

'New Directions for Foreign Policy Analysis': Reconfiguring the Field

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Abstract: This special issue (vol. 45 (2) and vol. 46(2)) presents (some) new research directions for Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA) and Diplomatic Studies. It is driven by the dual aim of exploring contemporary debates that have nourished interpretivist approaches to foreign policy and diplomacy and engaging, through this very prism, with two broader audiences in Brazil. On the one hand, it wishes to connect these recent research directions to scholars working within the prevalent analytical tradition of foreign policy in the country. On the other hand, it also tries to engage post-positivist traditions in Brazilian International Relations (IR) that have traditionally neglected the fields of FPA or Diplomatic Studies. In short, the SI starts from the premise that FPA is a field not necessarily connected to one methodological tradition. Interpretivist research can inform FPA, and FPA can inform interpretivist research.

Keywords: Foreign Policy Analysis; Critical IR; interpretivism; Brazil.

FPA is one of the main subdisciplines of IR. Indeed, for many outsiders, dealing with diplomacy is, next to war, the classical domain of IR. During the behaviouralist heyday in IR, FPA emancipated itself from the more historically informed analysis of foreign policy, diplomatic studies and foreign policy strategy. From early on, FPA's more systematic analysis centred around the decision-making process, including its bureaucratic and also its personal and psychological components (Snyder et al. 1962 [1954]; Allison 1971; Allison and Halperin 1972). The focus on decision-making provided a space to combine domestic and external explanatory factors. As such, it not only included more classical concerns of IR scholars, but also research in comparative politics, where the role of domestic actors and lobbies, media and public opinion, and so on, would add to the ever-increasing list of factors needed to make sense of decisions and policies. Finally, some

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of the concerns of multilateral diplomacy were packaged into the study of International Organisations, however, reducing their focus. Yet with ever more minute detail, diverse research fields, and longer lists of explanatory factors, it became increasingly difficult to integrate all elements into a coherent approach. And in the dispersion of the study in often isolated subfields, some of the original inspirations and tasks of diplomatic studies became lost (for an overview retracing the historical evolution of FPA and its different traditions, see the discussion in the collected reader edited by Carlsnaes and Guzzini (2011)).

Against this backdrop, FPA has been revived in new directions. Starting in the 1990s (and our references here purposefully include early publications), this research moved beyond the behaviouralist focus on decision-making, while not returning to the previous approaches where the scholarly analysis of diplomacy was limited to its history or the development of (the best) foreign policy strategy. The inspirations for this revival were multiple, as can be seen in this special issue. One was the new impetus given to the study of national foreign policy traditions coming out of constructivism and post-structuralism (Neumann 1995, 1999; Hansen 2006). Interested in how 'national biographies' interact with foreign policy, such studies problematized the impact of a country's self-representations on policy options and implementation (see e.g. Weldes 1999; Hopf 2002) and, conversely, how foreign policy actions constantly reconstitute state self-representations and foreign policy identity (the locus classicus being Campbell 1992, see also Gomes 2014, 2016). They problematised and historicised foreign policy discourses and collective memories (e.g. Mälksoo 2012; Berenskoetter 2014), also in the context of de-colonial and intersectional sensitivities (Doty 1996). From early on, feminist analysis focused on the micro-level of gendered security and foreign policy expert systems and their practices of socialisation (e.g. Cohn 1987) and also on the role of the body in diplomatic practices (Neumann 2008; Standfield 2020). Related issues include the social construction of, and the quest for, status and recognition (see Wolf 2011; and now, among others, Duque 2018; Wohlforth et al. 2017). In addition, the more recent interest in the role of emotions in foreign policy (perhaps starting with Crawford 2000), which undercut the rationality assumption in the analysis of foreign policy behaviour (Mercer 2010, 2014), pushed constructivists to broaden their analysis in content and methodology (Ross 2006; Saurette 2006) and to theorise the role of emotions more generally (e.g. Hutchison and Bleiker 2014).

A second inspiration is more philosophical about the very nature of diplomacy (for an early take, see Der Derian 1987). Some scholarship deals with the understanding of mediation or translation in world politics (for different takes on translation see Opondo 2010; Wigen 2018; Çapan et al. 2021; Heiskanen 2021) when international diplomacy can no longer even assume a single diplomatic culture (Constantinou 1996, 2013; Constantinou and Opondo 2021). Others use diplomatic theory to reverse the explanatory interest: rather than looking into what IR Theory has to say about diplomacy, it starts from what Diplomatic Theory can tell us about International Theory (for this approach, see Sharp 2009). Giving it a more sociological twist, practice theory has been used to shed new light on the history and changing patterns of the diplomatic field

(Constantinou et al. 2021; Kuus 2015, 2018; Pouliot and Cornut 2015; Sending et al. 2015). Finally, there has also been a historical re-thinking of the origins of that what we came to call foreign policy (Leira 2019).

This re-thinking of diplomacy takes place in a political environment that has seen the privileged role of Foreign Ministries under attack. Classical diplomacy was based upon the idea that national representatives defend a national interest but that this national interest is not thinkable without some common interest of international society. As such, diplomacy can only be unilateral at its own peril. Increasingly, the State Chancelleries, Presidential bureaucracies or Prime Ministerial Offices are taking over the coordination and content of diplomacy. Put starkly, Foreign Ministries have been pressured to reduce their tasks to the PR unit of ‘Country Inc.’, creating the ‘image of a country’ (public diplomacy), facilitating economic contracts. In the division of labour, they are asked to implement a policy already defined elsewhere. Whereas classical diplomacy was based on the ‘primacy of foreign policy’ in which policy instruments needed to adapt to the overarching vision of the state and its preferred world order, now diplomacy is asked to merely execute policies driven by often narrow domestic concerns.

A renewal of diplomatic studies while diplomacy is in a crisis is perhaps not coincidental. The paradox of diplomacy lies in the fact that it is most needed exactly when it seems to be least feasible. Not only has multilateral diplomacy returned to some blockages traditionally seen during the Cold War. Also new initiatives, such as the ongoing COP negotiations, have proved difficult, whereas others, such as the Doha Development Round, broke down. At the same time, the diplomatic field has expanded, as more voices strive to be heard or can no longer be neglected (for one reflection among many, see Spies 2019), and the Eurocentrism of international diplomatic culture, while not really replaced, is also no longer taken for granted (Neumann 2010; McConnell and Dittmer 2016). Consequently, the renewal of diplomatic studies has not returned to the traditional codification of the practitioners’ knowledge, as important as that view may be. Diplomatic studies has become reflexive in the need to better observe foreign policy traditions and diplomatic cultures in a world order where governmental and private actors, ‘Northern’ and ‘Southern’ visions meet – and where diplomatic practice may need to acquire a new role if a just order is to be achieved.

This special issue is the outcome of two interrelated initiatives which aim to approach certain aspects of this briefly described revival and renewal of both FPA and Diplomatic Studies. It comes in the wake of a broader cooperative effort in place since 2017 at the Institute of International Relations (IRI) of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), and which led to the creation of the ‘Espaço Política Externa’ (EPE, acronym in Portuguese for Foreign Policy Space) project.¹ The investigations and reflections developed in the context of EPE have been structuring a collective research agenda in which foreign policy is analysed as a response to and/or reflection of socially problematised issues that permeate and constitute everyday politics, in Brazil and beyond. This is a move away from a dominant understanding of foreign policy as a primordial space for alignments and solidifications of the state at the level of so-called “high politics” to an acceptance of foreign policy practices as loci of dissent, of precarious definitions of

the state itself, of negotiations, marginalisation and erasures of the multiple subjectivities that constitute political communities. Considering the foreign policy analytical tradition enrooted in Brazil, this shift is not just new, but also disruptive of some of its central tenets such as, for instance, the idea of foreign policy as an activity linking two distinct domains of the political life of the state and as resulting from rational decisions, objective interests, fixed normative principles and stable national identities established prior to the external behaviour of the state.

The movement initiated with the EPE project has also resulted in the (still ongoing) preparation of two volumes of the book 'Foreign Policy Studies in Brazil: contributions to new debates' (*Estudos de Política Externa no Brasil: contribuições para novos debates*), with more than twenty chapters by researchers from different Brazilian universities.² This book is seen as the other side of the coin of this special issue: it offers empirically and theoretically grounded materials for the classroom. Like this SI, it is grounded on the aspiration of a group of researchers who have come together to interrogate and enrich the FPA field, as presently developed in Brazil.

More specifically, this SI is a direct result of the seminar 'Foreign Policy Analysis: new provocations; new directions?' held in 2020 at IRI, PUC-Rio.³ Apart from the launch of the Portuguese version of the book *The Return of Geopolitics in Europe? Social Mechanisms and Foreign Policy Identity Crises*, edited by Stefano Guzzini (2012) and translated by Bárbara Motta (Guzzini 2020), the seminar included three thematic panels – with most of the authors of this special issue – and a closing session with Ambassador Rubens Ricupero, who discussed some of the challenges for contemporary diplomacy.⁴

This special issue combines three fora and three individual articles. The first forum – Populist Radical Right & Illiberal Foreign Policymaking – discusses the implications for FPA in face of the rise to power of populist governments. The contributions by Salgado, Casarões and Zarakol (vol 45, issue 2) focus on religion, leadership and ideology to explore how contemporary radical right populism, particularly as currently expressed in countries of the South, has affected the elaboration of foreign policy decisions. The authors also point to conceptual and normative changes that follow the rise of this kind of populism and consider its impacts on the way states have engaged with the liberal international order.

The contributors of the second forum (vol 45, issue 2) explore some ways through which affects and emotions, and the search for ontological security, intersect foreign policy discourses and practices and, therefore, can intervene in contemporary FPA theorisations. In "Foreign Policy, Emotions and Ontological Security", Resende, Solomon and Sandrin provide different analytical directions for connecting foreign policy to collective identities, states' autobiographical narratives, emotions and affective investments.

The third forum of this SI (Vol. 46, Issue 2) engages with foreign policy and diplomacy and the politics of status and recognition. Guzzini, Opondo and Smith traverse several paths to consider the relationship between recognition dynamics, the construction of identities and the production of hierarchies and exclusions in foreign policy and at new sites of diplomacy in which violent forms of foreignness may emerge.

Two individual articles echo some of the debates and sensibilities initiated with the first two fora. While Loureiro discuss how conspiratorial beliefs and conspiratorial politics have nurtured the far-right populism of President Jair Bolsonaro, as expressed in the views of his first Minister of Foreign Relations, Ernesto Araújo, Muñoz reads historical changes in Brazilian foreign policy discourses as convergent with a crisis of ontological security, followed by a diplomatic effort to adapt Brazil's traditional foreign policy biographical narratives (Vol 45, Issue 2). Complementing some of the debates raised in the third forum, the final individual article of this SI approaches the relationship between foreign policy and identity through an exploration of Bourdieu's conceptualisations of habitus, field, and doxa. By connecting FPA and International Political Sociology (IPS), Motta (Vol 46, Issue 2) addresses some pitfalls of FPA claims, discusses identity and indicates further avenues of investigation on how the field of foreign policy deals with one of its central questions: how to analyse continuity and change.

The special issue introduced here should be seen as more than a collection of renewed debates and theorisations about foreign policy and diplomatic practices. The ideas brought to the table with the articles and the dialogues presented also serve as an invitation to trace and discuss how new theoretical knowledge on foreign policy practices circulates, and becomes interpellated, in the context of a semi-peripheral academic community like Brazil.

Notes

- 1 The EPE project, under the coordination of Maíra Siman and Carolina Salgado, includes master's, doctoral, and post-doctoral students and researchers from several Brazilian universities and envisages the production and diffusion in Brazil of new theoretical-methodological approaches to Foreign Policy Studies.
- 2 The book is edited by Maíra Siman, Carolina Salgado, Francine Rossone and Bárbara Motta. It is expected to be published in 2025.
- 3 The seminar is accessible here: <https://www.facebook.com/IRI.Rio/videos/371553650747310/>.
- 4 This closing session was chaired by Maíra Siman and the interview led by Monica Herz and Letícia Pinheiro. A longer interview with Ricupero was subsequently conducted and published in the *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional* (Silva, Mello, Pinheiro, and Herz 2022).

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'Novas direções para a Análise de Política Externa': reconfigurando o campo

Resumo: Esta edição especial (vol. 45 (2) e vol. 46 (2)) apresenta (algumas) novas direções de pesquisa para a Análise de Política Externa (APE) e Estudos Diplomáticos. Ela é orientada pelo duplo objetivo de explorar os debates contemporâneos que têm alimentado abordagens interpretativas para a política externa e diplomacia e de engajar, através desse mesmo prisma, com dois públicos mais amplos no Brasil. Por um lado, busca conectar essas novas direções de pesquisa com acadêmicos que trabalham dentro da tradição analítica predominante de política externa no país. Por outro lado, tenta também engajar as tradições pós-positivistas nas Relações Internacionais (RI) brasileiras, que tradicionalmente negligenciaram os campos de APE ou Estudos Diplomáticos. Em resumo, a edição especial parte do pressuposto de que a APE é um campo não necessariamente ligado a uma única tradição metodológica. Pesquisas interpretativistas podem informar a APE, e a APE pode informar pesquisas interpretativistas.

Palavras-chave: Análise de Política Externa; Abordagens Críticas das Relações Internacionais; Interpretativismo; Brasil.

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