the room, I saw a diplomat, irritated and certainly without instructions from her capital, raised her plaque with energy to stop a proposal from the Bolsonaro government.

After all, those texts were not new. In recent years, they have always been approved by consensus and explicit support from Brazil.

Even Bolsonaro's new allies - Chile and Israel - did not break the Brazilian lurch into obscurantism. The representatives of both countries made to ask for the word to say that they did not accept what Brazil suggested.

But we were not alone. Surprisingly, those who came to support the Brazilian proposals were precisely those states that are accused of still living with medieval rules for their women and committing atrocities to those who do not follow a religious dogma. We were applauded by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Bahrain.

I decided to leave the room. I was trying to put myself in the shoes of those Brazilian diplomats who were forced to read such instructions.

In the corridor, I come across another European diplomat who makes a point of approaching me and comments: Do you know that the Duterte regime says that you Brazilians are with them in a resolution to prevent the massacres in the Philippines from being investigated?

On one of the most embarrassing days I have ever seen in the UN for Brazil, I saw only one pattern: a country ripping its history, burying its reputation, gaining the image of unfriendly and aligning with the values of the most backward countries of our planet.

In the coming days, there is a huge chance that Mercosur will conclude a historic agreement with the EU and, if it does, the government will run to announce that the treaty is a sign of Brazil's acceptance of Bolsonaro in the world. No, it's not. What Europe wants is market and sell, without losing space for Trump. And that is why you are closing this deal.

But in the political arena, the pressure will continue and governments will struggle to come out in defense of Brazil's positions.

In other UN rooms, Brazilian natives protested, environmentalists denounced, Palestinians questioned Brazil's position in Jerusalem, UN rapporteurs spoke of the dangers of torture in the country and an undercover government tried to give empty answers about the alleged commitment of the Bolsonaro government. All in one day.

The Brazilian ambassador to the UN? Oh, she was accompanying the visit of the Minister of Science, visiting the city.

I thought I had seen everything. But my mistake was to think that the embarrassment was over.

It was already the beginning of the night and I am leaving the UN headquarters when I am stopped for a special rapporteur of the entity that, holding me in the arm, asks: what is happening in Brazil?

Source: [Uol](#)