

The role of cultural heritage in the admission exams for the Brazilian diplomatic career between 1995-2015

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The selection of new members to occupy positions in the Brazilian federal bureaucratic framework changed progressively during the second half of the 1990s. If the initial orientation was characterized by the quantitative resumption of federal public tenders (1995-2002), post-2003, this trend sought to attract a greater diversity of social sectors in public careers — and the selection of diplomats was not alien to this process. The qualitative analysis of primary sources (documents) and secondary sources (literature review) showed that, along with initiatives already recognized in the literature — increase in the number of vacancies and remuneration, exemption from registration, among others — the very modification of questions formulated in the exams applied between 1995 and 2015 can be understood as a measure toward the alteration of the profile of those entering the diplomatic career. Between 1995 and 2004, the test evaluated and selected the candidates through questions of “general culture,” which privileged a certain “cultural heritage” reputed as a sign of social distinction and associated with an allegedly sophisticated social profile. However, between 2004 and 2015, there seems to have been a standardization of the new questions, which, moving away from the tacit requirements of cultural refinement, gave preference to other candidate profiles.

Keywords: federal public administration; diplomatic career; Rio Branco Institute; public exam for admission to the diplomatic career; diplomatic career and cultural heritage.

O papel da herança cultural nos processos de ingresso na carreira diplomática brasileira entre 1995-2015

A seleção de novos membros para ocupar cargos na estrutura burocrática federal brasileira mudou progressivamente durante a segunda metade da década de 1990. Se a orientação inicial foi marcada pela retomada quantitativa dos concursos públicos federais (1995-2002), após 2003 a tendência foi de buscar atrair uma maior diversidade de setores sociais nas carreiras públicas – e a seleção de diplomatas não ficou alheia a este processo. A análise qualitativa de fontes primárias (documentos) e fontes secundárias (revisão de literatura) permitiu verificar que, juntamente com iniciativas já reconhecidas na literatura – aumento do número de vagas e da remuneração, isenção de inscrição, entre outras –, a própria modificação das questões formuladas nas provas aplicadas entre 1995 e 2015 pode ser entendida como uma medida com o objetivo de alteração do perfil dos ingressantes na carreira diplomática. Entre 1995 e 2004, a prova avaliou e selecionou os candidatos mediante questões de “cultura geral”, que privilegiavam uma certa “herança cultural” reputada como sinal de distinção social e associada a um perfil social pretensamente sofisticado. No entanto, entre 2004 e 2015 parece ter havido uma padronização das novas questões, que, afastando-se das exigências tácitas de refinamento cultural, dariam preferência a outros perfis de candidatos.

Palavras-chave: administração pública federal; carreira diplomática; Instituto Rio Branco; concurso de admissão à carreira diplomática; carreira diplomática e herança cultural.

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El papel del patrimonio cultural en los exámenes de admisión a la carrera diplomática brasileña entre 1995-2015

La selección de nuevos miembros para ocupar los cargos públicos federales brasileños cambió progresivamente durante la segunda mitad de la década de 1990. Si la orientación inicial estuvo marcada por la reanudación cuantitativa de los concursos públicos federales (1995-2002), en el período posterior a 2003 esta tendencia buscó atraer una mayor diversidad de sectores sociales a las carreras públicas — y la selección de diplomáticos no quedó ajena a este proceso. El análisis cualitativo de fuentes primarias (documentos) y fuentes secundarias (revisión bibliográfica) permitió constatar que, junto a iniciativas ya reconocidas en la literatura — aumento del número de vacantes y remuneración, exención de registro, entre otras —, se puede entender la modificación de las preguntas formuladas en los exámenes aplicados entre 1995 y 2015 como una medida hacia la alteración del perfil de quienes ingresan a la carrera diplomática. Entre 1995 y 2004 la prueba evaluó y seleccionó a los candidatos a través de preguntas de “cultura general”, que privilegiaron un “patrimonio cultural” reputado como signo de distinción social y asociado a un perfil social supuestamente sofisticado. Sin embargo, entre 2004 y 2015 parece haberse producido una estandarización de las nuevas preguntas, que, alejándose de las exigencias tácitas del refinamiento cultural, darían preferencia a otros perfiles de candidatos.

Palabras clave: administración pública federal; carrera diplomática; Instituto Rio Branco; concurso para el ingreso a la carrera diplomática; carrera diplomática y patrimonio cultural.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Within the study of Public Administration, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) stands out due to the peculiarity of its operation and its *ethos* (Drezner, 2000; Moura, 2006, 2007). Recent studies that seek to understand the functioning of these entities and their peculiarities propose that understanding the relationship between the spheres of national and international administration requires a reflection that goes beyond the classical analyzes focused purely on the interaction between institutions (Putnam, 2010).

Thus, an increasingly adopted approach consists of an investigation of the lives details of those who manage, in practice, the functioning of foreign policy within state institutions, i.e., the diplomatic corps officials. Following the line of initiatives that seek to understand the role and results of affirmative actions in different admission processes (Venturini, 2021), there is a growing interest in understanding

whether it would be possible to claim that there is a specific profile – in terms of origin, race, gender and income – which compose the bureaucratic situation of Itamaraty and how this could be the persistence's results of different exclusion practices in the history of the country (Amparo & Moreira, 2021; Cavalcanti, 2022; Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018). In this analysis, such exclusion would be attributed to a general discriminatory structure in force in the country (S. Almeida, 2018; Moreira, 2017a, 2020), which would promote dispersed forms of microaggressions (Moreira, 2017b) responsible for excluding, along the different individual trajectories, self- or hetero-identified people, as it does not correspond to the “usual profile”.

Certainly, selection processes are not the main barrier to privileging certain groups over others: different excluding forces play this role prior to the moment of selection. However, tests applied in selection processes are not just mechanisms for the quantitative measurement of knowledge: they can also be understood as social mechanisms that measure knowledge in a qualitative dimension (Fidelis, 2008; Freire, 1997; Freitas, 2010, 2016). In other words, tests do not only measure the amount of knowledge in certain fields of learning: they also carry out candidate selections according to a certain desired or established profile – in the studied case – the profile designated for those who will have to manage the foreign policy of the country – (Bourdieu, 2002a, 2002b; Bourdieu & Champagne, 2002).

Thus, even if admission exams are not the only barrier in individual trajectories, they need to be seen as equally capable of limiting the access of certain social profiles to key positions – with repercussions not only in terms of individual self-esteem, but also in terms of recognition of greater or lesser legal-institutional and social openness to some groups in detriment of others (Honneth, 2009; Moreira, 2017b).

When specifically entering the field of diplomacy, studies presented by authors such as Bretas (2017), Cheibub (1984, 1989), C. A. P. Faria, Lopes, and Casarões (2013), Lima and A. J. S. N. Oliveira (2018), Moura (2006, 2007), Sanz (2001), Siss and V. S. Almeida (2019) and Souza (2006) buttress this thesis, pointing out that the education and origin of Brazilian diplomats, the methods of selection and career entry in the country, the social and cultural environments of the selected employees – i.e., conditions that mark individuals and change their way of acting – impact the direction of diplomatic activities. Therefore, the way of entering the diplomatic career must also be understood as a key factor in the analysis of forces that act to formulate the Brazilian foreign policy (PEB).

Since 2003, the civil-service examination test for Admission to Diplomatic Career (CACD) of the Rio Branco Institute (IRBr) consists of the following fields of knowledge: Portuguese, English, History (Brazilian and the World), International Politics, Geography, Economics, Law (National and Public International). Among these areas, it is noted that the Portuguese test is the one that draws the most attention, which occurs for two reasons.

First, at least since Niccolò Machiavelli (2010), this happens due to Western political thought, which traditionally attributes to languages the role of building and consolidating a stable political union or, more strictly, a national union within a State (Manent, 2006). Even though language is not the only element capable of building the cultural repertoire and promoting political aggregation (Anderson, 2008), it is recognized that policies for building national unity often involve the institutional choice of privileging a certain language in detriment of others (Kymlicka, 2007) – implying, intentionally or not, the progressive disappearance of the latter (Cruz, Masinire, & López, 2021; Sengupta, 2022). This

occurs mostly because the language itself transmits not only words and syntactic connections, but also a symbolic and axiological repertoire of social origin, responsible for consolidating expectations of cohesion and collective identification (Giddens, 1999).

This alone would justify, in particular, a closer look at the CACD test. Indeed, the diplomatic career is exclusive to native Brazilians (article 12, paragraph 3, item V, of the Federal Constitution of 1988). This means that this key position of Public Administration is reserved only for those who supposedly share a certain common national cultural repertoire – which, in Brazil, considering Portuguese to be the official country language (article 13 of the Federal Constitution of 1988), is traditionally transmitted by the common language.

Precisely due to this purpose, the second reason to focus attention on the CACD Portuguese test consists of the fact that, in this test, literary texts are traditionally asked for admission to the diplomatic career. On this matter, authors such as Antonio Candido (2000) and Terry Eagleton (1996) emphasize the great power that literature has not only to transmit a certain vision of each society history, but also to consecrate political and philosophical ideologies in an implicit or explicit way.

This thesis is reinforced by the studies of Bourdieu (2002a, 2002b; Bourdieu & Champagne, 2002) which highlight the relationship between the game of power and domination in society expressed by the cultural heritage transmitted through knowledge of literature. Thus, if the diplomatic career is reserved for native Brazilians – who unite around national collective representations preserved and transmitted through the Portuguese language –, it is required to analyze which and how literary works in CACD selection tests allows us to discover whether, among criteria for selecting candidates, a given cultural heritage performs or has performed an additional scrutiny in the preference of some native Brazilians over others.

To understand that, this paper raised, systematized and analyzed public notices, study guides and questions contained in the multiple-choice stages of the CACD tests performed since the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government (1995) until the year in which the Dilma Rousseff government came to an end (2015). The goal of this examination consisted in highlight elements that allowed the identification of continuities and ruptures between the selected period governments in terms of content and skills required for admission to the Brazilian diplomatic corps.

It is known that, more than simply understanding the temporal variation of the CACD tests in themselves, this analysis suggests that such variation reflects the adoption of conscious domestic political strategies aimed at fighting remnants of traditional forms of exclusion in the country and promoting certain inclusion or social transformation policies within the bureaucratic situation. On this matter, it should be noted that the analysis of selection notices and related documents has proved to be fruitful for the understanding of different choices and strategies of the Brazilian Public Administration, as pointed out, in other themes, the studies of F. S. Coelho and Menon (2018), Couto and C. Coelho (2015), Mattos (2020), Mello and Resende (2019), B. C. S. C. M. Oliveira and Santos (2015), Pinto and Midlej (2012), Sá, Donadon, and Braga (2021) R. M. P. Silva (2016) and Venturini (2021).

Despite the importance that literary texts may have in the institutional process of social distinction, there is still a gap in the analysis of this theme when specifically addressing Itamaraty in the mentioned period. The work of Zairo Cheibub (1984, 1989) is considered one of the main references for the study

of the Brazilian diplomatic corps education. The author systematizes three distinct periods of Itamaraty – patrimonial, charismatic and bureaucratic-rational –, and highlights a change in the way diplomats were selected in society. The author brings to light a very useful and interesting systematization, but his analysis ceases when it comes to the end of the Brazilian dictatorship. Thus, it is believed that the study of more recent periods of Brazilian history would dialogue with the thesis proposed by Cheibub and could argue about the limits, continuities and permanence of his conclusions.

Authors such as Bretas (2017), Lima and A. J. S. N. Oliveira (2018) and Moura (2007) analyzed later periods of the institution. The importance and relevance of the systematization and analyzes proposed by these studies, therefore, must be recognized. Moura (2007) performs an anthropological analysis of the consecration mechanisms of cultural heritages in the daily life of the MRE diplomatic experience. However, due to the focus of her study, the author does not go deep on the aspects of the test and the admission system, limiting herself to briefly describing the perception that the admitted candidates had about the test. On the other side, Bretas (2017) thesis focuses on the first- and second-phase tests from the same period that this research analyzes and, despite making a long and relevant tests systematization, the study does not examine in depth the meaning of the changes. Finally, Lima and A. J. S. N. Oliveira (2018) move forward in the analysis of the diplomatic corps profile and even present a reflection on geographic region, family origin, studies, among others. However, the study does not highlight the role of the selection process in changing these profiles.

A more in-depth analysis of the changes in the way the first-phase tests are formulated, with emphasis on the significant change in the appreciation of “general culture”, can complement current studies and assist in a broader understanding of the processes described by the authors. To achieve this goal, this paper is divided into five sections, including this introduction. The second section presents, delimits and justifies the consulted materials – primary and secondary sources –, and the methods used to develop the qualitative analysis of the selected CACD tests, pointing out the pertinent literature that analyzes the role of cultural heritage as a criteria of social distinction and consecration of power positions. The third section presents, in a systematic way, the analysis main results of the historical series of questions, finding patterns and ruptures in the tests formats. The fourth section seeks to indicate how these variations mark changes in candidate selection criteria in terms of content and skills. The fifth section is dedicated to the final considerations.

2. MATERIALS CONSULTED AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Qualitative approach of documents and bibliographic review

This paper predicates a qualitative research based on primary sources (document analysis) and secondary sources (bibliographic review). The primary sources basically consisted of the CACD tests and the respective public notices and study guides from 1995 to 2015, including 2003, when, atypically, there were two applications of the CACD test, which is why both were analyzed, being here differentiated as 2003.1 (first application) and 2003.2 (second application). The secondary sources consisted of articles, books and book chapters that address the PEB objectives at the time and the political mechanisms used by the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT, freely translated as Workers’ Party) to implement its political agenda.

The CACD tests are sectioned into several phases. In general, they can be divided between first phase tests of the civil-service examination, which contain only multiple-choice questions, and other stages tests of the civil-service examination, which are structured through essay-like questions. However, questions applied in the oral test in the years prior to 2004 – when this type of exam was no longer performed – were excluded from this analysis due to access complications, by the researchers, to the content and documents of this kind of test.

After a preliminary reading of all documents, significant changes were found in the first-phase tests, consisted of multiple-choice questions. Faced with such changes, and considering that the first-phase test is the most disputed of the civil-service examination (Moura, 2007), this study focused on understanding the occurring changes in this test at the analyzed period. On this matter, as the 1995 test was not structured with multiple-choice questions, according to the previous IRBr model, that year questions were not analyzed in this paper. However, this exclusion does not prevent the consideration of other aspects of the CACD public notice on that year, such as salaries and number of places. Nevertheless, for the initial analysis, a database was created in which the questions were first divided between the test knowledge areas. In case the tests do not have an explicit division by area, the questions were allocated in categories corresponding to the prevailed theme in the alternatives answers or in the supporting text of the question.

The time frame of this research has its justification in three questions. First, there is a range of studies that analyze the foreign policy transition between the governments of Dilma Rousseff, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (P. R. Almeida, 2003; Boito & Berringer, 2013; Bretas, 2017; C. Fonseca, 2017; Guilherme, 2014; Lessa, 2003; Miranda & Bischoff, 2018; Ricupero, 2017; Souza, 2006). Thus, we seek to dialogue with these studies and shed light on a not so much analyzed area, which contributes to the general formulation of public policies under discussion and helps in understanding the means used by governments to implement their change agendas, in this case, via CACD. Second, the tests of this civil-service examination started to adopt a standard based on multiple-choice questions in the first phase, only as of 1995. Thus, a quantitative comparative analysis of the number of questions, for example, would be unfeasible. Third, a particular piece of material from the research itself should be highlighted. Most of the documents used were not available for public access or in digital format during the carried out surveys. Obtaining them would largely depend on access to the Itamaraty and Rio Branco Institute physical archive. As this research was carried out during the pandemic, between 2020 and 2021, these locations were closed to the public, making it impossible to obtain such documents.

In total, 22 public notices, 19 study guides, 22 first-phase tests and 91 other phases' tests were analyzed. Due to this paper emphasis on the first-phase tests, only the tabulation and analysis of the 1500 first-phase questions were considered here. It is important to remember that part of the documents collected was available on the IRBr website (2022a, 2022b). However, a considerable part of the files was incomplete, poorly scanned or missing from the official website. Thus, the access to such files was duly requested through a request made pursuant to the Access to Information Law (Lei nº 12.527, de 18 de novembro de 2011). In order to obtain additional information for the research, the collaboration of the Secretariat of Communication and Culture of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also relevant.

In this research, we chose not to use interviews with the Itamaraty staff as primary sources. Even though recognizing the importance of this triangulation – carried out in well-known studies that also analyzed public notices (Couto & C. Coelho, 2015; Mattos, 2020; Mello & Resende, 2019; B. C. S. C. M. Oliveira & Santos, 2015; Pinto & Midlej, 2012; Sá et al., 2021; R. M. P. Silva, 2016; Venturini, 2021) – the material aspects related to the actual conduct of the research led to the non-completion of this information collection. In fact, the research funding that supported this study lasted a year and a half and, given the need to collect and request documents not yet available electronically, as well as to prioritize the systematization of a large volume of information extracted from such documents, there was precedence on the work around all these documents – which, as already mentioned above, were physically unavailable due to the access restriction to institutions because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, in order to partially compensate the absence of interviews, it was decided to complement the collected information with secondary sources. Hence, transcribed personal testimonies were included here, as in the study by Ricupero (2017), or transcripts of interviews, reported in the works of Moura (2006, 2007), Siss and V. S. Almeida (2019), which address the very perception of candidates approved about the civil-service examination and their personal experiences with it.

It is recognized that, despite this, the complementation effort still leaves open the conclusions raised as a hypothesis in this work. However, even with such limitations, it is possible to raise some assumptions based on the information collected and systematized. Therefore, we propose to initiate the academic community debate around this topic and, in turn, to suggest starting points for future investigations, for which the invitation is herein registered.

2.2 Cultural heritage as criteria of social distinction and consecration of power positions

The first-phase tests did not always have their areas clearly defined. Until 2003, it was common, for example, to ask several questions named “general culture”, which, by the way, had a higher incidence in relation to the total of questions until 2001. They mostly involved knowledge of literature and similar areas, such as music and theater. As of 2003, there was a transition: the “general culture” questions were extinguished and a content part was transferred to the Portuguese test, however, with a significant change in the way of asking, as will be shown below.

Thus, it is interesting to point out where the forces acting on the consecration of a “general culture”, and a literature considered relevant, are socially located, so that the examining board includes it in the tests (Eagleton, 1996). When elaborating field theories, Bourdieu (1968, 1984, 1989, 1996, 2004) analyzes how the dispute for powers in the different segments of society permeates a dispute over which aspects legitimize subjects as belonging or not to a particular “field”, as the case of political power associated to diplomacy (Giannattasio, 2021). It is understood that analyzing the change in the evaluation process for entering the diplomatic career is to analyze the change in a force that expresses which social profile one seeks to select to occupy a position socially consecrated as “high” (Giannattasio, 2021; Moura, 2006, 2007).

Likewise, Bourdieu also demonstrates that there is a direct relation with the bureaucratic legitimation of a cultural heritage belonging to economic and political elites through tests, especially those that value cultural characteristics of restricted access to the public, greatly emphasizing the literature (Bourdieu, 2002a, 2002b; Bourdieu & Champagne, 2002). In the Pedagogy field, studies also

point out to the same idea, i.e., the notion that tests are intended to establish social profiles holding a certain capital considered as “culture” by each field (Bourdieu, 1984, 1989; Fidelis, 2008; Freire, 1997; Freitas, 2010, 2016).

Thus, it is understood that the change in the objective questions formulation of the CACD, related to the phase that eliminates candidates the most, may represent a change in the type of cultural capital that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought to enshrine in candidates in the analyzed period.

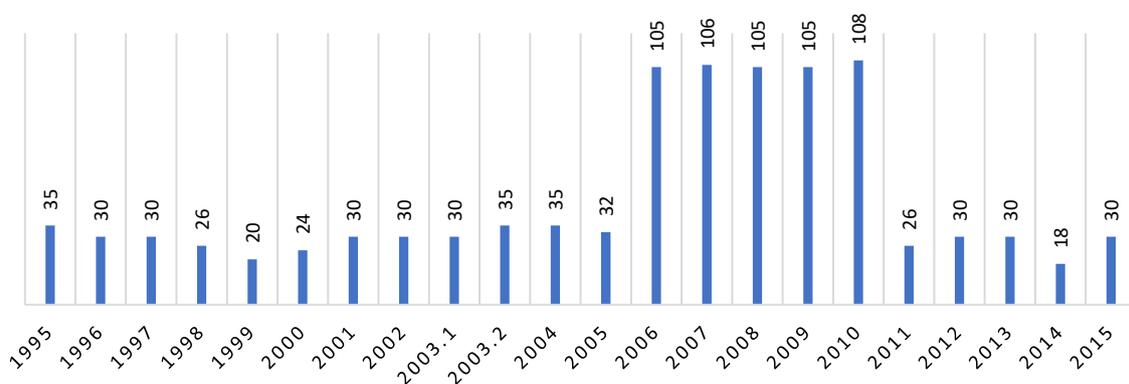
3. RESULTS PRESENTATION: CONTINUITIES, RUPTURES AND STANDARDIZATION OF CIVIL-SERVICE EXAMINATION TESTS BETWEEN 1995 AND 2015

3.1 General quantitative aspects of the civil-service examination

Drezner (2000) argues that the existence of perennial and stable bureaucratic institutions in history depends, among many other factors, on the cultural and political cohesion of each Institution. For institutions with a strong procedural organizational culture, one can still perceive greater resistance to the introduction of new political ideas through external forces (Drezner, 2000). Therefore, from a human resource management point of view, the introduction of new rationalities could occur through institutional innovations in selection processes.

On this matter, it was possible to observe interesting changes in the tests, which dialogue with previous studies. C. A. P. Faria et al. (2013) point out, for example, an expansion of the institutional staff of Itamaraty during the Lula government. As will be seen later, during the discussion of results, this trend follows a general movement of the composition reform of the Federal Public Administration since the previous government, even though according to a different rationality (Costa & Lamarca, 2013; Gomes, L. B. Silva, & Sória, 2012; Ventura & Cavalieri, 2021). Graph 1 indicates the significant increase in the number of places offered to CACD candidates from the second government mandate of the first PT president. However, after Dilma Rousseff took on the government, these values returned to the levels of governments prior to 2006.

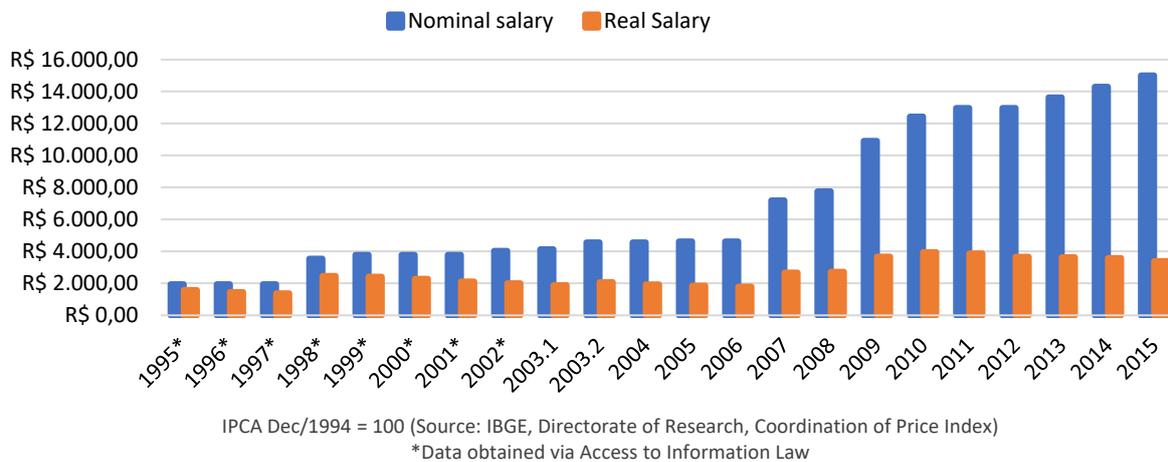
GRAPH 1 NUMBER OF PLACES IN THE CIVIL-SERVICE EXAMINATION – BY YEAR



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

At the same time, it cannot be ignored that the amount of real wages increased in the same period. As shown in Graph 2, between 2006 and 2010, the initial compensation of civil servants practically doubled in real values, and it is not too much to mention that the initial salaries for admission began to be publicly disclosed in the CACD public notices from 2003 onwards, an evident factor of attraction to those interested in the diplomatic career as a viable professional trajectory in Brazil (C. A. P. Faria et al., 2013). Although not disclosed in the public notices prior to 2003, the previous values were obtained through Law No. 12.527 (Lei nº 12.527, de 18 de novembro de 2011) and accounted by the authors.

GRAPH 2 CHANGE IN THE INITIAL SALARY ON ADMISSION TO THE DIPLOMATIC CAREER



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Thus, there is a clear movement to expand the professional staff of Itamaraty, which would be stimulated by increasing the number of employees at the agency, thus allowing the government to introduce new members into the bureaucratic structure. Authors such as A. L. R. Silva and Andriotti (2012) argue that there has been a strategy to expand the Brazilian presence on the African continent since the FHC government, which required, for example, an increase in the number of embassies in the region. When analyzing the number of offices in Africa between 1995 and 2010, through consultation with the Management and Human Resources Sector of the Foreign Service Department of the Itamaraty, it is observed that this was accompanied by an increase in the number of places, more specifically between 2006 and 2010.

On one side, the increase of places and salaries is certainly related to the demand growth for employees due to the opening of new service positions. On the other hand, the entry of a greater number of new members into the Itamaraty administration can also be seen as an opportunity to substantially change the staff profile that are part of the Brazilian diplomatic corps. Therefore, in view of the increase in the supply of positions, it is possible to suggest that there was a joint strategy of inserting new employees into the Itamaraty bureaucracy in order to change the profile of those who

would represent the country and act internally in the bureaucracy responsible for part of the foreign policy formulation. Thus, faced with internal demands to increase representation in different areas of power in the country, it is important to assess what type of individual was targeted to incorporate new perspectives into Itamaraty. In these terms, it is important to understand the stated and unsaid requirements of the selection processes, which is expressed not only through the questions of the test itself, but before them: in the formulation of public notices and study guides. This last aspect will be analyzed in the next section.

3.2 General qualitative aspects of the civil-service examination

The rationalization process of a bureaucratic institution can be read not necessarily as an efficiency search of the functions performed by that office, but as a process of normative legitimation of the power relations existing in that context (G. A. Oliveira, 1970; Trubek, 2007).

Among the countless forms of control that institutions have over those who exercise professional activity “upon their name”, affective, symbolic, normative, and physical strategies are adopted to reflect an autonomous way of acting and thinking of the institution in relation to the individuals themselves, who are part of the staff. These strategies are articulated to (i) reproduce these behavioral and cognitive ways over time, with which the institution understands itself, and (ii) inform how the individuals that are part of the staff should act and think – not only for the institution, but as it, since their subjectivity adheres to the institution one (J. Faria, 2007; Garcia, 2014).

On this matter, Itamaraty also has, around itself, an *ethos* institutionally created and replicated over time, an *ethos* that is continually reproduced and legitimized through a positive appreciation of the protocols that the institution has for itself, for the outside, and for career aspiring individuals (Moura, 2006, 2007). In the analyzed period, some requirements were changed in the public notices and can be understood as an integral part of an attempt to change the diplomats’ profile. Although these changes do not imply a complete modification of the institution *ethos*, they may suggest an attempt to modify the candidates’ perception on the institution, even without failing to indicate a predilection for a certain type of candidate.

Indeed, there is a recognition of the space of diplomatic relations as a space marked by “due ceremonials”, which compliance indicates the fulfillment of expectations associated with social sophistication or behavioral refinement. In other words, relational skills linked to specific patterns of taste, gesture, bearing and clothing, perceived as exquisite, would be equally relevant for the performance of professional activities to be taught by the IRBr to future members of Itamaraty. On this matter, the narrative by Ricupero (2017, p. 20) is illustrative, indicating the concern of Itamaraty to communicate in advance to candidates the appreciation of “select” social standards, typical of diplomatic activity:

In the letter, I also recorded, dazzled, my discovery of the fascinating world of Itamaraty and diplomacy. At the age of 21, growing up in one of the poorest corners of the working-class neighborhood of Brás in the 1940s and 1950s [...], I had never been exposed to such a majestic and imposing scenario. [...]. My enchantment [during the tests] reached its peak when, at one

point, employees in white gloves and uniforms with gold buttons served us coffee in elegant gold-rimmed cups with the Republic coat of arms. It was love at first sight [...] (Ricupero, 2017, p. 20).

Regardless of whether you agree or not with the *ethos* valued by an institution, it is interesting to note that the environment created by any admission exam in itself marks the preference of such institution for certain signs of social prestige over others. This would not be different in the CACD of IRBr.

A first aspect of this preference is observed in requiring social clothes by candidates. Until 2004, the public notice explicitly punctuated the obligation to wear a complete evening event suit (suit and tie), a requirement that has not been made after 2005. The obligation that has been repeated since then only concerns the need for candidates to wear an “appropriate attire on the tests days”. The requirement for “appropriate” attire seems to be recurrent in other civil-service examinations for the candidates selection for the Public Administration, in positions held by professions that are recognized as traditional, sophisticated and refined, such as offices in the Justice System (Office of the General Counsel for the Federal Government, 2015; Public Prosecutor’s Office of the State of Goiás, 2021).

The simple requirement of a certain dress code properly to the CACD test environment is an aspect that affects the candidates’ own experience before, during and after the tests. This is because not only many have not even worn formal clothes in other spaces and in other opportunities for social interaction (Moura, 2007), but also a certain way to perpetuate how they understand, continue to understand or come to understand Itamaraty, whether approved or not in the selection process: a space for few people.

On this matter, candidates who pass the tests are quickly introduced to the appropriate ceremonial through exclusive communications. For male candidates, for example, combinations of types and colors of suits and ties are expressly indicated for each day of the week, to attend classes or to participate in other social events, always in accordance with the expected formality and discretion. Likewise, even before taking on the office, it is required/expected that, in such a ceremony, they and their guests know how to present themselves, dressed in accordance with the sophistication required by the institution *ethos*, after all, it would be part of the definitive consecration ritual of their entry into this exclusive social space (Moura, 2007).

As of 2002, Itamaraty began to appeal to mechanisms aimed at encouraging the candidates’ access and permanence, through the provision of resources necessary to perform the tests. That year, quotas were created for candidates with disabilities, as well as, as of 2015, due to Federal Law 12.990/2014 (Lei nº 12.990, de 9 de junho de 2014), the creation of an affirmative action program for self-declared black candidates (Ministério das Relações Exteriores & Instituto Rio Branco, 2022) were accomplished. Since 2002, it is also possible to fill the application online, avoiding traveling to the cities where the test is applied – until 2010, the tests were applied in the cities of Belém (PA), Belo Horizonte (MG), Curitiba (PR), Florianópolis (SC), Fortaleza (CE), Porto Alegre (RS), Recife (PE), Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Salvador (BA) and São Paulo (SP). It is also worth mentioning that, since 1995, there is no longer an age requirement to participate in the civil-service examination, which was previously restricted to those between 21 and 35 years old.

Thus, these and other small changes seem to suggest an attempt to change the process of entering the diplomatic career during the years under analysis, with the objective of meeting internal social demands for the expansion and diversification of social representation within the Brazilian staff. It is interesting to mention the publication of Study Guides aimed at helping candidates who are preparing for the civil-service examination. In this publication, considered as mandatory reading by the public notices, supporting texts, recommended readings and samples of questions from the written phases are presented as “examples”. The guide was published until 2013 and, from then on, a yearbook prepared by the students themselves began to be published, which did not contain any indication of official reading recommendations.

The main change in the Guide lies in two aspects. First, as of the 2004 application, the pre-selection test started to have a list of recommended readings, something that did not happen before. Previously, the focus on general knowledge was mentioned, which made it impossible to indicate a specific reading. Second, although historically fictional literature has always been asked in CACD tests, it was only in 2007 that a list of mandatory reading works was inserted, which remained until 2010. However, small writing aspects on the Guide get our attention. When, for example, describing the content to be asked on objective tests, formerly called pre-selection test (TPS), the 1997 Study Guide establishes:

[...] Therefore, it is a type of unpredictable test, since its results will only be significant if they are the **expression of continuous experience**, not programmable or controllable. **Therefore, there is no specific publication to be indicated for its preparation.**

The best and only way to prepare for this type of test is to open your eyes to the world around you: read a lot and good contents (novels, poetry, newspapers, magazines, theater...), **pay attention to all kinds of cultural manifestation** (cinema, theater, sport, concerts, musical exhibitions in general...), be in a state of permanent readiness for the political, social, economic reality of the country and the world, **cultivate the arts in general**, both in its erudite manifestations, as in the popular ones, seek to contemplate the entire human spectacle with an alert and critical eye, trying to discern **what deserves special attention from what is commonplace** (Ministério das Relações Exteriores & Instituto Rio Branco, 1997, pp. 25-26, our emphasis).

In the years that followed, until 2003, the text followed similar models, often with the same text, and, when in different forms, with the same content. On the other side, in 2004, the Study Guide established the following in relation to the objective tests:

The TPS questions **will mainly address subjects that will be examined in the subsequent phases of the civil-service examination, without being limited to the programs described in this Study Guide.** They will tend to explore fundamental aspects and relevant knowledge of each subject, **privileging the reasoning ability of the candidate, and not just memorized knowledge.** Among the subjects evaluated, Portuguese and English will have special emphasis. In addition to the standard knowledge of the Portuguese language, it will seek to assess the abilities of text comprehension and interpretation.

However, a parcel of the questions will cover notions of general culture and Brazilian culture, which are not restricted to the subjects that compose the rest of the tests in the civil-service examination. It is about the evaluation of a type of knowledge (essential for the diplomatic career), **which has no distinguishable contours, originating from the most diverse sources and refractory to confinement in specific manuals** (there is no other reason why a Manual is not indicated for the test). The fact that the TPS contains less predictable questions than those of the following phases is not accidental: this test also seeks to assess the **sedimentation of knowledge directly or indirectly relevant to the exercise of the diplomatic profession**. Although finite, this range of knowledge is so extensive that it is not subject to satisfactory preparation in the short term (Ministério das Relações Exteriores & Instituto Rio Branco, 2004, p. 27, our emphasis).

Finally, as of 2006, the Guide becomes more synthetic, being limited to less than half a page.

The Pre-Selection Test (TPS), as the name implies, is a preliminary and selective test, with an eliminatory nature. Its purpose is to broadly test the **comprehension skill and the culture of the candidates**.

The TPS has its own nature, if compared with the tests of the subsequent Phases. In terms of study orientation, **it does not contain particular recommendations, since it does not correspond to a specific program**.

[...] Although the information contained in this Guide regarding the Portuguese (Second Phase), Brazilian History, Geography and English (Third Phase) tests is certainly very useful in preparing candidates, the content of the TPS questions will not be limited to these subjects. The same goes for World History (a subject that is not included in the Third Phase tests), which program is reproduced at the end of this volume, along with the relevant bibliography, as shown in the Study Guide of 2004 (Ministério das Relações Exteriores & Instituto Rio Branco, 2005, p. 19, our emphasis).

Thus, it can be seen that, gradually, the question of “general culture” starts to have less weight in the assessment of candidates, despite the mention of it continuing to exist every year. Likewise, something interesting to notice is that, more and more, there is the availability of a supporting bibliography. Even if it continues to point out that the test will cover more than what is contained in the Study Guide, as of 2004, there is a general bibliography to help the candidate. In addition, between 2007 and 2010, the test also included a list of must-read works of fictional literature, such as *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas*, by Machado de Assis (Ministério das Relações Exteriores & Instituto Rio Branco, 2006, p. 17).

3.3 Quantitative and qualitative aspects of the first-phase tests

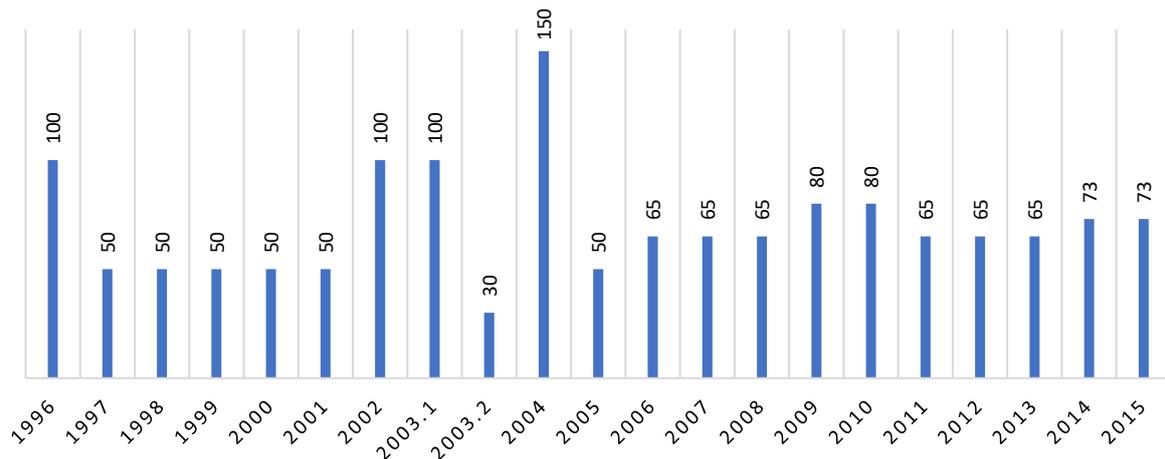
Besides the modifications of some of the admission requirements foreseen in the documents analyzed above, there are still several others, identified in the tests of CACD, which need to be underlined. It is understood that the modification of the types of questions to assess knowledge and select candidates also translates the movement of changing the profile of diplomatic staff.

Indeed, the test itself exposes preferred or neglected skills and knowledge of future members of the MRE, operating as well as the instrument that, under the pretext of evaluating, actually performs the selection and the consequent exclusion or inclusion of certain candidates. However, it is argued that the selection of candidates is made not only considering the simple presence or absence of knowledge about content, but also select social profiles that demonstrate that they have a certain type of knowledge recognized as sophisticated.

The argument presented above is based on the analysis of the historical series of first-phase tests between 1996 and 2015, the instrument recognized for being the great selection “sieve” that blocks a large number of candidates (Moura, 2007, pp. 58-60).

It is interesting to point out a great inconsistency present in the number of questions in the tests over the years, which impacts, for example, in the definition of the absolute cutoff score, since the test is composed of a system of negative scores for each error, and the eventual random selection of an alternative in the multiple-choice questions does not benefit a candidate who is not convinced about the adequacy of the answer. Thus, the weight that each question can have per year changes, as shown in Graph 3.

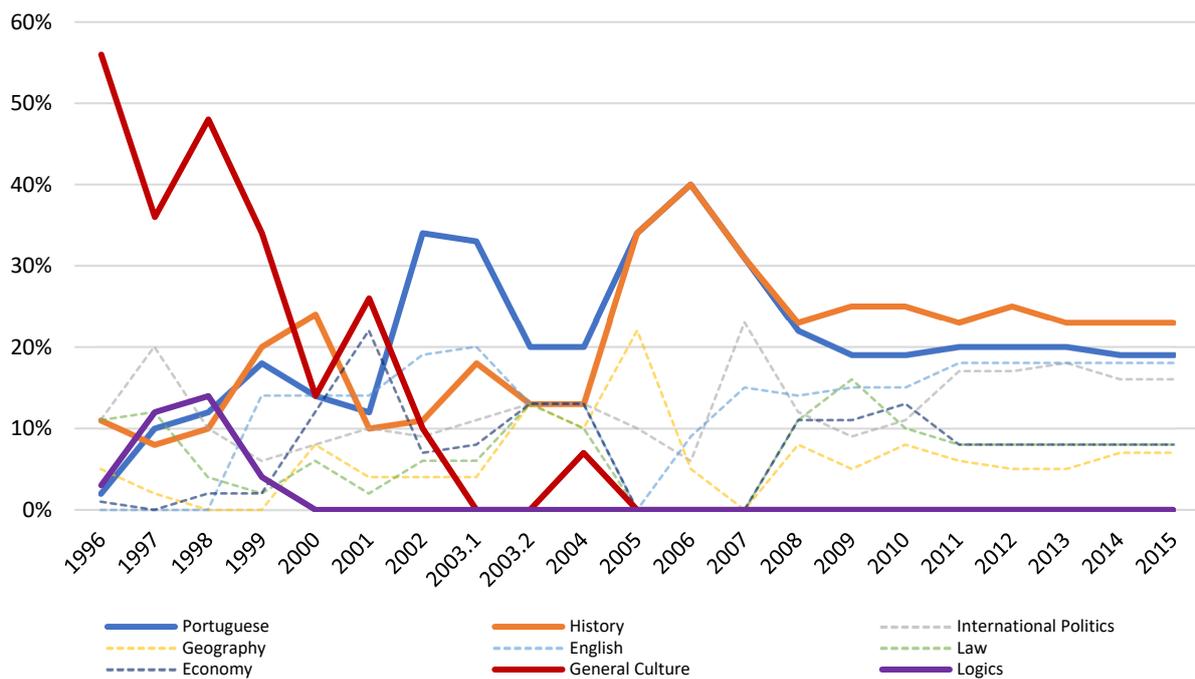
GRAPH 3 NUMBER OF QUESTIONS IN OBJECTIVE TESTS



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Another important feature to understand the objective phase of the test is to observe how the questions are distributed by the knowledge areas. Not all tests have an explicit division of knowledge area, but one can observe a perennial incidence in the areas of History (both worldwide and Brazilian), Portuguese, International Politics, Geography, English, Law (national and international), Economics and questions named by the civil-service examination as “general culture”, that is, the knowledge of artistic, architectural, plastic, cinematographic works and recent events involving these works. To a lesser extent, one can also observe questions of logic in the early years of the FHC government. In the years when there was a clear division as to the area of knowledge of the questions, what was stated in the test was adopted. In years when this type of differentiation did not exist, the question was identified as belonging to the area closest to knowledge of the subject. Thus, Graph 4 shows the proportional evolution of the knowledge areas present on the first-phase tests.

GRAPH 4 PERCENTAGE OF INCIDENCE BY AREA OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIRST-PHASE TESTS



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

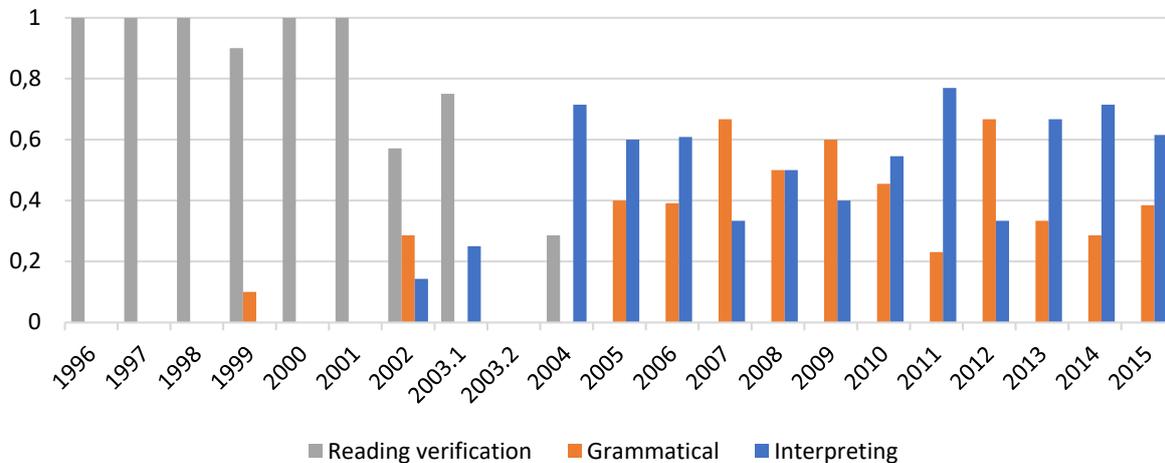
Two changes are identifiable through Graph 4. First, the test goes through an evident process of standardization related to the distribution of knowledge areas from the middle of the second government of Lula, an effect maintained in the governments of Dilma. Prior to that, the distribution of each knowledge area and, therefore, their relative weight, was volatile from year to year. Although there is a small variation in the number of questions, as shown in Graph 3, the relative proportion of subjects remained practically constant, generating a greater possibility of predictability of the test by the candidates. Second, it is important to pay attention to the standardization of the questions. On one side, it is observed that Portuguese and history, together, started to compose practically half of the questions as of 2004. With a few exceptions, to date, the questions in these two areas did not present great numerical differences in relation to the others, reaching less incidence than other areas. On the other side, there is a large drop in the questions that could be identified as integrating the broad spectrum of the “general culture” test, which came to compose more than 50% of the test in previous moments. The disappearance of these questions practically took place in 2003, in the first year of the Lula government.

Keeping in mind specifically the Portuguese questions, it is possible to measure the change in the weight given to questions of general culture in the first-phase tests of CACD and, consequently, to the cultural heritage of the candidates. This is because, unlike the questions from the other knowledge areas that were asked, the Portuguese questions (i) assess the knowledge of non-academic and cultural texts, such as poetry, novels etc., and (ii) inherited part of the questions previously identified as “general culture”.

Thus, a tabulation of the questions that had an approach specifically focused on literary texts was performed, since they were among those that most frequently focused on the “general culture” test. Texts that generally fit within the canon of classical literary theory were considered, such as published diary, chronicle, short story, poetry, novel, epic, published letters, published interviews, comic strips and plays, whether fictional or not (Bloom, 2013; Eagleton, 1996). Articles, academic theses, official documents, academic essays, newspaper news and the like were not analyzed, which were eventually used in the questions presented by CACD to the candidates.

After this first general mapping of the questions involving literature, the texts of each one of them were read in order to identify the way in which the literature text was presented to the candidate; how the question was worded according to the text. Therefore, if the question addressed literature, it was categorized into one of three groups: (i) linguistic questions, which assess the mastery of structural mechanisms of the analyzed language, named “grammatical”; (ii) literary questions, which involved interpretation without the need for prior knowledge of the text, named “interpretative”; and (iii) questions that only sought to verify if the candidate had previous knowledge of some literary work or text, named “reading verification”.

GRAPH 5 TYPE OF QUESTION INVOLVING LITERATURE BY YEAR¹



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The Portuguese test inherited part of the questions considered as “general culture” over the years. At the beginning of the analyzed period, the Portuguese test was dedicated almost exclusively to grammar, while the general culture test was composed of questions addressing literary texts. Over time, questions involving literature were shifted to the Portuguese test, but in a significantly different way. More comprehensively, it was found that, between 1995 and 2002, approximately 100 questions asked the candidate to have prior knowledge of some work in cultural areas such as: cinema, music, plastic arts or literature, without specific mention in the public notice of which works would be asked about.

In the initial model, all literature questions sought to assess whether the candidate had had any previous contact with literary texts of the most diverse types, even without any mention of them in Public Notices. After 2004, questions about literary texts were drastically reduced: as of then, all questions involving literary texts began to focus on grammatical or interpretive aspects of excerpts from texts provided by the test, not requiring any kind of prior knowledge of the candidate about the text, about literary movements or about contexts related to literature.

Authors such as Antonio Candido (2000) and Terry Eagleton (1996) emphasize the great power that literature has to not only transmit a certain vision of the history of each society, but also to consecrate political and philosophical ideologies in an implicit or explicit way. This thesis is reinforced in studies by Bourdieu (2002a) which highlight the relationship between the game of power and domination in society with the cultural heritage transmitted through knowledge of literature. In these terms, when observing the change in the way literature was asked in CACD tests, it can be seen that this movement seems to reflect a tendency to reduce the importance of a

¹ In the second application in 2003, there were no questions involving literary texts.

certain cultural heritage of the candidates as a way of selecting the most apt one to integrate the select space of Itamaraty.

As an example, as shown in Figure 1, questions that required the candidate to have knowledge of a specific text in fictional literature were extremely common, even if this was not expressed as mandatory reading in public notices or study guides.

FIGURE 1 QUESTION 7 OF THE 1996 PRE-SELECTION TEST

7. Which character created by Machado de Assis lived the doubt on the fidelity of his wife and the paternity of his son?
- a) Bentinho.
 - b) Brás Cubas.
 - c) Conselheiro Aires.
 - d) Quincas Borba.
 - e) Félix.

Source: Ministério das Relações Exteriores and Instituto Rio Branco (1996, our translation).

As of 2003, the questions that previously covered the aspect of “general culture” are now limited to the Portuguese test, with the maintenance of asking on fictional literature. However, the way of asking for such knowledge changes significantly. Almost unanimously, the questions start to ask from the candidate much more technical and/or interpretive knowledge about the work, as shown in Figure 2. Obviously, prior knowledge of the text can help with the questions, but in a much less significant way than indicated in Figure 1. Furthermore, in the very rare cases in which prior knowledge of the work was relevant, it was found that they were works indicated as mandatory reading in the Study Guide.

FIGURE 2 QUESTIONS 11, 12 AND 13 OF THE 2009 OBJECTIVE TEST

Text 6 Unconstitutional taxes...

Yesterday, when I turned a corner, I came across the unconstitutional taxes of Pernambuco. They recognized me right away, I, either due to lack of eyesight or because they really are fatter, did not recognize them right away. I knew them by their voice, *vox clamantis in deserto*. They told me they had arrived on the last packet. The eldest added that now they will regularly repeat these trips to court.

- We, as unconstitutional as we are, he concluded, do not die of boredom in the cell of probabilities. A little nap to the court, every now and then, does not hurt anyone, except...

- Except...?

- This is now wanting to scrutinize our intimate thoughts. Except for may the devil carry you, satisfied? There is nothing that cannot harm someone, whoever one is.

I spoke in a general and abstract way. (...)

- Are all unconstitutional?

- All.

- Let us go to the sidewalk. And now, what do you intend to do?

- Now we have to go to the Emperor, but I confess, my friend, we fear wasting time. Do you know the old saying that says history does not repeat itself?

- I think so.

- Well, that is our case. We are afraid that the Emperor, when he sees us, will be annoyed to see the same faces and, on the other hand, since history does not repeat itself... If you were an Emperor, what would you do?

- Me, if I were emperor? This is now more complicated. If I were an emperor, the first thing I would do is be the first skeptic of my time. As for the case in question, I would do a singular but useful thing: I would eliminate adjectives.

- The adjectives?

- You do not calculate how adjectives corrupt everything, or almost everything; and when they do not corrupt, they annoy us, by the repetition we make of the smallest gallantry. Adjective that pleases us is on the lips of the world.

- But what do we have to do with that?

- All; you as simple taxes are excellent, plump and ruddy, full of life. What corrupts them and makes them wither away is the epithet of unconstitutional. I, abolishing all State adjectives by a decree, would blow this old question at once, fulfilling this saying, which is all I have collected from history and politics, and then I give two pennies for those who govern the world: the adjectives pass and nouns stay.

Machado de Assis. *Jr. Gazeta de notícias* (1881-1900).
Balas de Estalo. Rio de Janeiro, 05/16/1885.

Source: Ministério das Relações Exteriores and Instituto Rio Branco (2009, our translation).

Question 11

Regarding the ideas and meanings of text 6, as well as its linguistic structures and textual organization, judge (C (correct) or E (incorrect)) the subsequent items.

1 () The narrator resorted to the metalinguistic function of language to formulate, at the end of the chronicle, his saying, full of arbitrariness.

2 () The author used the free indirect speech, which consists of giving voice and attributing human characteristics and feelings to inanimate beings.

3 () The excerpt "If I were an emperor, the first thing I would do is be the first skeptic of my time." (l. 30-31) produces a humorous effect, due to its internal incongruity and because it deviates from the "case in question" (l. 31).

4 () The phrase "*vox clamantis in deserto*" (l. 4-5) is in italics, because it refers the interlocutor to the respective source text and is part of the national collective memory.

Question 12

Check the option that presents the correct equivalence of meaning between the word or the underlined segment, used in text 6, and the meaning that follows it.

A) "when I turned a corner" (l. 1) – proceeding in a new direction

B) "on the last packet" (l. 5-6) – set of measures related to a theme

C) "wanting to scrutinize" (l. 13) – to pay attention to

D) "when he sees us" (l. 26) – to present to us

E) "would blow" (l. 42) – violently

Question 13

Based on text 6, mark the option in which the deletion of the underlined word or expression causes a grammatical error.

A) "I, either due to lack of eyesight or because they really are fatter, did not recognize them" (l. 2-4).

B) "There is nothing that cannot harm someone, whoever one is." (l. 4-15).

C) "If you were an Emperor, what would you do?" (l. 27-28).

D) "As for the case in question, I would do a singular thing" (l. 31-32).

E) "But what do we have to do with that?" (l. 38).

Thus, by making the CACD test more technical, as of 2003, a standardization that seems to have ceased to include questions that were intended to measure the cultural heritage of candidates and to select them based on that began. While preferring certain profiles of candidates as a way of meeting an internal political agenda of greater social representation, the selection of individuals via CACD seems to have ceased to be guided by a logic of exclusion of those which social origin did not allow them to carry and perform markers of social distinction based on the idea of cultural sophistication.

4. THE CHANGE IN THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS PROFILE AND FIELD FORCES: SOME INTERPRETATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

With the advent of the Lula government in 2003, it is possible to estimate a reconfiguration of the public policies formulation aimed at selecting the country staff, a process that was already underway before (R. M. P. Silva, 2016). Although a similar project was started during the government years from 1995 to 2002 (L. C. B. Pereira, 1998), it is argued that the way to carry out this change as of 2003 would have been guided in order to promote some innovations in relation to the previous model, and this was a practice continued by the Dilma Rousseff government (C. A. P. Faria et al., 2013; C. Fonseca, 2017; Lessa, 2003; Tiunan, 2017). It is recognized, for example, that the National High School Exam (ENEM), the main method of admission to public universities in the country, has proved to be an instrument consciously aimed at deepening and expanding the universalization of higher education throughout Brazil, mainly with the standardization adopted as of 2009 (T. I. Pereira & L. F. S. C. Silva, 2010; Tiunan, 2017). Likewise, it is understood that the admission tests for IRBr were also a space for the exercise of a conscious public policy of the same government, aimed at reformulating the people profile aimed at composing the national staff.

Studies such as those by R. M. P. Silva (2016) are of great value to represent and analyze the general aspects of the change in civil-service examinations in the country. However, it is believed that these studies have their greatest merit in the presentation of a long systematization of quantitative data referring to the civil-service examinations. This research, in turn, seeks to go beyond and enter the political and social intricacies that relate to the choices behind these changes and their meanings. Due to a practical limitation, to the detriment of the aforementioned study, this research chose a specific civil-service examination to be able to carry out an in-depth analysis of the history and disputes around the institution. It was considered that Itamaraty, as one of the most traditional ministries in the country, in addition to selecting staff that has an attribution imminently related to politics, would be an interesting way to open this field of analysis.

The composition of Itamaraty members was also affected by this practice. In fact, the expansion of the number of vacancies, the forecast of exemption policies in the enrollments, the increase of the real salary and the forecast of subsidy payment, equivalent to half of the salary value, during the training period in IRBr, are some of the stimuli usually pointed out as instruments aimed at reformulating the composition of the group of people who formulate and professionally operationalize PEB (Bretas, 2017; C. A. P. Faria et al., 2013; Moura, 2006, 2007; G. A. Oliveira, 1970).

Based on what has been exposed, the hypothesis is raised that the changes mentioned in the previous section express a project to change the profile of candidates who will compose the diplomatic corps of Itamaraty, with the aim of reformulating part of the public policies of Brazil (P. R. Almeida, 2003; Boito & Berringer, 2013). Authors such as C. A. P. Faria et al. (2013) showed that one of the strategies adopted by the Lula government to change foreign policy was the significant increase of new members in the staff of diplomacy, in order to introduce perspectives more aligned with the government project in Itamaraty. Part of the changes in the orientation of this segment of Public Administration, in the scope of foreign policy, was criticized by diplomats and academics because, in theory, they symbolized a “politicization” of PEB, which until then had been “non-party” due to a consensus on the need for its neutrality to act as a State policy (C. Fonseca, 2017; Guilherme, 2014; Ricupero, 2017).

However, when considering only the admission method of diplomats, an opposite process can be observed: the valorization of technical aspects to the detriment of specific cultural knowledge, which historically served as the basis for the consecration of Brazilian (Giannattasio, 2021) and European (Bourdieu, 2002a) economic and political elites, after all, only certain social profiles, throughout their lives, had the chance to “cultivate the arts in general” in Brazil, as requested and foreseen by the invitations (Amparo & Moreira, 2021).

Itamaraty, for a long time, was considered and seen as a “remnant of the Brazilian nobility” (Moura, 2007, p. 47) or even a “[...] safe place where an young individual of the elite could grow up peacefully” (Barros, 1986, p. 30, as cited in C. A. P. Faria et al., 2013, p. 469), considering here a certain tradition of selection of diplomatic representatives in Brazilian history (Giannattasio, 2021). However, the Ministry was already going through a process of trying to reduce aspects that favored certain social classes, a process that was also criticized by more traditional diplomatic and social sectors (Moura, 2006, 2007).

In this context, Lima and A. J. S. N. Oliveira (2018) identify, in the periods from 1997 to 2002 and 2003 to 2010, a trend of 20% approval by women. Amparo and Moreira (2021) found an oscillation in this number between 2007 and 2017. According to data collected and compiled by the authors, between 2007 and 2010, the number of women entering the career was around 26% of the total approved, reaching almost 40% in 2014 and exceeding 40% in 2017. However, the same authors point to a drop in this percentage in 2011, around 10% of women entering, and a return to the oscillation between 20% and 30% in the years 2015 and 2016.

At the same time, Lima and A. J. S. N. Oliveira (2018) identify, in the years 1997 to 2002 and 2003 to 2010, the continuous predominant approval of a greater number of candidates identified as white, more than 95% of the approved candidates. In terms of income, the same authors indicate that, even with the granting of scholarships to CACD candidates, between 2002 and 2012, only about 6% of scholarship recipients were actually approved, with considerable oscillations, for example, 0.0% (2005), 7.69% (2008), 1.37% (2010) and 2.53% (2012).

For this reason, the same literature assesses that it is still possible to notice the maintenance of a certain profile in the composition of the Brazilian diplomatic corps. Thus, elitist permanence in terms of gender, race and income would be identified, both when entering a career (Amparo & Moreira, 2021; Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018) and in progress along it (Amparo & Moreira, 2021; Lima & A.J.S.N. Oliveira, 2018).

Another elitist permanence was also identified by Lima and A. J. S. N. Oliveira (2018): now, in terms of the higher education expected of candidates. On one hand, legal courses still seem to retain some prominence, more than 40% of new entrants between 1997 and 2002, and just under 40% between 2003 and 2010 (Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018). On the other hand, in the assessment of the same authors, there would only have been a change in the regional origin of the entering elites: “from the elite universities of Rio de Janeiro” (Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018, p. 819) to other elite universities in the country (Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018), such as “USP jointly with UnB” (Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018). 2018, p. 819).

Thus, the hypothesis is considered that the change in the model of questions may, perhaps, reflect and transmit a country project proposed by the governments under analysis – which, by the way, are marked by a search for changes in social structures using a broad conciliation project (Giugliano & Novion, 2018; Singer, 2012). Certainly, in this case, Itamaraty has not ceased to be considered “elitist”,

there are still barriers to accessing the civil-service examination, such as the requirement for higher education, which excludes a large part of the Brazilian population or which indirectly privileges some social sectors (Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018; Siss & V. S. Almeida, 2019). However, it is understood that there is a change, intentional or not, in the type of elite that would have access to disputes for the consecration of the symbolic and practical field of diplomacy.

It should be kept in mind that the development of the Brazilian diplomacy has close historical links with the development of the field of Law, broadly and almost exclusively accessed by the political elites of Brazil (Adorno, 1988; Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018; Moura, 2006, 2007). On this matter, it should be noted that the Bachelor's Degree in Laws is, to date, the most frequent academic title among new entrants to Itamaraty (Lima & A. J. S. N. Oliveira, 2018). Perhaps, because of this, it is possible to perceive that many characteristics consecrated by the field of Law are also part of the field of Diplomacy, such as belonging to famous social circles or epistemic communities, being “sophisticated”, “cult”, and even appreciative of good arts and literature (Giannattasio, 2021; Moura, 2006, 2007).

Given the above, it is possible to think that the changes undergone by the tests reflect a dispute in the level that these characteristics should occupy in the ethos of Itamaraty. While questions with the requirement of prior knowledge of artistic works legitimize cultural heritage as a central factor for being part of the diplomatic staff of the country, more technocratic questions reflect a consecration of elites other than those who had access to “high culture” (Bourdieu, 2002a). There is a direct relationship between both elites, given that technical knowledge is still, despite the universalization of access to higher education proposed by the PT governments, mostly linked to the same social circles that have access to the “general culture” asked by the tests previously presented (Holanda, 1995; T. I. Pereira & L. F. S. C. Silva, 2010). However, the big change lies in the bureaucratic-legal legitimation of this cultural heritage that was constant in the tests until 2003, which may also point to an attempt at a more accentuated separation between these fields.

The hypothesis is also raised that this process symbolizes a general dispute in the fields of Brazilian politics, with CACD being a reflection of this dynamic, given that it is a politically strategic civil-service examination for selecting those who will be the spokespersons and, in some sense, the very personification, of the State. PT governments continued and accelerated part of a post-1988 project to redesign the Brazilian state, which, after an initial phase of tax stabilization (Costa & Lamarca, 2013; Fiori, 2000; G. Oliveira & Turolla, 2003; Teixeira & Pinto, 2012), sought to increase the attractiveness of public positions using new salary policies (Costa & Lamarca, 2013; Gomes et al., 2012; Ventura & Cavalieri, 2021). However, it is believed that this material strategy also underwent a symbolic change regarding the type of consecration factor that would mark the elites who would occupy these positions, after all, part of the construction of social fields depends on the monopoly on the type of symbology to be considered as legitimate or not (Bourdieu, 1984).

The cordiality, the good speech, the “culture” and the cultivation of the arts considered as classic and “superior” marked a good part of the construction project of Brazil and the dynamics between the elites and society (Holanda, 1995, 2012). The rise of PT governments symbolized an entire process of struggle by the Brazilian population for greater social participation and a deepening of democracy (Singer, 2012). Thus, the changes to CACD can be read as belonging to a dynamic that seeks to consecrate the people who speak on behalf of Brazil and, in turn, the State itself, in terms other than those used by traditional Brazilian elites.

Finally, it is also interesting to consider how this policy relates to the formulation of PEB in the period. The Federal Government sought, during the PT governments, to deepen a process, initiated by FHC, of building the image of a power that would speak on behalf of the global South and lead the developing nations, which explains, for example, part of the expansion process of offices in Africa (Saraiva, 2002, 2015; A. L. R. Silva & Andriotti, 2012). It can be considered that this change also occurs in terms of discourse, since Brazil starts to seek to build its identity based more on Latin America-West integration (Guimarães, 2020). It is noted that this transition generates some kind of noise in the fields of Itamaraty, because, if ruptures are rare in the MRE, changes in diplomatic style are rarer, regardless of the president of the Republic and the structural conditions (G. Fonseca, 2011). Thus, the search for more technical diplomats and the devaluation of an erudite culture in the questions, which on some occasions only asked knowledge related to the European tradition of art², can also be understood as a dispute within this field, with the purpose of building a new elite that is consecrated by means different from those inherited directly from the colonial period and that consecrated all the other previous generations of Itamaraty.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Tests applied in selection processes are not just mechanisms for the quantitative measurement of knowledge: they can also be understood as social mechanisms that measure knowledge within a symbolic dimension (Fidelis, 2008; Freire, 1997; Freitas, 2012, 2016). In fact, they not only measure the amount of knowledge: they also socially select candidates according to the desired profile (Bourdieu, 2002a, 2002b). In the case studied, the profile reputed to be adequate for those who will have to enter the diplomatic career in Brazil and integrate the staff of those who attend PEB.

In these terms, analyzing the temporal variation of the CACD tests is not only a strategy to verify the contents and minimum curriculum asked in the questions. As such tests play a controlling role in the identification and consecration of candidates who carry the social signs of distinction considered necessary for a diplomatic career, it is a matter of recognizing that understanding such variation allows for a glimpse of domestic strategies for renewing the conditions of access to positions in the Federal Public Administration, it is also a way of combating remnants of traditional forms of social exclusion in the country.

Through a qualitative analysis based on primary sources (document analysis) referring to the CACD tests between 1995 and 2015 and secondary sources (bibliographic review), this text sought to understand whether, among the criteria for selecting candidates in CACD, certain cultural heritage exerts or has exerted a sieve in the preference of candidates over others. Emphasis was given to questions presented in the Portuguese test, because, considering that the diplomatic career is reserved for native Brazilians and that the language is a factor traditionally recognized as an instrument for the transmission and perpetuation of collective identities related to the national state, understanding the way in which Portuguese is asked in CACD tests could signal an eventual preference for a certain cultural heritage to the detriment of others and, consequently, a certain social profile to the detriment of others.

² In the 1996 test, for example, out of approximately 40 questions that involved knowledge of some previous type of art, 15 demanded knowledge of European authors and 1 of a North American author.

There were related material restrictions: (i) the impossibility of physically consulting documents due to the social isolation measures arising from the COVID-19 pandemic; (ii) the response time to the request, through the Access to Information Law, for access to documents not originally available in electronic format; (iii) the need to compile and systematize information present in documents that were made available only gradually; (iv) the term of research funding. Due to such restrictions, this analysis focused on public notices, study guides and questions from the multiple-choice stages of CACD, as well as written testimonies in secondary sources, and it was not possible to triangulate information through interviews, as carried out in other studies that similarly analyzed public notices for civil-service examinations.

Even so, such limitations do not prevent the raising of hypotheses around CACD in the selection of future members of the diplomatic career, which can help in a greater understanding of the nuances between the policies adopted in the period of 1995-2015 in the selection of civilians for the staff of the Brazilian Federal Public Administration.

In these terms, it was identified that, in addition to initiatives already recognized in the literature, increase in the number of vacancies and remuneration, exemption from registration, among others, as of 2004, the test stopped evaluating and selecting candidates through “general culture” questions. As there was a standardization of the new questions in a more technical profile, it seems that CACD was no longer guided by a logic of exclusion of those whose social origin did not allow them to carry and perform markers of social distinction based on the idea of cultural sophistication.

Thus, if the redesign of the Brazilian State after 1988 passes, between 1995 and 2002, through a phase of quantitative resumption of federal civil-service examination, it is possible to notice, as of 2003, measures that sought to make public careers in the Federal Public Administration more attractive in order to also meet internal demands for increased representation in the different public spaces of power, which means mitigating the traditional forms of social exclusion consolidated in Brazilian institutions. The variation in the forms of asking questions in CACD as of 2004 can be understood, therefore, as inserted in this general movement of reformulation of the staff of the Federal Public Administration in the country.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the change in the way of asking questions about Portuguese and literature certainly did not fail to select a select social group, or even an elite, for the diplomatic career, since, after all, the minimum requirement is having a higher education degree, which excludes a large part of the Brazilian population. In any case, by seeking to select diplomats through more technical standards and by failing to value a supposedly erudite culture related to the European art tradition, one can see in CACD the preference for selecting a new elite profile: this would be consecrated by means different from those inherited directly from the colonial period, which until then would have consecrated the traditional Brazilian elites in previous generations of the diplomatic career of the country.

Finally, it is understood that this study corroborates the perception that a research agenda that focuses on the analysis of public notices and civil-service examinations is positive, after all, this type of research can suggest important information about continuities and changes in the forms of understanding and the composition of different public careers. In any case, here is an invitation for future joint research on the Brazilian diplomatic career that deepens the results found above in the light of the analysis of additional primary sources.

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