

Abstract

Institutional regional integration has become the main focus of Brazil's foreign policy during the administration of the Workers' Party 2003-2016. Why has Brazil decided to involve itself so deeply into the process of Latin American integration?

The main objective of this single case study is twofold. First, applying the theory of neoclassical realism, this thesis aims to discuss all the driving forces (variables) behind Brazil's decision to make regional integration its top foreign policy priority since 2003. Second, it attempts to clarify that the São Paulo Forum, a continental network of the leftist political parties, should also be included into the set of driving forces behind the foreign policy choices in Brazil from 2003 to 2016. The following research question is put forward: *What role does the São Paulo Forum play in Brazil's intensified involvement into regional integration during the period of the Workers' Party in power?*

Assessed through the congruence procedure and process tracing technique, the influence of the Forum is placed under the intervening variables of the neoclassical realist theory. The results of the study demonstrate that since the Workers' Party coming to power, its leader, Lula da Silva has used the directives, elaborated at the São Paulo Forum, to restructure, intensify and maintain the regional integration scheme.

Keywords

Brazil, Latin America, foreign policy analysis, neoclassical realism, São Paulo Forum