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How much Foreign Policy Teaching can be Foreign Policy Making?

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“The way we ‘officially’ see ourselves is central to found a doctrine of external action for the country. The ways of building an identity are obviously distinct. For the social scientist, they exist ideally as a topic of research and their aim is to unveil its movement as a social reality. (...) For diplomatic discourse, identity is a necessary part, constructed with political objectives” (FONSECA JR., 1998:254-55).¹

“There may be only one world, but we need more than one kind of approach to improving it” (HILL, 1994:21).

I. Introduction

Among the Social Sciences, Political Science and International Relations (IR) are the fields in which theory and practice are perhaps most intertwined. It must be remembered that the beginning and the development of IR as a field of study were – and still are – very much associated with international events and with the way in which different actors reacted to them. By way of example, we could cite several academics who not only made reflections about international relations but were also themselves actors in international relations – Woodrow Wilson, Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger, to mention just a few.

Taking into account the relevance of the discussion about the independence of academic thought, this paper seeks to discuss some likely consequences for foreign policy teaching at graduate level when it is based on books and/or articles written by practitioners themselves, without a critical

¹ *“A maneira pela qual nos vemos ‘oficialmente’ é central para fundar a doutrina de ação externa do país. Os modos de construir a identidade são evidentemente diferentes. Para o cientista social, existem idealmente como tema e busca desvendar o seu movimento na realidade social. (...) Já para o discurso diplomático, a identidade é parte necessária, trabalhada com objetivos políticos” (FONSECA JR., 1998: 254-55).*

approach. After all, although “*policies are in the last analysis grounded in concepts, which is where thinkers and teachers come in*” (HILL, 1994:21), we may have problems when these concepts are created by the same individuals – politicians or diplomats – directly committed to the interests of the State.

The presence of reading materials written by diplomats in graduate syllabuses as analytic sources for explaining foreign policy, that is, as secondary sources, may not be very common in many countries and therefore may not have been the object of much attention from scholars. In Brazil, however, for reasons I will tackle later on, this is standard practice. Nevertheless, very few analysts have worked on this subject so far. The present article is my second attempt to do so (PINHEIRO, 2004).

To that end, this paper is organized in three different sections, besides this introduction and the conclusion. The first sets the stage of the IR field of studies in Brazil and its connection with Brazilian international relations. The intention is to show the conditions that led international relations and foreign policy thinking authored by diplomats to obtain a quasi-academic – and even a fully academic – status.

Following this section, I will present the results of research on the most recent syllabuses of two of the most traditional Brazilian graduate programs (Master’s and Doctorate) in International Relations – the International Relations Department of the public university *Universidade de Brasília* and the International Relations Institute of the private *Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro* – founded, respectively, in 1984 and in 1987 (LESSA, 2005:173). In doing so, my goal is to show if and to what extent reading materials by diplomats have been used by these institutions and with what status.

Then, I will point to the likely consequences for a critical understanding of Brazilian foreign policy that result from the reading of materials by

diplomats if professors do not face this problem in a more consistent way. By way of illustrating these consequences, the question of identity seems to be quite an appropriate topic, since, as put by a diplomat himself, the first step diplomacy must take in order to be part of the international system *"is the definition of what we are"* (FONSECA JR., 1998:268). Therefore, if *"foreign policy is (...) an identity-making tool that erects boundaries between the self and the other, defining in the process what are national interests"* (MESSARI, 2001:227), the writings on Brazilian foreign policy by diplomats should be seen as instruments in this process and, hence, should be scrutinized as primary sources and not taken as analytical instruments to be used for explaining foreign policy. In other words, the way practitioners conceive Brazil's international identity and its relationship with foreign policy contents should be an object of study, and not an instrument for explaining this foreign policy.

Finally, by way of conclusion, I will raise some hypotheses for future research on this subject.

II. The Brazilian Foreign Service and the International Relations field of studies in Brazil

Several authors have already explained how the IR field of studies has developed and has become institutionalized in Brazil (FONSECA JR., 1989; HIRST, 1992; LIMA, 1992; MYIAMOTO, 1999; GUIMARÃES, 2001; TICKNER, 2001; HERZ, 2002; LESSA, 2005). Based on these studies, I shall firstly explain why diplomats have become so present in the academic community dedicated to the study of IR, particularly of Brazilian foreign policy. Besides, I

shall explain how and why their writings have acquired scientific status despite their close connection with diplomatic practice *per se*.

The creation of IR as an autonomous area of studies had a very low impact on the Brazilian academic world until the 1970s.² This fact can be explained both by academic and by structural variables. Among the academic variables, I will take into account the low level of development of the Social Sciences field in the country as whole, as well as the association of IR with International Law, Diplomatic History or specialized Journalism. Besides, we must not forget the perception of several academics that the IR discipline was a field of studies far too associated with the US hegemonic project (HIRST, 1992).

Regarding the structural variables, I will mention the relative unimportance of Latin American countries in general, and of Brazil in particular, in the international system. This fact made most analysts look at the region as an area of influence of the US and, as such, as having a merely reactive role in international affairs. In this sense, scholars tended to conclude that the region did not deserve any special attention. From the 1970s onwards, however, two simultaneous processes pushed a group of academics towards IR studies. On the one hand, despite the maintenance of the military-strategic bipolarity, the world became more economically and politically multilateral. This process increased the scope for peripheral countries to have a more active international behavior, *et pour cause*, enlarged the possibility of a new international agenda for developing countries. As a result, the prospects for Brazil to have a new external role led a group of academics to turn their interests of study to international relations and foreign policy (IDEM: 68).

It must be noted, however, that at that time, the interest of the academic community went alongside policymakers' priorities. It is said that the foreign policy analysis agenda walked *pari passu* with the State foreign policy

² A similar situation may be observed in the rest of Latin America, as shown by Tickner (2002).

agenda, the academics basically being concerned with explaining the policies formulated and implemented by the government in power. Or, as put by Fonseca Jr., it was as if scholars were more interested in underlining the best decisions to be made, than working on the best theoretical approach to explain them (1989:278). This being so, the development of IR studies from then on and the interest in particular topics or particular regions were automatically linked to Brazil's bilateral and multilateral relations, according to the importance given to them by decision-makers.

A couple of reasons can explain both the active role of the Foreign Ministry in foreign policy formulation and diplomats' strong influence on foreign policy analysis in the academic world (HIRST, 1992:66). One is the institutional characteristics of Itamaraty (as the Ministry is called), responsible as it is for giving diplomats a high-level education and professional training that, in turn, gave the institution relative decision-making autonomy, particularly during the 1970s, i.e., during the military regime (CHEIBUB, 1985).

This being so, even if we take into account the growth and enhancement of the academic community specialized in IR and Foreign Policy Analysis from the 1990s onwards (LESSA, 2005), we cannot deny the legacy of the past, when this area of studies was still underdeveloped and diplomats were indeed the chief voices of the debate. Therefore, even if these times are now past,³ this legacy still has some weight in the area and, sometimes, can strongly influence the studies about Brazilian foreign policy. Indeed, the academic education and the undeniable intellectual capabilities of many diplomats can explain a sort of scientific status given to their writings. This aspect comes with the perception that because they do have access to privileged information about international matters, they can be trusted and seen as credible sources of explanation for Brazilian foreign policy. However we must not forget that,

³ Nowadays, there is a relevant number of scholars who got their doctorates at prestigious international programs, such as the London School of Economics and Stanford University, to mention just two.

as civil servants, diplomats are primarily committed to the efficacy of the strategy of pursuing national interests and, by doing so, they are themselves agents in the constitution of these interests. In so doing, the pursuit of the so-called 'national interest' will always be their main objective, and not the search for the best analysis of their own actions. Despite this evidence, diplomats' writings on IR and on Brazilian foreign policy have been included at the syllabuses of many graduate programs as analytic works on Brazilian foreign policy, rather than as primary sources of research.

III. A view of IR syllabuses

The presence of reading materials written by diplomats in graduate syllabuses as analytic works may not be very usual in other countries and, therefore, may not have been the object of much attention from scholars. In Brazil however, for the reasons listed above – the late development of IR as an autonomous and institutionalized area of studies; the excellence of the Brazilian foreign service, whose process of education and training in foreign affairs has acquired such a degree of credibility that articles and books written by diplomats have almost the same status of those written by scholars – this is very common in leading graduate programs. This being so, it is usual for studies produced by diplomats to be considered by prestigious scholars from equally prestigious universities as academic analyses of Brazilian foreign policy and international relations and as secondary rather than primary sources, i.e., as objects of analysis.

A brief examination of the reading lists of two leading institutions at graduate level shows the following picture.⁴

Between 1998 and 2004, the International Relations graduate program of Pontifícia Universidade Católica (Catholic University) offered five different courses on Brazilian Foreign Policy. In the reading lists, we find a combination of articles and books written by academics and diplomats, in which the latter varied from 25% to 37% of the reading materials for each course.

Over the same period, the International Relations graduate program of Universidade de Brasília (University of Brasília) offered 25 different courses on Brazilian Foreign policy. In the reading lists we also find a combination of articles and books written by academics and diplomats. The percentage of materials written by diplomats, however, was much lower, varying from c.1% to 42%, although most had a very low percentage (c.2.5%).

The numbers above indicate that the graduate program whose stronger concentration is in Foreign Policy Analysis as a sub-field of IR (the case of the Catholic University) has been using materials written by diplomats as tools to conceptually explain Brazilian Foreign Policy, while the graduate program with a stronger concentration in the History of International Relations (the case of the University of Brasília) is less prone to using these materials. One way or another, we now turn to the likely consequences of this.

⁴ The analysis of these reading lists was possible thanks to research by Luisa Café - an undergraduate IR student who works as a trainee under my supervision – on the Annual Reports sent by universities to CAPES (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Ensino Superior), an agency of the Education Ministry, in charge of assessing undergraduate and graduate courses all over the country.

IV. Identity, Foreign Policy-Making and Foreign Policy Analysis

National identity is an all-important question in Brazilian academic discussions.⁵ Despite the fact that, as already stressed, identity and foreign policy have a strong connection, the relationship between the two as far as Brazil is concerned has not yet been sufficiently analyzed by scholars. It may not be a coincidence, though, that the few times when the topic was raised, it was by diplomats (FONSECA Jr, 1998; CORRÊA, 2000; LAFER, 2001). As a matter of fact, this has not happened by chance, since, as put by Messari, *"rather than being the external orientation of preexisting entities we call states, foreign policy is a boundary-making political practice, which is essential to produce and reproduce the identity of the state that it is supposed to represent"* (2001:234). In other words, being such a crucial aspect of the content of foreign policy, maybe we should not be surprised by the fact that the subject has been raised by members of the diplomatic agency.

The designation of a certain identity is not a neutral and automatic process, though. As long as one can define identity by choosing different angles – cultural, geographical, political, even religious or ideological principles etc – this choice is, in the last analysis, a political one.

Therefore, for the purpose of this paper, that is, to discuss the likely consequences for an understanding of Brazilian foreign policy of the presence of reading materials by diplomats in graduate syllabuses, I would like to raise the subject of Brazil's alleged South American identity. Or rather, I will scrutinize the way this identity has been "explained" by Brazilian diplomats.⁶

⁵ Some of the most prominent Brazilian scholars who have studied this subject are Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Hollanda, Oliveira Vianna, Manuel Bonfim, Caio Prado and Antonio Cândido, to mention just a few.

⁶ The topic of identity is not restricted to its geographical, cultural or religious aspect. Identity can also be traced to the principles and values that conduct countries' international policy - pacifism, multilateralism, respect for the principles of self-determination and non-intervention

Given the limits of this paper, I cite just two examples. As will be seen, both authors firstly identify – or rather, construct – Brazil's South American identity by underlining a supposed tradition, selectively picked out from History. Then they use this identity as an analytic device to explain – or rather, justify and legitimate – a particular emphasis in Brazilian foreign policy.

IV.1. “We are all from America and we want to be Americans”⁷

In the first example, the author, a prominent diplomat, tries to take from history, i.e., from an alleged tradition, what he sees as Brazil's true identity and true national interests. By suggesting a kind of "strategic alliance" between history and diplomacy (CORRÊA, 2000:29) – as if both, Diplomacy and History, had the same epistemological status – ambassador Luiz Felipe de Seixas Corrêa selectively ascribes a South American identity to Brazilian foreign policy:

“It is not for any other reason that (...) regional integration has become to Brazil the most effective means by which, based on our historical experience, we can understand our past and orient our future: certainly our best option to achieve an appropriate insertion in this globalized world (...) In the process of integration (...) perceptions become as important as realities. We know how much these perceptions are oriented by History. Therefore, it

etc. Even an alleged Grotian or Kantian way of behaving can be seen as an aspect of a country's identity (LAFER, 1999:135). In this case, we bring theory and practice even closer together, since the practitioners try to "explain" their own actions by a theoretical paradigm and, by doing so, they simultaneously constitute patterns and strategies of action at the international level, as I have already shown elsewhere (PINHEIRO, 2000).

⁷ Sentence taken from the Republican Manifesto, 1870 (SANTOS, 2005:187), a document launched in December of 1870 by a group of Brazilian intellectuals, lawyers, doctors, journalists and politicians in favor of the Republican regime for the country.

becomes crucial to work with History in order to advance and to deepen our integration with South America" (CORRÊA, 2000:29).⁸

In so doing, Corrêa not only constitutes an international identity for Brazil, but he does so by giving it a legitimacy based on a tradition shown by History. As a matter of fact, he invents a tradition, which, in turn, works as a positive certification for a political option. As correctly put by Hobsbawm, to the extent that there is a reference to a historical past, the "invented" traditions establish continuity with this past (1983:10)

In the second example, the attempt to simultaneously construct an identity based on an alleged tradition and use this same constructed identity as an analytic instrument is even more evident. In the very same way of presenting South America as a chief variable for the definition of the Brazilian diplomatic agenda, since the region is considered part of the national identity, the South American option is presented by Celso Lafer – not a career diplomat but a kind of Gramscian organic intellectual of the Itamaraty who has been Foreign Minister twice, as well as Brazilian representative at the WTO – not for what it is (an option), but as an inescapable tradition since the beginning of the century.

An expert in inventing traditions in order to enhance the image of continuity for Brazilian foreign policy – an important device in diplomatic affairs for creating credibility –, Brazilian diplomacy shows South America not as an option, but as a "circumstance" of our diplomatic *self*, as put by Lafer (2001:52). By assuming a position of a scholar as well as a former practitioner, Lafer recognizes the limits and possibilities of the clash between concepts and reality (LAFER, 2001:13), and points to several moments when the South

⁸ "Não será por outra razão que (...) a integração com o entorno regional tornou-se para o Brasil o meio mais eficaz de, à luz de nossa experiência histórica, entender o nosso passado e orientar o nosso futuro: nossa opção decerto mais inteligente para lograr uma inserção adequada nesse mundo da globalização, em que todos os países se tornaram fronteiriços" (...) Num processo de integração (...) as percepções tornam-se efetivamente tão importantes quanto às realidades. Sabemos o quanto essas percepções são alimentadas pela História. Torna-se, portanto,

American priority would supposedly have shown its "unquestionable character", for the Brazilian diplomatic agenda, as the expression of Brazilian identity. And in saying so, Lafer goes step-by-step, adapting Brazil's international identity to the country's political priorities.

What Lafer basically does is to try to explain the Brazilian government's decision to embrace the priority for South America to the detriment of Latin America – since Mexico had opted for NAFTA and the US has strong influence over Central America and the Caribbean – not just as a political need (2001:55), but also as an encounter with what was supposed to be more traditional in Brazilian foreign policy: the ideas of Itamaraty's founding father, the Baron of Rio Branco.

In Lafer's words, "as a function of its geography, of its historical experience and of the line of continuity of its diplomacy, Brazil feels comfortable and at home with the South American component of its international identity, which is a "deep force", of a positive nature, in its foreign policy" (LAFER, 2001:62).⁹ After all, this aspect has been, he continues, "since Rio Branco, a constant of Brazilian foreign policy, and a strong component of Brazil's international identity" (IDEM, 64).¹⁰

However, if we look more carefully at the place of South America in Rio Branco's ideas, we can see how different it is from what Lafer tries to make us believe. As a matter of fact, in Rio Branco's mind South America came after the priority of a special relationship with the US. In his view, the best way for Brazil to enhance its power resources in the international system was to have a

imperioso trabalhar com a História para avançar e aprofundar o processo de construção de nosso futuro de integração na América do Sul" (CORRÊA, 2000:29).

⁹ "Sintetizando: em função da sua geografia, de sua experiência histórica e da linha de continuidade de sua ação diplomática, o Brasil está à vontade e em casa com o componente sul-americano de sua identidade internacional, que é uma "força profunda", de natureza positiva, na sua política externa" (LAFER, 2001:62).

¹⁰ "(...) desde Rio Branco, uma constante da política externa brasileira, e um componente forte da identidade internacional do Brasil" (IDEM: 64).

special relationship with Washington. This, in turn, would enhance Brazil's plans for supremacy in South America.

In the same way, we should not forget Rio Branco's skepticism and even opposition to the *Bolivarian* view of Panamericanism (SILVA, 1995:98-99), i.e., the idea of not incorporating the US in the Panamerican group of countries. Therefore, Rio Branco's legacy on this matter would perhaps be better understood if seen as a hemispheric agenda, rather than a South American priority as an authentic expression of Brazil's international identity.

Therefore, with the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, the need to stress the difference from the European monarchies made South America a way to construct a new identity. The end of the monarchy doubtless made Brazil's rapprochement with its continental neighbors – all of them under republican regimes – easier, hence ending Brazil's political isolation in the region. However, what some see as a process of *americanization*, would be better explained as a process of *republicanization* (CERVO & BUENO, 1992).

In short, we must make a clear distinction between construction, assumption and definition of an identity as an input or as a proposal for political action, and the characterization of an identity in a more analytic dimension. To sum up, what I want to stress is the need to avoid mixing up political priorities with an allegedly everlasting identity. Furthermore, it is necessary to avoid justifying the former by latter if and when this very same identity has been constructed on the basis of political goals.

V. Concluding remarks

By way of conclusion, I would like to raise some likely consequences for the field of Brazilian foreign policy studies of the definition of identity by diplomats and the like, since academic staff from graduate and undergraduate courses continue to use their writings as secondary rather than primary sources. As has already been said by Messari, *"Through the use of speech, similarities are found or constructed between the self and the other, and a national identity is constructed by emphasizing these similarities and affirming them as part of that identity"* (MESSARI, 2001:245). This being so, we should take into account Fonseca's words, himself a prominent diplomat, one of the chief names in Brazilian contemporary diplomacy and author of several 'academic' studies of Brazilian foreign policy. When referring to the Brazilian case, he recognizes the effort made by people both from the Foreign Ministry and the Armed Forces to produce a serious reflection about Brazilian reality. Nevertheless, he underlines the particularity of this kind of reflection when he says that these institutions *"think' based on interests and on a certain vision of their role as permanent bureaucracies or even on a certain particular reality, therefore their thought lacks the conditions of originality and critical sense that intellectual or academic readings must usually display"* (FONSECA JR., 1998:263).

In so doing, one thing is the political construction of the identity, another is its analytical deconstruction. Therefore, even if one recognizes the high quality of diplomats' writings, which is indeed undisputable in many cases, I agree with Hill when he says, *"there may be only one world, but we need more than one kind of approach to improving it"* (HILL, 1994:21). Indeed, given that scholars and practitioners define the same problems in different ways, if we do not take this difference into account we can bring about serious

political as well as academic consequences for the teaching and learning of Brazilian Foreign Policy and International Relations.

Until scholars specialized in Brazilian Foreign Policy become fully aware of this and while diplomats and the like maintain such a status of academic credibility almost on the same level as scholars, we run the serious risk of becoming irrelevant and, at worst, of conniving at the official line, whatever it may be. After all, as diplomatic options are informed by interests, the supposed identification of a certain international identity by diplomats, which, in turn, becomes certified by the academic community can, at worst, make knowledge a hostage of political priorities.

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