RHETORICAL COERCION AND DESECURITIZATION: THE CASE OF BRAZIL'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

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Abstract

This thesis aims to analyze the interplay of rhetorical coercion and desecuritization in international security, using Brazil's nuclear program and its rivalry with Argentina as a case study. The research seeks to demonstrate how desecuritization can include processes of coercion, challenging the traditional view in international security literature that claims that desecuritization happens mainly through consensual and cooperative processes. To explore this, the study is divided into two chapters. The first chapter provides a literature review on the evolution of international security, defining rhetorical coercion through the lenses of framing theory and introducing concepts such as securitization and desecuritization. The second chapter employs a case study methodology, examining historical literature to understand the use of discourse and external pressures in shaping Brazil's nuclear policies. The findings bring attention to the role that was played by countries such as the United States in framing Brazil's nuclear projects, along with the noncompliance to nonproliferation norms, as a security threat. Through diplomatic pressure and conditional cooperation, the United States influenced Brazil's internal policies, using rhetorical coercion to make this transition happen. The case study illustrates how Brazil and Argentina, countries that faced a security dilemma in the nuclear field, moved from nuclear rivalry to regional cooperation, demonstrating that desecuritization cases can happen through coercive means, supported by rhetorical coercion.

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Table of contents

Introduction

In international security literature, there has been a shift in the way one understands security threats. This transformation reflects a broader shift from traditional perspectives to more sophisticated views that include societal perceptions, power dynamics, or the strategic use of language. This evolution can be seen in concepts such as rhetorical coercion and desecuritization within international security studies, focus of the present research.

This study aims to contribute to the evolution of international security literature by engaging these two international security concepts: rhetorical coercion and desecuritization. Traditional scholarship often claims that desecuritization processes require consensual and cooperative efforts among stakeholders to move issues from the field of security back into normal politics. However, the main argument of this study is that desecuritization processes can also be coercive and involve the use of language along with political pressures to reshape the perception of threats. This perspective can be understood within the framework of rhetorical coercion, in which actors use persuasive techniques to influence and constrain political opponents, facilitating desecuritization processes.

Rhetorical coercion, as described by Krebs and Jackson (2007), involves using language to shape political contexts and influence opponents. This approach is built on framing theory, which understands how certain elements of reality can be highlighted in language in order to shape perceptions and guide actions. Framing theory, pioneered by Erving Goffman (1974) and expanded by scholars such as Entman (1993), and Snow and Benford (1988), offers an important perspective to understand how actors construct security threats, gathering public support, and managing to justify their policies.

Securitization theory explores the framing of problems as existential threats requiring urgent actions. In order to securitize anything, an actor must declare it a security concern. The

1

approval of the audience is needed for this process to work. Securitization theory, however, has been criticized for ignoring the larger context that supports security discourses in favor of a restricted emphasis on speech actions.

Recent research has included desecuritization, which aims to take topics out of emergency politics and back into normal politics. Scholars such as Weaver define it as "securitization in reverse". Desecuritization concerns dismantling the distinctions between "friend" from "enemy" in an effort to promote a more cooperative political environment. This process involves shifting issues from being framed as existential threats that require urgent measures to being seen as regular politics which could be addressed through normal democratic processes. It often requires changing the public discourse and building trust among stakeholders. However, desecuritization is not always a straightforward or consensual process. Differently from existing literature on desecuritization (Hansen 2012, 539; Donnelly 2015, 923), that suggests desecuritization often being a consensual process that involves mutual recognition and acknowledgment of legitimacy, there can be cases in which desecuritization happens through coercive means. Therefore, it is not always an entirely peaceful process.

The case study of Brazil's nuclear weapons program and its rivalry with Argentina helps look at these theoretical concepts. During the Cold War, Brazil and Argentina's pursuit of nuclear capabilities exemplified a case of a security dilemma as both countries framed each other's actions as existential threats. However, the gradual desecuritization of this rivalry, marked by bilateral agreements and nuclear cooperation, can also be understood through rhetorical coercion.

Brazil's nuclear program has a past that involves both national and international issues. In addition to being associated with regional disputes and security dilemmas, particularly with Argentina, Brazil's nuclear efforts were driven by its desire for prestige, economic development,

and regional influence. Brazil and Argentina have a bilateral relation that is registered by times of collaboration and suspicions.

This thesis aims to use the concepts of rhetorical coercion and desecuritization to evaluate the social construction and deconstruction of security threats. It seeks to better understand security threat mechanisms by analyzing the use of language and external pressures that influenced Brazil's nuclear policy choices. The results highlight the importance of taking into consideration both coercive and consensual processes when studying desecuritization. The thesis will look into these concepts in the larger framework of international security studies. The goal is to examine Brazil's nuclear program and its rivalry with Argentina to offer a view of what made possible Brazil's denuclearization through the lenses of international security theory.

Chapter 1

1.1 Theoretical framework

A good understanding of the dynamics of the construction of security threats requires an examination of the international security literature and its evolution, particularly the recent shift that started considering more the importance and the nuanced aspects of the "framing" literature, that differs from securitization (Watson 2012; Carvalho Pinto 2014; Druckman 2001; Stępka 2022; Rychnovská 2014; De Vreese 2012). Recent scholarship on international security has argued that securitization overlooks larger contextual elements such as societal perceptions and the power dynamics between state and non-state actors (Watson 2012). At the same time, "framing", an approach that has been arguably overseen by international security scholars, could fill the gap by adding a psychological touch to its analysis, and involving new players other than the state to engage in a more comprehensive security discourse.

With the shift towards constructivism in International Relations, there has been a bigger emphasis on how international security scholars frame security threats (Watson 2012). Securitization theory, exemplifying this shift, has gained attention from academics as a means of addressing these threats. However, as Watson (2012) notes, framing theory has sparked debates regarding the scope of the securitization theory. This divergence raises questions about the compatibility and differences between the two frameworks and their potential contributions to understanding the construction of security threats.

At the same time, along with the framing literature, other concepts have gained attention to understanding security dynamics. For example, rhetorical coercion, as defined by Krebs and Jackson (2007), entails the use of language to constrain political opponents and determine the direction that a particular political context will go. This idea is especially important for

comprehending how different actors, such as international organizations, government representatives, and advocacy organizations, can make use of persuasive techniques to defend their perspectives on important issues.

This evolution of international security studies calls for greater attention to the concept of desecuritization, which has been arguably overlooked. Desecuritization, as defined by Hansen (2012, p. 546), involves shifting a securitized issue or group back into the realm of normal politics. This process typically requires reshaping the distinctions between "friend" and "enemy" to foster a more normalized political environment. The literature on desecuritization, particularly Hansen's (2012) work, suggests that an issue is desecuritized when relations between actors are reconfigured to be more cooperative and consensual, usually through a friendly process. However, there could be situations in which desecuritization would happen through coercive means rather than consensual efforts. This is important because recognizing the potential for coercive desecuritization broadens the understanding of how power dynamics and political strategies can influence this process, highlighting that desecuritization is not inherently friendly and can involve conflict or resistance.

In the flow of this shift in the literature of international security, this chapter aims to provide a literature review on the evolution of the framing approach, which emphasizes how political elites socially construct threats and justify coercive measures. This section will be followed by an exploration of the rhetorical coercion concept, which builds on elements from the framing literature in the sense that it also examines the use of language to influence decision-making processes. Afterward, the chapter will make an analysis of securitization, which, according to Watson (2012), demonstrates how security can be viewed as a master frame that influences the construction of threats. Finally, the chapter will delve into desecuritization, viewing it as a process that deconstructs perceived threats, setting the stage for the subsequent analysis in the second chapter.

5

To better analyze these dynamics, this thesis will apply the discussed theoretical framework into a case study. Specifically, the case study will examine how Brazil was "rhetorically coerced" into abandoning its nuclear weapons program while simultaneously, its rivalry with Argentina – a rivalry that had previously justified an arms race – was desecuritized due to external pressures. These pressures led both countries to collaborate in the nuclear field. This would be an example of how desecuritization can be manifested through coercive measures rather than through a cooperative process.

1.2 Framing Theory

The framing approach is a vast and diverse field employed in various disciplines like sociology, anthropology, psychology, media studies, and political studies (Watson 2012, 282). Initially used as "frame", the concept was first developed by Erving Goffman in the context of social movements, in sociology, to explain day-to-day interactions (Goffman 1974; Carvalho Pinto 2014). For Goffman, frame is a "schemata of interpretation" that enables individuals "to locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences" within their life space and the world at large (Goffman 1974, 21). To Entman (1993, 52), "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" Frames play a role in structuring our experiences and guiding our actions by attributing meaning to different events (Benford and Snow 2000, 614). Entman (1993, 52) also proposed that particular keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped pictures, information sources, or sentences that give thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments may be used to study and identify frames in news stories.

Though similar to frame, "framing" is a slightly different concept. For Snow and Benford (1988, 198), framing refers to the "signifying work" that social movements do when they "assign meaning to and interpret relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support and to demobilize antagonists". Consequently, framing is a dynamic process of meaning assignment that tries to arrange the audience's experience into interpretive frames and direct their behavior in order to achieve the goals set forth by the strategic actor (Snow et al. 1986, 464). In other words, framing is the active and dynamic process of choosing and highlighting particular aspects of a perceived reality in communication to influence interpretations and guide behavior.

The adoption of the framing approach, both in descriptive and analytical capacities, has proven to be a valuable research tool across various disciplines, particularly in international relations and public policy scholarship (Carvalho Pinto 2014, 164). The widespread acceptance of this approach can be attributed to its emphasis on reexamining ideas and the role of their interpretation in elucidating individual (and collective) mobilization patterns (Benford and Snow 2000, 611). Given its focus on the interpretation of individual events, i.e., the preferences of the audience, this approach facilitates establishing a link between specific events and the meanings attributed to them.

According to Carvalho Pinto (2014, 164), this implies that the framing approach can be used in any circumstance in which an actor seeks to persuade a specific audience (or target group) to take part in, mobilize for, or adhere to a particular idea. This is a fundamental idea that works in a wide range of circumstances. For this reason, Watson (2012, 279) argues that framing can be helpful in the study of several areas that are currently under-theorized in securitization studies because it examines the audience's preferences in a wide way. These areas cover topics such as marginalization, empowerment, acceptance by the audience, non-linguistic communication forms, resistance, and desecuritization.

As an empirical work, Tankard (2001, 100), listed different framing mechanisms for identifying and measuring news frames, such as headlines, photos, quotes, logos and statistics. This empirical method attempted to reduce subjectivity and offer a more exact and organized framework for researching framing in a variety of contexts.

Given the wide range of situations it can be applied to, framing is used in many epistemological and methodological contexts. These include sociological accounts of shifting attitudes toward important issues, and the strongly positivist research associated with experimental methods in psychology and public opinion research. Additionally, alongside agenda setting and priming, framing is sometimes used as a narrow concept to refer to a variety of specific media effects; other times, it is used as a more inclusive concept to describe a number of related processes that are involved in the construction of meaning (Watson 2012, 283).

For example, as to a positivist research on framing, Tversky and Kahneman (1981, 453) address decision-making processes and questions the idea that decisions are always logical. They address certain "decision frames", or how people see possibilities, results, and backup plans when they're making decisions. Participants in their research were given two scenarios, designated as Problem 1 and Problem 2, with the purpose of observing how framing affected their preferences. Participants in Problem 1 were asked to picture the United States getting ready for an uncommon Asian disease outbreak. Two different programs were offered to them to fight the illness:

If Program A is adopted, 200 people will be saved. (Preferred by 72 percent of participants)

If Program B is adopted, there is 1/3 probability that 600 people will be saved, and 2/3 probability that no people will be saved. (Preferred by 28 percent of participants)

Participants in Problem 2 saw a scenario that was similar to this one, but framed differently:

If Program C is adopted 400 people will die. (Preferred by 22 percent of participants)

If Program D is adopted there is 1/3 probability that nobody will die, and 2/3 probability that 600 people will die (Preferred by 78 percent of participants)

These scenarios demonstrated how subtle changes in framing could lead to major shifts in the preferences of participants. The argument by Tversky and Kahneman is that different frames can result in inconsistent preferences, and their research shows how people's preferences could be seen as controversial when options are framed differently. The scenarios that were shown in the article exemplify how framing affects decisions, particularly when it comes to gains and losses.

As of a sociological perspective, and also aligned with the framing perspective, Gamson and Modigliani (1989) analyzed the relationship between public opinion and media discourse regarding nuclear power through newsmagazines, editorial cartoons, opinion columns, and television news coverage from 1945 until the date the paper was published. The authors argued that public opinions about nuclear power are greatly influenced by the media, which also affects perceptions and support. Moreover, they emphasized the cultural dimension of policy issues, which takes the form of "interpretative packages" that provide context for a problem and "give meaning to an issue" (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, 5). The audience perceives certain ideas and language as natural and familiar due to their resonance with broader cultural themes.

Gamson and Modigliani trace the evolution of the interpretive packages, such as the "progress" perspective which frames the nuclear power issue as crucial for technological development and economic growth (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, 4–6). The authors also recognize a dynamic interaction between media discourse and personal opinion, suggesting

mutual influence. They demonstrate how changes in media discourse offer context for understanding different survey results on nuclear power (Gamson and Modigliani 1989, 2).

Framing research focuses on the diversity, creativity, and conflict within the human process of understanding and coping with novel, socially important, and challenging events. It is concerned with how many opposing points of view and interpretations of the issue interact and support the process of collective "making meaning together" (Stępka 2022, 34).

Druckman (2001, 245) mentions that the framing literature implies that "citizens either base their preferences on arbitrary information or are subject to extensive elite manipulation". However, the author also argues that most of the framing experiments that have been debated in the literature exposed subjects to just a single issue frame, when in reality there can be multiple issue frames. Moreover, the complete dynamics of framing were not fully explored in previous research. Krebs and Jackson (2007, 38) claim that that when targets are exposed to competing frames from equally reliable sources, the framing effect vanishes and they are less susceptible to the effects of framing.

In this line, Blaney (2014, 11) emphasizes the importance of carefully selecting language in communication, as even synonymous words can reflect different tones and impact how an audience perceives an issue. In this sense, the usefulness of the so-called rhetorical coercion, proposed by Krebs and Jackson (2007), is valid, as its basis is that "we cannot observe directly what people think, but we can observe what they say and how they respond to claims and counter-claims" (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 42).

In conclusion, the social construction of threat based on the framing literature justifies the strategic use of language to influence perceptions of an issue. Framing can manipulate perceptions when it emphasizes certain aspects over others. By so doing, it guides the audience's reactions to certain issues. This literature on the social construction of threat also incorporates

a concept called "rhetorical coercion". Other than the use of language to influence public opinion as shown in this section, rhetorical coercion can be utilized to influence governments on their policy decisions. This will be explored in this thesis case study that addresses how Brazil was "rhetorically coerced" by external pressures to abandon its nuclear weapons program.

1.3 Rhetorical coercion

For Krebs and Jackson (2007), rhetorical coercion involves the deliberate use of language to frame issues and offer alternative solutions, using public discourse to convince the public of the position of opposition parties. They created a model (2007, 43) that explains what the term entails. As the model shows, rhetorical coercion occurs when there is a contested issue, and a claimant (C) wants to alter things by arguing against the opponent (O) in front of the public (P). What matters most is that C can strategically make use of language to define a problem and provide ramifications in order to influence O's opinion. Four scenarios would follow (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 43–44):

1) O agrees with C's frame and implications, meaning that C would be victorious;

2) O agrees with C's reasoning but rejects the implications, producing a mixed result. As an example, the government (O) agreed to restrict logging after pressure from the environmental movement (C) but justified the policy change with references to the economy. The government might eventually extend logging rights for economic reasons just as easily as it had previously restricted them on the same grounds, even if the movement would have won the battle. As a result, it is reasonable to believe that its victory was not entirely achieved;

3) O agrees with C's arguments but rejects the implications, triggering an implication contest. For example, a lobbying group (C) say that lowering tax rates universally is the best way to alleviate the burden of high taxes on the population; a political party (O) may agree that high taxes are an issue but suggest instead targeted tax cuts. This relatively narrow policy discussion could be called an implication contest because it takes place within a shared issue framework.

4) O disagrees with C on both reasoning and implications, triggering a more expansive framing contest.

The Krebs-Jackson formula is a measure that helps us see how communication affects different audiences more clearly. Individual case studies could still be examined, and their conclusions assessed based on the researcher's judgment in the absence of this framework. However, the Krebs-Jackson method codifies the data for a more understandable and useful analysis by limiting it to one of four possible results (Blaney 2014, 13).

As an example, Krebs and Jackson apply the notion of rhetorical coercion through a case study: Israel's relations with its Arab minority – the Druze population – and how these relationships affect citizenship politics (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 49). The Druze used rhetorical coercion to demand equal rights and first-class citizenship by using their military experience as leverage. The Druze contested the discriminatory practices of the Israeli state by claiming that their military duties entitled them to the same civic rights.

The rhetorical approach of the Druze entailed framing their demands within the notion that equal obligations demand equal rights (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 50). They used rhetorical commonplaces deeply based on Israel's rhetorical traditions that emphasized the importance of civic dedication and obligation (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 51). Despite having resistance, the Israeli authorities had to give in to Druze claims because of how the Druze framed the issue.

12

They put their Jewish opponents on a rhetorical playing field that the Druze could not lose because important audiences, both domestically and internationally, would not have accepted a rebuttal (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 52). The Druze's ability to gradually strengthen their citizenship serves as an example of how rhetorical coercion works in a particular political setting.

Krebs and Jackson's case study shows that rhetorical coercion is more likely to be effective in a political community that "shares at least some understandings of the boundaries of acceptable discourse" (2007, 55). The effectiveness of rhetorical coercion is influenced by the number and quality of social links within the society. Rhetorical coercion is useful in both domestic and international politics, but it presents greater difficulties in international arenas since there are fewer common grounds for legitimacy and a need to take into account a variety of frequently opposing audiences (Krebs and Jackson 2007, 56). The strength of the bonds between political communities and their common perception of appropriate discourse determines how effective rhetorical coercion is.

Similarly, Krebs and Lobasz (2007) explored how rhetorical coercion was introduced in the United States by analyzing the origins of the war in Iraq, highlighting the role that discourse played in influencing the political context. The authors argued that the framing of the narrative of the War on Terror played a crucial role in legitimizing the war, contrary to the popular belief regarding the possibility of the existential threat represented by Iraq.

Considering that the purpose of this thesis is to emphasize that threats can be socially constructed and deconstructed, it will build on the concept of rhetorical coercion to explore securitization theory. This approach considers how political actors frame an issue as urgent security threats, justifying extraordinary measures.

1.4 Securitization Theory

While securitization and framing share common aspects, they are different fields of social sciences. Securitization involves a political and cultural concern regarding the broadening of the concept of security and survival. Its fundamental structure involves an actor presenting a discourse, whether direct, literary, or implicit, with the intention of pinpointing a threat to an object that resonates emotionally with a specific audience. This process entails selecting a political or non-political subject and placing it in an extra-political context, essentially removing it from the field of political discussions and security agendas. Consequently, this subject is elevated to a passive status outside the field of political actions (Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2010, 76; Lima, Salgado, and Marreiro 2021, 130).

For Buzan, Waever and Wilde (1998), securitization refers to the process of presenting an issue as a an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and providing justification for acts beyond the established parameters of political process (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 24). The securitization process is considered a move that transcends established political rules, either framing the issue as a special kind of politics or as above politics. Successful securitization involves gaining support from the audience, while unsuccessful securitization occurs when the presented discourse is not accepted (Wilkinson 2007, 9).

Threat articulations are disguised as "speech acts", a notion that speeches, beyond being a representational device, have a pragmatic and performative character. This aligns with the constructivist perspective on ideas. If every being is social, then they communicate with each other. When delivering a message, the speaker expresses their ideas, which are materialized into actions and institutional engagements (Livon 2019, 47). The so-called "Speech Act Theory" was defined by Waever (1995): "In this usage, security is not of interest as a sign that refers to something more real; the utterance itself is the act. By saying it, something is done (as in betting,

giving a promise, naming a ship). By uttering "security," a state-representative moves a particular development into a specific area, and thereby claims a special right to use whatever means are necessary to block it" (Waever 1995, 45).

Balzacq (2005, 172) criticizes securitization based on its reliance on the speech act theory. As it relies too much on a 'fixed and unchanging code of practice', securitization does not fully capture the dynamic and strategic character of security processes, reducing it to a "conventional procedure" in which the "felicity circumstances" (or conditions of success) should fully prevail for the act to go through (Balzacq 2005, 172). Instead, the author argues that securitization should be seen as a pragmatic and strategic practice that takes into account socio-cultural details, audience dynamics, and power dynamics, among other contextual factors. For this reason, Balzaq defends going beyond the normative bounds of the speech act in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of securitization processes.

McDonald (2008) also provides arguments related to the limitation of the securitization framework. He mentions that the analysis of securitization movements is generally delimited by the discourse of dominant actors. Moreover, the context of the securitization act tends to be limited by the moment when securitizing measures manifest, often resulting in methodological temporal disregards. Finally, the securitization framework is limited in the sense that the act's nature is determined exclusively by the designation of threats, defining what is a threat or not based on the object to be securitized (McDonald 2008; Lima, Salgado, and Marreiro 2021).

While securitization provides interesting perspectives to the understanding of security dynamics, the outlined limitations indicate that securitization is focused on problems that are seen as existential threats and overlooks larger contextual factors and non-traditional security considerations. Although successfully making an issue a matter of security has its advantages, as being able to bypass regular procedures, the Copenhagen School sees it as a failure, arguing

that it shows a lack of ability on the part of decision-makers to handle the issue through regular political channels, leading to what they call "panic politics" (McDonald 2008, 576; Donnelly 2015, 914).

In this sense, desecuritization appeared to offer an alternative strategy, suggesting a move away from framing issues as security threats and instead handling them through normal political processes. The following section outlines the definition of desecuritization, as well as the debates that surround this term. This discussion aims to lay the groundwork for the case study in the second chapter, which addresses how Brazil transitioned away from potentially developing a nuclear weapons program. The case study will show the practical applications of desecuritization in managing security situations.

1.5 Desecuritization Theory

Considered as the "conceptual twin to securitization" (Hansen 2012, 526), desecuritization involves "the shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining process of the political sphere" (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 4). This means a deliberate effort to reduce the intensity of any perceived threat and to reintroduce it into the usual public policy discussion, where it can be addressed through normal political discussions rather than adopting extraordinary measures, which is the case of securitization. Weaver sees desecuritization as securitization in reverse, with the issues being moved out of "the threat-defense sequence and into the ordinary public sphere" (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 29) where they can be dealt with in accordance with the rules of the democratic political system (Taureck 2006, 55).

While it is seen by scholars such as Weaver as "securitization in reverse," desecuritization still remains a contested concept. Unlike securitization, which clearly involves a decision-maker who makes use of a speech act to define an issue as being a security threat,

16

desecuritization doesn't have clarity regarding the specific actors that are responsible for its implementation. In general, it is understood that different stakeholders, including policymakers, civil society, and international organizations, can influence the shift from urgent security discourse to normal politics. However, little is known about how these stakeholders are "rhetorically coerced" to desecuritize.

Donnelly (2015, 915) believes that while desecuritization is still a contested concept, it works to unmake notions of security through two main threads. In the first thread, it prevents the issue of security from being escalated in the first place. This is important because discussing security can sometimes create more risks, and for this reason scholars such as Buzan and Waever recommend keeping security discussions off the agenda. The second thread is about when securitization has already started but needs to be deconstructed. In these cases, the elements previously referred to as security threats are moved back to being just political issues, dealing with them in a more normal, day-to-day political context. Connecting both approaches is the balance between talking about security only when necessary and keeping it out of the discussions to prevent unnecessary alarm (Donnelly 2015, 915).

The rationale behind desecuritization is grounded in the belief that not all issues should trigger a security-based response, which can often lead to the risk of escalation and miscalculations. Weaever emphasizes that desecuritization is preferable because it reduces the secrecy and politicization of security of the emergency measures (Waever 1995; Roe 2004, 283), allowing for more thoughtful policy responses, and potentially leading to more accepted solutions by the audience.

Taureck mentions that the concept of desecuritization is undertheorized, leaving doors open for interpretation (Taureck 2006, 59). Hansen (2012) describes that there could be four distinct approaches to desecuritization. These are 1) détente, which involves gradually shifting

an issue away from security discussions; 2) replacement, where one security issue is supplanted by another; 3) rearticulation, which reframes a security issue in a non-security context; and 4) silencing, where an issue ceases to be part of the security dialogue. Hansen's analysis shows that current interpretations of desecuritization are all linked to the Copenhagen School's idea that securitization is a performative speech act carried out by political elites (Scheel 2022, 1045), and also hints on how desecuritization should be a consensual process that involves mutual recognition and collaboration among the parties involved to transition from a state of securitization to normal politics (Hansen 2012, 539).

In securitization, the requirement is that an actor, through speech acts, declares an issue as a security concern, which then requires the audience to recognize and accept it as such. The argument must be framed in a manner that resonates sufficiently to justify emergency actions (Roe 2004, 281). While securitization can be achieved through speech acts, desecuritization cannot be accomplished in the same way. This is because using the language of security again to desecuritize would be contradictory and undermine the process of removing the security framing (Hansen 2012, 530).

Therefore, while there is extensive work on securitization, desecuritization remains open to interpretation, even though it is thought to be essential for returning securitized issues to routine political processes (Floyd 2007; Scheel 2022). Scheel believes that desecuritization is important to prevent the politics of fear from dominating public discourse, since "without instances of desecuritizing we would live in a state of complete insecurity and processes of securitization would become superfluous as security actors would lack any issues that have not yet been framed in terms of risk and danger" (Scheel 2022, 1046–47).

According to the Waever (2000), there are three approaches to desecuritize: the first approach is to avoid framing issues as security threats from the start. The second involves

managing responses to securitized issues in ways that do not create security dilemmas or escalate conflicts. Lastly, the third approach entails transitioning security issues back into the realm of regular politics.

To Waever (2000, 253), there are difficulties with the second approach, particularly for issues such as collective identities. Actions that are meant to protect these identities can generate societal security dilemmas, meaning that these identities' vulnerabilities get highlighted on public discourse. This can create a cycle of increased insecurity. Weaver argues that the first approach is preferable to prevent issues from being seen as security threats from the start.

For changing issues that have been framed as security threats, different strategies have been proposed. When analyzing the desecuritization of immigrants, Huysmans (1995, 65) claims there are three of them: objectivist, constructivist and deconstructivist. The objectivist strategy seeks to convince the local population that immigrants are not a security threat. It includes the generation of statistical data and arguments that demonstrate that immigrants do not reduce job opportunities for native citizens and that they contribute to the wealth of the native population. The issue with this strategy, according to Huysmans, is that it still reinforces the distinction between natives and migrants. Therefore, it risks strengthening the xenophobic and racist responses it wishes to reduce.

The second strategy, the constructivist, considers security practices as social constructs influenced by specific spatial and temporal contexts. This method emphasizes the importance of first gaining a comprehensive understanding of the securitization process before attempting to address it. However, this strategy also faces challenges because social practices and contexts are continually evolving, meaning that any understanding achieved is inherently incomplete in a constantly changing social world (Huysmans 1995, 67).

19

The third strategy, the deconstructivist, involves deconstructing the identity of a migrant to prevent them from being perceived as a threatening other. It works on the premise that storytelling can form perceptions, encouraging for narratives that depict migrants as having multiple identities. By showing that migrants can be mothers, workers, and have many other roles, this strategy emphasizes similarities rather than differences (Huysmans 1995, 68).

Scheel claims that securitization frequently sets aside alternative policy options. This is because security experts, who have access to the government's data and surveillance technologies, possess a type of expert authority that gives them the ability to control discussions regarding what is a threat, as well as the best solutions to mitigate them. Their knowledge serves as a foundation for the dominant security narratives, which makes it harder for more critical viewpoints to become established or gain credibility in the discussion (Scheel 2022, 1047).

At the same time, desecuritization has not been exempt from critiques regarding its validity in both theory and practice. Aradau (2004), for instance, claims that desecuritization is not given enough theoretical consideration and is frequently viewed as a supplement to the theory of securitization rather than as a fundamental component of it (Aradau 2004, 405). She emphasized that the desecuritization process has not been fully incorporated by the Copenhagen School with a strong political component, which she believes has led to a lack of analytical strength in their framework (Aradau 2004, 389). She also claims that the analytical focus on desecuritization without a political dimension diminishes its potential to address and transform the security practices it criticizes (Aradau 2004, 406).

Benkhe (2006, 65) also presents some critiques about desecuritization. He claims, for example, that desecuritization as a speech act can be a contradiction. If one declares an issue as a no longer threatening situation, it would not necessarily remove issue from security discourses, and questions if desecuritization can reverse securitization through speech acts

alone. Therefore, desecuritization "happens as a result of speech acts, but there is not, strictly speaking, 'a' desecurity speech act" (Hansen 2012, 530).

Desecuritization can also incorporate elements from rhetorical coercion, especially the use of discourse and framing to shape how securitized issues are perceived. To succeed, the audience should be convinced to see what was previously seen as an urgent threat as a regular issue, which can be dealt with in normal politics. Rhetorical coercion would then involve strategically using language and communication to reshape the narrative around the securitized issue, persuading the stakeholders to accept a less alarmist perspective, regardless of rivalries or historical tensions. This process can lead to former adversaries to find common grounds and cooperate on problematic issues, demonstrating that strategic framing and persuasive discourse can effectively transform the perception of threats and enable collaborative efforts in areas where there was once significant conflict. Therefore, one could be "rhetorically coerced" to desecuritize.

There are different ways of addressing desecuritization. One relevant way concerns what Hansen's previously mentioned rearticulation. Rearticulation involves changing a securitized issue by solving the threats that initially led to the securitization process. This process requires an effort to reframe the issue to the context of normal politics. Hansen explains that rearticulation "refers to desecuritisations that remove an issue from the securitised by actively offering a political solution to the threats, dangers, and grievances in question" (Hansen 2012, 542). This approach makes it easier the transition from emergency measures to normal politics by highlighting the importance of political involvement and the redefinition of security threats to produce a more stable environment.

Donnelly's approach on desecuritization in the case she studies, that is, the Anglo-Irish relations, could be seen an example of Hansen's rearticulation. During Queen Elizabeth II's

21

2011 visit to Ireland, gestures such as the Queen's speech in Gaeilge, were used to reshape the historical rivalry between the two countries. The simple act of speaking in the Irish language was a powerful move to reframe this relationship, being considered a sign of respect and a sign of willingness to reconcile past conflicts. Donnelly describes this as a desecuritizing move, aimed at fostering mutual recognition and creating a platform for a new, cooperative relationship (Donnelly 2015, 923).

Huysmans' (1995) categorization of strategies previously discussed offers an interesting framework for understanding the many ways that desecuritization could be accomplished. These strategies are consistent with the notion of Hansen's rearticulation, which incorporates elements of constructivist and deconstructivist approaches. Both of these strategies address how important it is to change the narrative and address the underlying issues that are presented as security threats.

Empirically, this can be seen in cases where governments or relevant stakeholders use framing to shift the public perception away from securitization. Hansen's approach to rearticulation suggests that desecuritization requires that actors in a conflict recognize each other as legitimate (Hansen 2012, 539). Similarly, Donnelly writes on how symbolic acts, such as a tailor-made speech, can be used to reshape relationships for the better (Donnelly 2015, 923). A critique of these perspectives concerns how desecuritization processes are usually depicted as consensual, without specifically considering elements of coercion or the underlying power dynamics that are behind these transitions.

1.6 Chapter conclusions

This chapter addressed the framework of theories on the social construction of threats. Framing theory is utilized to understand how threats are socially constructed and communicated. In this

theoretical framework, we can understand the concept of rhetorical coercion, which involves the use of language that aims to shape perceptions and behaviors. This is related to desecuritization, challenging the view in international security literature that desecuritization needs a consensual and cooperative process. Instead, it can also occur through "rhetorical coercion", where actors are coerced to perform certain actions not only because of agreement but because of pressures.

By making use of this theoretical background, this thesis will apply these concepts in a case study that explores what made possible Brazil to discontinue its nuclear weapons program. Recent scholarship, such as that by Spektor (2016), suggests that Brazil may have never intended to develop a nuclear weapons program. However, an analysis using the securitization and desecuritization frameworks suggests that underlying motivations were likely influenced by a security dilemma with Argentina, Brazil's historical regional rival. Eventually, both countries committed to the peaceful use of nuclear technology and established a bilateral nuclear safeguards agreement – a clear example of desecuritization. Yet, this shift was not only due to friendly cooperation; rather, it was driven by external pressures for the adoption of non-proliferation norms, particularly from the United States.

Chapter 2

2.1 Case Study: what made possible Brazil's denuclearization?

Brazil's trajectory into nuclear technology is explained by its ambition for prestige in the international arena, strategic development and geopolitical influence. As a country that is rich in natural resources, Brazil could use nuclear technology and benefit both from energy independence and military strength. Both possibilities triggered domestic debates and international suspicion.

Starting in the mid-20th century, Brazil used its position as a key supplier of essential nuclear materials to form partnerships with other countries. These partnerships were important for Brazil as it used it as a means to build its own nuclear program. It can be argued that Brazil's nuclear ambitions weren't entirely dedicated to peaceful purposes. Records of military plans, including experiments with peaceful nuclear explosions and efforts to develop a secretive nuclear program, suggest that Brazil was willing to develop nuclear weapons in the future. This concern was particularly highlighted in the context of Brazil's historical rivalry with Argentina, intensifying the regional security dilemma. This chapter will first explore these dynamics, examining how Brazil tried to develop its nuclear program but later did not carry this on, and chose the path to cooperate with Argentina instead.

Two concepts that were explored previously in the thesis are to be revisited, that is, rhetorical coercion and desecuritization. Pressures coming from the United States highlight what made it possible for Brazil not to develop nuclear weapons, even if it achieved the technical capability to do so, and there was political interest. The rhetorical coercion applied by these entities influenced Brazil's decision-making, such as, for example, the United States using diplomatic influence and conditional cooperation on nuclear energy to enforce non-proliferation

24

norms, leading Brazil to change its policies and align more closely with American interests. Secondly, the rivalry with Argentina explains one of the motivations for a nuclear arms race. After being "rhetorically coerced", both countries joined forces to establish a bilateral nuclear agreement, in what can be seen as a process of desecuritization. This shows that a desecuritization process might involve coercive elements to it.

2.2 Evolution of Brazil's Nuclear Program

From the mid-1940s to the late 1950s, Brazil initiated a program to acquire nuclear technology for civilian use. The initial focus was on purchasing complete, ready-to-operate cyclotrons, centrifuges, conversion plants, and small research reactors primarily from the United States and West Germany. However, Brazil maintained its goal of achieving self-sufficiency in nuclear research and development (Spektor 2016, 637). The following recommendations were made with the aim of establishing a Brazilian nuclear policy: 1) Creation of an agency for the study and control of nuclear energy; 2) Nationalization of Brazilian uranium and thorium reserves; 3) Review of the concessions already granted for the mining of these resources; 4) Control of the export of these minerals, preventing their crude exportation from the country without undergoing some processing; 5) Encouragement of research and scientific activities on atomic energy (Wrobel 1986, 38–39).

As Brazil worked towards its nuclear ambitions, it was agreed among national leaders and the scientific community that there was a need to build a national nuclear infrastructure that could fulfill both civilian needs and potential military uses (Patti 2021). The development of nuclear capability was also thought of as an instrument for future economic development and political emancipation (Spektor 2016, 636). This awareness led to the creation of national institutions and policies designed to enhance the acquisition and development of nuclear

25

technology, such as the National Research Council (*Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa*, or CNPq), which coordinated domestic nuclear energy development and supervised the export of nuclear minerals (Patti 2021, 24). By the early 1950s, Brazil was actively negotiating with different countries, attempting to bypass the limitations set by the United States. However, Brazil's action towards nuclear development was seen as suspicious by the United States. One example would be the intervention by American and British officials in 1954 in Antwerp and other European ports, to prevent the delivery of three uranium enrichment centrifuges that Brazil had purchased from the University of Göttingen (Teixeira 2007, 76).

During this time, Brazil was very active in international diplomacy, seeking to achieve prominence in the world of nuclear power. Brazilian officials took part in international organizations such as the United Nations Atomic Energy Commission (UNAEC), pushing for a more equitable distribution of nuclear materials and knowledge, which would allow developing countries to advance their own civilian nuclear energy programs without undue interference from the established nuclear states, challenging the dominance of nuclear powers such as the United States over nuclear energy resources and technologies (Patti 2021, 19). This approach was part of a wider strategy to secure the necessary technologies and materials for Brazil's nuclear initiatives. Under the leadership of names such as Navy Admiral Álvaro Alberto, Brazil used strategic alliances and knowledge exchange, which included acquiring technologies that could also support nuclear weapons development (Patti 2021, 18).

The United States at first assisted Brazil in acquiring nuclear technology. American President Dwight D. Eisenhower promoted the peaceful use of nuclear energy in an effort to lessen some of the stigma and secrecy related to nuclear issues after the 1945 detonations on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the expansion of military nuclear programs (Kassenova 2016, 603). This is how the Atoms for Peace program originated, allowing the United States to provide assistance to countries throughout the world with peaceful nuclear technology.

This allowed, for instance, that Admiral Álvaro Alberto could focus on establishing the first nuclear physics departments in universities, producing a stream of funding for nuclear research, training a generation of nuclear scientists abroad, bringing foreign nuclear scientists to assist in the development of the field domestically, and establishing public companies to mine Brazilian uranium reserves while prohibiting foreign exploitation (Spektor 2016, 637).

Brazil could get Washington's cooperation in the nuclear field mainly because it was a major supplier of atomic minerals to the United States (Drogan 2019, 453). However, Brazil chose to seek partnerships with other nations as well, such as Canada, Norway, France, Italy, and West Germany, so that it could diversify its sources of support. The Americans then decided to restrict its involvement with Brazil only to training a small number of Brazilian scientists in American universities and selling supplies and equipment for Brazilian labs focused on uranium research (Patti 2021, 25).

As the United States was unwilling to cooperate with Brazil regarding the provision of sensitive nuclear technologies, Brazil chose to cooperate with West Germany as an option to acquire enriched uranium and the building of eight nuclear power plants in the country. This deal was subject to enormous pressures coming from the United States (Vieira Vargas 1997, 43). Patti writes:

> The secret agreement between West German institutions and Rio de Janeiro was to be implemented in 1954. West Germany, a country still occupied by the Allied forces, and Brazil, a country in the United States' backyard, had excellent reasons to collaborate. They could exchange minerals for technology, and West Germany might restart a research program on sensitive aspects of nuclear energy, such as uranium enrichment, useful for both peaceful and military purposes. As Beyerle would later write to Alberto, the West German–Brazilian deal and the associated financial resources and incentives facilitated the development of research in the field, despite the barriers the Allies imposed on the reactivation of a West German atomic program (Patti 2021, 31)

However, the development of the nuclear expertise in Brazil had difficult times. The geopolitical tensions during the Cold War influenced how the international community saw

27

Brazil's nuclear efforts. The United States in particular was concerned about the spread of nuclear weapons capabilities. Because of this, it enforced strict regulations on nuclear technology exports and access to technical know-how (Spektor 2016, 637). Moreover, due to the long negotiations that followed these regulations, Brazil frequently postponed them due to a frustration with the United States' lack of support and increasing domestic pressure to minimize "improper' US influences" over Brazilian resources. This conflict triggered Brazil's desire for more equitable agreements that would support its own national ambitions in the development of nuclear technology (Drogan 2019, 353–56).

By the early 1960s, Brazil was exploring the idea of using peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs), arguing that these explosions could be useful for constructing canals, for example (Patti 2021, 59; Spektor 2016, 638). This approach was similar to the United States' Plowshare Program, which also made use of PNEs. Brazil aligned its nuclear policies with those of the major powers by consenting to international inspections to its PNEs (Patti 2021, 59). This posture can be seen as part of a broader strategy to enhance Brazil's diplomatic and technological presence on the international scene.

But Brazil's support for PNEs raised suspicions in the United States. The Americans were concerned that even peaceful transfers of nuclear technology could lead to military uses, especially after the nuclear test that India did in 1974, disguised as a peaceful explosion and called "Smiling Buddha", which undermined trust in international nuclear agreements (Patti 2021, 91). Additionally, the United States had a reason to doubt Brazil's intentions due to its mixed messages on nuclear nonproliferation and its refusal to abandon its PNE program during diplomatic negotiations. The suspicion was that Brazil could be using its nuclear program thinking of military purposes.

After the Smiling Buddha nuclear test, the United States Congress pushed for stricter export regulations for nuclear materials. The Congress passed a law in June 1976 that forbade the United States from providing financial or military support to any country that supplied or received nuclear enrichment or reprocessing technology, materials, or equipment unless both the donor and the recipient agreed to uphold IAEA safeguards on all transferred materials. This law threatened Brazil's nuclear ambitions and its economy, which was starting to show signs of crisis, including increasing inflation (Patti 2021, 94–95).

These suspicions were reasonable as Brazil's nuclear ambitions aimed to achieve parity with Argentina in what concerns nuclear capabilities, when Argentina was also advancing its own nuclear program (Hymans 2012, 203). After facing problems with the Brazil-West Germany agreement and the inability to secure conversion technology on the global market due to new nonproliferation regime (Patti 2021, 111), Brazil's military initiated a secretive "parallel" nuclear program aimed at building domestic capabilities to produce fissile material, specifically focusing on the technology to convert yellowcake into uranium hexafluoride (UF_6) (Patti 2021, 110). This is explained by the stricter rules for sensitive nuclear materials exports that were imposed by the international community (Patti 2021, 91).

This parallel program was named Autonomous Project. It would guarantee that the Nuclear and Energy Research Institute (IPEN) had the capability to produce UF_6. Additionally, it would increase Brazil's bargaining power when negotiating with other nations and eventually maximize Brazil's financial, scientific, and technological resources. Furthermore, the Autonomous Project would guarantee the progress of indigenous nuclear technologies without external supervision, with substantial involvement from Brazil's scientific and academic communities. Giving Brazil complete control over the nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear energy's peaceful applications, such as PNEs, naval propulsion, and an oceanographic vessel was the project's goal. To Coutto (2014, 312), the autonomous program also signified the direct

29

involvement of the armed forces in nuclear policy. This project was kept secret to prevent potential public criticism and to avoid foreign interference (Patti 2021, 112–13).

Spektor (2016, 643) notes that during the 1980s, further global suspicions emerged that Brazil might be building a nuclear weapons program. These suspicions also came from Brazil's research into rockets and missiles, suggesting that Brazil could be interested in developing nuclear delivery systems.

Moreover, Brazilian military officials privately sought capabilities that could make the peaceful nuclear technology transition to military applications if necessary. Former Navy Minister Maximiano da Fonseca once noted: "We don't need the bomb now, since there is no foreign enemy in sight. What we need is to retain the technology to have the capability to fabricate it should circumstances require" (Barletta 1997, 16). This approach allowed Brazil to maintain a rhetoric of complying with international norms while at the same time advancing the technical know-how and materials that are needed for a future nuclear weapons program in secrecy (Barletta 1997, 20–21). Brazil's rejections of fully complying to international nuclear inspection mechanisms, as well as the non-adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, only raised more suspicions from the United States.

According to Oliveira (1999, 448) technicians from a facility called Technical Aerospatiale Center, or CTA, recognized that there is a fundamental overlap in the technologies used for both weapon development and nuclear energy generation. However, they stressed that the decision to build an atomic bomb is ultimately a political one. In 1983, leaked information from the National Security Council, reported by the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, indicated that the nuclear device would not be ready before 1990, revealing, therefore, a pre-existing political resolution about a nuclear weapons program (Oliveira 1999, 448).

Oliveira (1999, 449) further adds that it was reported that the CTA had opted for a missile rather than an aircraft to deploy atomic bombs. The primary strategic nuclear weapon envisioned for Brazil was a 20 to 30 kiloton device (two or three times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945). This weapon, made from plutonium, would be launched from a massive missile standing one meter tall, weighing 40 tons, and classified as an MRBM (medium-range ballistic missile). This missile would be capable of covering about three thousand kilometers, carrying a warhead weighing over one ton. The nuclear weapons project was among several initiatives undertaken by the *Centro Técnico Aeroespacial* (CTA), known as Project Solimões (Oliveira 1999, 449).

Several military officials argued for the need build a Brazilian nuclear weapon, claiming that Brazil needed nuclear capabilities to assert control over the South Atlantic and prevent Argentina and South Africa from dominating the region strategically. However, due to significant international pressure, particularly from the United States, the continuation of the Solimões Project became infeasible (Oliveira 1999, 451).

According to Oliveira (1999, 454–55), speculation about the development of a Brazilian atomic bomb was confirmed in an official visit in the United States by President Fernando Collor de Mello, the first democratic president elected by direct voting after 21 years of military dictatorship, who was accompanied by José Goldenberg, the Secretary of Science and Technology. Both confirmed that there was a secret initiative within Brazil to construct a nuclear device under the Military Nuclear Program. President Collor de Mello further announced that he had ordered the suspension of the Brazilian Atomic Military Project and subsequently directed its complete termination within the Military Program. Secretary Goldenberg added that the Solimões Project had been entirely abandoned, noting that there was no interest in identifying which officials from previous administrations had participated in the plan.

Patti (2021, 161) suggests that several factors likely shaped Brazil's stance during the period after the Cold War. These include the major powers' moves towards disarmament and the declining global support for Peaceful Nuclear Explosions (PNEs). Furthermore, when the United States made a renewed appeal for Brazil to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Brazil reaffirmed its strong resistance, positioning itself as one of the few nations advocating for the right to develop such technologies.

One of the explanations for Brazil to pursue nuclear capabilities was its historical rivalry with its neighboring country, Argentina. The next section will delve into the dynamics of this rivalry and how it influenced Brazil's nuclear policy and regional security strategies.

2.3 The Brazil-Argentina Rivalry

International security literature defines security dilemmas as situations in which the military measures taken by one country are interpreted as threatening by another, leading to an escalation cycle (Jervis 1976). The rivalry between Brazil and Argentina can exemplify this concept as both countries developed nuclear capabilities perceived by the other as aggressive. Mallea, Spektor and Wheeler, in their book that emerged from a conference that focused on the oral history of Brazil and Argentina, addressed these dynamics of intentions and perceptions, noting that "(a)lthough security dilemma dynamics are not operative in this case, the transcript does highlight key episodes where uncertainty about the other side's nuclear activities could have triggered insecurity and fear, leading potentially to spiraling security competition" (Mallea, Spektor, and Wheeler 2015, 13).

Brazil and Argentina have been rivals since colonial times. They had disputes over trade, territory and remained antagonists throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries. Since their independence period, conflicts of interest led the two countries to engage

32

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in geopolitical disputes in the region, with examples that include the Cisplatine War (1825-1828) and the Platine War (1851-1852). Argentina was concerned about Brazilian regional political influence and hegemony, as well as from its expansionism (Resende-Santos 2002, 94; Kupchan 2010, 122).

In the initial years of the Cold War, Brazil positioned itself as a first-world nation supporting the United States, which led the Argentines to view Brazil as a proxy for United States imperialism (Kupchan 2010, 122). Additionally, there were disputes over different issues that sparked tensions between both of the countries including, for example, the use of the Paraná River for energy generation.

In 1966, Brazil made a deal with Paraguay to build the Itaipu Dam, thought to be the largest hydroelectric dam in the world, and located near the triple border with Argentina and Paraguay. Argentina contested this project because it was concerned that Itaipu could disrupt essential river routes that are used for Argentinean trade. Argentina's Foreign Minister Guido di Tella further articulated his country's concerns: "Half of Argentina thought the Brazilians were building a dam that would flood Argentina, and the other half thought that we would remain without water" (Kassenova 2016, 598).

The Itaipu conflict was settled in 1979 when Argentina accepted Brazilian plans to build the Itaipu dam and Brazil agreed that Argentina would be a signatory to the treaty governing the use of the Paraná River for this hydroelectric project (Resende-Santos 2002, 94–97; Mallea, Spektor, and Wheeler 2015, 14). Even though there were agreements on how the dam should be built, the real conflict was about power dynamics and Brazil's intentions for regional hegemony.

2.4 Transition from Rivalry to Cooperation

As both countries developed nuclear capabilities, Argentina was more advanced in this regard. According to Hymans (2012, 220), Argentina attracted a large amount of scientific émigrés from Germany and other troubled European countries. They soon created the ability to reprocess spent fuel and planned to enrich uranium as well as export fuel elements and research reactors with local designs (Hymans 2012). Concerned about this, the Brazilian President Ernesto Geisel informed his military chiefs that the country needed to invest in nuclear technologies because Argentina had made strides towards acquiring the ability to "build their weapon, their nuclear artifact/device" (Spektor 2016, 639).

In the 1970s, economic differences between Argentina and Brazil were significantly increased. Brazil experienced industrial growth and had a larger population and economy, with economic growth rates growing at 10 percent by the mid-1970s. This growth contrasted sharply with Argentina's economic struggles, changing the regional balance of power in Brazil's favor. Concerned about Brazil's growth, which Argentine leaders feared might reduce their country to a mere peripheral status, Argentina was compelled to seek a stable and negotiated solution. By the late 1970s, Argentina recognized that establishing a lasting foundation to ensure balanced regional influence was essential to counter Brazil's rising (Resende-Santos 2002, 97).

Settling the dispute over the Itaipu Dam was the beginning of a broader collaboration. To Malle, Spektor and Wheeler (2015, 34), "(r)esolving the Itaipu dam conflict was a precondition for setting in motion the tentative moves on both parts to first establish formal contact between the two nuclear sectors, and then build up confidence in the other side's motives and intention". Another step for strengthening bilateral relations was when Argentina supported Brazil against American pressures on the nuclear deal between Brazil and West-Germany (Vieira Vargas 1997, 43). The Argentineans supported Brazil mainly because, according to an Argentine diplomat,

"if the United States succeeds in impeding or limiting the German-Brazilian agreement, the next objective will be the sabotage of the Argentine nuclear program" (Patti 2021, 106). According to Patti (2021, 106), Argentina had to protect its atomic initiatives from external pressures, and aligning with Brazil would be important to this strategy.

Over the years, Brazil and Argentina moved from a relationship marked by rivalry and distrust to one of cooperation, especially in nuclear technology and regional diplomacy (Coutto 2014). The security dilemma also started to decrease after it became known to Brazilian authorities that financial constraints, technological deficiencies, international safeguards, and increasing pressure from Canada would hinder Argentina from developing a nuclear device for at least the next twenty years (Patti 2021, 105). Furthermore, pressure coming from the United States and increasing international isolation in the nuclear field led both Brazil and Argentina to adopt similar strategies for developing their nuclear programs and working together cooperatively (Patti 2021, 108). This led both countries to sign a nuclear cooperation agreement for the peaceful use of nuclear energy in 1980, which demonstrated that the rivalry that had lasted nearly three decades was being pushed back (Patti 2021, 131).

Following Brazil's return to democracy in 1985, a new school of thought emerged, focusing on exploring new economic markets by regional integration and fostering integrated technological developments. In this context, the Joint Declaration on Nuclear Policy – or the Iguaçu Declaration – was signed by Brazil and Argentina, establishing a working group to strengthen cooperation in the nuclear field. This agreement aimed to enhance their nuclear technological capabilities and establish mechanisms to ensure peace, development, and regional progress, all while maintaining the technical integrity of their nuclear collaboration (Oliveira 1996, 137).

In 1990, a new declaration was signed between both countries, which became known as the Joint Nuclear Policy Declaration between Brazil and Argentina, or also as the Declaration on Mutual Inspection. This declaration was viewed as a significant milestone because it set up a safeguard system between the two countries. During this event, it was established a joint system for controlling nuclear material accounting, which allowed mutual technical inspections between Brazil and Argentina (Oliveira 1996, 146–47).

To implement the system of mutual inspections, the Treaty for the Exclusively Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy was signed in 1991. This treaty reaffirmed the commitment of both Brazil and Argentina to make use of nuclear energy only for peaceful purposes. Moreover, the treaty established the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). This agency had the purpose of overseeing mutual control and conducting inspections of the nuclear facilities and materials in both countries (Oliveira 1999, 391).

ABACC marked an innovative approach to nuclear safeguards, bringing Brazil and Argentina closer to the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. This strengthened and deepened mutual trust in nuclear matters between the two nations. According to Vieira Vargas (1997, 54), this alignment in the nuclear sector also aimed to tell the international community that the relationship between the two largest nations in the Southern Cone was progressing into a new and cooperative phase.

2.5 Desecuritizing Brazil's Nuclear Projects

The dynamics of desecuritization, as discussed by Hansen (2012), Donelly (2015), and Huysmans (1995), present in the previous case study on Brazil suggests that desecuritization processes are not always consensual and friendly, driven by goodwill. Instead, these processes

can be the result of coercive contexts, as seen in the case study through external pressures primarily from the United States to enforce non-proliferation norms.

In Brazil's case, the desecuritization of its nuclear project involved different strategic and diplomatic moves, often considering external pressures and internal political calculations. Desecuritizing moves can filled with resistance, noting that Brazil faced substantial pressure from the United States to limit its nuclear program as part of broader non-proliferation efforts, and resisted compromising its sovereignty in what concerns developing a nuclear program. However, this external pressure forced Brazil to engage in negotiations and adopt policies that aligned with the international norms, balancing the interests of its military and scientific communities with the need to adopt what was expected internationally and avoid sanctions, or even the loss of economic advantages. The eventual cooperation with Argentina, that resulted in mutual inspection agreements and the establishment of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC), exemplifies how desecuritization can manifest from coercion. This case exemplifies that desecuritization is not merely a consensual process as suggested by international security literature but can involve power dynamics and external influences that will reshape national policies.

According to Hansen, power dynamics are crucial in the process of desecuritization. Power asymmetries determine which actors have the authority to define and address security issues, such as, for example, the influence the United States and the Soviet Union exerted on their allies during the Cold War (Hansen, 2012, p. 536). Similarly, political elites can internally manipulate security discourse to serve their interests, often resisting desecuritization to maintain their power. This resistance can be manifested institutionally, where military institutions may oppose desecuritization to avoid budget cuts and reduced influence, and politically, where leaders use securitization to gather public support or weaken the opposition.

The case of Brazil shows that the interests were many. The military sector had the interest in developing the nuclear weapons program because of regional rivalry with Argentina. Additionally, there was interest coming from other sectors of the government such as the scientific community and the government itself, since developing the nuclear capacity would help economic development and a means to enhance national prestige.

Conclusion

Brazil's nuclear weapons program and its rivalry with Argentina, when analyzed through the lenses of rhetorical coercion and desecuritization, offers interesting insights into international security literature. This thesis had two chapters, in which the first chapter provided the theoretical framework on the social construction of threat, rhetorical coercion and desecuritization. In the first chapter, the study argued that desecuritization processes are usually depicted in international security literature as being a consensual and friendly process. The argument is that desecuritization can also happen through coercive means or, more specifically, through rhetorical coercion. The second chapter of the thesis was dedicated to providing a case study that analyzed a desecuritization process that happened through rhetorical coercion. It concerned what made possible Brazil's denuclearization, or how Brazil gave up the idea of developing nuclear weapons, even if it had the technical capability to do so and political interest.

The United States framed Brazil's nuclear ambitions as a security threat, using diplomatic pressure for the country to change its internal policy and adhere to non-proliferation norms. A security dilemma that concerned Brazil-Argentina, which caused both countries to pursue nuclear capabilities, was desecuritized not mainly because of goodwill, but rather because if they did not do it, they would lose economic advantages and face increasing international isolation. The later bilateral agreements and cooperation even in the nuclear field between Brazil and Argentina exemplify how desecuritization processes can transform rivalries into collaborative relations through coercive means, despite existing previous tensions.

This thesis contributed to international security literature by including rhetorical coercion in the analysis of desecuritization processes. The concept of desecuritization can consider other power dynamics that involve strategic manipulation and external pressures. The thesis also

provided important insights into how security narratives are created and changed, as well as how governments may be persuaded, by analyzing the strategic use of discourse in international politics.

Therefore, examining Brazil's nuclear program and its relations with Argentina from the perspectives of desecuritization and rhetorical coercion offered an additional contribution on how to think desecuritization processes.

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