

UNIVERSIDADE DE SÃO PAULO  
INSTITUTO DE RELAÇÕES INTERNACIONAIS  
&  
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

Felipe Bernardo Este

Diplomatic Tales:  
Diplomacy as Myth Construction in Brazil

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Diplomatic Tales:  
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations at the University of São Paulo and King's College London.

Supervisors: Felipe Pereira Loureiro (IRI-USP)  
and Anthony Pereira (King's College London)

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*To my mother Ana Maria*

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*The History House.*

*With cool stone floors and dim walls and billowing ship-shaped shadows. Plump, translucent lizards lived behind old pictures, and waxy, crumbling ancestors with tough toe-nails and breath that smelled of yellow maps gossiped in sibilant, papery whispers.*

*'But we can't go in,' Chacko explained, 'because we've been locked out. And when we look in through the windows, all we see are shadows. And when we try and listen, all we hear is a whispering. [...]*

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things*.

## **Resumo**

Este trabalho procura entender a relação entre diplomacia e academia na constituição da disciplina de Relações Internacionais no Brasil. Fundamentando-se em análise de discurso e intertextualidade, a tese investiga qual é o mito fundador das RI no Brasil e como ele impacta a produção de conhecimento na área. Argumenta-se aqui que esse mito coloca os diplomatas em posição privilegiada como produtores de conhecimento nas RI. Consequentemente, mitos organizacionais sobre o Ministério das Relações Exteriores Brasileiro, o Itamaraty, são assimilados pela academia, criando pontos cegos analíticos. Assim, mais do que uma forma de operar no sistema internacional, a diplomacia brasileira converte-se em uma criadora de mitos que ampliam a capacidade de influência do Itamaraty.

**Palavras-chave:** Diplomacia; Política Externa Brasileira; Itamaraty; Análise de Discurso; Mito.

## **Abstract**

This work seeks to understand the relationship between diplomacy and academia in the constitution of the discipline of International Relations in Brazil. Based on discourse analysis and intertextuality, this thesis investigates the founding myth of IR in Brazil and how it impacts the production of knowledge in the area. This myth places diplomats in a privileged position as knowledge producers in IR. Consequently, organizational myths about the Brazilian Foreign Ministry, commonly referred to as Itamaraty, are assimilated by academics, creating analytical blind spots. Thus, more than a way of operating in the international system, Brazilian diplomacy becomes a creator of myths that expand Itamaraty's influence capacity.

**Keywords:** Diplomacy; Brazilian Foreign Policy; Itamaraty; Discourse Analysis; Myth.



## **COVID-19 Impact Statement**

The COVID-19 pandemic severely restricted my access to academic facilities. Since March 2020, I have not had access to libraries or an adequate workspace. To mitigate the consequences of the pandemic, I bought some of the books I intended to analyse, but others were unavailable. The pandemic impacted especially the last two years of the PhD when I had planned to write the bulk of the thesis. I decided to conduct an in-depth analysis of fewer texts to circumvent those adverse circumstances.

## **List of Abbreviations**

CACD – Concurso de Admissão à Carreira Diplomática (Admission Exam for the Diplomatic Career)

CAD – Curso de Aperfeiçoamento de Diplomatas (Diplomats Improvement Course)

CAE – Curso de Altos Estudos (High Studies Course)

CAPES – Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (Higher Education Improvement Coordination)

CFSPC – Conselho Federal do Serviço Público Civil (Federal Council of the Public Service)

CPCD – Curso Preparatório para a Carreira Diplomática (Preparatory Course for the Diplomatic Career)

CEBRI – Centro Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (Brazilian Centre for International Relations)

CIEX – Centro de Informação do Exterior (Foreign Information Center)

DASP – Departamento Administrativo do Serviço Público (Administrative Department of Public Service)

FUNAG – Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão (Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation)

IBRI – Instituto Brasileiro de Relações Internacionais (Brazilian Institute of International Relations)

ICG – International Crisis Group

IPRI – Instituto de Pesquisa em Relações Internacionais (Institute of Research in International Relations)

IR – International Relations

IRBr – Instituto Rio Branco (Rio Branco Institute)

MFA – Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MRE – Ministério das Relações Exteriores (Ministry of External Relations)

PEI – Política Externa Independente (Independent Foreign Policy)

PRE – Pragmatismo Responsável e Ecumênico (Responsible and Ecumenical Pragmatism)

RBPI – Revista Brasileira de Relações Internacionais (Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional)

UnB – University of Brasilia

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## 1. Introduction

The Brazilian Foreign Ministry, usually called Itamaraty<sup>1</sup>, is widely regarded as one of the most professional and traditional foreign divisions in the developing world (Hurrell, 2004). Despite being a developing nation, Brazil was often capable of taking a leading role in many international agendas. From the environment, climate change and human rights to security issues, Brazil has had global prominence, especially since the 1990's. The country has not only hosted two of the most important international conferences on sustainable development and the environment (Rio 92 and Rio+20) but also taken a proactive role in the discussions. As a part of the New Agenda Coalition, Brazil fostered international debates on nuclear non-proliferation and sponsored the negotiations that led to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In the 1990s, the country sided with India and South Africa in the World Trade Organisation to overcome HIV medicines patent barriers.

Analysts attribute this leadership capacity to Brazilian diplomatic service's diligence<sup>2</sup>. Brazilian diplomacy has consistently been recognised for its tradition, professionalism, and insulation from internal affairs and political struggles (Lopes, 2016). This tradition is associated with the Baron of Rio Branco<sup>3</sup>, the so-called 'father' of Brazilian diplomacy, who served as Foreign Minister between 1902 and 1912. During his term, he settled all the country's remaining territorial disputes and delineated a strategy for international action that still inspires Brazilian diplomats in the present day (Almeida, 1996; Ricupero, 2017).

When Bolsonaro took office at the beginning of 2019, his attitudes towards international issues suggested he would impose a shift in Brazilian Foreign Policy, driving it away from its historic guidelines. Some Brazilian academics thought, however, that he would not be able to bend the bureaucratic steadiness characteristic to Itamaraty, nor stir the Ministry away from its

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<sup>1</sup> 'Itamaraty' is the name of the building in which the Ministry of External Relations – formal title of Brazil's Foreign Ministry – is based. For a complete analysis of the history and significance of the 'house' of Brazilian diplomats, see Gobo (2019).

<sup>2</sup> The diplomatic service, which is formed by all the diplomats of a particular country, should not be confused with the diplomatic corps, which is the community of diplomats representing different states resident in the same city (Berridge, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> José Maria da Silva Paranhos Jr, the Baron of Rio Branco, served as Brazilian Minister of External Relations from 1902 to 1912. He was the son of Jose Paranhos, the Viscount of Rio Branco, who, in turn, had been the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs on three occasions (1856-7, 1858-9, 1868-70) and Brazilian Prime Minister from 1871 to 1875. Paranhos Jr is characterised as an intellectual with voracious appetite for history, geography and law. He is frequently credited for personally solving Brazilian last territorial disputes and for delineating the guiding principles of Brazilian modern diplomacy, for instance: pragmatism, peaceful settlement of disputes, cordiality in dealing with Brazil neighbours, participation in multilateral fora. For these reasons, he is considered the father of Brazilian modern diplomacy. (Almeida, 1996; Lessa, 2012a; Ricupero, 2017).

well-established tradition - and supposed political insulation (Casarões, 2019). The newly elected president would instead have to concede to the usual flow of Brazilian external affairs. Not long afterward, however, the appointed Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo's aggressive Twitter diplomacy caught everyone's attention (Mello, 2019). He not only supported President Bolsonaro's offensive attitude towards other countries and their leadership but also openly criticised the United Nations and exchanged barbs with a high-level Chinese diplomat.

Apart from those individual attitudes, which were not in accordance with the diplomatic rulebook, Bolsonaro and his Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo led a U-turn in the Brazilian foreign policy. Once a supporter of sustainable development and a promoter of human rights, Brazil abruptly sided with climate negationists, human rights violators, autocracies, and anti-globalists. The country moved away from traditional partners such as Argentina, France and Germany and privileged diplomatic contact with alt-right leaders, such as Trump in the United States, Orbán in Hungary, and Duda in Poland. Until Bolsonaro's administration, Brazil was regarded as an unwavering supporter of progressive agendas in international organisations. It began, however, to take part in conservative international meetings and systematically oppose the discussion of progressive issues, such as gender and LGBTQIA+ rights in the international arena. For that reason, Ernesto Araujo faced sharp criticism from academics and politicians alike. Even some senior and retired diplomats were quick to point their fingers at Bolsonaro and his minister, who, in their view, were tarnishing Itamaraty's reputation. Diplomat Paulo Roberto de Almeida, for instance, has condemned the 'misery of diplomacy' put forward by Ernesto Araujo, whom he calls 'accidental Foreign Minister' for not having the qualifications expected from an Itamaraty chief (Almeida, 2019).

Amongst scholars, Dawisson Lopes claims that '*foreign policy* in its practical expression seems perfectly interchangeable with *diplomacy*, given the degree of leverage enjoyed by a professional diplomatic corps inside the political system' (Lopes, 2020, p. 2, emphasis in original). Lopes argues, however, that there has been a recent change towards a 'post-diplomatic foreign policy', that is, a foreign policy designed not by Itamaraty, but by other political actors. With precision, Guilherme Casarões highlights that the President implemented a 'populist diplomacy' (2020) and goes beyond that, saying that 'Itamaraty, once the main

architect of foreign policy, will have the crucial role of checking the excesses that come from the presidency's core<sup>4</sup> (Casarões, 2019, p. 260).

I concur that Bolsonaro's administration has done immeasurable damage to Brazil's international image, which will not be easily reversed even after his most controversial Foreign Minister, Ernesto Araujo, stepped down in March 2021. It is indisputable that Araujo has led Brazilian diplomacy away from its traditional ways. Since the country's democratisation in 1985, Brazil has built a reputation as a reliable and progressive international actor. But apart from that, what both Casarões and Lopes's pieces have in common is the underlying assumption that Itamaraty was the sole captain of Brazilian foreign policy, and that the country's diplomacy had been thus far insulated from politics, therefore characterised by stability and continuity. It is seen as a surprise and as a matter of concern that Bolsonaro was able to exercise his authority over diplomacy and change its course.

Casarões and Lopes are not alone in that respect. The 'insulation narrative', the belief that Itamaraty hovers above Brazilian governments, pulling the strings of its foreign policy, is recurrent in academia. To support this tenet, analysts constantly rely on Zairo Cheibub's Master's dissertation *Diplomacy, Diplomats and Foreign Policy* defended in 1984 and published in academic journals in the following years (Cheibub, 1984, 1985, 1989). Since then, Cheibub has been cited hundreds of times and the insulation narrative has become dominant in the Brazilian International Relations (IR) academia.

Some authors indeed identify a democratisation of the decision-making process in foreign policy, but only after the end of the military regime, in 1985. Dawisson Lopes, for instance, argues that Itamaraty has gone through a 'democratising dynamic' in the last decades (Lopes, 2010, 2011). The trend is also discussed in a recent book edited by Carlos Aurelio Pimenta de Faria, *Brazilian Foreign Policy: Formulation, Implementation and Assessment*<sup>5</sup> (2021). However, the claim for democratisation ignores studies that show that many actors have participated in the foreign policy decision making process during and before the military regime (Amorim Neto, 2011; Pinheiro, 2013). Furthermore, even some actors who identify that democratisation seem to advocate for the Ministry's alleged political insulation during Bolsonaro's presidency (Casarões, 2019, 2020; Lopes, 2020).

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<sup>4</sup> 'O Itamaraty, outrora principal formulador da política externa, terá o papel crucial de evitar excessos vindos do núcleo-duro da presidência'.

<sup>5</sup> The original title in Portuguese is 'Política Externa Brasileira: Formulação, Avaliação e Implementação'.

Even though it is common sense in Brazilian International Relations, the ‘insulation narrative’, the idea that the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations (MRE) is isolated not only from the people but also from the government to which it answers may be puzzling for analysts from other fields or countries. Furthermore, the belief that Itamaraty formulates the country’s foreign policy – and not just advises the Executive branch – can also be surprising. From the perspective of state bureaucracy studies (Abrucio et al., 2010), the thought of Itamaraty – a relatively small ministry with a restricted budget – as more influential than the powerful Ministry of Economy in formulating a development strategy or a trade policy is odd. Taking that hypothesis seriously, one should expect that economists, historians, public administrators, and more traditional political scientists would scrutinise the Foreign Ministry. That, however, is hardly the case.

A vast literature built upon the Diplomatic Studies<sup>6</sup> perspective has produced works on diplomatic corps (Sharp & Wiseman, 2007), on Foreign Ministries (Hocking, 1999b; Lequesne, 2020b), on diplomats (Neumann, 2007, 2012). Some of these acknowledge and analyse the Itamaraty (Hutchings & Suri, 2020; Lequesne et al., 2019). However, in no other country, is the Foreign Ministry treated as insulated in the same way as Itamaraty is. Curiously, despite the attention given to Itamaraty in Brazilian International Relations, such a prolific literature is notably absent from studies about Brazilian diplomacy and foreign policy.

According to Vigevani et al. (2016), from 1992 to 2013, about 20% of IR PhD thesis and Master’s dissertations defended in the country discussed foreign policy, and half of them focused on Brazil. Until 2020, however, not a single article in the most influential Brazilian IR journals - *Contexto Internacional* and *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* – nor a single book chapter ever engaged with the Diplomatic Studies literature. This absence is only but another evidence of what Casarões (2018) has called ‘scientific exceptionalism’, the belief that Brazilian foreign policy and diplomacy are so special that the country is ‘avis rara’, that is, unique and incomparable.

Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence to counter the narratives of ‘insulation’ and the ‘uniqueness’. When considering recent works on Brazilian Foreign Policy, Leticia Pinheiro and Carlos Milani (2013, 2017) argued that foreign policy should be understood and analysed

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Diplomatic Studies’ should be understood as a specific field, which conforms a section at the International Studies Association and is characterised by investigating the diplomatic activity in its own terms, in history and across the international community. Some of its most influential researchers are Paul Shap, Iver Neumann, G. R. Berridge, Costas Constantinou, Brian Hocking, amongst others. For further discussion, see for example Sending et al. (2011), Berridge (2010) and Constantinou et al. (2016).



as public policy, subject to domestic politics and electoral preferences. Furthermore, Octavio Amorim Neto (2011) and Leticia Pinheiro (2013) have shown that a myriad of other actors and factors actively influenced the formulation of Brazilian foreign policy even before the democratisation: the military, the Ministry of Economy, public opinion, the Congress, political parties, interest groups, and even the President. Loureiro, Schor and Guimarães (2015) have shown how private economic actors have influenced Brazilian diplomacy during the João Goulart administration, in the 1960s – even under the so-called ‘Independent Foreign Policy’ phase. Paulo Roberto de Almeida (2008), Pio Penna Filho (2009), Alessandra Castilho (2014, 2021), and Roberto Simon (2021) have investigated how the Ministry of Foreign Relations has directly and actively cooperated with the military regime in persecutions and human rights violations in Brazil and abroad. In Luah Tomas’ (2020) investigation of women in Itamaraty during the 1930s, there are no signs of an ‘insulated ministry’, quite the opposite then, all the foreign ministers were career politicians.:

When we consider the Diplomatic Studies literature, we realise that many of the characteristics deemed unique to Itamaraty are not unusual: the traditional European-inspired structure and organisation, a ‘founding father’ figure, a rigorous selection process, rigorous professional instruction, additional academic-like training, periodic training throughout the career, a strong ‘sprit de corps’, and a high level of trust within public administration (Hutchings & Suri, 2020). How can Brazilian diplomacy be considered unique? What sustains its perception as an insulated institution, the sole decision-maker in BRFP, even against compelling evidence?

This work seeks to explain why analysts in Brazil give so much attention to Itamaraty and no attention whatsoever to the subfield of Diplomatic Studies. It explores ‘conditions of possibility’ (Foucault, 2005) of Brazilian diplomacy narratives – in other words, the conditions under which those narratives about Brazilian diplomacy were made possible and credible. There are several ways to investigate the attributes of ‘insulation’ and ‘uniqueness’ in such context; this work will develop a discursive approach to the issue.

The first part of the research focuses on the institutional side of the problem. After presenting the methodological framework on chapter 2, chapters 3 and 4 delve into Zairo Cheibub’s pioneering research about Itamaraty to retrace his argument and indicate inconsistencies. Those chapters introduce the perspective of Diplomatic Studies to better understand the institutional development of the Brazilian MRE. Chapter 5 investigates the

foundational myth of Brazilian IR and how it fosters interchange between diplomacy and academia.

Starting at chapter 6, the second part of the research will focus on the actual narratives produced by diplomats. More specifically, it submits emblematic pieces written by selected diplomats to post-structuralist discourse analysis (Dunn & Neumann, 2016). This analysis aims to describe the narratives about Brazilian diplomacy and how they are constructed. What elements constitute the diplomatic discourse about Brazil's foreign policy? That are their conditions of possibility? The works of Rubens Ricupero and Gelson Fonseca Jr, some of the most prominent intellectual diplomats, are this section's focus. I argue that the pieces written by (these?) diplomats should be read as a different genre, 'diplomatic non-fiction', for two reasons: first, because of the authoritative voice attributed to diplomats as policymakers, experts, and intellectuals all at once; and second, because of the privileged place Itamaraty occupies in the narrative of the development of Brazilian IR as an academic field of study.

In chapter 7, I argue that together, three myths concur to making Bolsonaro's influence in foreign policy be perceived as puzzling: professionalism, autonomy, and uniqueness. The foundational myth of IR discipline in Brazil constructs the idea of 'diplomats as academics' (Pineiro & Vedoveli, 2012), which legitimates their position as knowledge producers in Brazilian academia. This is reinforced by the myth of Itamaraty's insulation from politics and professionalism, which grants diplomats an aura of academic neutrality and protects the Ministry from criticism. Finally, the myth of Itamaraty's uniqueness hampers comparative studies that could destabilise the two other myths. Not coincidentally, the foundational figure materialized in the Baron of Rio Branco embodies those three myths as the founding father of Brazilian diplomacy.

The final section discusses the consequences of this discursive construction and presents future lines of enquiry. This thesis concludes that depersonalised and depoliticised diplomats may protect themselves from criticism, hovering above governments, but they gradually lose their capacity to interact with other actors, coordinate other bureaucracies, and profit from a constructive relationship with academia.

This research makes a contribution to Brazilian foreign policy studies as it identifies and the main themes and problematises the dominant interpretations in the analyses produced by diplomats. This work addresses some critical blind spots in the theoretical framework supporting contemporary Brazilian Foreign Policy analysis – that is, it questions representations

about Brazilian foreign policy that, because they are deemed ‘given’ or ‘natural’, are usually immune to systematic scholarly scrutiny. The ideas of ‘continuity’, ‘autonomy’, ‘paradigms’, for example, are some of the themes that could be better understood. Furthermore, investigating how Brazilian diplomacy constructs its narratives and how the Foreign Ministry interacts with the academic field may widen the understanding of discourse and diplomacy. Finally, this doctoral thesis is a contribution to the field of critical diplomatic studies, more specifically, to the understanding of the role myths play in diplomacy.

## 2. A Discursive Approach to Brazilian Diplomacy

To investigate the conditions of possibility of Brazilian diplomatic narratives, I will follow a discourse-analytical approach. What does that mean?

From a discourse-analytical perspective, discourses are not restricted to speeches or texts (Neumann, 2002). Discourses are means of making sense of the world so one can act in it, which means they are not separated from our everyday practices and institutions (Dunn & Neumann, 2016). They are not 'hidden' or opposed to 'reality': they are the framework we use to understand the world in which we live. A tsunami is still a tsunami, the 'reality' is there, but it can be the sudden movement of tectonic plates, an expression of God's wrath, or both. Depending on what we think a tsunami is, we can count on tracking tectonic movements or praying to God to alleviate the catastrophe's consequences.

Discourses are not fixed, static. They can be disputed, they can change in time, altering what we think of the world and, more than that, presenting new possibilities for action, new ways of interpreting 'real' situations. However, discourses cannot - and do not - exist independently from societies.

First, discourses operate within a previously established discursive framework, which is essentially the 'conditions of possibility' of a discourse. For a community that does not share the concept of God, it is impossible to think of a tsunami as 'God's wrath'. Second, discourses are reproduced through 'discursive practices', characterized by 'a delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories' (Foucault, 1977, p. 199). These practices are embedded in society and are reproduced by our daily reiterated activities and by institutions (like the church, the academia, or the Foreign Ministry). According to Young,

Their effect [of discursive practices] is to make it virtually impossible to think outside them. To think outside them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond comprehension and therefore reason. It is in this way that we can see how discursive rules are linked to the exercise of power; how the forms of discourse are both constituted by, and ensure the reproduction of, the social system, through forms of selection, exclusion and domination. (Young, 1982, p. 49)

Therefore, using discourse analysis to investigate Brazilian diplomacy goes beyond exploring what diplomats say. On the one hand, it means investigating the constructed 'reality' – or narratives – about Brazilian foreign policy, and, consequently, what is or is not possible to

think about Brazilian diplomacy. On the other, it means examining not only the narratives themselves, but also the institutions that reproduce them. This method allows the researcher to scrutinise the power relations that permeate, for instance, the link between Brazilian academia and the Foreign Ministry. As Foucault says, ‘discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but the thing for which and by which there is a struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized’ (Foucault, 1981, pp. 52–53).

The Foucauldian-inspired post-structuralist discourse analysis<sup>7</sup> differs from other modes of discourse analysis by rejecting the distinction between language and the material world, between theory and practice. This does not mean that the existence of the material world is denied, but that it can only be apprehensible through the language by which we refer to it, constituting the so-called ‘regimes of truth’. Those regimes are the representations and narratives that acquire the status of ‘truth’, which sanction certain *modus operandi* while delegitimising others (Foucault, 1997). ‘Discourse’ is defined here as ‘systems of meaning production that fix meaning, however temporarily, and enable actors to understand the world and to act within it’ (Dunn & Neumann, 2016, pp. 4–5). The ‘representations’ would be precisely those meanings temporarily fixed. Take the concept of ‘international anarchy’ for example. Many IR scholars would agree that international anarchy is the absence of a political authority higher than sovereign states, which fundamentally shapes international politics. Analysing ‘anarchy’ as a discourse, Brian Schmidt (1998) shows how ‘anarchy’ is not an objective fact of the international realm, but a historically constructed concept that has changed through time. In each moment, the political discourse of anarchy enacts determined interpretations of what the ‘international reality’ is and how states should act – for example, in the realist perspective, it is a menacing Hobbesian-like state of nature and states should seek power to protect themselves.

Such understanding of discourse suggests that the object of the analysis may include not only speeches but also texts, images, practices, objects, data in many forms, and even living things, provided they are part of a system of meaning production. Iven Neumann and Halvard Leira (2017), for example, argue for a more serious engagement with how animals are used in diplomacy, with a variety of meanings and functions. Foucault, at the beginning of *The Order of Things*, presents his iconic analysis of the painting *Las Meninas*, by Diego Velázquez, as a representation of the modern subject (Foucault, 2005). Even if we think about big data or

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<sup>7</sup> For a more developed account of post-structuralism, see Young (1981).

artificial intelligence, the parameters used to code are not natural or neutral but inscribed in already existing grids of intelligibility. Even the results achieved in supposedly neutral machine learning express the collective and individual biases of initial human input. Many studies have investigated the so-called ‘own-race bias’ in face recognition software (Slone et al., 2000).

Kristeva’s concept of *intertextuality* is especially valuable to discourse analysis. According to her, ‘any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another’ (1986, p. 37). Advancing Kristeva’s idea, Lene Hansen argues that intertextuality can also present itself as ‘conceptual intertextuality’, by which concepts rely upon implicit references and catchphrases to attain discursive stability. The idea that Itamaraty should resist the Brazilian government is sustained by a web of references and quotations that sustains discourse stability.

I developed a layered approach to discourse analysis in this work, combining four complementary elements: *strategy, mechanisms, procedures*.

### ***2.1 The Strategies: Plastic, Elastic and Genealogical Discourse Analysis.***

Mutlu and Salter (2012) have identified three dominant strategies of discourse analysis. Plastic discourse analysis seeks to identify continuity in discursive formations, recurring representations, and linguistic signs. Elastic discourse analysis searches for changes in discourses over time, analysing how relations between signs change, emerge, or disappear over time. Genealogical discourse analysis seeks ruptures; the goal is not to identify the origin of discursive formations, but how they disappear or are silenced, how they endure and prevail. Despite the differentiation between those three strategies, Dunn and Neumann (2016) argue that they are not mutually exclusive.

### ***2.2 Textual Mechanisms to Interpret Discourses***

Among the analytical methods that will be combined in this research, two are underlined here. The first is the ‘predicate analysis’ method, a survey and analysis of verbs, adverbs, and adjectives associated with specific nouns (Milliken 2001). Jennifer Milliken used this method, for example, to show how Western intervention in the Korean War (1950-1953) was associated with a discursive construction of an idea of ‘(in) security’ of the West by using qualifiers that deprecated the communists’ actions as ‘predatory’ and ‘irresponsible’, while representing the West as ‘united’ and protector of the ‘free world’ (Milliken, 1999).

The second analytical method, developed by Mark Johnson and George Lakoff (2003), is called ‘metaphorical analysis’ and consists of the collection and analysis of the recurring metaphors in certain representations. This type of analysis focuses on metaphors, that is, ‘conventional ways of conceptualizing particular domains in terms of others, through which actors rationalize and act upon the world’ (Milliken, 2001, p. 77). Iver Neumann, for example, uses this strategy to show how the statement ‘irritate a Russian and the Tartar will emerge’ is one of the strategies employed by Western Europe to characterize Russians as intrinsically violent and threatening, defining Russians in terms of Tartars (Neumann, 2013).

These two procedures can be used at the same time, or even be complemented by other types of analysis. In the book *Imperial Encounters*, for example, Roxanne Doty analyses two imperial relations (between the US and the Philippines, and the United Kingdom and Kenya), relying especially on the work of Edward Said (2003). The author departs from the assumption that ‘foreign policy’ would be a discursive practice whereby a given ‘self’/colonizer would represent the ‘other’ in a certain way to stabilize an identity – thus analysing the process of construction of otherness. To investigate how rhetorical strategies are used to create hierarchies between coloniser and colonised, Doty examines both the predicates (colonized as ‘inferior’ or ‘backwards’) as well as metaphors (such as the direct identification between the West and civilization, a supposed justification for colonization) (Doty 1996).

### ***2.3 Procedures for Discursive Control***

In *The Order of Discourse*, Foucault presents a framework to analyse the conceptual and discursive terrain in which meaning and knowledge are (re)produced – especially valuable to the first part of this work. The author offers a kind of methodological guidebook to investigate the ‘procedures’ by which some discourses are naturalised and others are excluded, arguing that,

‘in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality. (Foucault, 1981, p. 52)

The internal procedures are ways in which discourses exercise their own control, procedures that act as principles to classify, order and distribute information. The first one is the ‘commentary’: the collective act of referring time after time to the same narratives, telling the same stories again and again. The second one is the ‘author’, understood not necessarily as

a person, but as the origin of the discourse that gives it validity as an extension of this origin's authority. The third one is 'disciplines', understood here in the academic sense: defining the boundaries of discourses, drawing the line between what counts as valid knowledge and what should be casted aside.

When it comes to the external procedures, the first presented is the 'prohibition', the taboo: to forbid certain things from being said. The second is 'a division and a rejection': Foucault refers specifically to the opposition between reason and madness, segregating what and who is seen as unreasonable or simply crazy. The third one is the opposition between true and false that Foucault call 'will to truth', and which should not be seen as immutable, but historically constituted. It must be highlighted that

This will to truth, like the other systems of exclusion, rests on an institutional support: it is both reinforced and renewed by whole strata of practices, such as pedagogy, of course; and the system of books, publishing, libraries; learned societies in the past and laboratories now. But it is also renewed, no doubt more profoundly, by the way in which knowledge is put to work, valorised, distributed, and in a sense attributed, in a society. (Foucault, 1981, p. 55)

Finally, other procedures determine rules that restrict access to those discourses, exerting control over them. The first one is 'ritual', which goes beyond religion to include qualification requirements for individuals, behaviour, signs and even the effective vocabulary in determined circumstances. The second one is what Foucault calls 'societies of discourse' that are constituted 'to preserve or produce discourses, but in order to make them circulate in a closed space, distributing them only according to strict rules, and without the holders being dispossessed by this distribution' (Foucault, 1981, pp. 62–63). The third one is 'doctrines' – in a way, the opposite of those societies of discourse for their main purpose is to spread, diffuse the discourse. The last one is the 'social appropriation of discourse' – exerted especially in the system of education, 'a political way of maintaining or modifying the appropriation of discourses, along with the knowledges and powers which they carry' (Foucault, 1981, p. 64).

To summarise, the procedures are:

*Internal procedures:*

- Commentary.
- Author.
- Discipline.

*External procedures:*

- Prohibition.



- Division and rejection.
- Will to truth.

*Other procedures:*

- Ritual.
- Societies of discourse.
- Doctrines.
- Social appropriation of discourse.

As we can see, there is a strong institutional component in the procedures used to naturalise and exclude discourses. Therefore, this framework is invaluable to investigate how certain narratives are raised to the position of ‘truth’, are naturalised, whereas others are neglected, when not dismissed outright, in investigations by Brazilian IR academia.

#### ***2.4 Analysing Brazilian Diplomatic Discourse***

Considering that several pieces will be analysed, systematization techniques for this broad material are indispensable. For this purpose, I will use Atlas.ti software, developed to organize qualitative data. Although the software does not perform the analysis itself, it helps identify ‘hermeneutical units’, excerpts associated with specific ideas. This selection allows for the study of the semantic relations established within a single category (or ‘code’) and between multiple categories. From each of the texts pertinent to this research, selected excerpts about ‘autonomy’, ‘insulation’ or ‘development’ can be condensed into a single document (or report). There, the precise references for citation would already be aggregated, enabling a systematic, comparative, and vertical analysis of the diplomats’ discourse on the chosen categories.

As Keohane, King and Verba (1994) and Brady and Collier (2004) argue, there is a complementarity between quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches. In this sense, this research presents the possibility of contributing, through discourse analysis, to the opening of new paths of research on Brazilian foreign policy. It must be stressed, however, that this work does not seek to find causal relations between discourse and diplomacy for a simple reason: since diplomacy is discursively produced, it is impossible to separate one from another. To let go of causality-seeking, however, does not mean to let go of methodological rigour; it only means that the point of departure of this work is epistemologically different from most of the accounts of Brazilian diplomacy so far produced. Furthermore, if it is not possible to separate subject and object, neutrality is unreachable. This work seeks to investigate how

certain representations become dominant, how certain actors are deemed relevant, how certain sources are regarded as trustworthy. In Kratochwil words,

[i]nstead of making ‘consistency’ and ‘truth’ the paradigmatic cases for deciding validity-claims, as logic and positivism demand, we had better use the model of deciding such questions discursively as our ‘normal case’. . . the issue of why and how certain ‘opinions’ (doxai) become authoritative has to be investigated. In particular, one has to inquire into the ways in which traditions, historical experiences, past cases, practices, ideologies, etc., provide support for ‘reasons’ that become socially dominant. (Kratochwil, 1989, p. 33)

This work is not the first to investigate discourse in Brazilian IR, to take a closer look at Itamaraty, nor to explore the diplomatic thought. However, it is the first to analyse Brazilian diplomacy and its relations to the national IR academia from a post-structuralist perspective. Aside from its novel perspective, this work should be valued for establishing the goal to discuss the shaping of common sense in Brazilian IR, and for criticising the relationship between academics and diplomats. It is not a matter of bringing conflicting evidence against the dominant narratives, but of bending them until inconsistencies are revealed, so as to point out theoretical and analytical blind spots. Over a decade ago, Maria Regina Soares de Lima identified with precision the problem that lies in an understudied relationship between diplomats and academia:

An additional reason for the alleged stability of [Brazilian] foreign policy can be, for example, in the diplomatic service’s capacity to present the new as continuity of a certain diplomatic tradition, reinvented in each moment of crisis and change. The stability narrative would be, therefore, a conceptual construction of diplomacy, repeated and legitimated by the scholarly community in foreign policy. The dominant representation in the diplomatic and academic discourses is that of a primary continuity in the actions and orientation of diverse governments, with a few sudden changes of course. [...] The importance of any belief or idea, as a social phenomenon, is not so much that it is true or false, but that a significant part of a community shares it and, because it believes in that, it becomes true. It has not been different in the case of Brazilian foreign policy. (Lima, 2005, pp. 5–6)

The primary sources of this work comprise two groups of documents. The first is the literature on Brazilian diplomacy and its relation to the IR academia, which includes primarily articles published in Brazilian IR journals to evaluate the evolution of IR in the country. The second include pieces produced by diplomats as intellectuals to make sense of Brazilian diplomacy. This means that this research takes a peculiar stance on the literature: it is itself the object of study. While acknowledging their role in building these narratives, this research benefits from a more clearly defined scope: the influence of diplomats.

Another limitation of the research here developed is related to sources. Some important works written by academics, for example, that have had their share in constructing the narratives in Brazilian diplomacy. Authors such as Amado Cervo and Clodoaldo Bueno have produced emblematic accounts of the country's foreign policy. Their *História das Relações Internacionais do Brasil*,<sup>8</sup> for instance, is one of the most cited books on the discipline, and has been investigated in other academic works (Kalil, 2017). Nevertheless, the original insights presented here can contribute to understanding the field of IR in Brazil, the institutional construction of Itamaraty, and the role myths play in diplomacy.

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<sup>8</sup> *History of International Relations in Brazil.*

### 3. Revisiting Cheibub's 'Diplomacy, Diplomats and Foreign Policy'

The idea of Itamaraty's autonomy is paradigmatic in Brazilian foreign policy studies, having remained unquestioned for decades. Casarões argues that 'at least until the conclusion of our democratic transition, one of the consensuses most often mentioned in the literature referred to the expressive control, on the part of Itamaraty, over the conduct and, in most cases, also over the formulation of our foreign policy' (Casarões, 2012, p. 135). In a landmark article about foreign policy and public opinion, Carlos Alberto Pimenta de Faria claims that '[t]he insulated nature of the production process of Brazilian foreign policy, strongly centred in Itamaraty, has been widely recognized' (Faria, 2008, p. 80). Some authors have identified a pluralisation of the decision-making process in the last decades. Lopes argues that, since the end of the military regime in Brazil, in 1985, there has been a democratisation of Brazilian foreign policy, and the Foreign Ministry has had to submit to new forms of democratic control (Lopes, 2017). Milani and Pinheiro highlight the diversification of actors involved in foreign policy decision-making after the Cold War and call for the characterisation of foreign policy as a public policy (Milani & Pinheiro, 2013, 2015, 2017). However, despite acknowledging that more actors are gradually involved in the policymaking processes, the primary assumption is the centrality of Itamaraty until the 1980s.

Having examined articles and books about Brazilian foreign policy-making<sup>9</sup> and mapping the discursive terrain of the idea of autonomy and insulation of Brazilian diplomacy, I was able to identify the first expression of that idea. It was first put forward in the seminal work by Zairo Cheibub, '*Diplomacy, Diplomats and Foreign Policy: Aspects of the Process of Institutionalisation of Itamaraty*' (1984)<sup>10</sup>. That same year, as Cheibub published his Master's dissertation, his then supervisor Alexandre de Barros published a book chapter in which he presented a similar argument:

These peculiar characteristics of the diplomatic service in Brazil have contributed to a strong esprit de corps among diplomats, who regard themselves as different from (and superior to) other bureaucrats. Partly because of that (and partly because of the high geographic mobility of

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<sup>9</sup> To mention only some texts that take Cheibub as a fundamental reference: Abrucio et al., 2010; Almeida, 2006; Batista, 2010; Casarões, 2012, 2018; Faria, 2008, 2012, 2021; Faria et al., 2013; Figueira, 2010; Gobo, 2019; Lima, 1994, 2018; Mariano, 2015; Milani et al., 2017; Santos, 2005; Setemy, 2014; Vargas, 2009; Vedoveli, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Part of the dissertation was later published in academic journals (Cheibub, 1985, 1989) and advance the same argument presented in the thesis. Hence, I treat the three pieces as a unity. When the same topic was replicated in more than one piece, I have privileged the most recent version.

diplomats), they have cultivated a strong sense of isolation from the rest of the bureaucracy, for which they have sometimes been mocked as the *jeunesse dorée*. The social origin, training, competence, isolation, and relative esotericism of the diplomats, associated with the fact that they constituted a homogeneous elite group, contributed to an insulation of the process of foreign-policy making (and especially implementation) from much, although not from all, politicking of the day. (Barros, 1984, p. 32)

It was Cheibub, however, who became the inescapable reference. And his argument attained the status of self-evident truth. It is the presupposition of many analyses. In the few times authors questioned Cheibub's argument, it happened in footnotes: Casarões admits that 'this perception has been nuanced in recent studies' (2012, p. 135); Milani and Pinheiro state that:

[W]e would like to emphasize that, despite correct, the statement that the Brazilian diplomatic agency, due to its institutional characteristics, has been strongly preserved from political injunctions throughout its history, it would not be correct to postulate its complete autonomy or insulation. If in its beginnings, as an institution of an independent State, public interests were largely confused with private interests due to the patrimonialism that characterized national politics in general (Cheibub, 1985), after this period, sectoral interests always had access to the arena of public policy formulation, including foreign policy. The difference would be fundamentally in the absence of regular channels of transmission of the demands of social interests to state agencies, as well as, *et pour cause*, in the possibility of these agencies selectively absorbing the demands of society (Milani & Pinheiro, 2015, p. 18)

Nevertheless, there has never been a direct challenge to his assumption or a thorough investigation of the relation between Itamaraty and the presidency, between diplomats and politicians. In this piece, I will develop a 'double reading' of his dissertation, a two-step approach developed by Richard Ashley (1988). In this chapter, I will inform the reader of Cheibub's arguments, reconstructing the analytical path of his work as a 'monologue'. In the following chapter, I will propose a dialogical reading of the text, shedding light on the contradictions and inconsistencies of the argument and examining how Cheibub's work is read in Brazilian IR, unveiling the intertextual web that still places him as an irrefutable source.

### ***3.1 Diplomacy and the Formation of National States***

In the first lines of his work, Cheibub (1984) says that he developed his research because of his 'perception' that Itamaraty had been playing a gradually more important role in the formulation and conduction of Brazilian foreign policy. He then advances what he calls a 'historical approach':

This work is based on my perception that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomats as a professional group have assumed an increasingly imposing role in the formulation and management of Brazilian foreign policy. Considering this, the central proposal of this thesis is to understand the process that leads Itamaraty to conquer this position.

To this end, a historical approach was adopted, according to which the explanation of the current state of a phenomenon requires the identification of what it was in the past. (Cheibub, 1984, p. 1)

Cheibub considers Itamaraty's presumably central position in policymaking as a consequence of the Ministry's long-term bureaucratisation. The consolidated institutionalisation of the ministry had resulted in greater adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and cohesion (*esprit de corps*). Cheibub concludes that those two processes – bureaucratisation and institutionalisation – would strengthen the political power of Itamaraty. He then attributes the fact that Itamaraty was barely affected by the 1964 military coup to the Ministry's autonomy and cohesion. The entire argument proceeds as the following.

In the first chapter of the thesis, Cheibub discusses the origins of modern diplomacy. He argues that it emerged during the Renaissance, associated with the birth of modern states. Its distinctive feature was the establishment of resident embassies by the city-states in the Italian Peninsula during the fifteenth century. Based on Clausewitz's famous quote that 'war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means' (Clausewitz, 1989, p. 87), Cheibub concludes that diplomacy is the continuation of war by political means. Hence, modern diplomacy emerged in association with military activity and was absorbed by the states. Transformations in the function and position of diplomats have mimicked that of the military, which accounts for similar institutional organisation and values system.

In the same way that Clausewitz saw in the war the continuation of politics by other means, it can be said that diplomacy consisted in the continuation of the war by political means. Modern diplomacy emerges therefore in connection with military activity and is absorbed by the nascent states to the extent that, continuing the war by non-military means, it would serve to foster the growth and consolidation of the National States. (Cheibub, 1984, p. 11)

Cheibub turns to Weber to argue that the strengthening of the modern state was due to the state's accumulation and centralisation of political and administrative power, which resulted in the creation of permanent and impersonal institutions – the creation of the bureaucratic-legal state. This widespread trend would have influenced diplomacy: 'it can be said that the main tendencies of the history of diplomacy from the XV to the XIX century are its

centralisation, rationalisation and bureaucratisation’ (Cheibub, 1984, p. 14). The first evidence of this process would have been the establishment of the rules of participation in the diplomatic activity in the sixteenth century. This would have enabled the institution of permanent diplomacy, manifested by the installation of the first resident ambassadors. Cheibub argues that this development resulted in the creation of a section of the public service responsible for organising and coordinating the work of the network of permanent diplomats. This development would have made diplomatic representation ‘impersonal and bureaucratised’ (Cheibub, 1984, p. 16).

The transformations in recruitment and training of the diplomatic staff, which according to Cheibub occurred in three phases, also support the argument for rationalization and bureaucratization. Initially, there was no defined practice, and even foreigners could be diplomats. Following a second period of virtual monopoly of aristocrats performing those functions, the state finally instituted training programmes and keep a permanent and professional diplomatic staff – a process that took place in Europe during the eighteenth century and have, since then, spread throughout the world. Cheibub concludes that the state's assimilation of the diplomatic service would have been completed by the nineteenth century:

We can conclude this item by observing that in the 19th century there was the culmination of a process that had been dragging on for at least three centuries, that is, the complete absorption of diplomatic activity by the National State. The consequences of this development were the bureaucratization and professionalization of this activity. In this century there was also the complete generalization of diplomacy as the mode of interaction between the National States. (Cheibub, 1984, p. 19)

### ***3.2 The Institutional Construction of Itamaraty***

In the following chapter<sup>11</sup>, Cheibub argues that Itamaraty’s strengthening was gradual, which helped amplify the Ministry's capacity to control the formulation and implementation of Brazilian foreign policy. The author divides the institutional development of Itamaraty into three phases. The ‘Patrimonial Period’, which began with Brazilian independence in 1822, is characterised by the interpenetration of public and private interests in dealing with state diplomacy. The recruitment was personal, there was nothing similar to a public tender, and there was barely any separation between the means of representation and the private possessions of the representative. One example was the Baron of Penedo, who represented Brazilian

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<sup>11</sup> This chapter was later published as an article in the journal *Dados – Revista de Ciências Sociais* (Cheibub, 1985).

interests in the British Court for more than thirty years and used his personal wealth to finance most legation expenses. Cheibub then attributes Brazilian ‘diplomatic supremacy’, when compared to that of neighbouring countries, not to the professionalisation of the diplomatic service but to its stability, cohesion, and homogeneity. These attributes derived from the fact that diplomats were all members of the imperial elite. A paradigmatic figure during that time was the Viscount of Cabo Frio, who served as the General Director of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs from 1864 to 1907. Having kept his position through the fall of the monarchy and emergence of a republican government in 1889, he and was the central figure in maintaining the imperial diplomatic tradition in the first years of the Brazilian Republic (Cheibub, 1984, 1985).

The next phase was the ‘Charismatic Moment’ of José Maria da Silva Paranhos Jr, the Baron of Rio Branco, Brazilian foreign minister from 1902 to 1912. The defining characteristic of the period was the charismatic leadership of Paranhos Jr, regarded as the founding father of modern Brazilian diplomacy: ‘the “Baron’s” administration meant the true foundation of modern Itamaraty. Nowadays, the MRE seeks its roots in the achievements of Rio Branco with few references to the imperial period’. (Cheibub, 1984, pp. 42–43) He altered administrative processes in Itamaraty, centralising the organisational life of the Ministry under his wing, weakening its previous patrimonial institutional structure. A notable example would be the frequent disagreements between, Rio Branco on one side, and Cabo Frio on the other, and section heads:

Rio Branco's charismatic character also altered administrative processes at Itamaraty. Due to his personalist style, the "Baron" totally upset the work routine Secretariat of State and centralized the entire administration around his person, thus avoiding letting himself be caught by the routine procedures. As a result of this strong and charismatic style, the administrative structure of the Ministry ends up suffering a process of weakening, particularly in relation to the post of Director General [occupied by Cabo Frio], which represented the institution vis-à-vis the Minister. This is the main issue around which disputes were concentrated [...]. (Cheibub, 1984, p. 45)

Rio Branco’s Office became the centre of Itamaraty’s administrative structure. The all-mighty minister, who resided in the Itamaraty Palace, was personally responsible for recruitment and follow the imperial criteria, selecting diplomats from the traditional oligarchic circles – most of them, descendants of the imperial aristocracy.

In the case of diplomats this disaggregation process did not occur due to the charisma of Rio Branco, which alone promoted a certain *esprit de corps* among the members of Itamaraty, as well as to the agency of the ‘Baron’ in



the recruitment of new members. The recruitment mechanism tended to standardize career members in terms of their social origin, as it was predominantly recruited from the oligarchic and 'aristocratic' sectors of the Old Republic [1889-1930]. This process involved strengthening those who favored the development of an *esprit de corps* and elements consequently of a certain cohesion and homogeneity among diplomats. (Cheibub, 1984, pp. 47–48)

The Bureaucratic-Rational Period is the final phase of Itamaraty's institutional development. This process corresponds to the modernisation of the Brazilian state, especially after the 1930s. Cheibub divides this period into two moments. The first one, pre-1945, would lay the foundations and modernise Itamaraty. In the 1930s, the Mello Franco<sup>12</sup> and Aranha<sup>13</sup> Reforms merged the three branches which, up until that point, had constituted the foreign services: the State Secretary (responsible for the internal and administrative tasks), the Diplomatic Services, and the Consular Services. In 1945, Itamaraty created the Rio Branco Institute<sup>14</sup> which, in the following year, became responsible for recruiting new diplomats<sup>15</sup>. It is worth mentioning that the expansion of IRBr's attributions was designed to reinstate Itamaraty's monopoly of the selection of new diplomats, which had been threatened by the creation of the Administrative Department of the Public Service (DASP). DASP had been responsible for recruiting all public servants – including diplomats – since its creation in 1938. Cheibub makes two remarks about this moment. First, the brief period in which DASP was responsible for recruiting new staff members did not tamper with the cohesion and *esprit the corps* of diplomats. Even if political patronage resulted in a somewhat diversification of diplomats' backgrounds, those effects would have been neutralised by the homogenising effect of IRBr. Second, the Itamaraty could not convert Rio Branco's political capital into political influence. Hence, as a professional group, diplomats were not yet able to affect foreign policy formulation.

The next moment, post-1945, is characterised by the accumulation of political influence by Itamaraty, even though there would have been no significant innovation in the Ministry's structure. Cheibub attributes that to three elements. The first one is the strong *esprit de corps* of the diplomats, resulting from the socialisation process produced by IRBr training. The second is that some diplomats had developed a new approach to the profession and began to instil

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<sup>12</sup> Decree n. 19,529 on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 1931.

<sup>13</sup> Decree-Law n. 791 on October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1938.

<sup>14</sup> Decree-Law n. 8,324 on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

<sup>15</sup> Decree-Law n. 9,032 on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

meaning and purpose into the diplomatic activity. As Cheibub calls them, these 'formulators' sought to play a more decisive role, influencing the formulation of Brazil's foreign policy. Third, especially after the military coup of 1964, the officials gave Itamaraty greater autonomy in formulating foreign policy. According to Cheibub, the new authoritarian regime tried to gain credibility by giving more space to civilians in the government, and diplomats seemed the perfect candidates because of their professionalism and the similarity between both careers:

'[A]s diplomatic and military careers have several common traits, it is easy for the military to recognize in diplomats some positive characteristics that they see in themselves. [...] This recognition helps explain the fact that Itamaraty went through the post-1964 period almost without political removal' (Cheibub, 1984, pp. 61–62)

The author concludes the chapter by stating that many diplomats then worked in other governmental agencies not because of the low wages, in comparison to other sectors of the public administration, but on account of their qualification and a general belief that diplomats were well-prepared professionals.

### ***3.3 Bureaucratisation and Autonomy***

In the third chapter of his thesis, Cheibub delves into the recruitment process of diplomats to analyse two claims about Brazilian diplomats: their lack of representativity and elitism. He shows that, from 1913 to 1982, 43,4% of the diplomats were born in Rio de Janeiro, 70,4% lived in that city, 67,5% had a degree in Law, and 12,1% were sons of diplomats. The author concludes that, despite the concentrated geographic origin and educational background, there has been progressive democratization and diversification of the profession, especially after the creation of IRBr, which points to the growing bureaucratisation of the career. In the fourth chapter, he examines the data about origin and education against career progression, finding no evidence of a correlation between personal background and quicker career ascension. He then argues that:

[T]he analysis undertaken here showed that the diplomatic career in Brazil is in a process of acquiring autonomy in relation to broader social influences. This process is accompanied by an increase in the degree of professionalization and rationalization of the diplomatic profession in the country, thus reflecting a broad social transformation towards bureaucratization. (Cheibub, 1984, pp. 116–117)

In the conclusion of his dissertation, Cheibub argues that there has been a strong institutionalisation of Itamaraty, similar to that of the Armed Forces, which is attested by its characteristics: adaptability, complexity, autonomy and cohesion:

The process described above leads to a progressive institutionalisation of Itamaraty, only comparable to that which occurred with the Army. An indicator of this evolution has been the development of some institutional characteristics in Itamaraty, namely those that Huntington points out as necessary institutionalization of an organization: adaptability, complexity, autonomy and cohesion. (Cheibub, 1984, p. 119)

According to Cheibub, of those four characteristics, adaptability and complexity do not have any relevant implication to the analysis:

With regard to adaptability and complexity there is no deeper implication to be examined. It can only be pointed out that Itamaraty has demonstrated a very great capacity to adapt to the different moments of Brazilian foreign policy, even reflecting on its organizational structure. (Cheibub, 1984, p. 120)

Nevertheless, autonomy and cohesion are deeply interrelated and have four significant impacts on Brazilian diplomacy and foreign policy study. The first is that Itamaraty should henceforth be considered a unity if analysis, with particular interests and values. The second is that autonomy and cohesion provided Itamaraty with the necessary stability to achieve a high degree of continuity in Brazilian foreign policy. Those characteristics protected the Ministry from social interference and promoted internal consensus. The third implication is the possibility that the Ministry would enjoy administrative impunity for its capacity to be impervious to social control. Finally, he states that the Itamaraty will keep its centrality in the decision-making process until the rise of other actors powerful enough to counterbalance its weight in the foreign policy arena.

After reconstructing Cheibub's thesis, the next step is to scrutinise it. Before starting, however, it must be said that we must read Cheibub's work taking into account the limitations he faced when developing his research. First, it was a master's dissertation, which means that it was less ambitious and had to be written in a shorter timeframe than a PhD thesis. Second, there were severe source limitations for two reasons: the difficulty to access primary sources – as pointed out by Santos and Uziel (2019) –, and the challenges to access bibliography in a pre-Internet era. Third, in 1984, Brazilian IR academia was still incipient, and the foreign policy community was much smaller than it is today, which means fewer shoulders to stand on. Given those difficulties, Cheibub's pioneering work is remarkable and commendable. However,

today's researchers must be attentive to those constraints and engage his work critically, not taking his arguments for granted.

In the first two chapters of the dissertation, the author follows an inductive path primarily. Even though he claims to advance a 'historical approach', he does not rely on archives or primary sources to develop his arguments. On the contrary, he explores the consolidated social sciences literature works that sought to explain the puzzle he identifies. Cheibub applies Weber's theory of bureaucracy to think about diplomacy and its bureaucratisation and derives Itamaraty's bureaucratisation from that. Obviously, to follow an inductive path is not a liability to his dissertation. Yet, it is a choice with profound consequences. Any work which cites Cheibub to sustain its analysis or takes his arguments for granted should take a step back and scrutinise his assumptions. In other words, we should not take Itamaraty's centrality and autonomy for granted. In the two final chapters, the author turns to the limited statistical data obtained in the IRBr's yearbooks to find evidence of bureaucratisation and professionalisation of Itamaraty. On the one hand, he analyses diplomats' geographical, educational, and socio-economic backgrounds and, on the other hand, career progression patterns to confirm his thesis.

In the next chapter, I argue that despite innovative, his dissertation was still an incipient work, not designed to investigate its underlying assumptions deeply. Moreover, if we still face difficulties accessing primary sources to study Brazilian diplomacy today, the problem was even more dramatic in the 1980s, during the twilight of the authoritarian regime. His primary sources were diplomatic memoirs and statistical information compiled by the Ministry itself. It is a remarkable effort, yet not definitive. There are three main inconsistencies in Cheibub's research path, the first one is related to his account of the development of Brazilian diplomacy, the second is related to the bureaucratisation of the career, and the third, to the autonomy of the Foreign Ministry.

## 4. Diplomatic History, Bureaucratisation and Autonomy

The last chapter revisited Cheibub's argument and prepare the terrain to understand how his dissertation has become a self-evident truth that has stood almost unchallenged for almost four decades. Now, using combined elastic and plastic discourse analysis strategies, I will investigate the textual mechanisms and procedures that sustain the long-held position of Cheibub's piece as a paradigmatic text and its status as 'truth'. I argue that three organisational myths about Itamaraty have ensued from his work: insulation, professionalism, and exceptionalism. Those three myths work together, reinforcing each other and generating theoretical blind spots by naturalising accounts about the Foreign Ministry.

### 4.1 Diplomatic History and Brazilian Diplomacy

When it comes to Cheibub's account of diplomacy, there are two main inconsistencies in his argument: he does not consider the differences between the evolution of general state bureaucracy and that of diplomacy, and he disregards specificities of the Brazilian case. Each of those issues will be analysed in turn.

Even though the bureaucratisation of the state and of diplomacy are indeed related, there are specificities that Cheibub overlooks. The birth of modern diplomacy is usually identified with the establishment of the first permanent embassies in the Italic Peninsula during the sixteenth century (Berridge, 2010; Hutchings & Suri, 2020). Nevertheless, the responsibility for foreign policy and the diplomatic activity was not concentrated but dispersed among different parts of the state's incipient bureaucracy. Only two centuries later, states began to create specific institutions within the state machinery to deal with diplomatic affairs. In response to the increase of foreign communications during Richelieu's period, France created in 1589 the first post of Secretary of State and Louis de Revol became the first Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>16</sup>. Great Britain and the United States followed that trend only in the late eighteenth century, while China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire took even longer (Berridge, 2010; Lequesne, 2020a). On this topic, Berridge argues that:

[I]t was only during the eighteenth century that a recognizably modern ministry of foreign affairs became the general rule in Europe. Even then, the administrative separation of foreign and domestic business was by no means watertight. [...] Even in Europe, however, it was well into the nineteenth

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<sup>16</sup> Berridge (2010) acknowledged that there can be other candidates, but to investigate that would be beyond the goals of this work.

century before foreign ministries, which remained small, became bureaucratically sophisticated. (Berridge, 2010, p. 6)

Furthermore, another significant institutional transformation was ignored by Cheibub: the merging of diplomatic, consular, and state-secretary activities – distinctive of modern foreign ministers – only happened in the twentieth century. After creating the first permanent embassies, the progressive strengthening of the diplomatic network resulted in diversification of relations and more frequent communication. Ministries of Foreign Affairs were established as administrative units to centralise and organise that increasingly complex dynamic. There was a strict differentiation between the civil servants working inside the ministries and diplomats. Civil servants were usually members of the small bourgeoisie, reliant upon their wages and responsible for the correspondence exchange and working only inside the country. Diplomats were members of the aristocracy, endowed with significant personal wealth. They spent large periods without returning to their countries of origin and were responsible for financially maintaining the embassies. Even when the first ministries started to train their staff in the mid-nineteenth century, the differentiation was quite strict. It was not before the late nineteenth century, when the political power of the bourgeoisie was in ascension, that civil servants started to demonstrate discontent with this situation, and things began to change. In 1906, Sweden was the first country to unify those two branches of diplomatic activity under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other countries followed her path in the next decades. (Berridge, 2010; Hocking, 1999b; Lequesne, 2020a; Neumann, 2012)

If we now turn to the development of Brazilian diplomacy, we realise that it mimicked an international tendency, and its process is much more nuanced than what Cheibub presented. Because Brazil was once a Portuguese colony, we should begin with the coloniser's institutions. On November 29, 1643, king Dom João IV created the Secretary of State, responsible for celebrating marriages, alliances, and treaties, and communicating with diplomatic agents and foreign leaders. It is clear that there was no clear-cut separation between internal and external affairs as we understand today, something that would be more delineated around the Enlightenment Age (Neumann, 2012). Indeed, the Secretary of State was defined by its clerical work rather than its outward-looking functions. In 1736, king Dom João V reorganised the public administration and created three Secretariats of State: the Kingdom's Interior Affairs; Navy and Overseas Domains; and Foreign Affairs and War. In 1807, when Napoleon invaded Portugal, the royal family fled to Brazil to avoid capture, taking with them the whole bureaucratic apparatus of the realm. After they arrived in Brazil, on January 22, 1808, the

State's bureaucratic structure was established in Rio de Janeiro. On March 11, 1808, a decree by the Regent Prince Dom João VI officially reinstated in Brazilian soil the State Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and War and made Dom Rodrigo de Souza Coutinho its minister. Even after the end of the Napoleonic Wars, in 1814, the Portuguese royal family decided not to return to Europe, and Brazil was elevated to the status of United Kingdom to Portugal and Algarves in 1815.

In the following years, the subjects of the European portion of the Empire became increasingly unhappy with the secondary position relegated to mainland Portugal. In August 1820, the deterioration of the political, economic, and social situation resulted in the eruption of the Liberal Revolution of 1820. From the port town of Porto, the movement soon took the whole of Portugal, demanding the immediate return of king Dom João VI and the adoption of a constitution to limit the crown's power. From that moment onwards, the history of the Secretariat followed two different branches. In Portugal, a Provisional Junta of Government took power until the return of Dom João VI. The Junta determined, on September 17, 1820, that the management of foreign affairs and war should be separated from each other, creating the Portuguese Secretary of Foreign Affairs. In Brazil – which was not, until that moment, independent – Dom João VI issued a decree on April 22, 1821, leaving Dom Pedro I, his firstborn, as the regent prince. On May 2, 1822, Dom Pedro issued another decree dismembering the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs and War and putting the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs under the auspices of the Secretary of Brazil's Kingdom Affairs. On September 7, 1822, Brazil became an independent empire. Finally, on November 13 of the following year, a decree separated Secretariat of Foreign Affairs from the Secretariat of the Empire's Affairs - the former being the bureaucratic predecessor of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first Brazilian diplomatic agents inherited their Portuguese counterpart's *modus operandi*, *modus vivendi* and perspective on their occupation (Castro, 1983; Faoro, 2012; Fausto, 2019; Lopes, 2014; Ministério dos Negócios Estrangeiros de Portugal, 2022; Ramos et al., 2014; Soares, 1984).

The institutional development of the Brazilian Secretariat of Foreign Affairs advanced with baby steps and there were no significant changes during the nineteenth century. The first organisational structure of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs was established only on September 15, 1828, with an ordinance by the minister Carlos Augusto de Oyenhausen – the Marquis of Aracaty – that divided the Secretary correspondence into six sectors: five following

geographical criteria, and one devoted to decrees, certificates, and letters to princes. According to Castro,

[...] the slow process of evolution responsible for the first organization of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs was the same evolutionary process that gave shape and a more organized existence to the other Secretariats of the Imperial Government. Obviously, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs has always been inserted in a broader governmental structure, operating in harmony with other organs of the direct administration of the country, keeping, however, its characteristics and peculiarities. (Castro, 1983, p. 66)

In 1842, minister Aureliano de Souza e Oliveira Coutinho – the Viscount of Sepetiba – approved a reform of the Secretariat, rearranging the sections into three geographical divisions, and one section responsible for functional, administrative, and accounting affairs. In 1859, José Maria da Silva Paranhos, the Viscount of Rio Branco, replaced the geographical sections with five thematic ones: political issues and disputes; trade and consular issues; chancellery and archive; accountancy; and, for the bureaucratic activities, the central section. Moreover, Paranhos, who was the father of the Baron of Rio Branco, created the figure of the General Director, responsible for overseeing the Secretariat's activities. Joaquim Thomaz do Amaral, the Viscount of Cabo Frio, served as General Director from 1865 to 1867 and again from 1869 until 1907, being the personification of the Ministry's institutional memory. In 1889, after the Proclamation of the Republic in Brazil, the new government changed the name of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs to Ministry of External Relations – which stands until these days. (Calogeras, 1936; Castro, 1983; Lopes, 2014; Silva et al., 2010; Soares, 1984)

From 1902 to 1912, José Maria da Silva Paranhos Júnior, the Baron of Rio Branco, served as Minister of External Relations. There is no doubt that Rio Branco is a central figure to Brazilian diplomacy, and his legacy, a symbolic landmark. Nonetheless, apart from amplifying the diplomatic and consular network and raising diplomats' remuneration, he did not bring any noteworthy institutional innovation. Conversely, as acknowledged by Cheibub himself, Rio Branco represents a setback in the institutional evolution of the Ministry. His term was characterised by great centralisation around his figure and strengthening of the minister bureau to the detriment of the General Director and section heads, especially after the death of Viscount of Cabo Frio, in 1907. (Cheibub, 1984; Soares, 1984)

In 1913, after Rio Branco's death, Minister Lauro Muller nearly doubled the Ministry's staff and implemented combined thematical/geographical sections. Yet, the reform was reversed already in 1918 by his successor, Nilo Peçanha, who reinstated thematic sectors and



aimed at strengthening the commercial area of the Ministry to promote international trade. Until 1930, the Ministry of External Relations had remained a relatively small and simple sector of state administration, with no significant bureaucratic sophistication. This situation started to change during Afrânio de Mello Franco's term as Minister, from 1930 to 1933, when he implemented several organizational and structural innovations. In 1931, Franco issued two important decrees, the first one reorganising and complexifying Itamaraty's structure and the second, regulating the three careers – state secretary, diplomatic and consular services – under the auspices of the Ministry. Additionally, he terminated the position of Secretariat officials, reassigning its former members to the diplomatic or consular services. For the first time, the three careers received equal treatment, and it became mandatory to rotate between service in Brazil and time abroad. Oswaldo Aranha, Minister from 1938 to 1945, completed the merging of the three careers - an institutional innovation first implemented by Sweden in 1906. During the 1930s, Franco and Aranha finally laid the foundations of a modern Itamaraty. This modernisation trend was not specific to Brazilian diplomacy but followed a broader international movement of adaptation and reform during the interwar years. (Castro, 1983; Figueira, 2010; Hamilton & Langhorne, 2010; Silva et al., 2010; Tomas, 2020)

In sum, it would be imprecise to deduce Itamaraty's institutionalisation as deriving from the institutionalisations of international diplomacy and of the Brazilian state. Despite interrelated, different dynamics and timing must be considered, and it was not before the 1930s that the foundations of a modern Ministry of External Relations were laid.

Furthermore, when considering patrimonialism as a form of political organisation in which authority is concentrated not in the institution but in a person, Rio Branco's term emerges as the pinnacle of Itamaraty's patrimonial phase, notwithstanding his undeniable charisma and symbolic relevance. The institutional milestone of modern Itamaraty is more precisely identified in the 1930s reforms promoted by Mello Franco and Oswaldo Aranha.

#### ***4.2 Bureaucratisation and Elitism***

In the second part of the thesis, Cheibub argues that Itamaraty's bureaucratisation resulted in the rationalisation and professionalisation of the career. This trend was not specific to Brazil: it was part of a more significant tendency resulting from an increasingly complex international environment, with a growing number of relevant actors and institutions, and a more intense exchange of information. In that respect, Hocking argues that:

[T]he evolving states system required an enhanced capacity at two related levels. First, the resources to communicate internationally and to project national interests through the development of networks of overseas representation were needed. Second, the ability to interact with these networks and the broader diplomatic environment and to support the shaping of international policy at home was required. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these requirements resulted in the professionalization of diplomacy through formalized recruitment processes and the introduction of examinations and training programs. (Hocking, 2018, p. 136)

Regarding the Brazilian case, Cheibub argues that evidence of Itamaraty's bureaucratisation would be the combination of the increasingly diverse backgrounds of diplomats and homogenous career advancement patterns, that is, career progression would not be associated with nepotism or personal relations (Cheibub, 1984, 1989). However, this argument fails to effectively engage with the quality of the training process and to acknowledge that, despite the progressive de-aristocratisation, entry barriers ensured that new diplomats were still a homogenous group. Hence, similar career paths would tell little about equal opportunities or bureaucratisation. In other words, the selection process was – and, to a certain extent, still is – biased.

Recruitment systems to the diplomatic career until the nineteenth century have been widely documented as biased. There used to be a strict differentiation between civil servants working in the Secretariat of State/Foreign Affairs and those in diplomatic or consular services. The former were primarily responsible for clerical work, were never sent abroad and were part of the ordinary state bureaucracy, whereas the latter were wealthy aristocrats and spent long periods abroad. Even after some governments began to establish recruitment systems in the mid-nineteenth century, selection mechanisms largely favoured patronage and elitism: the requirements were not easily attainable. As stated by Neumann, '[e]ven in Norway, a country whose small aristocracy was stripped of legal privileges in 1821, aristocrats were key when the new state's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was established in 1905' (2012, p. 11). Little has changed after establishing the first modern Ministries of Foreign Affairs at the beginning of the twentieth century. Despite receiving wages, diplomats used to cover most of the embassy's costs. Hamilton and Langhorn argue that the situation was not different even in highly prestigious diplomatic services, such as the British and the German:

[In Britain] until 1919 budding diplomats were required to have a private income of £400 per annum [approximately £24,000 in 2022's values], and their professional survival depended more upon their family fortunes than the public purse. This property qualification, the patronage implicit in the system of nominating candidates, and the courtly mannerisms and protocol associated

with diplomacy, all helped substantiate the claims of later left-wing critics of the British foreign service that it was an effete and aristocratic body which had imposed its will on popularly elected governments. As with many such generalizations this one contained an element of truth. [...] This was equally apparent in the foreign services of some of Britain's continental neighbours. Thus, despite the growing industrial might of imperial Germany and the rigorous examination procedures maintained by the Wilhelmstrasse, German diplomacy in Europe remained firmly in the grasp of the aristocracy. As in other European countries, the requirement that recruits first act as unpaid attachés made financial independence a prerequisite for admission to the service. (Hamilton & Langhorne, 2010, pp. 107–108)

The situation in Brazil was not different. A remarkable example was Francisco Inácio de Carvalho Moreira – the Baron of Penedo – who served as Brazilian ambassador to London almost uninterruptedly from 1855 to 1889. His costly lifestyle and intense social activity were financed mainly by his personal wealth, and not by his allowance – something around £4000 per month in today's value. Furthermore, until 1930, the furniture, tapestry and artworks present in Brazil's embassies were the personal property of the head of the mission. Dawisson Lopes describes this situation with precision, applying Raymundo Faoro's idea of an aristocratic 'bureaucratic stratum' (*estamento burocrático*) to Brazilian diplomacy. (Cheibub, 1985; Faoro, 2012; Gobo, 2019; Lopes, 2014; Mendonça, 2006)

Worldwide, things started to change during the interwar period. Governments began to receive heavy criticism, and the rising bourgeoisie intensified pressure for change. Many countries started to reform recruitment mechanisms and career patterns to democratise their Ministries of Foreign Affairs, albeit the results were frequently limited (Hamilton & Langhorne, 2010). The Brazilian path was similar, as shown by the reforms promoted by Mello Franco and Oswaldo Aranha during the 1930s. However, one can hardly argue that Itamaraty was democratized during that moment, not even in the decades to come, despite recent efforts in that direction.

The most effective way to assure that this aristocratic ethos would not change in the Ministry was the control of the recruitment process. It is true that the first instructions to the establishment of an admission exam to the post of diplomatic attaché were presented as early as 1852 by the Minister José Paulino de Souza. However, the required knowledge was clearly exclusive to the elites – it included French, English, History, Law, Economics, and diplomatic etiquette – and political nominations were still the rule. Although the first 'Rules of Procedure for the Provision of Initial Positions of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Diplomatic and Consular Services' were issued in 1920, only in the 1930s did the admission exam become

the only way to join Itamaraty. In 1936, the Getúlio Vargas administration created the Federal Council of the Public Service (CFSPC) to modernise public administration and promote an efficient and equitable merit system in recruitment to be applied to all branches of the State. The first public tenders to the diplomatic career organised by CFSPC were held in 1937, and which, in effect, claimed control over the recruitment process, taking it away from the Itamaraty. In 1938, the CFSPC was replaced by the Administrative Department of Public Service (DASP), which inherited its responsibilities. The situation only changed in 1946, when the Decree n. 20,694 of March 6, 1946, assigned IRBr the responsibility for selecting new diplomats. Notwithstanding some degree of democratisation promoted by mandatory admission exams, the process was still remarkably elitist, mainly because of the required level of foreign languages mastery – which persisted even during the brief CFSPC/DASP recruitment period. (Castro, 1983; Rodrigues, 1966; Tomas, 2020; Wahrlich, 1983)

According to, Alexandre de Barros:

To circumvent the centralized admission system, the Itamaraty created and put under its own control the Instituto Rio Branco [...] The entry exam to the Rio Branco was considered very difficult, and indeed it was. In addition, however, it was biased in favour of the upper classes, as the type of knowledge demanded from the applicants was much more likely to be part of the "natural" stock of knowledge of upper-class students than of those with middle- or lower-class backgrounds. The bias also favoured diplomats' offspring, since it involved foreign languages and other skills more easily acquired abroad than in Brazil. (Barros, 1984, p. 31)

Despite meagre evidence to support that the examinations favoured diplomats' offspring, there are clear traces of elitism and bias towards the upper classes (Cheibub, 1984; Lima, 2015; Moura, 2006), revealed by the recollection of the admission exams since the 1960s. Until 1994, both English and French language mastery was a prerequisite, evaluated as early as in the first phase of the exam. In 1996, following the lift of the French language requirement, there was a more than threefold rise in applications, which can be seen as evidence of the social barrier the language had represented. Still, from 1994 to 2004, the exam presented questions about fine arts, clearly favouring those with high cultural capital. In 2005, during President Lula da Silva's administration, the grade obtained in English test remained an important ranking measurement, but a low mark would no longer eliminate candidates from the tender. In his attempt to democratise the recruitment process, Lula faced fierce criticism from high-ranking diplomats. Mario Gibson Barbosa, Foreign Minister from 1970 to 1974, claimed that Lula's initiative would 'vulgarise' and 'open the doors of our diplomatic career to illiteracy' (Barbosa

*apud* Moura, 2006); Paulo Tarso Flecha de Lima stated that it would be a ‘bet in the mediocrity of the diplomatic staff’ (Flecha de Lima *apud* Moura, 2006).

The administration endured the criticism. In 2016, however, the English test became once again a requirement whose failure would result in disqualification. According to research commissioned by the British Council, only 1% of Brazilians are fluent English speakers (British Council, 2014); French language mastery is presumably even lower. It is indisputable that diplomacy requires mastery of foreign languages. However, the examiners are usually diplomats or English professors in universities, but there has never been a specialist in language proficiency exams. Specialised professors in preparing for the IRBr exam report unclear evaluation criteria and vast evidence of inconsistent marking, which is highly problematic for a test that is both disqualifying and classificatory. This causes remarkable distortions, once we consider that foreign language scores are the subjects with the highest standard deviation in the exam, that is, they significantly affect ranking. One cabal example of inconsistency was the fact that, in 2018, more than 90% of black candidates were approved in the English exam; the following year, the figure was inferior to 25%.

In addition to language barriers, there are significant financial barriers to becoming a diplomat in Brazil. After succeeding in the exam, IRBr has trained prospective diplomats since 1946. Until 1994, newcomers received only a small allowance during the Preparation Course for the Diplomatic Career, which highlights the importance of prior financial independence or family support. After 1994, new diplomats started receiving a salary even during their initial training. Still, it would hardly suffice in an expensive city like Brasilia, Brazil’s capital city and seat of the Ministry of External Relations and IRBr. In the 1990s, a diplomat’s situation would only change after they went abroad, where they received a significant salary bonus, and attained an accelerated career progression.

The most significant changes to the admission exam and salaries were introduced during the presidencies of Lula da Silva (2003-2010). Invested in strengthening Brazil’s international position, Lula abolished oral examinations, tripled salaries, and approved 400 new posts in the diplomatic career during his term. This was a game-changer in Itamaraty, effectively diversifying its recruitment base. Admissions raised from approximately 25 per year to around 120 from 2006 to 2010. It is undeniable that this investment rendered the career more attractive: in 1994, there were less than 1000 applicants; the figure raised to 3000 in 2002, and almost 9000 in 2010. The higher competition, however, still favoured the upper classes.

Up to this date, the average preparation time still ranges around four years of studying, but some applicants study for more than a decade. Most of the approved applicants do not work during most of the preparation years, counting on previous savings or family support. Successful candidates rely on specialised preparation courses and private tutors, and it is not unusual to hear accounts of more than R\$50,000 spent in the process (almost US\$10,000, about fifty Brazilian minimum wages). The context becomes even more exclusive when living expenses are added. Until 2015, virtually all preparatory courses were based in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo or Brasília, expensive cities for Brazilian standards. After 2016, online courses became dominant, but the prices remained high.

Cheibub pointed out that, between 1913 and 1982, more than 50% of the diplomats were born in Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo, Brazil's wealthiest cities – a remarkable concentration. Given the high costs of preparatory courses, it is not surprising that little has changed after that: the figure remains roughly the same from 1982 to 2010 (Lima, 2015). Only after 2010, the geographic origin became more plural.<sup>17</sup>

The aristocratic bias has always been conjugated with evident race and gender biases. Despite being the most celebrated Brazilian diplomat, Baron of Rio Branco's racist recruitment practices were mentioned in 1957 by Gilberto Freyre – one of the country's most important sociologists:

About Baron of Rio Branco, it is known that, chosen by the Republic to be Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, he held this position cunningly attentive to aspects of the Brazilian representation abroad that his long residence in Europe had taught him to be of importance for the affirmation of prestige of a nation still young and information, among the old and fully mature. Among these aspects, the appearance of diplomats who, in his view, should be eugenic, tall, elegant, representing what the Brazilian 'race' information had already best; and his care for the appearance of Brazilian diplomats abroad led him to the Aryan excess of almost systematically including the Caucasic aspect of individuals among those eugenic virtues required by the candidates to represent Brazil abroad. (Freyre, 2013, p. 1020)

This fact was also mentioned by Thomas Skidmore, who, describing racial ideas and social policy in Brazil in Rio Branco's time, claims that '[a]s foreign minister he followed a "white only" policy in recruiting diplomats and in choosing special envoys for missions abroad.

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<sup>17</sup> This paragraph is the result of my personal experience as a candidate from 2010 to 2015, and my activity as personal tutor and professor in preparatory courses since 2014. Besides informal interviews with applicants and new diplomats, I also relied on information presented in the informal study guides written by newcomer IRBr students since 2015 (IRBr Class 2015-2017, 2016; IRBr Class 2016-2018, 2016; IRBr Class 2018-2020, 2019; IRBr Class 2020-2021, 2020).

He preferred the tall, handsome blond types' (Skidmore, 1990, p. 12). This bias towards race was not unusual in Brazil, a country that abolished slavery only in 1888 and that up until these days struggles with structural racism (S. Almeida, 2019). However, this policy had long-lasting effects in Itamaraty: in no other body of the public administration is the presence of black people so scarce until this day. In 1961, Raymundo Souza Dantas became the first Brazilian black ambassador, appointed personally by President Jânio Quadros to lead the Brazilian embassy to Ghana. Despite being a respected journalist and writer, Souza Dantas was not a career diplomat<sup>18</sup>, which led to sharp criticism from Itamaraty. According to Fábio Koifman, his biographer, this hostile reaction from the Ministry was not only due to the fact that he was an outsider but also to racism (Koifman, 2021). Until 1972, not a single black person succeeded in the admission exam. Despite representing more than half of the country's population, until 2003 black people were less than 1% of the Brazilian diplomats. The first career diplomat to become Minister of First Class – the highest rank in the MRE – was Benedicto Fonseca Filho, and only in 2010. In 2002, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso implemented a project to offer scholarships to black people. Albeit laudable, from the 354 people who received the grant, only 6% were approved in the admission exam. There are signs of change, though. In 2010, Foreign Minister Celso Amorim implemented a racial quota in the first phase of the recruitment process. In 2014, a national-wide 20% racial quota policy in public service admissions was approved by Law n. 12,990 on July 9; in the next year, it was applied to Itamaraty's recruitment process. Nevertheless, black diplomats still report racial prejudice inside Itamaraty, and in 2021, three-quarters of black candidates were disqualified by the aforementioned English exam. (Gobo, 2018; Lima, 2015; Oliveira, 2011; Rocha, 2021; Rosenbaum, 1968)

The inclusion of women has been a challenge to Itamaraty since the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1918, Maria de Castro Rabello Mendes became the first woman admitted to the Ministry of External Relations. In 1926, Mendes was followed by Wanda Vianna Rodrigues and Celina Porto Carrero and, two years later, by Zorayama de Almeida Rodrigues. The four women, however, were officials of the Secretary of State, hence not part of the diplomatic or consular services. When in 1931 the Mello Franco Reform terminated the position of Secretary official and implemented a rotation between working in the country and abroad, different rules were applied for male and female public servants: men could choose to be incorporated by the diplomatic or consular services, whereas women could only follow the consular path. In 1938, when the Oswaldo Aranha Reform merged the three careers, the 18

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<sup>18</sup> In Brazil, the head of an embassy is the only staff member who can be from outside the diplomatic career.

women working in Itamaraty were then reassigned to the unified diplomatic career. Nonetheless, the same reform prohibited women from taking part in the admission exam; a decision reversed only in 1952. Since then, despite being allowed to integrate Itamaraty's ranks, women have been, on average, less than 30% of the approved candidates. They still make up a mere 20% of Brazilian diplomats and are even more underrepresented in the highest ranks of the career, with persisting reports of gender discrimination in the Ministry. (Balbino, 2009, 2011; Brandão et al., 2017; Friaça, 2018; Gobo, 2018; Lima, 2015; Teixeira & Steiner, 2017; Tomas, 2020)

One final aspect of the recruitment process has yet to be studied: homophobia. According to Azambuja (2011), during the first decades of IRBr selection, the psychological evaluation of new diplomats had a hidden homophobic objective. One ambassador who was part of the examiners panel during that period was nicknamed 'fairy hunter'<sup>19</sup>, as another diplomat reports (Gobo, 2018). In 1969, five years after the military coup, the Foreign Minister Magalhães Pinto instituted a commission to investigate and punish 'inadequate behaviour' within Itamaraty. Seven diplomats were removed because of the practice of 'homosexuality' [sic] and ten others were subjected to further psychological evaluation (Carmo, 2018). Fortunately, new diplomats say that today's Itamaraty is much more welcoming to homosexuals, albeit no less heteronormative. Anecdotally, the informal study guide elaborated by the approved candidates in the 2016 admission exam shows that the favourite television show of almost one-fifth of them was RuPaul's Drag Race, a famous drag queen reality television show (IRBr Class 2016-2018, 2016).

The strong homogenising effect of the admission exam is complemented by training and socialisation. Despite not being uncommon since the mid-nineteenth century, the training of the diplomatic services was implemented in Brazil only in 1934 by Minister Felix de Barros Cavalcanti de Lacerda. Since its creation in 1945, the IRBr became Itamaraty's primary institution responsible for diplomats' instruction and development of skills. In the following year, the first regulation of IRBr created the Preparatory Course for the Diplomatic Career (CPCD) and Diplomats Improvement Course (CAD); in 1977, the Ministry instituted the High Studies Course (CAE). The CPCD is mandatory for everyone approved in the admission exams and has a duration of three to four semesters; CAD is a requirement for the promotion to First

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<sup>19</sup> The exact term was 'deer hunter'. 'Veado', which literally translates 'deer', is a pejorative term in Portuguese to call a homosexual man.



Secretary; CAE is a prerequisite to becoming Second Class Minister<sup>20</sup>. (Berridge, 2010; Castro, 1983; Gobo, 2019; Hocking, 1999b; Moura, 2007)

Despite changes in format since its creation, CPDP has had a primary role in socialising new diplomats. Working with diplomats' memoirs, Castilho (2021) shows that former students deem IRBr important not because it honed fundamental professional skills, but because it was a place for socialisation. According to Moura (2007), IRBr is the primary place where diplomats learn formality, hierarchy, diplomatic etiquette and even how to dress. In her participant observation carried out in 1998, she reports a general perception that the teaching in CPDP is not intellectually challenging at all, and the most difficult part was not the learning, but to fit in. New diplomats were expected to talk, act and dress in a 'diplomatic' way. In the last decade, many CPDP participants shared with me the same perception. At the beginning of my research, I thought it would be interesting to analyse the syllabus of Brazilian Foreign Policy and International Politics modules in CPDP, but I frequently heard from those who took the course that nobody reads them because they are too basic for someone who was approved in the recruitment process.

To summarise, the entrance barriers present in the admission process have rendered new diplomats remarkably homogenous in terms of social-economic background and, inextricably, in terms of race and gender. Furthermore, training plays a crucial socialising and homogenising role throughout the career. Hence, similar career progression patterns, as identified by Cheibub in 1984, are to be expected. Whether the progressive sophistication of Itamaraty's structure since the 1930s would indeed be evidence of increasing bureaucratisation, the same cannot be said of a similar promotion path.

### ***4.3 Autonomy, Cohesion and Politics***

The first lines of Cheibub's dissertation are 'This work is developed after my *perception* that the Ministry of Foreign Relations and diplomats as a professional group have played a progressively more important role in the formulation and conduction of Brazilian foreign policy' (Cheibub, 1984, p. 1, emphasis added). The idea of Itamaraty's pre-eminence and political power is a presupposition of the analysis, although it is not thoroughly investigated in the dissertation. Nevertheless, it has been widely reproduced ever since. As his argument goes,

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<sup>20</sup> The career progression in Itamaraty, from the lowest to highest rank, is: Third Secretary, Second Secretary, First Secretary, Counselor, Second Class Minister and First Class Minister.

Weberian bureaucratisation leads to institutionalisation, which, according to Huntington, would result in adaptability, complexity, autonomy, and cohesion. Of these four characteristics, autonomy and cohesion would be paramount to analyse Itamaraty. Each of them will be examined in turn.

According to Cheibub, increased autonomy of Itamaraty stems from the Ministry's professionalisation and ensuing greater political power – the first evidence of which being that the Ministry played a central role in formulating and directing foreign policy, especially after the 1964 coup.

These processes - bureaucratization and institutionalization – increase Itamaraty's political power when compared to other institutions of Brazilian foreign policy since no other has a similar degree of institutionalization, except for the Army. The idea that the processes mentioned above are capable of producing a strengthening of the political power of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diplomats is the central argument of this thesis. (Cheibub, 1984, p. 3)

In terms of official foreign policy discourse, Itamaraty had indeed become a necessary actor; a consequence of its modernisation after the 1930s. However, there were several interest groups that influenced the formulation and conduction of foreign policy: the military, Congress, other ministries, a myriad of interest groups, journalists and, of course, the presidency (Amorim Neto, 2011; Carmo, 2018; Loureiro et al., 2015; Pinheiro, 2013; Rodrigues, 1966). Itamaraty's role was to articulate those interests coherently, deriving from that the official discourse. As argued by Neumann (2007, 2012), in this mediating role, diplomats actively search consensus, tailor-making speeches to the audience – and the official foreign policy discourse is no exception. In that process, variation tends to be suppressed, which is why a change in diplomacy is not generated within the Ministry, but outside of it – usually promoted by politicians. It is no coincidence that the overwhelming majority of Brazilian Ministries of Foreign Affairs were politicians, not diplomats. The country's first Minister of Foreign Affairs was José Bonifácio, not a diplomat, but a statesman and a central figure in the country's independence process. From the independence in 1822 until 1902, only career politicians occupied the position of Secretary/Minister of Foreign Affairs until Baron of Rio Branco took office, in 1902. From 1912, when Rio Branco died, until 1963, the only other career diplomat who occupied the position of Minister of External Relations was Domício da Gama, from 1918 to 1919.

When the Independent Foreign Policy (1961-1964) promoted a remarkable change in Brazilian Foreign Policy (Bueno & Cervo, 2002; Visentini, 2013), many diplomats kept their

distance from those initiatives (Rosenbaum, 1968). During that period, of the five foreign ministers, only the last one – Araujo Castro – was a career diplomat. When, on March 13, 1964, just a few days before the military coup, President João Goulart organised a massive rally to promote his purportedly ‘radical’ economic reforms programme, Araujo Castro was the only minister absent (Batista, 2010). Despite the few political removals in Itamaraty after the 1964 coup, one should not ignore the exemplary potential of the action, the threat it poses (Carmo, 2018). Furthermore, diplomats actively contributed to the military regime by gathering intelligence to help political persecution via Foreign Information Centre (CIEEx) and by running an international propaganda campaign to legitimise the regime and downplay human rights violations (Almeida, 2008; Carmo, 2018; Castilho, 2014, 2021; Penna Filho, 2009; Setemy, 2014; Simon, 2021). Diplomats were invited to play a more active role by the military, and Itamaraty’s liberty of action was curbed by the presidency – an idea expressed by Clovis Brigadão, another analyst of early-day Brazilian foreign policy. The title to his article (1978) article explicits the central thought: ‘Brazil’s Foreign Policy: The Military Command, Itamaraty Embellishes, Multinationals Gain’. This does not mean that every diplomat was a supporter of the regime, but it evinces that, below the surface, the Ministry is not that cohesive.

Another consequence of bureaucratisation would be Itamaraty’s cohesion. According to Neumann, ‘[i]nasmuch as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs consists of units that mediate relationships to widely different worlds, there is a pressing need for it sometimes to speak in one voice’ (Neumann, 2007, p. 183), and the Brazilian Ministry of External Relations is no exception. However, if we scratch the surface, we identify several schisms amongst diplomats. One example, as mentioned above, is the engagement of some in supporting the military regime. Castilho (2021) argues that the pro-regime group, of which Pio Corrêa is the most notorious member, is part of an anti-communist lineage in Itamaraty that dates back to the 1930s. In technical and professional terms, we can also mention the generalists vs specialists dispute: those who believe that diplomats should be generalists against those who deem necessary to have diplomats specialised in topics such as trade or law. In political terms, diplomats split between those in favour and against the Independent Foreign Policy (1961-1964), President Collor’s alignment to the USA (1990-1992) or Lula’s active foreign policy (2003-2010). Given the Ministry’s need for apparent cohesion, public displays of such internal divisions are rare and usually expressed by retired diplomats. (Almeida, 2014; Batista, 2010; Casarões, 2012; Cheibub, 1984, 1985; Rodrigues, 1966; Rosenbaum, 1968)

We now turn to the consequences of the autonomy-cohesion combo. The first one would be administrative impunity. Unfortunately, little could be said to counter-argue that, even today. Recent cases of moral and sexual harassment resulted in mild sanctions to the perpetrators, who were only temporarily suspended or required to sign a Conduct Adjustment Agreement (Agência Efe, 2014; Amado, 2021; Basso & Mundim, 2013). In November 2021, an investigation found that Fábio Guimarães Franco, Brazilian Ambassador to Guiné-Bissau, had given his wife, Shirley Franco, an office at the embassy and that she was acting as if she was an official representative. Furthermore, she was accused of racism against the embassy staff. He was called back to Brazil and signed a conduct adjustment term, but there was no other sanction.

The second consequence is to treat Itamaraty as the central actor in Brazilian foreign policy – endowed with particular interests and ideology. The third, closely connected to the previous one, is the obtention of nearly-exclusive prerogatives in decision and policy making. Nevertheless, until that moment, the few analyses of Itamaraty highlighted, apart from its cohesion, its conservatism, elitism and even irrelevance in some cases. In his 1966 pioneering study about Brazilian foreign policy, José Honório Rodrigues argues that diplomacy had been a monopoly of a hereditary cast, divorced from the country's reality, but committed to the interests of the slave-owning class (until 1888) and of landowners and coffee producers. According to him, foreign policy was simply another facet of internal politics, and it would be no coincidence that almost every Brazilian Foreign Ministers until 1964 were politicians – Rio Branco being a noteworthy exception. Rodrigues summarises his trenchant critique:

Brazilian foreign policy is a clear reflection of its entire history. It presents the same picture of constant fluctuations, advances and retreats of internal history. Dominated by an oligarchy that primarily profits from it regardless of the nation, and directed by an alienated elite, the foreign policy has had – like all our history – a few moments of autonomous and free creation and leaders who knew how to firmly defend the interests of the country. (Rodrigues, 1966, p. 180)

A few years later, Clovis Brigadão would argue that Itamaraty's role during the military regime established in 1964 was to embellish a foreign policy commanded by the military to the advantage of multinational companies. Furthermore, he criticises Itamaraty's secrecy and authoritarianism:

Itamaraty is a very conservative institution, both in its internal structure and its management of foreign affairs. Its interests, style and world view are

shaped and determined by 'elitist' oriented values and serve to embellish the country's international image. (Brigadão, 1978, p. 2)

Finally, the fourth consequence of the Ministry's autonomy and cohesion would be stability continuity in Brazilian foreign policy – of which the only sustaining argument relied in the Castelo Branco government (1964-1967) as rare example of rupture. Nevertheless, this argument goes against contemporary scholarship for two reasons. First because, in 1984, the consensus was that ruptures were not unusual. To Bradford Burns, for instance, the Independent Foreign Policy implemented during Jânio Quadros (1961) and João Goulart (1961-1964) administrations would have altered Brazilian international path by giving space to nationalism and steering away from diplomacy's traditional path (Burns, 1967). Honório Rodrigues argues that:

The moments of success are not only rare, but they are also especially discontinuous and irregular, because delay and stagnation dominate the leadership. Hence, the internal and external inconsistencies, the anachronistic decisions and the consequent monotony of large historical periods that are repeated without ceasing, as a farce, by the continued resistance to the change that the oligarchy imposes on the historical process. (Rodrigues, 1966, pp. 180–181)

Cheibub's work, despite remarkable and pioneering, is not definitive. Even though he presented invaluable insights to the study of Brazilian foreign policy and Itamaraty, there are some inconsistencies and blind spots in his approach. His assumptions and conclusions have been challenged in many academic pieces, albeit fragmentedly and never as systematically. However, he is still regarded as a necessary reference and used as an authority argument to claim that Itamaraty is autonomous or insulated. The next chapters will investigate how his work attain discursive stability, reaching a status of self-evident truth. My argument is that the foundational myth of Brazilian International Relations constitutes diplomats as authoritative subjects, who introduced in academia some organisational myths about Itamaraty.

## 5. The Foundational Myth of Brazilian International Relations

*'To label something as myth  
is to assume the stance of critic, the nonbeliever for  
whom the myth no longer resolves contradictory principles.'*  
Dvora Yanow

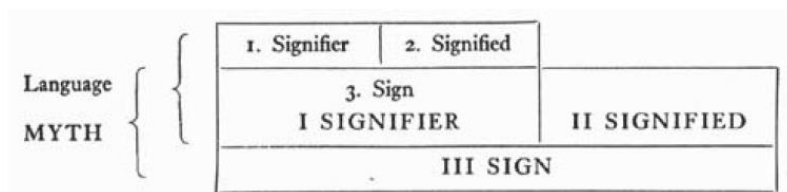
The last chapters show that Cheibub's thesis attained the status of self-evident truth despite its inconsistencies. In this chapter, I take the first steps in investigating how the purported autonomy, professionalism, and centrality of Itamaraty became naturalised in Brazilian foreign policy studies. I argue that the foundational myth of Brazilian IR places diplomats in a privileged position in Brazilian academia. This section follows a 'mythographical approach', that is, it employs the concept of myth to investigate why specific socio-political conditions prevail and why some narratives are dominant even despite existing evidence against them (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2016). Myth here is not understood here as something unreal or untruth though; instead, it has a discursive acceptance.

### 5.1 Defining Myth

In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes (1972) defines myths as specific kinds of speech characterised not by their content but by their form. Consequently, anything can become a myth so long as it is a discourse. Nevertheless, to fully grasp what Barthes means, we need to understand the basics of Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist linguistics.

According to Saussure, a linguistic sign is 'not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image' (Saussure, 2011, p. 66). The concept is what he calls 'signified', and the sound-image, the 'signifier'. The linguistic sign 'book', for instance, is composed of both the concept 'book' (the dictionary definition of what a book is) and the 'sound-image' which generates in our minds an image of a book. Barthes builds on semiology's insights to claim that the myth is a 'second-order semiological system' (Barthes, 1972, p.113), that is, a complete linguistic sign to which another signified is attached. The graphic representation of his theory would be the following:

Figure I: Myth as second-order semiological system



Source: Barthes, 1972, p. 113.

The idea of autonomy in Brazilian foreign policy analysis serves here to illustrate his point. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, we can define autonomy as ‘[t]he condition or right of a state, institution, group, etc., to make its own laws or rules and administer its own affairs; self-government, independence’ (OED Online, 2021) However, in Brazilian IR, the term – autonomy – came to signify the timeless ‘diplomatic expression of [Brazilian] difference’ (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 361) in the international system, de-historicising it. Autonomy becomes nothing but a form to which an idea about Brazil’s international behaviour is attached. Consequently, as noted by Lima and Pinheiro, autonomy encompasses ‘adaptation to changes in the international scene, of bandwagoning with the dominant power, and of acquiescence to the global normative status quo end up being perceived as autonomous’ (Pinheiro & Lima, 2018, p. 12). The original linguistic sign – in this case ‘autonomy’ – must be stripped from its original definition, becoming an ‘empty abstraction’ or simply a linguistic ‘form’ to which another concept – the diplomatic expression of difference – is attached. Autonomy becomes a myth and can be then defined regardless of the original concept.

To Barthes, the way to decipher a myth is to restore its history as a concept, and to re-politicise it, in order to evidence the theft of meaning which characterises it – something similar to what Lima and Pinheiro (2018) do in their article *Between autonomy and dependency*. Barthes argues, therefore, that the myth ‘transforms history into nature’ (Barthes, 1972, p. 128) the same way bourgeois ideology does. Hence, the myth is intrinsically conservative, a force against social revolution. The author therefore advocates for bringing back history to the equation, recovering the original meaning that the myth has stolen.

After Bather’s pioneering intake on the semiology of the myth, other authors have devoted themselves to understanding how it is socially constructed and reproduced. In his seminal work, Lincoln (1989) criticises Barthes’ idea that myth hides some true meaning of a concept the same way bourgeois ideology does. According to him, the Barthesian opposition

myth/truth follows Marx's proletariat/bourgeoisie. Myth-making would be similar to alienation, an instrument in the hand of conservative forces but incompatible with the proletariat revolutionary drive. Lincoln then advances a narrative definition of myth as 'a small class of stories that possess both credibility and authority' (Lincoln, 1989, p. 24). According to him, authority is precisely what differentiates history from myth: while the former can embrace different interpretations, the latter is a narrative that claims the status of 'paradigmatic truth' rejecting and repelling competing narratives. Nevertheless, when he asserts the instrumentality of the past and its manipulation by some groups, he derives authority – hence myth – from power, attributing to the latter ontological precedence. Lincoln draws a clear line between discourse and power, overlooking their co-constitutive relation.

Advancing the narrative conception, but focusing on organisations, Dvora Yanow defines myth as 'a narrative created and believed by a group of people that diverts attention from a puzzling part of their reality' (Yanow, 1992, p. 401). This definition of myth also implies meaning (re)creation but advances a more dynamic approach in the form of a narrative. According to her, a myth has four characteristics. The first one is a narrative form. Myths are not logical propositions or rhetorical arguments but take the form of matter-of-fact statements or naturalised history. Second, they are socially constructed and contextually bound. This does not mean that they are intentional or conscious formulations, but they are collective, usually shared by a group or a community. Third, they are believed to be a self-evident truth, and therefore, hardly questioned or investigated. Finally, myths emerge when there are incompatible values or principles within a determined group or community – what Yanow calls 'incommensurability'. Myths can mask or divert attention from conflicting values or objectives by naturalising narratives, consequently blocking further investigation or questioning. The conjunction of those four characteristics makes it difficult to perceive or to disprove a myth. The naturalisation of the narrative results in the myth taken for granted, and the fact that it masks conflicting principles or objectives causes their believers to protect them.

For example, Yanow's contribution inspires Berit Blieseemann de Guevara's analysis of the International Crisis Group (ICG)<sup>21</sup> myths. The author identifies three central tensions between incommensurable values and beliefs in the organisation. The first one is between two different logics that guide ICS's research, producing two different kinds of knowledge: problem-driven and success-oriented. While the former privileges analytical precision, the

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<sup>21</sup> ICG is influential a non-governmental organisation founded in London in 1995 and dedicated 'to prevent wars and shape policies that will build a more peaceful world' (International Crisis Group, 2016).



latter focuses on being well received by policymakers. Second, ICG's claim to moral authority and correctness contrasts with the intrinsically complex and unstable contexts of armed conflicts. Finally, ICG's claim to neutrality is in tension with the organisation's political entanglements through its staff networks and accountability to funders. To conciliate these tensions, four mythical narratives are advanced by the organisation. The 'field facts myth' asserts that the knowledge produced by the organisation is authoritative because it is derived from 'being in the field', even if there is little information about actual methodological procedures. The 'myth of flexible pragmatism' derives ICGs integrity from its moral stance against any kind of violence: forestalling violence justifies their behaviour and calls them for action as a moral imperative. The 'myth of uniqueness' checks comparisons with other organisations, which would reveal that many of the ICG's policy recommendations are not original but conform with traditional liberal internationalism. Finally, the 'neutrality/independence myth' erases the ICG's political connections (Bliesemann de Guevara, 2014).

Sybille Münch (2016) argues that, besides masking tensions, myths can play complementary roles. First, they are potent tools that exclude competitive or alternative interpretations of events. In the ICS example, the myth of neutrality checks investigation on the political entanglements of the organisation as a possible competing explanation for its success. Second, myths are discursive solutions to puzzling situations. This different form of rationality can stabilise confusing or precarious situations. The myth of Brazilian racial democracy (Freyre, 2006), for example, masks the terrible conditions in which Brazilian enslaved people lived (Nascimento, 2016). Third, myths are powerful, timeless validation instruments, naturalising, and universalising narratives. In the first letter describing Brazil, written in 1500, Pero Vaz de Caminha stated that 'country is so well-favoured that it would yield everything' if cultivated. This myth of Brazilian fertility has helped to naturalise the idea that Brazilians lack initiative; they would passively wait for country and government to give them what they need but not fight for their rights (Chauí, 2007; Holanda, 2000). It should be easy to see how myths can animate action (or inaction in that case), since they are not simply descriptive, but also prescriptive.

It must be clear by now that the notion of myth as here put forward rejects the idea that social identities are fixed and pre-formulated, and actors consciously create myths to justify their actions. On the contrary, identities and actors are constituted by discourses, in accordance with Foucault-influenced poststructuralist discourse analysis. Furthermore, myths can take

many narrative forms (Münch, 2016). *Individual* myths value the actions of a single person as being the engine that advances the narrative and the thread that hold it together – for instance, how Bismarck’s genius created modern Germany. *Event*-related myths stresses specific events or incidents as the corner stone of the narrative – much like all Independence Day celebrations. *Spatial* myths rely not only in places, but in drawing boundaries between people – perhaps ‘The West’ in the most emblematic one. Finally, *temporal* myths divide time in eras, such as ‘the Cold War’, and derive from this the prominent features of the period. Still according to Münch, these categories are not separated, but usually overlap and work together to complement and reinforce each other.

Among these narratives, foundational myths are especially relevant because of their strong capacity to structure social relations and constitute subjects. Taking the field of IR for example, de Carvalho, Leira and Hobson (2011) see the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and the birth of IR as an institutionalised area of study in 1919 as powerful myths that draw the ontological and epistemological boundaries of the discipline. The year of 1648 is pointed as the birthdate of the sovereign state and the anarchic international system, consequently being the moment in which the object of study of IR came to existence. The 1919 myth has three interconnected elements: IR as a discipline was born in 1919 in Aberystwyth; its main drive was to prevent another great war from emerging; this “idealist” drive, however, ultimately did not prevent another war, which confirms that realism won the First Debate. It defines the boundaries of the discipline and claim that it evolves by means of great debates. Even though several studies question this narrative and highlight the racist, western-centric and imperial foundations of the discipline, those myths are still widespread and powerful (Acharya & Buzan, 2019; Bartelson, 1995; Behera, 2021; Davis et al., 2020; Long & Schmidt, 2005; Schmidt, 1998; Thakur et al., 2017; Vitalis, 2017). Not coincidentally, the starting point of this investigation of the myths that surround Itamaraty will be the foundational myth of Brazilian International Relations.

## **5.2 Foundational Myth**

When it comes to Brazilian IR, the foundational myth of the discipline is much more recent when compared to the Aberystwyth narrative, and it is deeply intertwined with Itamaraty. International Relations as an autonomous academic field is relatively new in Brazil. However, the foundational narrative operates by circumscribing what counts as knowledge about international relations, functioning as a gatekeeper of Brazilian IR. As an epistemological myth,

it defines what matters as IR and determines who the legitimate voices in the field are. According to Long and Schmidt, ‘Disciplinary history is rarely a neutral or impartial undertaking. Rather, it is often closely tied to intellectual struggles to determine and legitimate the contemporary identity of the field’ (Long & Schmidt, 2005, p. 5). To delineate academic disciplines is one of the procedures identified by Foucault for the control of discourses, setting the rules to establish the validity of propositions:

[...] a discipline is defined by a domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true, a play of rules and definitions, of techniques and instruments: all this constitutes a sort of anonymous system at the disposal of anyone who wants to or is able to use it, without their meaning or validity being linked to the one who happened to be their inventor. [...] in a discipline, unlike a commentary, what is supposed at the outset is not a meaning which has to be rediscovered, nor an identity which has to be repeated, but the requisites for the construction of new statements. For there to be a discipline, there must be the possibility of formulating new propositions, *ad infinitum*. (Foucault, 1981, p. 59)

The foundational myth of Brazilian International Relations equates the birth of Brazilian IR to the creation of the first IR bachelor’s degree programme in 1974, at the University of Brasília (Lessa, 2005b, 2006b; Lopes et al., 2022; Miyamoto, 1999; Santos & Fonseca, 2009). This comparatively late development of the field is attributed to several conditions. First, IR was deemed the ‘American Social Science’; it was associated with US imperialism, which contrasted sharply with Latin America’s quest for a higher degree of independence from the US during the Cold War (Hoffmann, 1977; Tickner, 2002; Villa & Pimenta, 2017). Tickner (2009) argues that the IR theories available during the 1960s and 1970s – realism and interdependence – were perceived as inadequate to deal with Latin American problems at that time. They would only reproduce the US perception of the international system and contribute little to coping with what was perceived as Latin America’s major challenge: to overcome economic dependency. Second, Schwartzman argues that interest in IR tends to be more accentuated in countries that occupy a prominent role in the international system, which was not the case in Brazil back then (Schwartzman, 1977). Third, until the 1970s, virtually no one was able to develop consistent analysis about Brazilian foreign policy, let alone about the international system in Brazilian universities (Miyamoto, 1999).

However, the Brazilian state could not prescind knowledge about the international system. The country had to acquire information to protect its interests and achieve its objectives in the global scenario. According to this narrative, since there was no academic interest or expertise in IR up to that moment, Brazil could only rely on its diplomatic service to analyse

Brazilian foreign policy and the global arena. Diplomats have played a crucial role: they were the only group with the necessary expertise, means, knowledge and drive to produce knowledge about international relations, relations. Moreover, this role allegedly followed a well-established intellectual lineage, which dates to the nineteenth century and has in the ‘historian diplomat’ its archetypical figure.

José Maria da Silva Paranhos Jr, the Baron of Rio Branco, is regarded as the most emblematic name amongst those ‘historian diplomats’. Rio Branco was Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1902 to 1912. He was the son of José Maria da Silva Paranhos, Viscount of Rio Branco, who was Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs on three occasions (1856-7, 1858-9, 1868-70) and Brazilian Prime Minister from 1871 to 1875. Paranhos Jr is not only named as the ‘founding father’ of Brazilian diplomacy but also as an intellectual whose voracious appetite for research has resulted in diplomatic victories that helped drawing the country’s borders peacefully (Almeida, 1996; Lessa, 2012b). It is no coincidence that the institute responsible for the training and socialisation of Brazilian diplomats bears Rio Branco’s name. Besides Paranhos Jr, names such as Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro, Varnhagen, Joaquim Nabuco, Oliveira Lima and Pandiá Calógeras<sup>22</sup> show the ‘osmosis between the academic research activity in History and applied policy in diplomacy’ (Almeida, 2006, p.45).

The *Instituto Rio Branco* (IRBr)<sup>23</sup> was created in 1945 – the centenary of Paranhos Jr’s birth<sup>24</sup>. IRBr is responsible for the selection, training, and specialisation of Brazilian diplomats. Furthermore, it promotes conferences and courses to spread knowledge about national and international issues and systematises data and documents valuable for political and diplomatic history research. In 1975, the Federal Council of Education recognised IRBr’s training course for the diplomatic career as a high education course and granted IRBr the status of high education establishment (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2021). In 1987, Gelson Fonseca Jr. – a Brazilian diplomat widely recognised for his intellectual work – argued that IRBr was the most relevant centre for the production of knowledge in IR in Brazil, commending the fact the academic research had kept with the priorities established set by the MRE in foreign policy (Fonseca Jr, 1987).

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<sup>22</sup> Duarte da Ponte Ribeiro (1795-1878), Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen (1816-1878), Joaquim Nabuco (1849-1910), Manuel de Oliveira Lima (1867-1928) and João Pandiá Calógeras (1870-1934) were Brazilian diplomats (or politicians who served as diplomats) who are recognized for their intellectual work.

<sup>23</sup> *Rio Branco Institute*.

<sup>24</sup> Decree Law n. 7,473 on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 1945.

As the myth follows, it was only natural that the first IR Bachelor's Degree would be created in 1974 in Brasilia – the same city that hosts the MRE and IRBr. The course was convened in a public institution, the University of Brasília (UnB), in close cooperation with Itamaraty. The birth of this academic discipline in the country responded to a governmental demand: since Brazil was starting to play a more prominent role in the international arena, it needed qualified public servants to help navigate global politics (Lessa, 2005a). According to Lessa (2006b), the multidisciplinary course was designed to provide the graduate with strong analytical skills. Learning foreign languages and developing a culturally rich and cosmopolitan perspective should complement the base curriculum. Since it was challenging to find academics prepared to analyse the international arena and Brazilian foreign policy, no less than five of the initial twelve professors were career diplomats (Julião, 2012; Miyamoto, 2003).

This close link between academic IR and Itamaraty would eventually create what Antônio Lessa called the Brazilian Tradition of International Relations. This tradition would give Brazilian IR a unique character, concerned with national problems and challenges and deeply reliant upon diplomatic thought and history (Lessa, 2006). Hence, Paulo Roberto de Almeida, a diplomat with close ties to the academic field, argued that there would be a 'benign dictatorship' of IR history – equated with diplomatic history – in Brazilian IR (Almeida, 1993). In that narrative, there have been three privileged themes in the Brazilian Tradition of IR. The first is to investigate explanatory variables in the formulation of Brazilian foreign policy, paying particular attention to Itamaraty as its leading architect. The second theme is rupture and continuity, investigating turning points in Brazilian foreign policy but reinforcing the stabilising role of the Foreign Ministry. Finally, the third is universalism as a critical feature of the country's diplomacy. It must be clear that the MRE plays a crucial role in each of those themes. Even after the sharp increase of IR courses in Brazil in the 2000s, this historical/diplomatic tradition is still associated with UnB and Brazilian IR in general (Alejandro, 2018; Cervo, 2003, 2008; Fonseca Jr. & Uziel, 2019; Herz, 2002; Miyamoto, 1999, 2003).

If diplomatic history has purportedly played a crucial role in Brazilian IR, the same was never said about IR theory. Herz (2002) argue that until the 1990s, history of Brazilian foreign policy and policy prescription were dominant in the field. It was not until the turning of the century that the discipline's theoretical and epistemological debates gained traction in North America and Europe. Amado Cervo, one of Brazil's most influential IR scholars and professor at UnB, has come to the point of opposing the teaching of IR theories altogether, arguing that they are not valuable because they had been formulated by the dominant powers according to

their interests and world views. Brazilian political and diplomatic thought should instead look up to political leaders and statesmen, especially diplomats, and focus on autochthonous concepts and not imported theories (Cervo, 2003).

To summarise, according to the foundational myth, before the birth of academic IR in Brazil, diplomats, encouraged by Itamaraty, were the main producers of knowledge about Brazilian foreign policy. Not only there no other academics with the necessary expertise, but also the members of the foreign Ministry followed a well-established tradition of intellectual diplomats. Even after the creation of the first IR course in 1974, pieces written by diplomats remained influential, and the main concern of the academic discipline was history. Hence, Itamaraty is perceived as being in the origin Brazilian IR, and the academic discipline is deeply indebted to the intellectual contribution of diplomats. The production of those ‘diplomats as intellectuals’<sup>25</sup> is widespread in Brazilian academia. The rules for knowledge production in Brazilian IR are thus established, by tracing the borders of the discipline, legitimising diplomats as author and repeating their arguments – respectively, Foucauldian procedures of ‘discipline’, ‘author’ and ‘commentary’ for discursive control (Foucault, 1981).

### ***5.3 Diplomats in Brazilian Academia***

Analysts – both diplomatic and academic – point out that the Rio Branco Institute (IRBr) has been actively fostering the interaction between diplomats and Brazilian IR (Fonseca Jr., 2011b, 2011a; Milani, 2021; Moura, 2006; Pinheiro & Vedoveli, 2012; Vedoveli, 2010). Even with the increasing diffusion of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in International Relations in Brazil from the 1970s and 1980s, and the expansion of the training of specialised academic staff, the intellectual production of diplomats remained very expressive and influential in the area. Recent studies show that the intellectual output of diplomats has been widely used by scholars as research sources or recommended in university courses’ syllabi (Moreli & Tomas, 2021; Pinheiro & Vedoveli, 2012). Breda (2005, p. 24) identify an ‘academisation’ of studies conducted by diplomats. According to Pinheiro and Vedoveli:

due to the symbiosis that marks the existence of these two communities specialised in Brazilian foreign policy themes – academic and diplomatic –, the first seems, in its origins, not to have problematised the intersection that the second undoubtedly has with diplomatic practice per se and, in this way,

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<sup>25</sup> ‘Diplomats as intellectuals’ is a term coined by Pinheiro and Vedoveli (2012) to designate those diplomats who are known for their intellectual work without ignoring their institutional affiliation and the distinct *ethos* that derives from their socialization as diplomats.

did not consider (or did so insufficiently) its possible effects (Pinheiro & Vedoveli, 2012, p. 18)

It is not unusual that pieces written by former Ministries of External Relations are frequently read not only as primary sources but also as actual foreign policy analysis. Remarkable examples are San Tiago Dantas (Goulart administration, September 1961 to July 1962); José de Araújo Castro (Goulart administration, August 1963 to March 1964); Azeredo da Silveira (Geisel administration, March 1974 to March 1979); and Ramiro Saraiva Guerreiro (Figueiredo administration, March 1979 to March 1985).<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, investigating Brazilian IR academic publications better demonstrates how intertwined is knowledge produced by diplomats and academics.

In 1954, Itamaraty fostered the creation of the *Brazilian Institute of International Relations* (IBRI), the first association dedicated to studying Brazilian international relations. Although it was not an official institution of the Ministry, it was conceived within the walls of its headquarters – Itamaraty Palace in Rio de Janeiro. Its aim was to carry on, promote and support studies about international issues, especially those relevant to Brazil. Albeit congregating members from varied backgrounds, diplomats have played a prominent role amongst its members since the institute inception. (Almeida, 2004). In 1958, IBRI launched the first journal dedicated to international relations and foreign policy, the *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* (RBPI).<sup>27</sup> The publication, which is until this day the most influential Brazilian IR journal, has traditionally published pieces written by diplomats. Additionally, from its creation until 1992, one could find in its pages articles, policy-oriented analyses, and official diplomatic documents. For that reason, Almeida argues that ‘RBPI plays a crucial role in the political and academic culture [...]. Hence, it constitutes a privileged “living memory” about Brazilian foreign policy and an indispensable source for all academic research about international relations [...]’ (Almeida, 2004, p. 225). In 1993, IBRI was incorporated to the University of Brasilia, which then became also responsible for RBPI (University of Brasilia, 2021). According to Pinheiro and Vedoveli (2012), diplomats signed almost one in five articles published in RBPI between 1958 and 2010.

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<sup>26</sup> Some of their most important works are *Política Externa Independente* (Dantas, 1962); *Discurso dos Três Ds* (J. A. de A. Castro, 1963) e *Fundamentos da paz internacional* (J. A. de A. Castro, 1970); *O Brasil e a nova ordem mundial* (Silveira, 1970); e *Organismos internacionais – conceitos e funcionamento* (Guerreiro, 1974).

<sup>27</sup> *Brazilian Journal of International Relations*.

Another example is the journal *Política Externa*<sup>28</sup>, published between 1992 and 2015. The publication was idealised in 1992 by Celso Lafer (acting Foreign Minister), Fernando Gasparian (politician and editor) and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (academic and politician who would be Brazil's President from 1995 to 2002). The founders of the journal sought to take advantage of the interest in international issues raised by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio-92), which would take place in Rio de Janeiro, to launch a publication that would present analysis of Brazilian foreign policy and international policy (*Política Externa*, 2017b). Over time, the journal became a *locus* of recognised excellence for diplomats and foreign policy analysts to present their texts, in a similar way to the case of foreign affairs magazine in the United States (Council on Foreign Relations, 2006). The editorial board of *Política Externa* was composed of renowned academics (Boris Fausto, Jorge Caldeira, Maria Hermínia Tavares de Almeida and Pedro Dallari), and of diplomats (Gelson Fonseca Jr., Luis Felipe Lampreia, Marcos Castrioto de Azambuja, Rubens Ricupero) as well as political and intellectual figures strongly linked to the conduction of Brazilian diplomacy (Celso Lafer, Hélio Jaguaribe and Marco Aurélio Garcia)<sup>29</sup> (*Política Externa*, 2017a).

Indeed, the journal is not strictly academic: since its conception, foreign policy has housed *policy-oriented texts*. However, precisely because of its hybrid character, with texts from both academics and diplomats, the journal is a clear example of the intricate relationship between diplomacy and academia. A survey of authors in all editions, from the journal's launch in 1992 to its not-yet revoked temporary suspension in 2015, resulted in 206 articles and reviews published by diplomats.

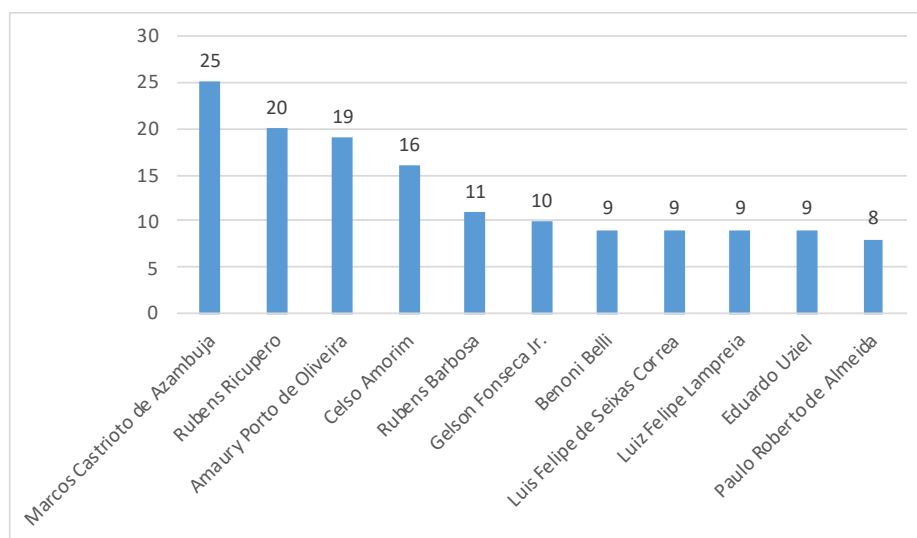
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<sup>28</sup> *Foreign Policy*.

<sup>29</sup> Celso Lafer was Foreign Minister from 1991 to 1992; Hélio Jaguaribe was an intellectual known for his work on international autonomy; Marco Aurélio Garcia served as foreign policy advisor to President Lula.



Figure 2 – Diplomats who most published in the journal *Política Externa*.



Source: elaborated by the author, with data collected from the editions of *Política Externa*.

The final example is the journal *Contexto Internacional*<sup>30</sup> – Brazil’s second most relevant journal specialised in IR according to CAPES Foundation, the government agency responsible for evaluating the country’s graduate programmes. Differently from RBPI and *Política Externa*, *Contexto Internacional* has had an exclusive academic focus since its creation in 1985. Nevertheless, until 2010, 7,4% of its articles were authored by diplomats – less significant than RBPI but still noteworthy (Pinheiro & Vedoveli, 2012).

When we analyse some of the most relevant academic books about Brazilian foreign policy, we can observe the same phenomenon. The texts written by diplomats are frequently placed side by side with those elaborated by academics as if they were pieces of the same nature. For instance, one of the most cited works on Brazilian foreign policy: the book *Sessenta anos de Política Externa Brasileira (1930-1990)*<sup>31</sup>, published in 1991, juxtaposes texts written by academics (Gerson Moura, Monica Hirst, Paulo Fagundes Visentini) with those written by diplomats (Gelson Fonseca Jr, Luiz Felipe de Seixas Corrêa and Rubens Ricupero) (Albuquerque et al., 2006). More recently, in the collection *História do Brasil Nação*<sup>32</sup>, edited by the historian and anthropologist Lilia Schwarcz, Rubens Ricupero authors a chapter on foreign policy (Ricupero, 2011).

<sup>30</sup> *International Context*.

<sup>31</sup> *Sixty Years of Brazilian Foreign Policy (1930-1960)*.

<sup>32</sup> *History of the Brazil-Nation*.

One of the main consequences of this equal treatment is the recurrence of the adoption of analyses and concepts elaborated by diplomats in academic texts – often without problematisation of the different means of knowledge production in academia and diplomacy (Vargas, 2009). This feature is particularly noticeable in referential works on Brazilian foreign policy. Two examples could be mentioned.

The first is the idea that Brazilian foreign policy has been characterised historically by continuity, which is closely related to the image of the Baron of Rio Branco as the ‘founding father’ of Brazilian diplomacy (Fonseca Jr, 2011c; Hirst, 2009). This argument is recurrently used, for example, in the analysis of Clodoaldo Bueno and Amado Cervo that the Castelo Branco administration (1964-1967) was a ‘step out of cadence’, that is, a rupture in the continuity that characterises the country’s foreign policy (Bueno & Cervo, 2002, p. 368). Paulo Fagundes Visentini (2013) argues that there have been only three major periods in the conduct of Brazilian diplomacy since the XVI century – ‘Portuguese colonisation and English hegemony’ (1494-1902), ‘American hegemony’ (1902-1960) and ‘Multilaterality’ (since 1960). The argument of continuity can also be identified in a piece by Monica Hirst (2009) about the great moments of the relationship between Brazil and the United States – ‘alliance’ (1989-1930), ‘alignment’ (1930-1974), ‘autonomy’ (1974-1989), ‘adjustment’ (1989-2002) and ‘affirmation’ (since 2003). Another example is the idea of overarching ‘paradigms’ of Brazilian diplomacy, an argument observed in the work of several analysts who identify coherence in Brazil’s diplomatic activity since at least the 1930s, driven by the search for development – the so-called ‘developmentalist paradigm’ (Bueno & Cervo, 2002; Hirst & Pinheiro, 1995; Lima, 1994; Milani et al., 2017).

The second example is the employment of the concept of ‘autonomy’ – used repeatedly by the diplomat Gelson Fonseca Jr. (2005) as an explanation of Brazil’s actions in the international system. Fonseca Jr. argues that the launch of the Independent Foreign Policy in the 1960s marked the beginning of a period in Brazilian foreign policy characterised by the pursuit of ‘autonomy by distance’, that is, by a systematic effort to keep distance from the bipolar conflict of the Cold War as a means to expand the possibility of conducting foreign policy in an autonomous way, especially in the face of US pressure. With the end of the Cold War, the notion of ‘distance’ had to be reassessed, demanding a change of strategy by the Brazilian government in the international system. The adaptation to the new context would require a different type of autonomy: instead of ‘autonomy by distance’, the focus then had to be on an ‘autonomy by participation’, which corresponds to an effort by Brasília to expand the

country's participation in international forums to influence the restructuring of the international order.

Inspired by Gelson Fonseca Jr., academics such as Gabriel Cepaluni, Marcelo Oliveira, Rodrigo Cintra, and Tullo Vigevani have recurrently used the same narrative of 'autonomy', arguing that both the Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995-2003) and the Lula da Silva administrations (2003-2010) employed the same logic to Brazilian foreign policy. Despite adjusting their policies to contemporary constraints and the transformations through which the international order underwent in the 1990s and 2000s, both Presidents also oriented their external actions by a quest for autonomy – the so-called 'autonomy by integration' and 'by diversification' respectively (Vigevani, Oliveira, and Cintra 2003; Vigevani and Cepaluni 2007).

Another consequence of overlooking the distinct social place from which diplomats talk is frequently taking their words to be true in the academic investigation. That does not mean that diplomats are untrustworthy, but what they say should be questioned and contrasted to what other sources show. This problem has been identified by Santos and Uziel, who argue that 'the tendency is for the studies on the history of Brazilian foreign policy to take the official discourse on foreign policy not only as a mould or a guide but also as an adequate reflection of its underlying reality, instrumentalising its labels as elements of analysis' (Uziel & Santos, 2019, p. 194). This recurring problem is identified even in *História da Política Exterior do Brasil*<sup>33</sup> (Bueno & Cervo, 2002), probably the most influential work on the topic. According to Santos, the authors 'mistake Itamaraty's diplomatic discourse for Brazilian foreign policy itself' (Santos, 2005, p. 26). Furthermore, Santos and Uziel point out the perils of over-reliance on oral history as a supplementary source. They acknowledge the importance of interviewing diplomats and policymakers, especially when references are scarce, but highlight the need for cross-referencing sources to get round selectivity and *a posteriori* interpretations made by the interviewee (Uziel & Santos, 2019).

An example of trust in the official discourse is the course *History of Brazilian Diplomacy: from the Empire to the XXI Century*, organised by the Brazilian most influential IR think tank *Brazilian Centre for International Relations* (CEBRI) in 2021. The course was a remarkable success, gathering more than 1600 students. Amongst the lecturers, there were

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<sup>33</sup> *History of Brazilian Foreign Policy*.

academics, former Presidents, former foreign ministers, and diplomats – the most numerous group of all. According to the course’s programme, written by the diplomat Rubens Ricupero:

The first objective of the course is to tell the story of Brazil through the angle of its relations with the outside world, how it conditions us, how we try to influence it. This history must not be separated, as happened in the past, from the heart of internal history, it must be an integral, constitutive part of politics, of the economy, of culture. Diplomacy and foreign policy need to be seen as fundamental stones of Brazil’s construction, in the same title as changes in government, constitutions, economic expansion. [...] We will show how diplomacy has helped solve the major problems faced by the country since Independence, contributing decisively to consolidating the territory, ensuring the increasing autonomy of decisions, and paving the way for development in each of the stages of Brazilian historical evolution. (CEBRI, 2021).

Even though the course was organised by a think tank – not a university – Rubens Ricupero clearly framed his discourse as an absolute and true account of Brazilian diplomacy. Ricupero himself is one of the most prominent ‘diplomats as intellectuals’ and recently published the book *A Diplomacia na Construção do Brasil: 1750-2016*<sup>34</sup> (Ricupero, 2017).

Itamaraty has been actively fostering the production and diffusion of knowledge produced by diplomats for decades and their interconnection with the academic field. This contact has been encouraged in the training course for starter diplomats – which usually includes academics amongst the teaching staff – but also in training programmes necessary to advance in the career. The most relevant is the *Curso de Altos Estudos*<sup>35</sup> (CAE). Held by IRBr, the course is mandatory for diplomats who want to ascend to the highest rank of Brazilian diplomatic service, called first minister. The first edition dates to 1979, and since its inception, it requires the participants to present an academic-like theses of both analytic and propositional nature (Hutchings & Suri, 2020; Pinheiro & Vedoveli, 2012). It must be a piece that ‘has functional relevance and utility for Brazilian diplomacy, or that represents some contribution to historiography or the Brazilian diplomatic thought’ (Ministério das Relações Exteriores, 2017). The thesis is evaluated by a committee composed by first ministers, who are assisted by reports prepared by two rapporteurs, one from the MRE and another external to it – usually an academic. This committee then decides if the thesis is ready to advance to the last part of the evaluation process, the oral defence – a simulacrum of the academic rite. From 1979 to 2015, diplomats defended 718 CAE thesis (Gusmão, 2016).

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<sup>34</sup> *Diplomacy in the Construction of Brazil: 1750-2016*.

<sup>35</sup> *High Studies Course*. The course was initially proposed by the Bill n. 3,917 on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1961 but implemented by the Decree n. 79,556 on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1977.

If CAE plays a central role in the production of knowledge by diplomats, the *Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão*<sup>36</sup> (FUNAG) is the official institution responsible for the diffusion of those pieces. FUNAG was created in 1971<sup>37</sup> with the explicit objective of undertaking and promoting studies about international relations and Brazilian diplomatic history and contributing to the formation of a public opinion concerned with international issues. However, it was not until the 1980's that the foundation began to assume a central role in the relation between Itamaraty and Brazilian academia. This change was greatly influenced by the ideas of Gelson Fonseca Jr., a prominent 'diplomat as intellectual'. In 1981, Fonseca Jr. presented his CAE thesis entitled *Diplomacy and Academia: a study about academic analyses on Brazilian foreign policy in the 1970s and on the relations between Itamaraty and the academic community*. He argues that:

[...] since 1945, the academy has well defined its 'establishment' of social sciences, but only by the mid-70s did it turn, with the best of its instrumental, to Brazil's diplomatic and international issues. From this finding, this thesis was constructed, which aims, as a central inquiry, to examine the consequences and implications of this academic concern with diplomacy for Itamaraty as an institution. [...] the objective will then be to propose lines for Itamaraty's institutional behaviour in its relations with academia and even to suggest, very superficially, some ways of 'operating' the relationship with the academic community. (Fonseca Jr., 2011a, p.36)

The diplomat argues that there is a growing interest in Brazilian international relations, which could already be seen in the academic field. Consequently, Itamaraty should ask itself how it should relate to Brazilian IR. Specifically, he suggests that the Ministry should grasp the opportunity of having its perspective endorsed by researchers:

[...] to the extent that prestige is acquired and following the growing interest in foreign policy, it is more likely that there will always be intellectuals who legitimise [Brazilian] foreign policy and others who move towards counter-legitimation. There will hardly be unanimity in the process. Another very important element to consider is that the academy does not exhaust the process of legitimation: it is one of the ideological apparatus, but it is not the only one. It does not have a monopoly on the process, although it is convenient for it to incorporate 'our reasons', and not systematically criticise the lines of action of the institution. (Fonseca Jr, 2011a, p. 65)

After considering the consequences of ignoring academics, he advocates for actively engaging with them. To have an institutional policy of interacting with universities and

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<sup>36</sup> *Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation*.

<sup>37</sup> Bill n. 5,717 on October 26<sup>th</sup>, 1971.

researchers is regarded as politically beneficial to Itamaraty: ‘The intellectual’s knowledge of the ‘institutional argument’, of the limits in which we work, can be fundamental in the process of creating codes [for the conceptual framework of the diplomatic process] in which the Itamaraty’s perspective is somehow incorporated’ (Fonseca Jr, 2011a, pp. 71–72). It must be said that Fonseca Jr. never suggests that Itamaraty should attack academic autonomy or co-opt researchers. However, he explicitly states that ‘Itamaraty could accomplish political objectives by interacting with the academia’ (Fonseca Jr, 2011a, p. 206).

The direct result of Fonseca Jr.’s reflection was to bring FUNAG closer to Brazilian IR academia. In 1987, it created the *Institute of Research in International Relations* (IPRI) with four objectives: (1) to develop and disseminate studies and research on topics related to international relations; (2) to promote the collection and systematisation of documents related to its field of activity; (3) to encourage scientific exchange with national and foreign similar institutions; (4) to carry out courses, conferences, seminars, and congresses about international relations (FUNAG, 2015). Gelson Fonseca Jr. was appointed IPRI’s first director. Since 1989, FUNAG has systematically published CAE’s thesis – 124 by 2015 (Gusmão, 2016). After the 1990s, it started publishing works signed by academics and organising conferences and seminars. All its publications are offered in online versions free of charge. Nowadays, FUNAG is one of the most relevant IR editors in Brazil, with a catalogue of over 800 publications (FUNAG, 2021).

Acknowledging that many of the works signed by diplomats are of great value to the study of IR in Brazil, it is worth noting that ‘no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author’s involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances’ (Said, 2003, p. 11). All production of knowledge is political, mainly if carried out by authors occupying positions of power and state representation, as is the case of diplomats. This is so because of the place that diplomats hold in society and the strategies and questions that guide their research (Cable, 1981; Pinheiro & Vedoveli, 2012) – what Hurrell (2004) identified as an ‘informal foreign policy ideology’. In other words, although the use of diplomatic texts is not a problem *per se*, it is essential to consider that they were produced by members of the Ministry of External Relations.

Discourses constitute subjects and establish the rules for exercising power: ‘the form of discourse are both constituted by, and ensure the reproduction of, the social system, through forms of selection, exclusion and domination’ (Young, 1981, p. 48). From the procedures of author, commentary and discipline, the discursive boundaries of Brazilian IR are drawn. The

foundational myth of Brazilian IR places diplomats in a privileged position in the interface between academia and diplomacy. Another account of the birth of Brazilian IR can challenge that narrative and places Itamaraty as the object of study.

#### ***5.4 Another Account of Brazilian International Relations***

Even though the country's first International Relations course was created in 1974, authors have shown that the history of IR in Brazil went well before that. In 1999, Miyamoto recognised that from 1930 to 1980, there were many studies elaborated by legal experts, economists, social scientists, historians, and journalists about international relations, especially about Brazilian foreign policy to the Río de la Plata Basin and Africa. However, he still argues that there was a virtual monopoly of diplomats in the production of knowledge in IR. (Miyamoto, 1999) It was not until the 2010s that analysts have formulated different accounts for the origin of Brazilian IR.

When we take a closer look at UnB's IR course, we realise that it originally had a outstandingly technical profile. In his preliminary report for the establishment of the degree, professor Lauro Alvaro da Silva Campos claimed that the course's main objective should be to provide the professional with the analytical tools necessary for implementing the country's development project (Campos *apud* Julião, 2012). Hence, it should be constituted by modules offered by the departments of Law, Economics and Administration – no mention to History or Social Sciences. Itamaraty followed the implementation of the new course with close interest. The document that accredited the degree stated that IRBr would make an annual donation destined to build a specialised library. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, diplomats were five of the initial twelve members of the academic staff (along with five academics and two public servants) (Julião, 2012). It is difficult to sustain that what the UnB managed to consolidate in the 1970s was indeed a programme with an analytical profile, reliant upon Political Theory, Theory of International Relations, International Political Economy, History of International Relations, Contemporary International Politics (Lessa, 2005b). Instead, if there was a prominent characteristic to the UnB's course at that time, it was its intimate relation with Itamaraty, a feature that was not seen in any other university.

There is also little evidence that Brazilian IR is characterised by a clear dominance of diplomatic history. By analysing the 210 dissertations and thesis produced in IR graduate programmes and supported by financing agencies between 1982 and 1999, Herz (2002) shows that 86 were about Brazilian foreign policy and international relations. The number is

significant. From 1992 to 2013, half of the thesis and dissertations were about Brazilian foreign policy, while the other half discussed diverse themes such as Argentina, regional integration, USA, China, Japan, and European Union (Vigevani et al., 2016). In addition, Guimarães and I have argued that, contrary to the idea that there is a frank pre-eminence of history in Brazilian IR and little theorisation (Cervo, 2003; Herz, 2002), there is a significant production of middle-range theories in Brazilian academia. If we investigate the IR journals, we see that from RBPI's creation in 1958 until 1999, only 4% of its articles have applied foreign policy analysis analytical tools. The low figure, however, is not surprising for a journal that had a clear policy-oriented focus until 1993, when it stopped being published by IBRI and was restructured under the auspices of UnB (Almeida, 2004). If we compare RBPI with *Contexto Internacional*, the contrast is evident: until 1999, 53% of the published pieces have used foreign policy analysis tools (Guimarães & Estre, 2021). All those studies, however, do not investigate how many articles, dissertations of thesis were produced specifically about Brazilian diplomatic history – something yet to be verified.

When it comes to the development of the academic discipline, Casarões (2018) identifies four waves in the evolution of foreign policy studies in Brazil, which would emulate the development of IR itself. The first wave dated from the late XIX century and was characterised by a descriptive normative focus, in which academics, diplomats and the military reflected upon practical problems to find the best policy. The second wave, in the 1970s, relied upon US Political Science and IR to better understand Brazil's new status as a rising power in the international arena. The third wave focused on analysing the role of bureaucracy. The fourth wave analyses the consequences of redemocratisation and the growing plurality of actors involved in foreign policy understood as a public policy.

Milani (2021) argues that the development of Brazilian IR builds on the XIX century practices and conceptions of modernisation and sovereignty developed by politicians and statesmen. Hence, the discipline reflects 'contradictions of a national development project rooted in an external search for recognition, prestige, and autonomy, but also in a domestic structure of inequality and social exclusion that belies this ambition' (Milani, 2021, p. 2). Nevertheless, Brazilian IR also draws on the geopolitical thought developed especially by the military since the 1920s. Milani acknowledges that previous studies about the origins of the discipline have disconnected geopolitics, defence and strategic studies from diplomacy. To overcome that, he understands the discipline as a transdisciplinary field also encompassing



Political Science, History, Sociology, Diplomacy, Geography, Law, International Political Economy and Defence Studies.

The plurality identified by Casarões and Milani can be further attested when we consider that think tanks and post-graduation courses in Brazil have been producing knowledge about international relations in Brazil since at least the 1950s. Noteworthy examples were the Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies (ISEB) in 1955; Centre for Afro-Oriental Studies (CEAO) at the Federal University of Bahia (1959); Brazilian Centre for Analysis and Planning (CEBRAP) in 1969. In 1969, the University Institute for Research in Rio de Janeiro (IUPERJ) and the Federal University of Minas Gerais created their postgraduate programmes in Political Science. After the boom of post-graduation courses during the 2000s, Brazilian IR has intensified its movement towards pluralisation. Since the 2010s, there has been a multiplication of research groups focusing on coloniality, indigenous peoples, feminism, gender, and race. In 2021, the Brazilian Association of International Relations created the ‘Feminism, gender and sexualities’ thematic area. (Herz, 2002; Lessa, 2006a; Lopes et al., 2022; Milani, 2021; Miyamoto, 1999; Santos & Fonseca, 2009; Vigevani et al., 2016)

Discourses are not fixed. Quite the opposite: the construction and reproduction of meaning are constantly in dispute. By analysing the foundational myth of Brazilian International Relations, I intended to destabilise and denaturalise this narrative, offering a different account of the birth of the discipline. This, in turn, allows us to see Itamaraty not as a producer of knowledge but as an object of study. No author denies the relevance of the works produced by diplomats. However, it is necessary to dislocate the Itamaraty-centric narrative to grasp the remarkable plurality that characterises Brazilian IR. If myths mask incommensurable values or objectives, the foundational myth masks how Itamaraty can instrumentalise its relationship with researchers and universities for political advantage, avoiding criticism. It holds in suspension the tension between being at the same time producer of knowledge and object of study. Following Vedoveli, ‘one of the effects of the exchange between the production of diplomats and academics was exactly the absorption of myths proper to Itamaraty in the writing of a history of Brazilian foreign policy’ (2010, p. 70). After questioning the foundational myth, we can now turn to three myths about Itamaraty that were assimilated by academia: autonomy, professionalism, and uniqueness.

## 6. In the Beginning Was the Itamaraty: Diplomatic Non-Fiction

*In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.  
John 1:1*

If the production of knowledge by diplomats is not exempt from political content – insofar as it may be an expression of their institutional affiliation – the adoption by academics of interpretations on Brazilian foreign policy elaborated by diplomats needs to be better analysed and problematised. As Michel Foucault states, the discourses can uncover political relations where they are not perceived because ‘theory will not express, it will not translate, it will not apply a practice; it is a practice’ (Foucault, 1979, pp. 70–71).

Some academic pieces have already dealt with interpretations elaborated by diplomats or questioned dominant narratives about Brazilian foreign policy. Zairo Cheibub and Cristina de Moura, for example, have studied the role of diplomats' socialization during the first steps of the diplomatic career, evidencing the Ministry of External Relations' efforts to ensure intellectual cohesion among diplomats. That way, they perceive themselves as members of a community, of a professional body, and reproduce an ‘institutional ethos’ – which can be observed in speeches, texts and public manifestations (Cheibub, 1984, 1985, 1989; Moura, 2006, 2007) Vedoveli (2010) and Mesquita (2012) have studied how the idea of ‘tradition’ is constructed throughout the narrative of a ‘diplomatic intellectual history’.

Other pieces showed that interpretations disseminated by diplomats about Brazilian foreign policy have no or little empirical support. That is the case of Octavio Amorim Neto, who has employed quantitative methods to challenge well-established ideas about Brazilian foreign policy. For instance, the author analysed the voting pattern of the Brazilian government at the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) and found results that challenged with some of the most recurrent interpretations on the trajectory of Brazilian foreign policy. According to the author, the alleged ‘automatic alignment’ of the Castelo Branco administration (1964-1967) with the United States would not have a solid empirical basis, since ‘after 1961 no Brazilian government has ever produced a convergence with the United States at the level verified in the previous 15 years’ (Amorim Neto, 2011).

Some works sought to analyse the institutional aspect of the Brazilian diplomatic conduct and the participation of interest groups, questioning whether diplomats had been the

sole formulators of Brazil's foreign policy guidelines. According to those authors (Amorim Neto, 2011; Loureiro, 2021; Pinheiro, 2013), although the MRE remained a crucial dynamic centre of Brazilian foreign policy, other interest groups, such as the military, businesses and political parties, would also have participated in the decision-making process, especially after democratization.

Nevertheless, even though some authors criticise the analyses elaborated by diplomats, there are still no studies on recurrent representations of Brazilian foreign policy built by diplomats, how are they formed and how they have impacted the academic literature. As Pinheiro and Vedoveli state, the issue has not been ‘problematized by the academic community *stricto sensu*’, which is contributing ‘to the recognition of diplomats as analysts of foreign policy largely without questioning their social place’ (Pinheiro & Vedoveli, 2012, p. 226). Official diplomatic narratives are ubiquitous among Brazilian academia. Consequently, despite the fact that the country's IR community has developed significantly in the last decades, comparative studies are still rare (Alejandro, 2018; Casarões, 2018; Guimarães & Estre, 2021). Furthermore, there has been a tendency to use primary sources inadequately, taking the official discourse produced by diplomats as a faithful reflection of reality (Uziel & Santos, 2019).

This chapter investigates some of the narratives elaborated by two diplomats – Rubens Ricupero and Gelson Fonseca Jr – about Brazilian foreign policy. The chosen methodology, discourse analysis, makes it possible to destabilise those narratives, investigating their conditions of possibility, presuppositions, metaphors and predicates (Dunn & Neumann, 2016).

### **6.1 Rubens Ricupero: Heroic Diplomats**

Rubens Ricupero entered Itamaraty in 1961, the year that President Jânio Quadros launched the Independent Foreign Policy. In addition to being a career diplomat, Ricupero took part in several professional activities outside the MRE. He taught IR theory at the University of Brasilia from 1979 to 1987, he was Environment Minister from 1993 to 1994, Finance Minister in 1994, and served as United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's Secretary-General from 1995 to 2004. He has been publishing pieces about Brazilian diplomacy since the 1980s (Ricupero, 1989, 1995, 2000, 2001, 2010, 2011) and, in 2017, Ricupero launched his *magnum opus*: *A Diplomacia Na Construção do Brasil (Diplomacy in the Construction of Brazil)* (2017). Ricupero claims that he needed a compendium to help him teach the evolution of Brazilian foreign policy as an inseparable feature of national history. There is a disclaimer in the preface of his book, though:

I do not hide that this is an inside look, from someone whose personal identity [...] is constituted by a lifetime devoted to Itamaraty and Brazilian diplomacy. [...] I am not ashamed to confess this love, and I hope that the reader will not accuse me of having, for love, exaggerated the contribution of diplomacy to the construction of a Brazil still far from the "intense dream" of our anthem. (Ricupero, 2017, pp. 23–24)

This analysis of Ricupero's book does not seek to accuse him of exaggerating the contribution of diplomacy or dismissing the value of his work. The goal is to investigate how *A Diplomacia na Construção do Brasil* presents a narrative that reinforces the belief in the centrality of Itamaraty not only in the country's foreign policy but also in its history. In the introduction of the book, Ricupero argues that 'few countries are indebted to diplomacy as much as Brazil does' (Ricupero, 2017, p. 27). Itamaraty delineated Brazil's borders, increased its international prestige, constructed the idea that it would be a satisfied country in the international arena. Ricupero argues that:

The way by which the territory of future Brazil was established brought such lasting implications for the foreign relations of the independent country that it justifies retaining from the Colony period at least the territorial particularity. This narrative thus starts from the beginnings of the occupation and expansion of the territory [...]. An additional benefit of this starting point is to highlight some of the characteristic qualities of diplomacy, first Portuguese and then Brazilian, which succeeded it and inherited many of the original attributes from it. (Ricupero, 2017, p. 37)

When placed as a builder of the nation, diplomacy is separated from the nation itself both in time and space: it is anterior even to Brazil's independence and constitutes the country's borders. Furthermore, it aggregates a heroic feature to diplomacy, as it would have saved Brazil from territorial disintegration or war. Finally, diplomacy is constituted in opposition to war, hence negating the possibility of using diplomacy as an instrument of coercion: the author does not consider the evident asymmetry between Brazil and its neighbours as a possible reason for the 'peaceful' drawing of the country's limits.

Ricupero replicates the tenets of the realist theory about the centrality of the state but adds the Ministry as the single voice of the state. Rio Branco, as the diplomat-statesman-intellectual, becomes a central figure in that discursive construction, the symbolic origin of modern Brazilian diplomacy. Diplomats would be placed above the nation, operating in the international sphere. Sovereignty, as separation from inside and outside, constitutes the internal space as that of history, politics, evolution; the external sphere would be that of recurrence, that

of the 'Hobbesian state of nature', the space of the technique (Walker, 1993). Diplomacy would be the link that translates Brazil's uniqueness into international action.

## **6.2 Gelson Fonseca Jr: *Autonomy All the Way Down the Line***

Gelson Fonseca Jr is a prominent 'intellectual as diplomat'<sup>38</sup>. He entered the career in 1968 and retired in 2016. During that time, he published several books and articles in academic journals. In the book *A Legitimidade e Outras Questões Internacionais (Legitimacy and Other International Questions)* (1998), he developed the concept of 'autonomy' in Brazilian foreign policy. Since then, this idea has been recurrently replicated and applied to analyse other Brazilian governments (Caballero & Crescentino, 2020; Cepaluni & Vigevani, 2016; Ligiero, 2011; Pautasso & Adam, 2014; Saraiva, 2014; Spektor, 2014; Vigevani et al., 2003; Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007). However, Fonseca Jr also stands out for his analysis of the field of IR in Brazil and the relation between Itamaraty and Brazilian IR academia (Fonseca Jr, 1987, 2011a; Fonseca Jr & Uziel, 2019). When this work was submitted, he was serving as the director of FUNAG's Centre for Diplomatic History and Documentation. This section investigates Fonseca Jr's conception of the field of IR in Brazil, especially the relation between identity and agency.

In *A Legitimidade e Outras Questões Internacionais*, Fonseca Jr delves into what he calls the Brazilian thought on IR. According to him, four preconditions make it possible to identify a 'thought' on any aspect of reality. The first is the existence of proper 'thinkers', that is, people with the necessary skills to analyse a given aspect of reality. The second is the presence of institutions to harbour the 'thinkers' and provide them with the conditions to research and publicise their findings. The third is the capacity to influence the public debate and the media. Finally, the fourth is the existence of contrasting schools of thought. When he applies that idea to Brazilian IR, he concludes that that field is less developed in the country when compared to others such as Political Science, Law, History or Sociology. He then starts searching for the origins of Brazilian thinking in IR. He initially presents three candidates: nationalism, geopolitics, and dependency theory.

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<sup>38</sup> Pinheiro and Vedoveli (2012) use the term 'intellectual as diplomat' to reinforce that even those diplomats well known for their intellectual production are still first and foremost servants of the Foreign Ministry.

Fonseca Jr argues that nationalism found its way into foreign policy through the pieces published in the *Política Externa Independente (Independent Foreign Policy)*<sup>39</sup>. In the mid-1960s, the journal condensed the left-wing political thought on foreign policy. However, Fonseca Jr argues that the content was not academic IR because in there, ‘prescription prevailed over analysis, as, in fact, was the journal’s objective’ (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 257). A similar thought is applied to geopolitics. Fonseca Jr argues that General Golbery do Couto e Silva’s 1958 text *Brazil’s Geopolitics* is the founder of geopolitical thinking in Brazil, but Golbery was primarily interested in intervening in the country’s reality and promoting the alliance with the West during the Cold War. Finally, dependency theory is dismissed for a different reason, not because of political entanglements, but because it would not take the game between states – diplomacy – as its primary object of study:

[...] the analysis of dependence essentially seeks to reshape the sociology of development from the dialectics of the constraints, internal and international, economic, and social, which set the limits for the national options of progress. Very secondarily, it deals with the game between States. (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 258)

After asserting the incipient character of Brazilian IR, and dismissing other perspectives as the origin of academic IR in Brazil, Fonseca Jr argues that it was only during the 1970s, when Brazil started to diverge from the United States in the international arena, that academia became interested in studying foreign policy and diplomacy, especially their motivations and constraints:

How can we explain that a dependent country, which should subordinate its foreign policy to the ‘designs of imperialism’, could have different positions from those of the US in trade matters (the first serious conflict was around soluble coffee in 1968), or even a diverse and even contradictory worldview (differences in disarmament, rapprochement with the Arabs, with the third world movements etc.)? Similarly, geopolitics was not enough to understand this dialectic of a ‘rebellious’ ally.

It is at this moment that the need to direct thinking about how the Brazilian state develops its foreign policy, what conditions it, what motivates it, arises at the university. The diplomatic game becomes the object of specific questioning. (Fonseca Jr, 1998, pp. 258–259)

This first movement is paramount to understanding how Fonseca Jr discursively delimitates the field of IR. In the excerpt, Fonseca Jr equates foreign policy with diplomacy,

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<sup>39</sup> The journal *Política Externa Independente* was published between 1965 and 1966. Even though it had only three issues, it condenses importance pieces about the Brazilian foreign policy of that time. (Vigevani et al., 2016)

presupposing the equivalence between the two, and defines the ‘diplomatic game’ as the object of study. Hence, he can dismiss other possible candidates for the origin of the academy’s interest in IR. Furthermore, he assumes, first, a separation between prescription and analysis and, second, places the academy in the realm of analysis. The precondition for that claim is that ‘analysis’ would lead to politically neutral knowledge, that there is a separation between object and subject. This alleged division can surely be problematised (Brady & Collier, 2004; Jackson, 2010), but for the purposes of this work, it suffices to say that Fonseca Jr believes the analytical method – whatever that is – can guarantee the neutrality knowledge production.

Subsequently, Fonseca Jr argues that there was only one place in which knowledge about IR could be found in Brazil, even before the emergence of academic interest: in Itamaraty. The author claims that ‘in specific situations, given the urgency of governmental action, there is a need to analyse a certain reality without the “ideal” academic bases for this. This is true for the universe of international relations’ (Fonseca Jr, 1998, pp. 252–253). The word choice is not random: even though Itamaraty had assumed that position, it had not been by choice, but because the Brazilian state *needed* it to do so. This idea is reinforced by the purported academic ‘disinterest’ (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 266) in foreign policy before the 1970s. Furthermore, Itamaraty produces not ‘policy papers’ but ‘analyses’, which implies the neutrality of the method discussed in the previous paragraph. Hence, it would be possible to ‘find in the official speech enough material to outline what we’re calling [IR] thought’ (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 267).

In Fonseca Jr’s work, those claims taken together constitute the foundational myth of Brazilian IR. Leira and de Carvalho decompose a foundational myth into two aspects, one epistemic and the other ontological: the epistemic is how the discipline emerged and its means of knowledge production, whereas the ontic component defines the object of study of the discipline (Leira & de Carvalho, 2018). In Fonseca Jr, the epistemic element arises from the idea of academic disinterest in foreign policy, added to the government need for specialised knowledge, which was produced by diplomats. Furthermore, those diplomats would not act simply as policy advisors, but as neutral analysts. The ontic component defined the object of IR as states and the diplomatic relations amongst them:

It is also worth clarifying that we are dealing with a broad and complex concept when we talk about International Relations, which comprises a vast spectrum of activities. For the purposes of this text, we will limit it and take as the object of analysis the relationship between States, privileged space of the diplomatic game. Of course, the subject of diplomacy is nourished by the economic, the legal, the social. For the purpose of delimiting a field, however, it is necessary to accept that the processes of dispute and cooperation between

States have their own dynamics, basically determined by the sovereign nature of their main actors, the States. (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 253)

Those ontic and epistemic moves are crucial to understanding Fonseca Jr's proposition of a close relation between IR discipline and Itamaraty (Fonseca Jr, 2011a). But above all, those moves place diplomats as privileged subjects in Brazilian IR, for they are seen as reliable sources and legitimate academic interlocutors because they purportedly produce neutral analysis.

The second theme privileged in Fonseca Jr's *A Legitimidade e Outras Questões Internacionais* is autonomy. I will not, however, delve into the concept itself<sup>40</sup>, but in how it is discursively articulated to attain the status of a permanent Brazilian foreign policy goal. The search for autonomy is derived from a static conception of Brazil's national identity as unique, different. Since Fonseca Jr defines autonomy as the diplomatic expression of difference, autonomy is seen as the ever-present goal that guides Itamaraty and guarantees continuity in diplomatic action.

Fonseca Jr argument is that a country's action in the global arena derives primarily from its identity, which is constituted in the dialectical relation between what the international system offers in terms of ideological constraints and the national roots of identity. The ideological constraints are readily identified: East or West during the Cold War; North or South in the context of global economic relations; liberal-democratic or authoritarian after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The national roots of Brazilian identity, however, are more complex. He argues that Brazil has a unique historical evolution, characterised by Portuguese colonisation, and miscegenation between the indigenous, European, black and, more recently, Japanese, Syrian, Lebanese, etc., inheritance. Furthermore, the country's dimensions and its development stage grant it the status of middle power - another peculiar feature. The author argues that:

[a] dimension of peculiarity was born from the unique forms of the formation of the Brazilian 'civilization', which served to create multiple bases for international contact; there we would have from the presence of Japanese immigration (as support for the intensification of economic relations), through racial tolerance (as a basis for serving as a 'bridge' between the West and the Third World), to participate in various regional subsystems in Latin America (platinum, amazon, South American) etc. (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 281)

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<sup>40</sup> A high-quality discussion of 'autonomy' in Fonseca Jr's work can be found in Pinheiro and Lima (2018).



Fonseca Jr's argument relies on crucial presuppositions. First, he reproduces Gilberto Freyre's argument about the virtues of racial miscegenation. Gilberto Freyre is one of the most prominent figures of Brazilian Sociology. In the book *Casa-Grande & Senzala* (2006), writing during the 1930s, pioneered in denying the racial theories of the time, which stated the superiority of the white race. Conversely, he emphasised the country's miscegenation as a strength, refuting the idea that miscegenation leads to degradation. Despite being a turning point in the studies about Brazilian identity, Freyre's thesis has been revisited and criticised for understating the violence of the colonial encounter and slavery. Instead, contemporary perspectives argue that Brazil cannot be regarded as a 'racial democracy' that promotes equal opportunities for everyone independently of race. On the contrary, the country is divided by structural racism (S. Almeida, 2019; Nascimento, 2016). Fonseca Jr, however, crystalises Brazilian Freyrean identity as the drive for Brazilian international action. The country's brutal internal racial inequalities could decrease the Brazilian diplomacy's legitimacy to act as bridge between the West and the Third World. However, that tension is resolved in Fonseca Jr's work by reproducing the inside/outside division (Walker, 1993) as constitutive of state-centric Brazilian IR and placing the tensions on the inside, preserving diplomacy.

Another presupposition is that the primary drive for action is identity: 'Once the identity is defined, which, in the hypothesis that we developed for the Brazilian case, had strong institutional content, the second step is to choose the relationships that serve the affirmation of that identity' (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 269). This claim assumes a stable and fixed identity that is directly translated by Itamaraty. Furthermore, since identity defines relationships, there is little space for other group's agency in foreign policy, be they internal or external. The fact that Brazil placed itself under the US's sphere of influence during the Cold War is explained by ideological convergence and identity similarity, whereas the hypothesis of the alignment being the result of Washington's overwhelming military superiority in the American continent was not even considered. That move simultaneously denies rightful agency to governments in foreign policy and asserts Itamaraty's, as we can see in his comparison between Presidents Jânio Quadros and João Goulart's 'Independent Foreign Policy' (PEI) (1961-1964) and President Geisel's 'Responsible and Ecumenical Pragmatism' (PRE) (1974-1979).

Fonseca Jr argues that the PEI was one of the rare moments of rupture in Brazilian foreign policy. The author defines ruptures as situations in which there is a dual change, in both official discourse and diplomatic practice. To preserve his argument's discursive stability, he must address change and the agency of the executive in that case. He does that first by

introducing the concept of ‘mitigated continuity’ (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 296). The origin of change is placed not inside Itamaraty, but outside it, in politics:

[I]t may be easy to interpret the origins of the PEI adopting orthodox analyses, which recall that it was finished, in Jânio's case, by the personal inclinations of the President, an admirer of Tito, Nehru, Nasser, curious of the solutions of the Cuban Revolution, and who, by force of his [internal political] legitimacy, can impose his diplomatic preferences. (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 302)

However, even in change, there would be continuity:

A Universal and Independent Foreign Policy (1960-1964) The election of Jânio Quadros in 1960 led to deep changes in Brazilian foreign policy — changes that were not entirely unexpected, to be sure, since Brazil's desire for greater autonomy was already apparent during the Kubitschek administration. (Fonseca Jr, 2011b, pp. 382–383)

To deal with the agency of the executive during the PEI, the discursive strategy is the comparison with President Geisel's PRE. On the one hand, the PEI was politically motivated and did not attain continuity. In that sense, the Presidency failed when it tampered with foreign policy to promote dramatic change because it failed to read the international context correctly. On the other, the PRE succeeded in recovering the PEI's principles because it followed the ‘diplomatic logic’:

The case of [Geisel's] pragmatism is more complex. There's something unexpected. Why Geisel's autonomist line? Without risking any definitive interpretation, innovation would basically be determined by impositions of diplomatic logic. If independent foreign policy is born from a political project, from an intellectual conception, pragmatism will be an attempt to overcome a history that begins in 1964 and which results, on the one hand, in some diplomatic isolation (especially in the multilateral field) and, on the other, in a network of real contradictions with hegemonic power (in varied areas, with sea rights, nuclear energy, trade, etc.). (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 302)

The backdrop of the argument is that when Itamaraty was bypassed, the policy failed; when it directed foreign policy, it succeeded. The last part of the excerpt is also telling: Itamaraty not only conceived PRE but did against the military government. At one time, Fonseca Jr reasserts Itamaraty's rightful agency and isolates it from the military regime.

Finally, Fonseca Jr identifies an overarching objective to Brazil's international action: autonomy to mitigate changes and assert continuity during an extended period of time. To do that, he defines the concept as ‘The diplomatic expression of difference’ (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 361). The author relies on the ontology of the search for diplomatic autonomy. that reinforces

the belief in the Ministry's political insulation: no matter who the President is, Itamaraty is meant to pursue that goal. Since autonomy is not rooted in circumstantiated choices, but in a perennial conception of national identity, 'Our persisting challenge is to know how to advance in autonomy' (Fonseca Jr, 2011c, p. 31). Finally, the concept can be employed even to justify antithetical behaviour:

Autonomy, today, no longer means 'distance' from the controversial themes to protect the country from undesirable developments. On the contrary, autonomy is translated by 'participation', by a desire to influence the emerging agenda with values that express diplomatic tradition and the ability to see the directions of the international order with its own eyes, with original perspectives. (Fonseca Jr, 1998, p. 368)

In Fonseca Jr's conceptualisation, autonomy could easily explain distance and participation in the international arena.

### ***6.3 Diplomatic non-fiction***

Ricupero and Fonseca Jr have produced consistent pieces about Brazilian foreign policy. However, their social place should not be ignored in the analysis. Diplomats are not technicians without personal preferences (Keys, 2020). They are first and foremost human beings serving the state:

The personalities and identities of diplomats are usually deeply affected by their profession, lifestyle, status, and individual relations to the state which they represent. A diplomat is strongly connected with his or her statehood politically, socially, and personally (Faizullaev, 2006, p. 501).

The impossibility to separate ourselves from our social environment is not here seen as a liability. The same thought could be applied to academics: it is not possible to isolate our work from the institution to which we are associated. However, equating the intellectual production of diplomats to that of academics should be a matter of concern for it can naturalise official interpretations about diplomacy or Brazil's place in the world, generating analytical blind spots. Hence, I suggest a specific framing for diplomats' intellectual production differently, as a particular genre: diplomatic non-fiction.

Diplomatic non-fiction is defined as a genre of literary production that is authored by diplomats, presents a narrative about an aspect of Brazilian diplomacy, mimics the academic writing norms, and derives its authority at least partially from the privileged 'insider' position occupied by the author. It is clearly different from diplomatic memoirs and should not be

equated to academic texts. Some features of the diplomatic non-fiction are the overreliance on official sources, especially diplomatic ones; the recurrent deference to diplomacy and its institutions; the use of academic references; and the explicit inclusion of the self in the narrative – for instance, referring to MRE using the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘us’.

This genre is central to thinking about the relationship between academia and diplomacy. Hansen (2006, p. 60) argues that the authority of academic and journalistic genres comes from the method and the idea of independence, of producing knowledge that is regarded as disconnected from political and financial power. For diplomats to be seen as legitimate producers of ‘academic knowledge’, the idea of their separation from politics is crucial. In that process, the belief in political insulation is naturalised, therefore not problematised.

The narratives of the ‘diplomacy of knowledge’ and of ‘autonomy-seeking’ are paramount to support the idea of Itamaraty’s centrality and almost undisputable agency. By seeing diplomatic non-fiction not as an explanation or as an analysis of Brazilian actions, but as data, we can open new paths of research. One example is that, in their pieces, Ricupero and Fonseca Jr present otherness as constitutive of the country and diplomats. Brazil is placed in contrast to other countries, peoples, regions. Diplomats are constituted in opposition to politicians, military personnel, and (sometimes) academics. This strategy for identity construction is not unusual, but how it is conducted by Brazilian diplomacy is yet to be investigated. Diplomatic non-fiction is a rich source of such narratives.

## **7. Organisational Myths: From Itamaraty to Brazilian Academia**

In the two last chapters, I argued that the foundational myth of Brazilian IR places diplomats in a privileged position in Brazilian academia. Hence the nearly immediate adoption of some of Itamaraty's organisational myths by the Brazilian foreign policy community. The deeply ingrained naturalisation of those myths was such that, when Bolsonaro took office, in 2019, analysts claimed that Itamaraty could still follow its traditional path. They believed that Bolsonaro would find it hard to crack the Ministry's bureaucratic steadiness and that diplomats were able to counterbalance any excess coming from the Presidential core. That was not what happened. Expecting a Foreign Ministry to resist the presidency to which it is subjected might be counterintuitive in many countries, but it is not surprising in Brazil. The cornerstone of that belief is the idea that Itamaraty has a high degree of autonomy in the formulation of Brazilian foreign policy. That is the backdrop of Casarões' (2019) claim that Itamaraty should resist the presidency and Lopes' (2020) criticism of Bolsonaro's post-diplomatic foreign policy.

Cheibub first introduced the idea of Itamaraty's autonomy in his 1984 thesis. According to him, autonomy is the result of the Ministry's progressive professionalisation (Cheibub, 1984). In chapter three, I argued that Cheibub's work presents little evidence of Itamaraty's autonomy. More recent works in fact point the other way, showing that there is a myriad of different actors involved in the formulation of foreign policy and that the Ministry responded to and cooperated with the military government. Furthermore, the process of Itamaraty's professionalisation only advanced after the 1930s, and its effects on diversifying the diplomatic service have been limited. Despite counterevidence, this idea is still highly influential and enjoys a status of self-evident truth. In this chapter, I argue that the notion of Itamaraty's autonomy and professionalism are myths: self-narratives presented by Itamaraty to conciliate incompatible principles it embodies. Those narratives function by attributing other signifiers to the 'autonomy' and 'professionalism' signs, which gain a particular meaning when applied to Itamaraty. Furthermore, those mythic self-narratives mobilise well-established ideas about Brazil and its place in the world, forming an amalgam of meaning that is finally shielded from criticism by the myth of Itamaraty's uniqueness.

### ***7.1 The Myth of Itamaraty's Professionalism***

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'professionalism' has two meanings: 'Professional quality, character, or conduct; a professional system or method. In early use frequently: the characteristics of a particular profession; (now usually) the competence or skill

expected of a professional'; and 'The practice or status of a professional, as distinguished from an amateur' (OED Online, 2021). Albeit related, those two meanings are distinguished by the idea of quality, necessary to the first, whereas absent in the second. The myth of Itamaraty's professionalism discursively relies on the obliteration of that difference, masking the tension between a highly elitist and exclusionary recruiting process and the supposed ensuing quality of the diplomatic service.

When Cheibub (1984) argues that the professionalisation resulted in Itamaraty's autonomy, he was considering professional as opposed to 'amateur'. Articulating Weber's theory of bureaucratisation with Huntington's idea of institutionalisation, Cheibub states that the bureaucratisation of the Brazilian state would have resulted in increasing professionalisation of Itamaraty. There is no consideration of quality or competence. Evidence would be a more democratic recruitment process, which would be progressively more open. Nevertheless, the Ministry remains a highly exclusionary institution, and only in the 2000s can we identify visible signs of diversification – and not without protest from high-rank diplomats (Moura, 2006). Some authors argue that evidence of Itamaraty's quality would be that other state agencies have recruited diplomats, but they ignore that this movement is usual throughout the public administration, and diplomats are no exception (Abrucio et al., 2010; Figueira, 2010). The point here is not to say that Brazilian diplomats lack qualification, but to characterise 'professionalism' as a belief, a self-narrative that has been (re)produced by Itamaraty, an organisation myth which prescind from validation. In weaving this mythic narrative, the original concept of 'professionalism' as presented by Cheibub is reconfigured, emptied of its original 'not amateur' meaning and resignified as 'high quality'.

According to the myth of Itamaraty's professionalism, Brazil is the heir of Portuguese institutions. Hence, Brazilian diplomacy has an ancient history and a more elevated status because of its European pedigree, differentiating it from its American neighbours (Lafer, 2001). Consequently, despite being a former colony and a relatively young country, Brazil has enjoyed considerable prestige among European countries, especially after the Baron of Rio Branco's ministry (Lafer, 2001). Professionalism was later associated with recruitment within the country's elites. Rio Branco himself was the son of a former high-level politician of the imperial period, Viscount of Rio Branco, former President of the Council of Ministers and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The retired diplomat Marcos Castrioto de Azambuja (2011) asserts that Itamaraty has always been the house of the elite. Until the first half of the twentieth century, all the great names of Brazilian diplomacy were wellborn:

Our [Itamaraty's] Greatest were, in good numbers, high-born. Many had the self-confidence that came from a social position that had always been secure; from being between peers and equals; from being prepared for the game and functions; from being imbued with a sense of superiority over the medium in which they were included; from cultivating feelings that, by the good manners that were then adopted, were more implicit than explicit, and that came from the sum of these traits and circumstances. (Azambuja, 2011)

Baron of Rio Branco is seen as the one responsible for putting the Ministry on the right track. He set the tone for Brazilian diplomacy and founded the country's diplomatic tradition. According to this narrative, Rio Branco was the institutional builder of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Before him, Brazilian diplomacy was characterised by lack of direction, which is attested by the frequent changes of the Secretary of Foreign Affairs leadership. Rio Branco marks the beginning of a new era: he served as Minister of External Relations from 1902 to 1912, under for different Presidents (Rodrigues Alves, Afonso Pena, Nilo Peçanha and Hermes da Fonseca). To assist him, Rio Branco had personally selected brilliant young men to join the diplomatic ranks, granting the ministry institutional unity and ideological homogeneity. Consequently, Itamaraty has had a high degree of cohesion, a feature that has been valued ever since. During Rio Branco's term, Brazil purportedly attained greater international projection and prestige (Almeida, 1996; Azambuja, 2011; Faria, 2008; Faria et al., 2013; Lafer, 2001; Lessa, 2012b; Ricupero, 2000)

After 1945, the source of Itamaraty's idealised quality with the IRBr: by rigorous selection and training, the institute forged the Ministry's excellence – an intellectual, not aristocratic elitism characterised Itamaraty (Azambuja, 2011). This was attested not only by Brazilian diplomatic recognition internationally (Hurrell, 2004; Lafer, 2001; Lima, 2014), but also by the fact that other governmental agencies started recruiting diplomats for their high professional quality (Milani & Pinheiro, 2015, p. 18). To summarise, the myth of professionalism relies on European origin and rigorous recruitment, there considered synonyms of high quality. Each of those elements will be analysed in turn.

The belief in the European roots of Brazilian diplomacy rests on the idea that there was a seamless transition from colony to an independent state. The Independence, therefore, is not read as a rupture, but as continuity, discursively merging coloniser and colonised. Brazilian diplomacy is regarded as superior because of its 'European inheritance', but, in that process, the violence of the colonial process is obliterated. This is consistent with the traditional narrative that Brazil's history would have started in the year 1500 AD, when it was 'discovered' by the Portuguese: the country was brought into existence by the European contact. The result

of this process is a somewhat uneasy self-narrative about Brazil's placement in the international system, trying to be part of the West but aware of its inferiority in an Eurocentric global system (Guimarães, 2020). To stabilise the narrative of a 'prestigious diplomatic service', the Baron of Rio Branco fits perfectly as the father of Brazilian diplomacy, constantly regarded as a heroic figure; his deeds repeated incessantly (Almeida, 1996; Lafer, 2001; Ricupero, 2000, 2017): After spending decades living in Europe, he answered the President's call to become Foreign Minister out of love for his country; he had an aristocratic origin, but chose to be a diligent public servant throughout his life; his genius alone settled Brazilian borders peacefully; his numerous diplomatic triumphs granted Brazil international prestige. Perhaps most emblematically, Rio Branco decided to keep his title of nobility even after the end of the Brazilian Monarchy, in 1889, and was regarded as a 'baron' throughout his life. Rio Branco is the embodiment of Brazilian diplomacy's noble origin

Rio Branco is also a central figure to the idea of rigorous recruitment. He is usually regarded as a game-changer: he took the recruitment process into his hands, personally interviewing and assessing candidates to guarantee quality and ideological homogeneity (Cheibub, 1984; Faria et al., 2013; Lopes, 2014). Not surprisingly, however, Rio Branco was transparent about his bias towards blond, tall, blue-eyed men – the typical European phenotype (Freyre, 2013; Nascimento, 2002; Skidmore, 1990). This reverence towards Europe and the United States was not uncommon amongst the South American country's elites until the first decades of the twentieth century, and many Brazilian intellectuals of that time relied on racial theories to advocate for the whitening of the nation (Leite, 2017; Vieira, 2018). Paranhos Jr simply applied those ideas to the Ministry: to elevate Brazilian diplomatic service was to uphold its European inheritance, including in the recruitment process. In that sense, quality means Europe, which in turn equals white and masculine.

When the first Vargas administration (1930-1945) centralised the civil servant's recruitment process in the DASP in the late 1930s, the Itamaraty made efforts not to lose its grip on the selection of new diplomats. Initially, it articulated closely with the DASP to elaborate the entry exams (Tomas, 2020; Wahrlich, 1983). A few years later, in 1945, IRBr was created, and, in the following year, it took the recruitment process into its hands. Naming the institute responsible for the selection and training of diplomats after the Baron of Rio Branco could not be more appropriate: IRBr resorts to the symbolic weight of the father of Brazilian diplomacy to project credibility and excellence. The quality of the diplomatic service would be a consequence of the meticulous selection and grooming of the new members of the 'House of



Rio Branco'. The myth of professionalism created the conditions of possibility for Itamaraty to fully control recruitment, as if the Ministry was the only institution capable of doing so – something that remains until today. The consequences are well known: women and black people have been severely underrepresented in Itamaraty's ranks, and every movement towards democratisation of access encounter fierce opposition from high-rank diplomats because it would 'open Itamaraty to illiteracy' (Brandão et al., 2017; Gobo, 2018, 2019; Oliveira, 2011; Teixeira & Steiner, 2017).

Nowadays, the alleged quality of the recruitment process remains essential to the myth of Itamaraty's professionalism. However, the Ministry could not resist more profound changes in Brazilian public administration – the most significant being the racial quota of 20%. The myth of professionalism is also deeply associated with the privileged status diplomats have in Brazilian academia, for it constitutes them as qualified subjects – even when they have no academic training. The fact that myths are presented as naturalised or self-evident truth makes it even more difficult to scrutinise the recruitment process and identify its persistent bias. Furthermore, it crystallises the generalist character of the process<sup>41</sup>, excluding alternatives such as issuing specialist or gender and race-oriented calls to Itamaraty.

Myths mask tensions between incompatible principles and objectives. The self-narrative of professionalism masks tensions between the traditional claim that diplomats should be generalists and the need for specialists. It masks the tension between the democratisation of the state and elitism in selection disguised as 'rigorous recruitment', whatever 'rigour' means. It masks the tension between a diverse and plural population and its mostly white men diplomatic representatives under the trope of 'highly professional diplomatic services'. It masks the tension between the required democratic accountability and the lack of means of democratic assessment and control of the diplomatic services. Finally, the myth of professionalism masks the tension between diplomats as subjects that formulate foreign policy and as objects of study of IR scholars.

## ***7.2 The Myth of Itamaraty's Autonomy***

In Brazil, 'foreign policy' and 'diplomacy' are often used interchangeably. Although this terminological mixing is not unusual in other countries (Hocking, 2016), it has specific

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<sup>41</sup> All applicants are submitted to the same exam, which consists of objective and/or discursive questions on the subjects: Portuguese, English, French, Spanish, Geography, Brazilian and World History, Economics, International and Constitutional Law, International Politics.

contours in Brazil. According to Dawisson Lopes, rather than a conceptual misunderstanding, this terminological confusion indicates '(a) the centrality of some bureaucratic agencies - and Itamaraty, in particular - in the Brazilian state apparatus; and (b) the great importance of diplomats in the external projection of the country, from formal independence to the advanced of the twentieth century' (Lopes, 2016, p. 20). This idea mirrors Cheibub's (1984, 1985) argument that Itamaraty has progressively played a central role in formulating and implementing Brazilian foreign policy because it enjoys a high degree of autonomy. Even though this idea has gradually been challenged (Batista, 2010; Castilho, 2014, 2021; Loureiro, 2021; Milani et al., 2017; Patti, 2021; Penna Filho, 2009; Simon, 2021), it is still highly influential (Casarões, 2012; Faria, 2008; Faria et al., 2013). I argue that the resilience of this narrative stems from its mythical form, discursively stabilising incommensurable principles of action: to exercise agency while being a peripheral country and make credible long-term commitments while implementing each administration's unique political project.

Autonomy is a central concept in Latin American political thought and has been consistently used as a tool for political analysis, especially since the 1970s (Pinheiro & Lima, 2018). In its original formulation by Jaguaribe (1979) and Puig (1980), autonomy is articulated in opposition to dependence. The authors claim that the international system is a hierarchical structure, and Latin America occupies a peripheral position.

Later used as an analytical tool, the concept of autonomy assumed two facets: one internal and one external. In its external acception, autonomy means maximum decision-making capability considering the systemic constraints. Since the 1980s, Brazilian scholars have consistently used autonomy as an analytical tool to analyse the country's foreign policy. According to Pinheiro and Lima (2018) the original concept of autonomy inspired Gerson Moura's (1980) analysis of Getúlio Vargas's foreign policy in the early 1940s: the President exploited the available breaches in the international system to attain the maximum degree of autonomy possible, considering systemic constraints – 'autonomy in dependence', as Moura calls it. Pinheiro and Lima argue this acception of 'autonomy' would have a 'situational', context-dependent feature.

Almost two decades later, diplomat Gelson Fonseca Jr (1998) takes 'autonomy' as the central idea to analyse Brazilian foreign policy since the 1960s. He argues that, during Jânio Quadros and João Goulart's Independent Foreign Policy (1961-1964), Brazil formulated a strategy of seeking 'autonomy through distance', that is, keeping its distance from the bipolar conflict to increment its potential to exercise autonomy. After the end of the Cold War, that

strategy was replaced by seeking ‘autonomy through participation’, actively adhering to and engaging with international agendas to increase the country’s global presence and influence. Pinheiro and Lima (2018) argue that Fonseca’s concept differs from the original Jaguaribe-Puig formulation because it aggregates a behavioural component to ‘autonomy’ that obliterates the dichotomous relation with dependence. Additionally, Pinheiro and Lima argue that it is ‘congruent with the diplomatic strategy of granting continuity status to the policy through a narrative that always pursues autonomy as the basis of legitimacy, regardless of any epistemological inconsistency’ (Pinheiro & Lima, 2018, p. 11). To assert, as Fonseca does, that ‘autonomy’ after the end of the Cold War would mean ‘participation’, is to stretch the concept so much that it loses analytical accuracy and becomes a legitimating tool that could encompass including positions of increased dependency.

This conceptual stretch is not a mere terminological confusion: it is the constitution of a self-narrative that preserves Itamaraty’s agency even when it must bend to international constraints or submit to international norms which it did not even had the chance to negotiate. As a myth, autonomy would become naturalised as a perennial objective of Brazilian foreign policy since the 1960s, which could be adjusted to any circumstance. In the 1960s, it justifies not signing the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; in the 1990s, it justifies signing it (Fonseca Jr, 1998). The myth preserves Itamaraty as the central actor to understand Brazilian foreign policy, presenting a rationale that systematically excludes other actors – national or international – influence in formulating and implementing Brazilian foreign policy.

Because of the intimate relationship between diplomacy and academia, Fonseca Jr’s ‘behavioural’ formulation of autonomy could be promptly assimilated by Brazilian academics as the analytical panacea to find coherence in the country’s international actions. Following that logic, the belief in autonomy as the everlasting goal of the country’s international actions has been highly influential in academic production (Cepaluni & Vigevani, 2016; Lopes, 2013; Saraiva, 2014; Spektor, 2014; Vigevani et al., 2003; Vigevani & Cepaluni, 2007). Foreign policy becomes a synonym of diplomacy, as Itamaraty alone held the reins of the country’s global strategy, having its agency be preserved even when the country bended to others’ will. As highlighted by Pinheiro and Lima:

The risk of ending up with interpretations that confuse the analytical argument with the political statement regarding what would constitute an autonomist-leaning policy is further complicated by a particular characteristic of the Brazilian context, i.e. the intimate connection between diplomatic thought and the academic literature on the field of foreign policy. In these circumstances,

the analysis and formulation of the foreign policy get mixed up with one another, with deleterious consequences for the analytical content produced in the field of Brazilian foreign policy studies. (Pinheiro & Lima, 2018, p. 12)

An example of those consequences is seeking – and finding – autonomy in every moment of Brazilian history. Saraiva argues that the search for autonomy has been directing the country's foreign policy since the beginning of the nineteenth century, as a guiding arrow that is 'not linear, it moves in oscillations, time tending to more, time to less but guaranteed autonomy' (Saraiva, 2014, p. 10). This conception assumes autonomy was first found when the Unequal Treaties signed with England were extinct (1844), having since guided the Baron of Rio Branco (1902-1912), Vargas (1930-1945), Jânio Quadros (1961), João Goulart (1961-1964), Lula (2003-2010), Dilma (2011-2016).

Autonomy is also central to Cheibub's argument. However, in its internal formulation: in Fonseca Jr's conception, the concept refers to Brazilian actions in the international arena, whereas Cheibub discusses the internal power dynamics and intra-bureaucratic disputes. According to Cheibub, the bureaucratisation and professionalisation of Itamaraty would increase its autonomy because they would amplify its political power. In other words, the alleged centrality of Itamaraty's role in formulating and implementing Brazilian foreign policy would be the result of its increased political power.

When the Brazilian IR community was still rising, this proposition was revolutionary for two reasons. First, it gave this community a unique object of study that could foster group identity. It drew the line between traditional political science on one side, and Brazilian foreign policy analysis and international relations on the other. Second, it endowed the ministry with agency and anointed it with an aura of relevance that justifies its purported ontological centrality. However, similarly to what happened to the concept of professionalism, autonomy has been constantly resignified to attain discursive stability.

Cheibub's 'autonomy' does not mean that the Ministry was free from pressure or interference from the presidency, but quite the opposite: it would have enough capacity to promote its political agenda within the government. Hence, Cheibub does not assume that the Ministry would be politically neutral or isolated from the executive branch. That argument is consistent with Pinheiro's (2013) study of the decision-making process in the Geisel administration and Amorim Neto's (2011) analysis of the actors and the structure of the Brazilian decision-making process in foreign policy. Even in the field of Diplomatic Studies, the dominant idea is that 'It would [...] be wrong to view the MFA as the sole, or even the

dominant, agency through which a national community interacted with the international arena' (Hocking, 2018, p. 136).

Nevertheless, the current formulation of the myth has resignified autonomy to mean political insulation. When we employ an intertextual strategy to analyse the concept, we can pinpoint the moment when Cheibub's thesis has gained the additional meaning. In the first lines of the article 'Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: insulation, politicisation and reform in the production of Brazilian foreign policy', Carlos Alberto Pimenta de Faria argues that 'The insulated character of the process of production of Brazilian foreign policy, greatly centralised in Itamaraty, has been widely recognised' (Faria, 2008, p. 80). The myth of Itamaraty's autonomy has naturalised not the original narrative but Faria's version of it. Even after taking the purported insulation for granted, the first part of the article presents six reasons that would justify it: (1) the constitutional centrality of the executive branch in foreign policy issues, (2) the fact that the legislative would have delegated to the executive the responsibility to formulate foreign policy, (3) the 'imperial', that is, the centralised character of the country's Presidentialism, (4) the inward-looking economic model that has internationally isolated the country until the 1990s, (5) the usually non-conflictive and adaptative character of Brazil's diplomatic performance, and (6) the solid and early professionalisation of Itamaraty and its national and international prestige. Faria concludes that: 'These factors, added together, seem to explain the low degree of politicisation of the country's foreign policy at least until the end of the 1980s, which reinforces and justifies the insulation of Itamaraty, which perceives foreign policy primarily as a state policy' (Faria, 2008, p. 81).

Faria's argument is developed in two steps, first highlighting the centrality of the executive branch in foreign policy, corresponding to the points one to four, and then differentiating and isolating the Itamaraty from the executive branch, points five and six. The second step is central to the analysis because it translates into depoliticisation and continuity as 'state policy'. The myth of Itamaraty's autonomy naturalises the diplomat as a 'vessel for state interests' (Keys, 2020, p. 4). The differentiation between government and state policies becomes the difference between politicians and diplomats. While Cheibub converts autonomy into an enhanced political agency, merging the diplomat and the politician, Faria operates the exact opposite movement, presenting the diplomat as apolitical or even anti-political. Autonomy is thus reconfigured.

In 2012, Faria published 'Itamaraty and Brazilian Foreign Policy: From Insulation to the Search for Coordination of Governmental Actors and Cooperation with Societal Agents'.

In that piece, the author once again presents the insulation thesis, finding further support for it. He resorts to Edson Nunes definition of bureaucratic insulation – which has become a benchmark in the analysis of Brazilian bureaucracy:

In the language of contemporary organisational theory, bureaucratic insulation is the process of protecting the technical nucleus of the state against interference from the public or other intermediary organisations. The technical core is assigned to the achievement of specific objectives. Bureaucratic insulation means reducing the scope of the arena in which popular interests and demands can play a role. (Nunes, 1997, p. 34)

Nunes' argument, however, is not used by Faria to justify the insulation of Itamaraty from the public or other state bureaucracies, but the purported insulation of the Ministry from the very government to which it responds. Ultimately, both Cheibub's and Nunes' arguments come to justify one belief: that politics and diplomacy should not mix because diplomats must faithfully translate the apolitical character of the national interest.

Both the external and internal versions of autonomy – as an overarching objective and as diplomatic insulation – reinforce each other. The assumption that diplomats always seek international autonomy supplies the perennial goal that has permeated every administration, at least since the 1960s. Therefore, as the narrative goes, the diplomatic principles articulated during the Independent Foreign Policy (1961-1964) were followed even after the 1964 military coup, and diplomats were preserved from political persecution not only because of their professionalism, but also because they were above politics. This narrative successfully saved the ministry from criticism, as if sectors of Itamaraty had not contributed to the authoritarian government – even against convincing evidence that it has actively supported political persecution and promoted propaganda campaigns abroad to defend the regime against accusations of human rights violations (Castilho, 2014, 2021; Penna Filho, 2009; Simon, 2021). Furthermore, the myth of autonomy can continually transform variation into continuity. Lula, for instance, faced harsh criticism at the beginning of his administration because of the 'ideologisation' and 'politicisation' of the country's foreign policy (Jakobsen, 2013, 2016). However, at the beginning of Lula's second term, Vigevani and Cepaluni (2007) argued that the President's foreign policy was characterised by the search for 'autonomy through diversification', downplaying change in favour of a reedition of Fonseca Jr's analysis. This 'continuity bias' has been identified by Milani, Pinheiro and Lima, who reject the hypothesis that Brazilian diplomacy is isolated from the political debate as 'an idea nurtured by diplomats

themselves in order to give foreign policy an aura of permanent continuity' (Milani et al., 2017, p. 596).

Diplomacy has indeed a pressing need to present itself as politically neutral as it is a permanent state institution. It must prove to each government that it is fit to represent it internationally. At the same time, diplomats must convince their foreign counterparts that the commitments made by previous administrations will be honoured. The myth of Itamaraty's autonomy conciliates those two objectives by presenting change as continuity, adaptation as permanence. The former Foreign Minister Azeredo da Silveira brilliantly captures this idea in his 1974 opening speech 'Itamaraty's best tradition is to know how to renovate itself'. To present change as continuity is no easy task, though:

Making the world seem to be stable when it is in fact in constant flux, means that having power among other things involves having the ability to freeze meaning. It has to be done by constantly repeating specific representations of things, actions, and identities, until what one repeats is naturalised to such an extent that it appears doxic. (Neumann, 2007, p. 190)

For Itamaraty to preserve its power to produce narratives and fix meanings, it must maintain its privileged place within Brazilian IR academia and, to that end, the myth of Itamaraty's autonomy is paramount. The supposed insulation of the MRE buttresses the purported insulation of the diplomat. Hence, the knowledge produced by diplomats is not seen as politically interested, but neutral. If the myth of Itamaraty's professionalism fosters the idea of diplomats as experts, the self-narrative of autonomy grants them an aura of scientific credibility. Nevertheless, the very nature of the diplomatic mode of knowledge production is profoundly conservative as it must be consensus-driven. The Ministry must be able to speak as one voice to mediate relationships amongst internal and external actors (Neumann, 2007, 2012). In that process, it must produce a single official narrative that accommodates sometimes divergent interests. Hence, the diplomatic self becomes interwoven with the nation, so that state identity becomes part of the personal identity of diplomats:

As members of a diplomatic or foreign service, diplomats most of all are servants of the state, and therefore the diplomat's job is service to the state. No wonder that loyalty at all times is considered as the most essential quality of diplomats. Indeed, there is no true and effective subservience without loyalty, and loyalty is always supported by the system of beliefs. (Faizullaev, 2006, p. 503)

Paranhos Jr's motto is illustrative of this merging of self and state: *Ubique Patriae Memor*, Latin for 'In every place, I carry the memory of the homeland'.

The idea that diplomats directly translate the national interest is not unusual. However, as Herzfeld (1992) argues, the larger the bureaucracy, the more internally plural and differentiated it becomes. Keys (2020), for instance, analyses diplomatic guides and memoirs to show how diplomats are encouraged to explore personal beliefs, feelings, and vulnerabilities from their counterparts but, at the same time, deny having themselves such beliefs, feelings, and vulnerabilities. This would stem from the conviction on the ‘state-centred’ mind of diplomats:

Like other myths, the notion that diplomats and leaders can think and act on the basis of a state-centered mind endures despite lack of proof and in the face of counterevidence. It is built on unequivocal assertions, not traditional argumentation. It persists partly because it offers convenient intellectual shortcuts, but it also serves the status quo by sustaining a tradition of elitism that defines foreign relations as an arena suitable only for those with special expertise. It buttresses the primacy of states and state interests in international relations and the exclusion of nonstate actors from high diplomacy, which is restricted to actors that meet traditional standards for representing groups and places. (Keys, 2020, p. 3)

In the Brazilian case, those diverse interests are evident in the anti-communist group led by the diplomat Pio Correa that actively collaborated with political persecution during the military regime in the 1960s (Castilho, 2021) or, more recently, the growing number of diplomats filiated to political parties (Santos & Lopes, 2021). We must not be drawn by the image of the ideal diplomat, a neutral and faceless bureaucrat devoted to the homeland and bearer of a long-lasting diplomatic tradition.

### ***7.3 The Myth of Itamaraty’s Uniqueness***

Even though Brazilian diplomacy is constantly regarded as highly professional (Hurrell, 2004), there is a remarkable absence of comparative studies about Brazilian foreign policy involving the Itamaraty (Guimarães & Estre, 2021). According to Casarões (2018), this results from a ‘scientific exceptionalism’ that has trapped Brazilian scholars, that is, the belief that the country is incomparable because of its uniqueness. I argue that the myth of Itamaraty’s uniqueness is a factor that supports the idea of exceptionalism. The myth’s underpinning is the belief that Brazil is a unique country; hence it must have a unique diplomacy. The constitution and formation of the Brazilian State granted Brazil a unique identity in the international system for three reasons, which I call territorial, socio-political, and sociological.

The territorial reason for Brazilian unique international identity has its origins more than five hundred years ago. It is attributed to the deeds of three social actors: navigators, who have



discovered the continent; pioneers (*bandeirantes*), who have expanded Portuguese territory beyond the line of the Tordesilhas<sup>42</sup>; and diplomats, who have juridically consolidated the borders. This argument, borrowed from the diplomat Synesio Sampaio Goes Filho (2015), places diplomats as crucial figures in the constitution of modern Brazil: in 1750, Alexandre de Gusmão negotiated the Treaty of Madrid<sup>43</sup> in favour of the Portuguese; from 1895 to 1903, Baron of Rio Branco would have finished the job by peacefully negotiating the final treaties that fixed Brazil borders. The result was a continental-scale country, ‘like the USA, Russia, China (permanent members of the Security Council) and India’ (Lafer, 2001, p. 21). However, contrary to other such gigantic countries, Brazil has allegedly drawn its borders peacefully – a unique feature regarded as a personal feat of the Baron of Rio Branco.

The socio-political reason is the Portuguese colonisation and its inheritance. Differently from other parts of the Americas, Brazil is the only country colonised by Portugal and that has Portuguese as the official language. Furthermore, when the Portuguese court reached the Brazilian coast in 1808 fleeing the Napoleonic troops, they elevated the colony status to a United Kingdom and transferred the capital of the Portuguese Empire to Rio de Janeiro, where they reproduced there the metropolitan administrative institutions. After independence, Brazil became the only monarchy on the continent. Finally, it withstood political and territorial fragmentation, contrary to Spanish colonies. Lafer argues that:

The Monarchy was the basis of the international identity *sui generis* of Brazil in the nineteenth century, within the framework of the Americas: an Empire amid Republics; a large Portuguese-speaking territorial mass that remained united in a fragmented Hispanic world, with the United States of America expanding territorially in the Northern Hemisphere. Therefore, in the 19th century, due to our insertion in South America, being Brazilian was non-Hispanic. In this sense, Brazil recreates on a continental scale the linguistic and sociological singularity that, in Europe and the Iberian Peninsula, historically characterised Portugal. (Lafer, 2001, p. 35)

The sociological reason presented by Lafer relies on traditional interpretations of modern Brazil, such as the formulated by Gilberto Freyre, Darcy Ribeiro, José Murilo de Carvalho, Antonio Candido and Sergio Buarque de Holanda. Brazil is regarded as a unique amalgam of the European, African and indigenous inheritance. Despite internal inequalities, it

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<sup>42</sup> The Treaty of Tordesilhas, signed between Portugal and Spain in 1494, divided between the two countries the lands ‘discovered’ outside Europe. In the following centuries, Portuguese territory in South America – which later would become Brazil – extended well beyond the limits of the Treaty.

<sup>43</sup> The Treaty of Madrid, signed between Portugal and Spain in 1750, juridically consolidated a great territorial gain to Portugal beyond the line of Tordesilhas.

is seen as a cultural cauldron of the native indigenous, European colonisers and enslaved Africans forcefully brought to work the land. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the migratory waves that brought Italians, Germans, Spaniards, Slavs, Arabs, Japanese, among others, have diversified even more the cultural matrix. Lafer argues that this diversity is assimilated into Brazilian international identity, therefore influencing how Brazil acts globally – for instance, defending the end of colonisation in the United Nations during the 1960s.

The diplomatic consequence of those three narratives – the territorial, socio-political, and sociological – is that Brazilian diplomacy must be unique both nationally and internationally. Nationally, because diplomats have played an active role in constructing the country, differently from other state bureaucracies. Internationally, the unique historical constitution of the country and the diversity of its people makes it necessary for Itamaraty to carry on a unique diplomacy. Rio Branco is the embodiment of this narrative, for he is deemed as the hero who traced Brazil's boundaries and delineated Brazil's diplomatic tradition, the founding father of modern Brazilian diplomacy. Besides, he is an allegory of the unity and exceptionality of the Ministry, which is commonly regarded as 'the house of Rio Branco' (Gobo, 2019; Moura, 2007).

Many discursive mechanisms operate together for the myth of uniqueness to attain discursive stability. The cornerstone of the narrative is that if Brazil is a unique country, it must have a unique diplomacy. For this narrative to work, equating diplomacy with the nation is necessary. Therefore, the diplomat must be present across time, as a force pulling the strings behind territorial consolidation for centuries: first, Alexandre de Gusmão, and then, the Baron of Rio Branco. This presents a paradox, though: at the time of the Treaty of Madrid, 1750, Portugal did not have an independent Foreign Ministry, and the small diplomatic service was mainly composed of aristocrats who lived abroad. Professional diplomatic services would start to emerge only a century later. Alexandre de Gusmão was not a career diplomat – there was no such thing by then. To turn Gusmão into a diplomat in the modern sense requires erasing the historical development of diplomacy – or at least to place Brazil out of it: the country is unique, incomparable.

The quintessential image of uniqueness, however, is the Baron of Rio Branco. He is regarded as a heroic figure, capable of solving all previous inconsistencies by his genius alone. He is not a simple diplomat: he is a geographer, a historian, an intellectual, a statesman. Rio Branco assumes a foundational status: he solved all the territorial disputes and articulated the Brazilian diplomatic tradition. Rio Branco became the personification of uniqueness: before

him, Brazilian diplomacy had been inconsistent; he is the merging of the European aristocratic inheritance with the nation in the figure of the Baron-diplomat-statesman, equating national interest with diplomacy. He is the embodiment of the confusion between diplomacy and foreign policy. The two citations above express that idea:

Let us leave the deeds of the one who in our diplomacy was like the mythological giant Atlas and who, like this one, was also the son of a Titan, the Viscount of Rio Branco. With his herculean work and his steady hand, he traced the boundaries of a nation. Continent, whose children from primary school and for their entire lives, every time they cast their eyes on the map of the Motherland will keep in memory and in their hearts the name of this patrician benefactor. (Soares, 1984, p. 196)

And,

The Baron of Rio Branco, acting in The Republican Brazil, was the last great representative of the work of the eminent statesmen and diplomats of the Empire, especially the Viscount of Rio Branco, his father, with whom he identified himself and of whom he considered himself a continuer in the field of foreign policy. (Lafer, 2001, p. 45)

Rio Branco's myth turns diplomacy into the architect of the nation, a top-down notion that constitutes the people and most other social actors as passive witnesses of this process. Additionally, it constitutes diplomats as the legitimate translators of the national interest – one of the reasons why there is confusion between diplomacy and foreign policy in Brazil (Lopes, 2016). As Hocking precisely puts it:

[T]he management of international policy has accorded more to a pattern of intra-bureaucratic tensions than it has to the sole dominance of any one agency. This is to be expected and it is only the assumption that foreign policy is something inherently different from other spheres of policy that produces the belief that this should not be so. (Hocking, 1999a, p. 8)

#### ***7.4 Myths at Work: Theoretical Blind Spots***

In the last chapter, I argued that the foundational myth of Brazilian IR places diplomats in a privileged position within the academic community. Thus, Itamaraty's organisational myths were assimilated by Brazilian academia: professionalism, autonomy, and uniqueness. This chapter investigates how those myths attain discursive stability using 'plastic discourse analysis' (Mutlu & Salter, 2012), seeking stability and recurrence in those mythic narratives. I

argued that those myths play a crucial role in reproducing official narratives and shielding the ministry from criticism. According to Yanow,

Myths provide a way of knowing about the world; they socialise as they teach a way of behaving. They compel emotional as well as intellectual belief and thereby prompt action. Myths validate and authorise not only belief, but also customs, ceremonies, rituals, and rites. [...] Furthermore, myths legitimate the social, political, and economic order as it is vested in existing institutions. Because policy and organisational myths are believed in and are not subject to factual disproof, they are difficult to perceive. Created at points of tension or uneasiness to mask those very sensitivities, myths are protected by their believers. Shutting off further inquiry, they are difficult to discern and fathom. As they redirect attention it is hard to see through or beyond them, adding further to public silences. (Yanow, 1992, p. 403)

Halvard Leira and Benjamin de Carvalho argue that myths play a central role in academic disciplines: ‘they tell us who we are and what we should be concerned with, and they provide blueprints for arguments about policy choices’ (2018, p. 222). Although myths are valuable ways to differentiate disciplines, offering a milestone to foster group identity, they can also hinder the academic investigation by ‘transforming history into nature’ (Barthes, 1972, p. 128), that is, by naturalising and depoliticising the disputed process of meaning construction. The foundational myth of Brazilian IR places Brazilian diplomats in a privileged position not as objects of study but as producers of knowledge. Since they are recognised as legitimate academic interlocutors, diplomats can introduce Itamaraty’s organisational myths in Brazilian IR. This protection dome curbs comparative studies and overvalues national sources – especially diplomatic ones. Interviewing diplomats becomes not a piece in the process of academic investigation but a means to find the truth.

The three myths presented in this chapter reinforce each other. Rio Branco is regarded as the great institutional builder of Itamaraty, recovering the European legacy of the country’s diplomacy and controlling recruitment to assure quality and ideological homogeneity. The alleged result is a highly professional diplomatic service, able to preserve its autonomy both internally and externally. Hence, Itamaraty is able to effectively translate the national interest, becoming one voice with the homeland. Inasmuch as Rio Branco's legacy is followed, Itamaraty is able to convert the unique territorial, political, and social development would translate into a unique diplomacy. Rio Branco is a kind of sage diplomat who has delineated the unique principles that guide Brazilian diplomacy and professionalised diplomacy in Brazil (Almeida, 1996; Lafer, 2001; Lessa, 2012b). Because of those unique principles and characteristics, Itamaraty would be incomparable.

Nevertheless, studies of modern European diplomacy tell a different story. The institutional development of Itamaraty's is not unlike that of other parts of the world, and both diplomats and academics could benefit from comparative studies. There are three constitutive activities of modern diplomatic activity: negotiation, representation and collection of information (Neumann, 2012). For a successful negotiation, knowing the practices and traditions is essential. Therefore, a country's diplomacy should not be seen in isolation from global diplomacy since successful diplomacy depends on shared practices. Collecting information and converting it into a specific kind of knowledge is also constitutive of diplomatic activity: diplomats abroad send reports to their country. However, there is a distinctive character in those reports: they are not mere descriptions but are based on perception and contacts with elites and with the diplomatic corps of a particular place. In addition, the reports seek to substantiate the government's decision-making. It is a specific type of knowledge in its means of production and objective. Representation is also a constitutive activity of diplomacy. For diplomacy to be effectively representative, it must be seen as legitimate. From this comes the practice of the diplomatic envoy bringing gifts to the sovereign whom they are visiting: the value/symbolism of the present legitimises the representative. (Berridge, 2010; Neumann, 2012)

Diplomacy is seen as a medium activity, essentially conservative because it must preserve its common practices and articulate consensuses: a successful negotiation contemplates the interest of all the actors involved; collecting information implies constant information exchange with local actors, especially other diplomats; representing implies respecting protocol, reproducing diplomatic practices. As Neumann (2012) argues, a diplomat rarely produces something new: his practice is to circumvent tensions, consistently creating consensus. Diplomats do not act independently from the government. Diplomats never get out of character: even their 'personal' position in memoirs are constituted from the diplomat's point of view; their private views are rarely externalised. Neumann shows that even when diplomats write memoirs, they still make it the state official's place. Because of that, he suggests the division between diplomats 'public', 'personal' but still official, and 'private' thoughts. (Neumann, 2007, 2012)

The aristocratic diplomacy characteristic of Brazil in the XIX century (Lopes, 2010), its personalistic characteristic during the Rio Branco period and the late professionalisation of the career, are not atypical features. Intensive training of new diplomats is not unusual, nor is interchange between diplomacy and academia (Hocking, 1999b). Diplomacy is a social activity.

To be part of the international diplomatic community means that (Brazilian) diplomats must conform to its practices. (Hutchings & Suri, 2020; Sharp & Wiseman, 2007)

One theoretical blind spot generated by the academic assimilation of Itamaraty's myths comes from overlooking the Eurocentric character of Brazilian diplomacy. According to Vieira, Brazil's identity with Europe – more specifically, Portugal – constitutes a discursive attempt to stabilise the perceived inferior status resulting from the colonial experience:

[F]ollowing independence from Portugal in 1822, Brazil's quest for ontological security should be understood as intrinsically connected with political elites' attempts to discursively accommodate/stabilise the anxiety-laden 'lack' generated by their perceived inferior status vis-à-vis the West. These narrated fantasies around the myth of postcolonial racial/cultural hybridity, which have over the decades produced an illusory, albeit necessary, sense of ontological security, have shaped Brazil's self-perception and resulting foreign policy ideas. (Vieira, 2018, p. 158)

This movement is converted into a constant need to reassure Brazilian diplomatic greatness by producing diplomatic heroes when it comes to diplomacy. Baron of Rio Branco is the paradigmatic example, but there are others. Rui Barbosa (1849-1923) was Brazil's 'Hague's Hawk' for his enviable oratory and tenacious defence of juridical equality amongst nations in the 1907 Hague Conference. Raul Fernandes (1877-1968) stood out in the 1945 São Francisco Conference for having suggested the optional character of the International Court of Justice compulsory jurisdiction clause, which would be henceforth known as 'Raul Fernandes clause'. Oswaldo Aranha (1894-1960), presiding the first UN General Assembly's extraordinary meeting over the Israel-Palestine situation in 1947, played a central role in approving the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine. However, the myth of Itamaraty's uniqueness is successful in protecting those ideas from investigation, and the few works that effectively delve into those diplomatic deeds find little evidence to support these claims about the prominence of Barbosa, Fernandes, Aranha (Giannattasio, 2021; Polito, 2019; Tomas, 2020). This constant need to reassure itself is consistent with Guimarães' argument of the 'uneasy sense of well-placement' of Brazil within both Latin America and the West. The complex identity repertoire created by Itamaraty encompasses contrasting, even conflicting identities in a delicate balance and effectively place Brazil in the West, even if other so-called Western countries would hardly accept that idea. (Guimarães, 2020)

The Eurocentric character of Brazilian diplomacy reproduces the dominant narrative that obliterates slavery, colonialism, racism, and violence from diplomacy. As Zondi (2016) argues, Eurocentrism erases diplomatic experiences outside the West and permeates knowledge

production. In the Brazilian case, it would first mean the silencing of original people's diplomatic actions during centuries of colonisation, such as the diplomatic value of the recently translated letters exchanged by indigenous peoples to discuss the Portuguese presence in the seventeenth century (Alves, 2021). Eurocentrism also masks Brazilian diplomatic defence of slavery during the nineteenth century (Marquese & Parron, 2011) and Portuguese colonialism and South African Apartheid in the United Nations during the 1960s (Nascimento, 2002). Finally, Eurocentrism erases the oftentimes coercive and violent nature of diplomacy. If we naturalise the resort to Rio Branco's genius to understand the territorial consolidation, we negate the effect of nineteenth-century wars in delineating the country's borders. To equate diplomacy with peace means to deny the diplomatic leverage Brazil has in negotiating with its neighbours, the result of the stark power asymmetry that characterises its relations.

If we negate the Eurocentric claim that diplomacy only encompasses relations between modern states (Nicolson, 1988) in favour of diplomacy as the 'mediation of estrangement' (Derian, 1987), we not only see the plurality of the diplomatic universe (Opondo, 2016), but we dislocate Itamaraty's central role in Brazilian diplomacy. But for that, we must denaturalise the mythic narratives promoted by Itamaraty. Fonseca Jr argued at the beginning of the 1980s that:

One of the institutional advantages of Itamaraty is, exactly, the absence of important interlocutors in civil society. The Itamaraty, because it has a monopoly on diplomatic doing, ends up having a monopoly on foreign policy formulation. Therefore, there would be no room for the independent emergence of a "thought" on international relations in Brazil. (Fonseca Jr, 2011a, p. 42)

When we challenge Itamaraty's self-narratives, we challenge the idea of the Ministry's monopoly on foreign policy formulation, and the institutional advantage fades away. Especially after the pluralisation of the IR field in Brazil in the past few decades, pieces that challenge Itamaraty's official discourse have gained space. The independent thought on international relations in Brazil has been flourishing, as seen in the emergence of multiple academic groups focusing on de-colonisation, gender, post-structuralism, race, Marxism, and critical theory.

## 8. Conclusion: Diplomatic Tales

*Discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.*  
Michel Foucault

This work is a first effort to shed light on Brazilian foreign policy and diplomacy from the perspective of critical diplomatic studies. Despite being an essential reference to studies on Itamaraty, Zairo Cheibub's dissertation was an incipient work. Recent advancements in Diplomatic Studies and Brazilian History and Foreign Policy point to inconsistencies in his dissertation. That is not a problem, for constant review and investigation are the logic of academic enquire. Cheibub advances the centrality of MRE in foreign policy formulation, its autonomy and professionalism. Those claims attained the status of self-evident truth because they are in consonance with the foundational myth of Brazilian IR.

Pieces signed by diplomats appear as recurrent sources in academic studies about Brazilian foreign policy. This characteristic is a consequence of the mythical account of the birth of the Brazilian IR academia. According to this narrative, although the first Chair of IR was created in Europe in post-World War I, the same did not happen in Latin America. Its constitution did not start until the 1960s, when academics created the first institutionalised spaces for the study of International Relations. Before that, analyses of Brazilian foreign policy would be produced by academics from other areas, such as History and Law, and especially by diplomats.

In this foundational myth of Brazilian IR, diplomats were the first to produce knowledge about Brazilian foreign policy, were the first to analyse global politics. Consequently, when IR emerged as an independent discipline in the country, most of the studies available were produced by diplomats. Brazilian IR have a diplomatic origin and diplomats were legitimised as academic interlocutors. Even after the pluralisation of the field in the last decades, figures such as Rubens Ricupero or Gelson Fonseca Jr wield significant influence in the area. Consequently, organisational myths about Itamaraty – autonomy, professionalism, and uniqueness – made their way into the field of IR. Those myths reinforce the idea that Itamaraty is insulated from politics and block any inquiries about the intricacies of the relation between MRE and other actors – the presidency, interest groups, other bureaucratic agencies etc. Furthermore, these myths silence other voices and interpretations about Brazil's place in the



world – such as geopolitics and dependency theory – that have been developed since the 1920s. Finally, they downplay the exclusionary ethos of Itamaraty that influences the institution until this day.

Diplomacy mediates estrangement. To create common understandings in environments where interests clash and contrasting world views are in dispute is not an easy task. It ramifies inside and outside national borders. Internally, there is a myriad of actors wishing to influence foreign policy, to have their voices heard in the definition of diplomatic priorities. Externally, it faces a global ecosystem populated by states, institutions, companies, non-governmental organisations, and activists. Since myths can conciliate incommensurable goals, mythmaking is invaluable to diplomacy. In academia, however, we must unveil those contradictions.

Diplomats as gatekeepers of the domestic-international division constituted what was seen as the very limits of Brazilian IR. The progressive consolidation of the discipline welcomes the questioning of the role diplomats play not only within the state apparatus, but also in the academic field. Recent studies that depart from the official diplomatic perspective towards race, gender, and indigenous peoples are the clearest picture of this.

If we do not destabilise some of the narratives involving Itamaraty, in no time Bolsonaro and its former Minister Ernesto Araujo will be assimilated into it. Bolsonaro's government will not be analysed as counterevidence to the idea that Itamaraty is insulated from politics and autonomous formulation of foreign policy discourse. Bolsonaro diplomacy will be seen as an exception, reinforcing, by contrast, the idea of diplomatic tradition and continuity: he would be another 'step out of the cadence' of Brazilian foreign policy, just a temporary deviation from the atemporal search for autonomy. If we do not question Itamaraty's alleged centrality in foreign policymaking and formulation, other actors will keep bypassing the ministry. The more Itamaraty closes its eyes to paradiplomacy and to the multiplicity of actors in policymaking, the more it loses its capacity to coordinate the vast array of diverse, sometimes conflicting interests that influence.

In studies about diplomacy, 'discourse' is commonly equated to the speeches delivered by state representatives. In discourse analysis, the term has a different sense as constitutive of reality. Discourse is not a synonym to utterance; is it the precondition for action, the blueprint to how we make sense of the world and act in it. To advance a discursive approach to Brazilian diplomacy is not to investigate the content of official speeches, but to unravel the narratives that make it possible to think about Brazil as a peaceful nation, about diplomacy as separated

from politics, and diplomats as *quasi*-academics. To expose contradictions and inconsistencies of discursive constructions is to challenge long-lasting ‘truths’ about Itamaraty. In that sense, I cannot deny that this work is somewhat iconoclast. However, I believe that academic investigation is not a neutral analysis, but always represent a political project. To debunk Rio Branco’s myth is crucial to reassess the pillars of Brazilian international in a world much more plural that face challenges unimaginable for a nineteenth-century aristocrat. To criticise Itamaraty’s racist and misogynist past is a necessary step towards effective democratisation of the Ministry. And to dispute the idea that diplomats are neutral sources is to advance towards a broader understanding of Brazilian foreign policy.

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