

THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE TRADITION IN THE INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY. THE CASE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN RELATIONS OF BRAZIL

Gisela Pereyra Doval

gpdoval@gmail.com

PhD in International Relations. Coordinator of the Program of Studies Argentina-Brazil [*Spanish: Programa de Estudios Argentina-Brasil, PEAB*] at the School of Political Science and International Relations of the Universidad Nacional de Rosario (Argentina.) International Relations Teacher in the same institution. Postdoctoral Fellow from the National Scientific and Technical Research Council [*Spanish: Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, CONICET*].

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to describe certain elements that we consider constituent of the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Brazil - Itamaraty - as "empty signifier." The tradition of continuity in foreign policy is the result of the combination of these elements, which, in the end, creates a distinctive institutional identity. Among them, we will describe the different values, principles and constants, the importance of strategic thinking and administrative evolution.

Keywords:

Itamaraty; Foreign Policy; Tradition; Institutional Identity

How to cite this article

Doval, Gisela Pereyra (2013). "The Point of View of the Tradition in the Institutional Identity. The case of the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Brazil". *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations*, Vol. 4, N.º 2, November 2013-April 2014. Consulted [online] on date of last view, observare.ual.pt/janus.net/en_vol4_n2_art5

Article received on 30th August 2013; accepted for publication on 16th September 2013



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Introduction

Some elements, conceptual as well as institutional/organizational, generate acknowledgment inside a group and obligatoriness for the individual members. Thus, these 'implied standards' help define social meanings, establishing collective expectations. These standards are repeated through internalization of the group members and result in a solution of continuity through *tradition*. In this way, the aforementioned social meanings are established. The hypothesis of this article is that this tradition of continuity is composed of several elements that are part of the Ministry as "empty signifier". For this reason, the purpose of this paper is to describe each one of these elements. Thus, the first section – The Diplomatic Tradition – focuses on tradition with everything that implies, the different values, principles and constants that are held through time allowing the continuity of the foreign policy. The second section – The Strategic Thinking – briefly shows the importance of the ideas that were maintained throughout the years. Finally, the third section – The Ministry's Organic Evolution – briefly describes Itamaraty's administrative evolution through three periods -the imperial diplomacy, the charismatic period and the bureaucratic-rational or modern phase- to show that, in spite of administrative adaptations, the diplomatic elite started to shape up together with the nation and that the axiological base of the country's foreign action was conformed since the Baron of Rio Branco took office which, at the same time, coincided with the declaration of the Republic.

In this way, we will start from the analytic dimension proposed by Aboy Carlés (2001) –the *point of view of the tradition*- to analyze the institutional identity of the leading diplomatic elite¹ of the Brazilian foreign policy. In the first place, we consider paramount to share the concept of political identity,

¹ We are referring to a "selected" group of people that is distinguished in a particular activity. In this case, it is the group of diplomats that are a part of the political helm of the Ministry of Foreign Relations and that, as such, has the power of taking decisions regarding the foreign policy. They are one level below the political leader (in this case the president) in the decision-making process in matters of foreign policy. This group we call diplomatic elite (or just elite) is the one that most closely surround the political leader. They are "(...) all those members of one body that altogether select a course of action, in consultation with each other" (Hermann, 2001: 57).



"(...) the set of engraved practices, shapers of meaning, which establish, through one same process of external differentiation and internal homogenization, stable solidarities capable of defining, through units of nomination, gregarious orientations of the action in relation to the definition of public affairs" (2001: 54.)

Another dimension presented by Aboy Carlés is the *representative dimension*. In this regards, he states:

"(...) the element defining the representative dimension shall be the never finished inner closing of a self-defining surface (...) We have here as central elements either the processes of constitution of a leadership, either the formation of what has generally been called a 'political ideology,' either the relation with certain symbols, such as cohesive elements of an identity (...)" (2001: 66-67).

That is to say, the representative dimension is the unfinished effort to close, to internally homogenize an identity, an institutional one in this case, the way in which it is internally built. In this way, this bureaucracy creates frameworks of 'meanings' within which they think and act themselves; as a consequence, their actions reinforce the leading speeches created by themselves.

Basically, what allows for a definition of Itamaraty's institutional identity is a Weberian² bureaucratization and rationalization as *empty signifier*, that is to say, as the generalization of the different characteristics that make up the diplomatic elite. In this sense, we can relate the decision-making process with the second model presented by Allison (1988), according to which the bureaucratic units function in accordance with a specific pattern, whose behavior is determined by routines and oriented by goals and objectives which condition its action, which leads to maximize certain values which are inherent to it.

With regular career patterns, control over recruiting, and a professional assessment and training system, Itamaraty made the maintenance of a high degree of corporate cohesion possible enabling the emergence of an institutional identity of its own, independent and *articulating* of the several identities of their particular components. As stated by Laclau y Mouffe,

"(...) it all depends on how this 'organization we are capable of giving ourselves' is conceived, which redirects the fragments to a new form of unit: that organization is contingent and, therefore, external to the fragments (...) this form of 'organization' may be considered as articulation (...)" (1987: 106-107).

² We could call this ideal type Bureaucratic-Rational.



"(...) we will call articulation to any practice which establishes such a relation between elements that their identity ends up modified as a result of that practice" (1987: 119).

In the third section, we will see how the ministry was created under a monarchic regime and if there were considerable modifications with the creation of the Republic.

Besides its autonomy, cohesion and bureaucratic 'isolation,' the long "corporate coherence" in force in the institution is also remarked as a Weberian characteristic of Itamaraty. This is expressed in the continuity and the soundness of its members' adherence to the 'doctrine' of foreign policy developed by the corporation. It is worth mentioning some reasons that enable this 'isolation' of the Ministry. Political parties have been generally distant from the foreign policy, the official agenda of the main parties ignored, or simply respected the Itamaraty's points of view. The same applies to unions, business persons, armed forces and society in general. But, moreover, according to Barros, it has also been an elitist matter, which made Itamaraty bureaucrats "feel" superior to the rest of the bureaucracies:

"Partly because of that (and partly because of the high geographic mobility of 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" (1984: 32).

According to Geddes (1990), the competence of the bureaucratic staff depends on two factors: the capability to train people in a society from which to recruit and the recruiting process which chooses between potential employees based on merit. At the same time, if the recruiting process is successful, career bureaucrats will be isolated from political favors and, therefore, their incentives will be more corporate. Their work will be oriented towards the agency, its goals and their colleague's values rather than towards personal interests and benefits. Thus, the isolation of an agency is a way of preventing the organization tasks from being overturned. At the same time, bureaucratic agencies have a natural tendency to try to control the resources they depend on, including the faculty to hire candidates, develop an ideology of belonging and a sense of mission to guide their decisions, and also to develop divisions between themselves and their surrounding environment.

In this way, the institutionalization of the diplomatic service contributed to 'depoliticize'³ the foreign policy; however, the bureaucratic factor is not enough, by itself, to account for that result. Another thing that seems to have favored that relative separation of the foreign policy from the dynamic domestic policy was the nature of the issues that, generally, made up the foreign agenda, a consequence to which certain institutional characteristics of the policy formation process contributed, guaranteeing the Ministry of Exterior Relations a decisive influence on the definition of that agenda (Lima, 2000: 288-289.) The idea of coherence and continuity – which may be

³ Depoliticization is narrowly related to *realism*, and it has to do with the adaptation to circumstances in order to make a profit.



considered a traditional political ideology for Itamaraty – is explained based on this strong institutional element in the formation of foreign policy and the presence of an autonomous, bureaucratic power defined in the existence of a specialized agenda. These elements may be identified in the decision-making process. In accordance with Pimenta de Faria (2008: 81) there are six factors that enable the centralization of Itamaraty's decision-making process regarding foreign policy: the country's constitutional system grants autonomy to the Executive Branch, demoting the Congress to a marginal position; at the same time, the Legislative Branch granted the Executive total responsibility over foreign policy decisions; the "imperial" character of the presidential system; the fact that the industrialization model by substitution of imports generated an introversion in financial and political processes which resulted in the country's international isolation; the country's diplomatic performance which has been non-confronting; and the early professionalization of the diplomatic body, added to a recognition at a national and international level. These factors explain that the foreign policy, more than a government policy is a State policy.

To sum up, the aforementioned elements, the bureaucratization process, the selection and the preparation of the diplomatic body by Itamaraty are some of the most important elements that justify why the Brazilian Chancery operates as an 'empty signifier'. In this way, the work developed by Itamaraty accounts for how the particularities are organized –candidates' individualities- contributing to build one institutional identity through the formation process.

The Diplomatic Tradition

The last dimension Aboy Carlés refers to is the *point of view of the tradition* and, in this regards, the author states that:

"Any political identity is constituted in reference to a temporal system in which the interpretation of the past and the construction of the desired future are combined to provide meaning to the current action" (2001: 68).

Diplomacy and history in Brazil are linked in many ways and for several reasons. In this relationship, we can see reflected visions and perceptions of national interests anchored in the State formation, in its distinctive characteristics and in the tension each country, when exercising its individuality and sovereignty, carries with in its relationship with the other.

In all its fields of influence, the profession of diplomacy is revealed as essentially political⁴, constantly conditioned by the critical consideration and the adequate knowledge of background. For professional diplomacy, therefore, history and tradition represent an essential work tool. The Brazilian diplomatic process has worshipped its ideas and actions which have a tendency to remain in time, a commitment to tradition, a commitment to keep the present in touch with the past and the future. Diplomacy, for formal and substantial reasons, is indeed one of those things. The Brazilian foreign

⁴ Leaving out of the goals of this paper the discussion on what is *political*.



policy is associated with long-term national and permanent interests. That's where its coherence and continuity through time come from.

The diplomatic tradition in Brazil, since its independence, has strategically and pragmatically shaped its foreign policy, avoiding rough detours from the doctrine. In this way, as stated by Aboy Carlés:

"If the relation between the collective action and the achievement of goals defined as desirable seems evident to those who pretend to approach the action in terms of its rationality, the understanding of the current action to future companies acquires specific importance by contributing to give sense to the collective action through a traditional validation" (2001: 68).

Thus, Itamaraty's elite maintained the domestic interests, making small changes to the foreign policy implemented depending on the international juncture where it was applied, but continuing to keep a realistic vision⁵, in line with the country's general goals. As stated by Lins da Silva:

"The Brazilian foreign affair policy has been preserving, historically, strong features of continuity. The exchange of people and government parties, even when coming from thrauma movements, such as revolutions or putsches, has not changed, in a significative way or long lasting way some of its foundation principles, which were persistent through the whole 20th century (...)" (2002: 295).

In this sense, we are not unaware that this statement may be challenged with some examples as well as that the presidential diplomacy – carried out, mainly, as of the decade of the nineties with the FHC administration and reinforced by Lula's administration - would question such a categorical statement. However, it is important to highlight two issues. The first one is that the prominence of the presidential figure in the foreign policy environment is not part of the Brazilian tradition (Giaccaglia, 2010), but a recent model of foreign policy; and second, that the pluralization or democratization of the decision-making process in foreign policy should be understood in relative rather than absolute terms – "Pluralization departs from a unique baseline: the quasi-monopolistic reputation of Itamaraty" (Cason y Power, 2006, 7). Thus, even though Amaury de Souza's renowned study focuses on the expectation of the diversification of parties interested in having any influence on the decision-making process, the author also argues that there is a

"'democratic deficit' coming from the lack of transparency in the decision processes and from the inexistence of adequate channels regarding the

⁵ Regarding the pragmatism and the importance of the National Interest.



representation of the interests of organized groups or of the major tendencies of the national point of view” (2009, 85).

As stated by Pimenta de Faria

“(...) if today, there are significant evidences of a wider porosity of the PEB production process, maybe it is a bit premature to categorically state that there was a change in the roots of that same policy, of a clearly top down to a more bottom up format” (2008, 84).

Finally, according to Amado Cervo⁶, there are three constant conceptual premises of the foreign policy, which emerge as secondary elements of the Brazilian identity and consolidate through time to currently become primary elements as foreign policy principles and have more impact on its continuity. These are universalism, disarmament and integration. Cervo explains that it was possible to carry out a universalist foreign policy, as one of the vector principles of the foreign policy, because Brazil is a heterogeneous country and has a heterogeneous social composition⁷. In this way, universalism derives from a plural cultural and diversified ethnic composition with a strong indigenous and European stratum, but also with Oriental and African elements (Arabic, Chinese, and Japanese).

“Three lines define the ethnic composition of the Brazilian population: a) an original root of mixed race formed with the mixture of whites, Indians and blacks; b) a crescent whitening as a consequence of the European emigration and of the interethnic mixtures and c) the elevated degree of integration of ethnical and cultural matrixes” (Cervo, 1995: 134).

Thus, Brazil has a historical formation of the national identity of coexistence of the differences associated to the heterogeneous character of the country and its inhabitants. In this way, the construction of an identity with plural bases, lead to principles, values and patterns of behavior which were incorporated to the country's foreign policy, composing its historical heritage. As of the impulse to modernize society in the decade of the thirtieth, Brazilian diplomacy has reflected the ideology of the cultural and ethnic plurality in its discourse. This background was useful for the defense of principles of conduct and values inherent to the foreign policy which gave it a continuity character. In the words of Cervo,

“The way that the speech has taken over the concepts of the plural national identity ideology will be exposed through the reference to the lusitanism terms, African roots, ecumenism and universalism to

⁶ Interview conducted to Professor Amado Cervo in October of 2010.

⁷ This explanation is also backed up by Minister João Mendes Pereira, Financial General Coordinator for South America (IIRSA/COSIPLAN) in an interview conducted on November 9th, 2011.



conclude something about the connection between multiculturalism and foreign politics in Brazil” (1995: 140);

currently, we have to add South Americanism to these concepts. From this author’s point of view, universalism as strategy of the Brazilian foreign policy was possible through the incorporation in the discourse of cultural and ethnic issues, which served to establish bonds with the communities in which those features were shared.

Furthermore, we highlight that the universalist strategy is accompanied with pragmatic political actions. This is observed in the Brazilian discourse whenever it is asserted that cultural attachés are reasserted as long as they are useful in consolidating foreign orientations. Thus, it is observed that each discourse helped Brazil establish relations depending on who was the valid speaker for the context. It could be inferred from that that as Brazil has one of the most heterogeneous populations in the world, it has the ability to perform the role of bridge between the different continents.

Notwithstanding, we have to take into account that there other positions regarding the racial issue. Classic authors oscillate from the most favorable to the most reluctant to the mixture of races. Oliveira Vianna outlined the inequality of races – for the African to have a positive influence in a civilization’s generation, they had to “mix” with the Arian race -; Gilberto Freyre (forefather of the Brazilian “racial democracy”), on the contrary, weighed the contribution of Africans to the formation of the Brazilian culture. De Almeida Vasconcelos (2007), in his study on the racial issue, concludes that: the racial issue is delicate; spatial differences have to be taken into account; in a very “mixed” society, it is difficult to “separate” blacks from mestizos and Indians; the discussion over the racial issue places the country’s social inequalities in a secondary position, regardless of color.

The second key concept is disarmament. In the decade of the fifties, the ambassador Fácio proposed in the OAS the need to assign the resources that were used to maintain the military apparatus to finance economic development at a regional level – at that moment, projecting the issue at a global level was considered a lack of realism. Fácio (1958) stated that the safety of the countries of the region would not be threatened since the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance [*Spanish: Tratado Interamericano de Asistencia Recíproca (TIAR)*] would work as a dissuasion in the presence of a potential extra-continental aggression and, therefore, it was unnecessary to maintain military forces over those demanded by domestic security. Cervo (1995) argued that this Fácio idea is a theoretical subsidy to the Brazilian diplomatic thinking. In this way, we observe a need not only to demilitarize the region, but also to assign those resources to other areas more fruitful for the social development. Those terms were also stated, in the XVIII Ordinary Session of the 1963 United Nations General Assembly, in the famous speech by Minister Araújo Castro on the 3 Ds⁸, which would leave a deep mark in the Brazilian diplomatic tradition.

“The fight regarding the disarming is the fight for Peace and juridical equality of States which aim to save themselves of fear and intimidation” (de Seixas Corrêa, 2007: 173.)

⁸ Disarmament, Development and Decolonization.



As of that moment, in discourse and practice, the Brazilian diplomacy would use this resource to show its non-confrontational policy.

However, it is worth clarifying that this situation was jeopardize with the arrival of the most active stage of the nuclear process which came hand in hand with the Doctrine of National Security and the military governments and the historical situation of rivalry with Argentina. This rivalry was manifested mainly through two key events. On the one hand, in the Rio de la Plata basin which had the shared waters of the Paraná River as stage, where some misunderstanding occurred in the context of the construction projects of the Itaipú (Brazil) and Corpus (Argentina) dams in the seventies. The first effort to revert this situation was made with the signature of the Tripartite Agreement in 1979. On the other hand, this competition was evidenced through the nuclear and arms race which only started to go through a path of cooperation with the signature of the bilateral Cooperation Agreement for the Development and Application of the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in 1980. As of the decade of the eighties, this rivalry disappears, among other factors, due to the re-democratization process in both countries which is complemented with the several regional integration mechanisms, especially, the MERCOSUR. Even when the moments of higher tension between both countries were generated strictly in the nuclear environment, it was also the space in which the first Measures of Trust which would lead, after the arrival of the democracy, to the consolidation of what we consider a process of Cooperative Security were established. After the arrival of the democracy in both states also came the adherence to the treaties of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. As an example, we state: the adherence to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the signature together with Argentina of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the signature of the Declaration of the Mercosur as a peace and free of massive destruction and nuclear weapons zone and the Declaration of the South Atlantic Peace and Cooperation Zone, among others. In this way, even when it is true that there was a critical period in regards to the nuclear development, it is also true that it was a short period of time and under de facto regimes.

As far as the third Cervo's heading is concerned –integration- we can highlight that this constitutes an ever-present issue in the discourse since several actions have been carried out to achieve regional integration throughout time. This policy stayed, regardless of the sways the Latin American integration processes were subjected to.

In the decade of the fifties, Kubitschek's administration program gave priority to the effort of industrialization, considered paramount for the country's economic development. The understanding between Kubitschek and the rest of the region's leaders - especially Frondizi - was not only in the economic arena, but also in the political. When the Brazilian president fostered the so-called Operation Pan-America, he received full support from the Argentinian leader; at the Pan-American Conferences, they both defended the idea that the major threat to our countries was not to be found in the extra-continental powerful nations but in the underdevelopment. That cooperation environment enabled the emergence of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA), first integration step in the region. In this context, the definitions of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) were framed, and particularly, those of the Development Theory formulated by Raúl Prebisch whose recommendations were adopted by the countries of the region. In



this way, the main goal of the regional integration processes was to support the industrialization model by Substitution of Imports, which had to be driven by the State. This us how in the sixties, the regional financial integration was seen as an instrument useful for the search of a development conceived as a stage post-underdevelopment. Under this conception, the regional economic integration was a strategy to achieve the expansion of the domestic market and foster industrialization in Latin American countries. This integration was characterized as introvert and closed⁹ (Van Klaveren, 1992, 64.)

LAFTA's goals were limited but during the first years we were able observe an increase in the exchange between the member countries as a result of tariffs reductions on goods that did not originate resistance. Negotiations were stalled at the time of reducing fees in an effort to achieve the essential in the exchange. Moreover, there was also no progress on the reduction of quantitative restrictions or on industrial complementation agreements. As a consequence, the supremacy of protectionism, the authoritarian regimes that succeeded in the following decade in all of Latin America, the inefficient bureaucratic interventions, the obtaining of asymmetric earnings among the members and the financial and political instability contributed to the failure of the model.

In spite of its poor breakthroughs, the ECLAC experience was the foundation stone on which the LAIA stood. Such institution became, as of 1980, the point of approximation of the countries which currently form the Andean Community¹⁰, the members of the MERCOSUR, Chile and México. The transformation of ECLAC and LAIA was the result of a need to provide a new framework to the Latin American integration. Under this new model, new generation agreements which overcame the commercial dimension to incorporate the political dimension were implemented. In this way, a new phase started, characterized by the assimilation, in a pragmatic model, of the region's heterogeneity and the institutional channeling of the region's integrationist commitment within a flexible framework. Without pre-established quantitative commitments, it contained elements needed for the model to evolve towards superior economic integration stages and achieve, eventually, the goal of the Latin American common market. Compared with the ECLAC, the LAIA emerged as a more open institution since it foresaw the participation of member countries in partial actions with non-member countries, as well as the participation of the Association in the movements of horizontal cooperation between developing countries.

By the middle of the decade of the eighties, the foundations for a more ambitious regional integration project in Latin America were laid, the Southern Common Market [*Spanish: Mercado Común del Sur, MERCOSUR.*] In the first place, factors of systemic order were influential in a governmental perspective of approximation between the countries of Latin America: the crisis of the debt, the Central American crisis and the worsening of the East-West conflict. Taking into account the aforementioned factors, the Brazilian administration intended to favor Latin American integration. Thus, the Declaration of Iguazú, signed in 1985 by Alfonsín and Sarney, appeared like the first

⁹ An introvert financial integration is deemed as one that looks inside and is devoted to solve the domestic demand problems the underdeveloped countries have. It was closed since it was instrumented based on the processes of substitution of imports which intended to energize the national industry.

¹⁰ The Andean Community (1996) derives from the Andean Pact (1969) and it is formed by Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela.



step towards the re-launching of a bilateral relation. On July 29th, 1986, the leaders signed the Act for Brazilian-Argentine Integration in Buenos Aires, and on December 10th the Act for Argentine-Brazilian Friendship in Brasilia. Finally, this stage would be completed with the Integration, Cooperation and Development Treaty of 1988, ratified by both congresses in 1989.

The decade of the nineties starts with the broad structural reforms recommended by the Washington Consensus and from there emerges the so-called new regionalism which would be adopted in Latin American integration processes, as is the case of MERCOSUR. The beginning of the Open Regionalism led to multiple changes regarding the conception of the integration processes and the practices that would be adopted to make them operational.

The Treaty of Asunción was signed on March 26th of 1991 between the four Member States – Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. The purpose of this agreement was the creation of a common market. On that account, they outlined a strategy of gradual integration which led, first, to the establishment of a Free Trade Area between 1991 - 1994 and to the creation of the Customs Union as of 1995. It is worth mentioning that the four partners have experienced several problems which hindered complete fulfillment of the two aforementioned stages.

Regardless of the analyses which may be performed on the efficiency of the MERCOSUR, it is worth mentioning that in geo-economics terms, the regional integration has enabled and expanded the cooperation between our countries making them stronger at a global level. Thus, during the FTAA project negotiations, the MERCOSUR countries negotiated en masse – upon Brazil's request and due to its *Building Blocks* proposal in opposition to the North American suggestion of *Step by Step* negotiations -, which conferred them a higher impact on the negotiations than if each country had acted individually. Moreover, integration has helped democratic countries strongly seal the peace achieved in the borders with a tradition of conflict (creating the Peace and Cooperation Zone), and protect the democracies through the democratic clause (Protocol of Ushuaia of 1996.) These FHC administration achievements were obtained under the assumption that the formation of integration blocks constituted the only solution for developing countries against the risks of globalization. In this way, just as it happened in almost all Latin American states, Argentina with President Carlos Menem and Brazil with Collor de Melo, Itamar Franco and FHC abandoned the developmentalist State model adopting a neoliberal model. Accordingly, the governmental policies and perceptions that used to rule in the past were reformulated, the strategies of substitution of imports were abandoned, the role of the State and the international commercial and economic relations were reformulated in both countries, and the interpretation adopted was the one according to which all issues were of pure economic nature. In this way, the regional integration was used as an efficient political instrument to intensify the trade liberalization and continue reducing the protection levels average demanded by neoliberal policies. From the wide structural reforms emerges the so-called new regionalism or Open Regionalism which was to be adopted in Latin American regional integration processes. Within this framework, we have to comprehend not only the signing of the Treaty of Asunción of 1991, which set the commencement of the MERCOSUR, but also, and more importantly, the Protocol of Ouro Preto of 1995, which finally implemented its institutions and the creation of the common external tariff. Unlike the neighboring countries, Brazil did not suffer



counterweights and we even observed positive reactions of the economy to the economic opening. The fact that it is the biggest economy in South America generated asymmetries among its other partners that are still getting deeper into the planning of the integration.

As of Lula Da Silva's administration, the Southern Cone's peripheral condition started to be analyzed with an optimistic opinion, as long as the countries of the region started trying to associate to, jointly, handle the situations generated by themselves between them and with third parties, as well as those caused by third parties and which impacted on national economies and societies. In 2004, Brazil furthered what is now called Union of South American Nations [*Spanish: Unión de Naciones Suramericanas, UNASUR*] expanding the importance previously given to the MERCOSUR to the whole of South America. Having said that, it is worth mentioning the importance of diplomacy in the genesis of integration processes. As stated by Cervo (2008), even though political leaders are the apparent creators of integration processes, these can be carried out if, and only if, social forces are directly involved, and diplomacy is the one in charge of raising awareness around it. Integration as a permanent item in Brazil's foreign policy agenda can be observed in its participation in the several instances and processes, as those already mentioned.

In all these cases, diplomacy had a superlative importance. The Empire left diplomacy as a legacy that is 'genetically' transmitted in the construction of the State. In this way, Itamaraty adopted a position of strength in foreign affairs, informing and forming foreign policy opinions adequately. In the words of Melo:

"The strengthening of Itamaraty, as a professional body, has its origins in the history and in the formation of the National state. It can be observed that the institution acquired a crescent autonomy concerning the social system and the government apparatus itself (...)" (2000: 58).

Thus, the combination of autonomy and centralization enabled the decisive process to reach a high degree of union. The sound consensus on foreign policy, Itamaraty's approval by key segments such as the armed forces and entrepreneurial groups and the functional articulation with other federal agencies significantly contributed to shape the core role of Itamaraty in the formulation of the Brazilian foreign policy (Russell, 1990.) Historical approval comes from the fact that the foreign policy agenda has been focused on the country's development priorities.

The strategic thinking

The ambassador Meira Penna states that Brazil is the product of diplomacy. Even though we consider this assertion to be a bit extreme, we agree that the direction of the Brazilian policy by itself has been influenced by important strategists and, among them, we find a great number of diplomats. For this reason, we believe that the study of the political identity that underlies in the corpus of thought of Itamaraty diplomats, and with the one of its great dignitaries, is paramount to understand the Brazilian foreign action and its relation with Brazilian domestic political goals.



The history of political ideas in Brazil is full of images and deep concepts. In this section, we will not talk about political ideas in action, as materialized by statisticians who consider themselves the people's representatives, but about those political ideas which may have influenced those statisticians to finally act, that is to say, what was essential in the base consensus of the national political-strategic thinking. Basically, as stated by Severino Cabral (2004), it has to do with the study of contemporary political-strategic ideas that analyze a set of concepts on Brazil, created by intellectuals that are settled in the country's high political command, and applied to the creation of a national response to the challenges, both domestic and international.

Studying the way thinking developed by these intellectuals

"(...) It can seem an anacronical exercise of erudition not that relevant (...) However, it seems even closer to nowadays in the political agenda developed, at that time, by some of the characters which took care of the scenery with ideas and problems related to the national Human Being and its fate" (Cabral, 2004: 15).

The way of thinking of these politicians and intellectuals has an amazing importance in relation to the country's domestic development as well as in relation to its performance in the international scenario.

Calvario dos Santos defines strategic thinking as that

"Intellectual activity turn to the preparation and application of National Power to reach or to maintain our goals overcoming every kind of obstacles" (2003: 41.)

According to Severino Cabral¹¹, in order to define 'strategic thinking,' in the first place, we have to ponder on the existence of a system of thought, that is, of a set of systematized ideas in a theoretical body which express a determined field of knowledge about facts and data. The system of thought differs from a simple conception of the world or ideology since it admits an epistemic formalization capable of generating speculations and previsions susceptible to be proved or demonstrated – a system of thought example would be the Marxist socialist or liberal economic doctrines on the nature of the society and the State. Secondly, when the system of thought is supported by costs and benefits calculations to figure out projections of possible scenarios for a determined society, which imply the possibility of competition, conflict, approximation and/or cooperation with other societies, we then stand in a strategic situation, and the thought depends on the strategy, thus creating a field of thought that serves as background for the emergence of a strategic theory. The duration in time consolidates that doctrine and makes it a role model for other thoughts.

¹¹ Interview granted by Dr. Severino Cabral in October of 2010 in the Superior School of War of Rio de Janeiro.



In this way, regardless of who the thinker is, the important thing is that those concepts have to be taken into account to be expressed in actions. Thus, the Baron of Rio Branco, Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, José Honorio Rodrigues, Hélio Jaguaribe, Golbery do Couto e Silva, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, João Augusto de Araújo Castro, San Tiago Dantas, Gerson Moura, Ramiro Saraiva Guerreiro, Celso Lafer, Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães, are some of the examples of an idea of *Brazil country*, which was later, somehow, turned to actions. The articulation between these politicians-intellectuals who had very different thoughts from each other was that they thought of the Brazil of their times, however, their ideas prevail in time.

In the third place, we stated that certain historical characters as well as goals established at the beginning of Brazil's independent experience, have considerably contributed to provide meaning to Itamaraty's current action, taking permanent interests, perceptions and premises and adapting them to the current times, which, in Aboy Carlés's opinion, constitutes part of the whole political identity.

Nascimento (2005) explains that intellectuals have been present at times which expressed deep modifications in Brazilian history. In the decade of the thirties –which, as far as we understand, marks the beginning of Brazil's modern State-, intellectuals decided to direct their actions towards the State, conceived, as of that decade, as the superior representation of the idea of nation and the brain capable of coordinating and enabling the harmonious functioning of the whole social organism. In this way, the intellectual of that time had a social role which demanded that it was necessary to join thought and action. It was a period in which the nationalist thought was intensified. The consequence in the foreign policy was an important change in the representation of Brazil's national interests. Pragmatism and deideologization had as a counterpart –at a national interest level- a main goal: obtaining supplies for the national development. Another historical turning point was in the decade of the seventies with the military governments, which highlighted the idea that the Brazilian foreign policy had to be updated to give Brazil a prominent role in the world -the idea of Brazil as a power.- The last period we want to highlight, on which we will expand, is the Lula da Silva's administration, whose minister of foreign relations, Celso Amorim, has gone in depth on three strong core ideas. The first one is the feeling of belonging to South America, South Americanness. From this first core idea, we can deduce the second one: national leadership. Finally, this regional leadership tries to portray itself beyond South American borders to play at a global level. In the words of Amorim:

“At the same time, we understand the Latin Americans and, more specifically, the South Americans, we recognize the Brazilian singularity in the world context. There is no incompatibility in that. The Brazil's position as a global actor is consistent with the emphasis which we give to the regional integration and vice-versa. In reality, the capacity to coexist peacefully with our neighbors contributes to the development of the region and it is a relevant factor of our international projection” (2007: 7-8).

Brazil has become an emerging power, under the direction of Lula Da Silva's prominence and charisma. To that purpose also contribute a self-oriented diplomacy,



the company of a minister of Foreign Relations with experience and with a strong understanding with the president. This international identity has enabled the country to become a speaker for the Southern states within the most important international organizations, as well as a 'creator' of regional institutions.

The increasing prominence the country has acquired its regional and global role and, as a consequence, its insertion in the world, derive from an idea of manifest destiny (Almeida Neves, 1995.) This is, in part, the result of the construction of its national identity. As stated by Busso & Pignatta (2008), those countries whose national identity acted as a structuring element of its foreign policy, have achieved better results in their international insertion than those states in which the identity is weaker.

Led by Amorim, at a regional level, Brazil 'used' its territorial condition to strengthen its position regarding its movements in the continent and in the world. The mentions to *the regional*, which are part of the country's identity, are reinforced in the XXI century, when South America starts to represent the regional platform that references Brazil's international insertion strategy¹² (Freitas Couto, 2009). As stated by Samuel Pinheiro Guimarães –another ideologist of the Da Silva administration-:

"South America is the inevitable circumstance, historically and geographically of the State and of the Brazilian society" (2002: 146).

As stated before, the absorption of a South Americanity in Brazil's national identity meant the creation of initiatives to strengthen that dimension, which were reinforced by Amorim's administration.

In a structural dimension, the contributions of the different periods may be seen – paraphrasing Weber- in a harmonious balance of certainty and responsibility. In other words, the maximum external responsibility is tied to the game of national interest to consolidate a national project of strong domestic development and autonomous international presence. There, certainties act like subsidiary contributions -as parts of a whole- which assist to one, in broad outline, unique identity that becomes the support of the political continuity.

The Ministry's Organic Evolution¹³

The organic evolution which, later, led to the creation of the Ministry of Foreign Relations as such was complex and bumpy. Even before the Brazilian independence, the handling of foreign issues by the empire went through several modalities. As of the year 1822, Borges Cheibub (1984) performs a follow-up of the evolution of the diplomatic organ par excellence, dividing the history of the diplomatic process in Brazil in three moments: the proprietary period (imperial diplomacy) - from 1822 to 1902 - the charismatic period (the Baron of Rio Branco) -1902 to 1920-; and the rational

¹² At the Presidential meeting of the Rio Group in 1993, president Itamar Franco proposed the creation of the South American Free Trade Area [*Spanish: Área de Libre Comercio Sudamericana, ALCSA.*] Thus, the Group served as the real first South American essay of the Brazilian foreign policy. At that time, Amorim stated that the ALCSA initiative marked the beginning of South America's political construction.

¹³ According to Oliveira Castro (2009), the process we will describe may be similar to the development of a living organism.



bureaucratic period - 1920 to date. We will take these three categories and we will briefly describe the Ministry's process of bureaucratization since in its evolution, we find the explanation of the organicity.

In the first period, Brazil had a diplomatic structure inherited from Portugal. At this point, the recruiting policy aimed at the diplomatic task being exercised by members of families of noble ancestry, close to the State and linked to it by trade links. This characteristic did not allow for clear boundaries between collective and individual interests. This –together with the Empire's financial insufficiency- did not enable a high degree of professionalization of the diplomatic scenario of the period. However, these characteristics, which *per se* are not considered good, produced good results: the elite, previously socialized in the Portuguese tradition, was not heterogeneous.

“Were the stability, cohesion and homogeneity of the imperial elite which made Brazil a country different from all the other in Latin America – which guaranteed the country the diplomatic supremacy in relation to the neighbor countries (...)” (Borges Cheibub, 1984: 118).

The most interesting thing stated by Cheibub is that, during the whole period, there was an intra-elite consensus which was what enabled the continuity of the foreign policy. During this period, the goal of generating a bureaucratic structure *of its own* to recruit diplomats –although in the first stage prebendary characteristics were adopted- created the most important background for the diplomatic service, which would steady itself in the subsequent periods.

The transition from the Empire to the Republic did not imply great alterations in the Brazilian foreign policy, as stated by several authors (Borges Cheibub, 1984; Lafer, 2002; Pinheiro, 2004). However, Borges Cheibub (1984) makes a distinction between the imperial period and the charismatic moment due to the figure of the Baron of Rio Branco and the symbolic force this character would acquire through the years for Itamaraty. The so-called legacy of the Baron has a broader significance for the fact that he was responsible for the assertion of principles and values that would later be recognized as the axiological base of the country's foreign action (Sénéchal de Goffredo, 2005).

The Baron of Rio Branco impressed a distinctive seal in the manner of exercising diplomacy from their managements, especially through the symbol of *esprit de corps* which he instilled in Itamaraty. His management may be considered as the paramount symbolic framework in the modern conception of the Ministry of Foreign Relations. As stated by Celso Lafer:

“(...) the direction that oriented Rio Branco's vision of the future was the development as a means to reduce the differential of power, responsible for South America's vulnerability” (2002: 102).

On the other hand, as stated by Barros (1984), the originality of the Baron's situation lied in that, with the exception of the Armed Forces, no other bureaucratic agency of



the Brazilian government generated such a powerful historical symbol as to help it act coherently and sort out the uncertainties of the current bureaucratic competence. Rio Branco was the politician who started the definite turn. As of his intervention, diplomatic history starts to be told in a different way as the Ministry acquired a leading role in the republican bureaucracy.

After the death of Rio Branco, the so-called *Belle Epoque* of the diplomacy would end and the bureaucratic-rational or *modern phase* of the history of the Ministry of Foreign Relations' organization would start, with the consequent administrative modifications and regulations that would lead to the current organization. Thus, this last period focuses on the bureaucratic reform which turned Itamaraty into the institution we know today. It is worth mentioning that, as stated by Borges Cheibub, the bureaucratic-rational transformation process of Itamaraty was typical of the general modernization of the State in the XX century - particularly as of 1930 -, when the tendencies to centralization and bureaucratization of the whole public administration are sped up.

In this way, Itamaraty has been getting stronger throughout the history of the formation of the Brazilian national State, among other things, due to the characteristics of the State formation process itself and to some factors related to the diplomacy itself and to the diplomatic institutions. Thus, diplomats tend to acquire independence with respect to the system, which confers them an increasing initiative in regards to the formulation and implementation of the foreign policy, while securing them a certain ability to secure its continuity (Borges Cheibub, 1984).

Summing up

In this paper, we have tried to analyze the Ministry of Foreign Relations as "empty signifier", which enables Itamaraty's tradition of continuity. On that account, we described certain foreign policy constants, detailed some points of view of the diplomatic thought, and we made a brief description of its organic evolution. Furthermore, we believe that Itamaraty's officers – the diplomatic elite - have generated the tendency to act in one same direction, to protect and go deeper into its shared identity – institutional identity - through the application of these guidelines.

In Itamaraty, there is a structural component over the political component, which, regardless of contextual changes, maintains certain guidelines, principles, values and goals. The foreign policy is developed in such a way that organic goals are more important than the governmental ones. Regardless of the bad critics that may be made to some State agencies, it is worth mentioning that Itamaraty acts as *bolsô de eficiência* in which the *esprit de corp* allows it to be an agency that keeps a coherence through time, maybe because of the feeling of belonging of the agents composing it - which makes it possible for the shared identity to overcome individual identities. - We agree with Arbilla in that the presence of a diplomatic corporation with a strong self-institutional orientation and a high degree of control over most access channels to the process of formulation of the foreign policy, inhibited conceptual ruptures in spite of contextual changes. These have been translated into an *update* of the traditionally sustained principles, as stated by Azeredo da Silveira, "the best Itamaraty tradition is *knowing* how to renew itself".



Summing up, Itamaraty's political identity is defined through the Weberian bureaucratization as empty signifier. It is this bureaucratization the one that allows for the establishment of one unique identity in the continuity, with a high degree of corporate cohesion. Considering the practice of articulation stated by Laclau y Mouffe, we state that it is precisely this Weberian bureaucratization which allows the establishment of that modification in the different individual elements that re-drives the fragments to one unit represented in one unique institutional identity, which is evidenced in the maintenance of a high degree of corporate cohesion.

It is worth mentioning that, for the last couple of years, it has been stated that the premise of positive consensus of the several political-ideological tendencies on the Brazilian foreign policy is no longer valid. In general, critics consider that the current foreign policy is a late emission of the underdevelopment of the decade of the sixties, characterized by a childish anti-imperialism, as well as in the limitations in Brazil's leadership ability (de Almeida, 2006). Even though these opposite opinions make the consensus hypothesis more complex, it is undeniable that they reinforce the hypothesis of coherence and permanence throughout history of the continuous treatment of certain issues and perceptions. Taking the latter into account, we dare to asseverate the existence of a unique political-institutional identity in the core of Itamaraty.

The organizational and administrative modifications suffered by the Ministry of Foreign Relations as institution show what Olivera Castro (2009) calls organic evolution; that is, that the Ministry has evolved and continues doing it as the needs stated by the international policy and the Brazilian domestic policy move forward.

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