

MAGNA CLASS BY THE MINISTER OF STATE
FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AMBASSADOR
ERNESTO ARAÚJO

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Good morning to all. It is a joy to be here with our dear Rio Branco Institute, Ambassador Stela Frota, Mr. Secretary-General, secretaries, colleagues, Maria Eduarda, Chief of Staff. I would like to speak a little first, and then, since this is a class, I would like that, in the format of a class, there were some interaction, to open the floor for questions. I would actually like that to be the main focus, so that we can talk about different themes involving our foreign policy.

But, to start, I would like to make an introduction with some ideas. First of all, it is a renewed joy to be here at the Rio Branco Institute, I was here a few days ago... (the President of FUNAG, I had not seen him yet), I was here a few days ago for the start of the new class, and, like I said that day (I will reiterate, since the colleagues from the previous class were not present), to me, one of the fundamental points of this administration is contact and interaction, which I want to always be very frequent, very close, with the Rio Branco Institute, with the students of the Rio Branco Institute.

Well, yesterday, at the Senate hearing I attended, I spoke a little about the matter of the principles of foreign policy, which are set out in the Constitution, in article 4 of the

Constitution. I would like to begin by talking a little about that. Article 4 lists the principles that must guide Brazil's international relations.

The first principle to be set out is that of national independence. And I do not think it is an accident that it is listed first, and it is not trivial, this place where they put this principle, the representatives of the Constitutional Convention. Within this concept, which is no longer that modern, national independence sounds somewhat archaic. I think that is good, because it refers us to historical continuity and continuity, deep down, with our foundation, of the Brazilian nation. To remember also that we are not just born with independence, but with the word "independence," with the concept of independence, with the shout of independence.

So, it is very functional, it is very deep, I think, this placement of *national independence* as the first principle which must guide Brazil's international relations. And we must explore this concept a little. Within this concept, we have implicit the matter of sovereignty, the matter of freedom — independence is within this semantic and sentimental universe of sovereignty and freedom — and, simultaneously, we have

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here the idea of nation, of *national* independence, independence of the Brazilian *nation*.

Of course, this, in the surface, means independence in facing foreign powers, the first sense, the most basic sense of independence since the beginning. But it seems to me that it must also mean, and increasingly so, independence in the face of a nebula, a diffuse magma of concept, of practices which, increasingly, throughout the world, affect sovereignty, affect, contest nations, the existence of nations, the vitality of nations.

So, independence, independence, therefore, of the nation. And, so that the nation is independent, and so that it acts, it is necessary for it to identify as a nation, to feel, experiment, live as a nation. This theme of nationalism, of national sentiment, this is today, from my point of view, absolutely fundamental, and it is interesting that we can discuss this from the starting point of the Constitution.

I was reading a book, I think that it is the last, perhaps next to last book by Cardinal Robert Sarah, a cardinal from Guinea, who is perhaps one of the greatest contemporary Catholic thinkers. I am reading it in English, it is called *The Day Is Now Far Spent*. And, during a certain portion of it, he discusses

globalization, and he speaks of nations, he says one thing I will read and translate simultaneously, so excuse the bad translation, he says: "Man's wealth is the land that saw his birth and growth. He draws incalculable resources from this specific geographic location. The land, the world, cannot be an ocean without borders. This planet would become a nightmare." Soon afterwards he says: "nations are big families."

It is a defense of nation. And it is interesting to see that defense of nation in the heart, in this case, of the Catholic Church, because this already draws attention to a certain structural tension that exists in this Catholic thinking regarding Christian nationalism, which is so ingrained in our civilization. Why? Catholic, in the Greek *katholikos*, means universal. So there is, deep down in the very heart of this institution that is so important in our civilization, this tension between the universal and the national.

Many times it is said that one thing is incompatible with the other, and that Christianity is anti-national, and it is not. I agree with what Cardinal Sarah says. Nowadays there is often an interpretation, an opinion that sometimes sectors, in this case, I don't want to talk only about the Catholic Church, but I think it is an interesting

example. Sectors of the Church have established themselves as anti-national, as anti-borders, as against the existence of peoples identifying with themselves. And it is not necessarily that way. We have a great figure in the Church who respects, and praises, and sees this essence, this character of nation and nationality that is so essential.

I also always recall, I have been talking about this, that if we take the root of the word *nation*, *nature*, the same root, the root of *birth* (*nascimento*, in Portuguese), it is something very deep. So, sometimes we hear “oh, the nation-State,” that is another problem, the matter of the nation-State. We always speak of the nation-State when we speak of nations. And I have already written about that as well. It is interesting, we usually write the word *State* in capitals and *nation* in lower case, isn't it? Why? Anyway.

But this theory is spread around, that the nation is something that arose, I don't know, in the 17th century, and that it is coming to a close. Maybe this is the day that is far spent, according to the Cardinal, in the title of his book, and which perhaps should not be coming to an end.

Well, continuing with some of these principles of article 4, we also find the self-determination of the peoples, closely related to the previous one as well, with

independence, with sovereignty, with nationality. So, self-determination of the peoples, we consider it like this, abstractly, but come on, first, self-determination starts with our own, right? The self-determination of the Brazilian people.

So, it is interesting, because the same Constitution that, immediately before, in article 1, if I am not mistaken, says that all power emanates from the people, also says, in this article, that foreign policy must also emanate from the people. I think this is a very clear interpretation of this article 4, when it discusses the self-determination of the peoples also as a base principle of foreign action.

And it is also interesting because the *caput* of the article, makes no mention of foreign policy, it speaks of the principles that shall guide “Brazil's *international relations*,” which is something I think supersedes our concept of foreign policy as something a bit technical, as a series of (and we'll discuss this a little afterwards), as a series of positions on given subjects.

Ultimately, then, this article begins to pose a greater challenge than what we imagine when we normally speak of foreign policy. So, also, when it speaks about international relations, *inter national* relations, so, our presence in the world, it takes place

through relations among nations. It does not speak of interstate relations, it does not speak of multilateral relations, or whatever it may be, isn't it? *International* relations.

This, to make an aside, which I wanted to talk about later, and I don't remember if I've already written it down, so, for me not to forget, I will say the following: I have been avoiding the use of the word *global*; we have come to use the word *global* too frequently when we mean *international*. This is a trend today, the "great global themes," the "global treatment," a "global focus," because, built into this replacement of the *international* with the *global*, there is certainly a contestation, a relativization of the nation, of identity, of this profoundness of the feeling of nation.

Well, so, it is a challenge, it is a challenge greater than we envision it, because it is hard to create a policy, to conduct an international relationship that stems from the nation, that stems from the people. I think we can use, of course they are not exact synonyms, but they are also part of the same semantic group, *people* and *nation*. To create a policy that emanates from the people demands a type of attention, of interaction, of thinking, perhaps more complex, deeper, more challenging than what is normally imagined.

It is easier to create a policy of the State, because the State is a shape, the State is

something formal, it is more or less evident where it is, what it says, the State has a simpler presence than the nation, than the people. To create a policy of the people is harder, because the people is a living, organic, pulsating entity.

I don't know if you saw Regina Duarte's speech during her inauguration yesterday as Secretary of Culture, I think it was the day before yesterday. She said something very interesting, used a very interesting analogy, which had even already occurred to me, but she said it much better than I would have said it, and better than what I will say here, but the idea of the people as a body with many arms, with many hands, I think it was the image she used. So, of course, there is a whole diversity, there is a whole wealth and, sometimes, conflict between different hands. But there is a body, there is a central body, and that is what gives this idea of people its solidity. If we do not imagine the people as something individual, despite how complex it may be, it makes no sense to speak of people, it makes no sense to speak of nation if we do not imagine that there is a deep unity of feelings and something that supersedes everyday action and everyday choice. So, this organic nature of the people also creates its complexity, is part of this complexity.

A little further, another principle of article 4 discusses "cooperation among the

peoples.” It is not cooperation among the countries, cooperation among the States; it is cooperation among the *peoples*, I think “for the progress of humanity” (I will check it here later, if anyone wants to check article 4 there). But it is another base principle. So, it is also harder, when we are bringing Brazil to the world, we are bringing the Brazilian people to cooperate with other peoples, also for the progress of humanity. This is also interesting: the progress of humanity is something broader than development, than a just international order, or whatever it is. *Progress of humanity*, this concept is also fundamental, this idea of the peoples as the main actors of, let’s call it, humanity’s drama.

So, I think this is fundamental: we have the people as the subject of international life, according to the Constitution, and the State is an instrument of this people. We can say that “well, this is not what happens today, this is, as I said, perhaps archaic.” It is interesting, because the Constitution is not that old, it is 32 years old. But also, that concept that “all power emanates from the people,” which is so essential, this comes, this also emanates from a very deep past, it is an idea that is not a current idea; I think it is the survival of something that people felt they needed to place there. What is to emanate? To emanate is something metaphysical, isn’t it? It is not

simply a matter of voting, or simply the matter of electoral expression. Power *emanates* from the people, it is something much deeper and almost mysterious.

But I think Brazil is not alone in this, and, even if it were, it is not a problem. This is another thing we must start considering, isn’t it? “Oh, Brazil is alone, Brazil is isolated!” It is not, but also, we must think for ourselves. Yesterday I said that at the Senate. To stop being this country that is always looking beside it: “Who’s with me? Who is not?” Let us look ahead; whoever wants to come, can come. Of course, preferably, compositions, but not with the first reflex being to think about who is together and who is not. Yes, may the first reflex be what we want, what we are, from this emanation which comes from the people.

But we are not alone; I think that today some, maybe the great majority of international actors, in this somewhat classic perspective of countries, are strong nations and self-assertive nations, or nations that intend self-assertiveness. United States, China, Russia, India, and Japan establish themselves in the world as nations, not as post-nations.

I think no region, at least in the emerging world, let us say so, seeks this emergence through the post-national path. It is certainly not the case of Asia, of Southeast Asia, there,

or South Asia; it is not the case of Africa, I believe (the African colleagues can tell me whether I am mistaken or not). But, in the trips I have made to Africa, I have seen that there is, there, aside from a concern with economic development, which is a very common challenge for us as well, there is also a feeling of sovereignty, a very deep will to exercise sovereignty. I have spoken about this in several African countries, and, each time I said that, I think it echoed strongly, and I have also heard that a lot from colleagues in African countries. It is very interesting, these young nations, such as us, Latin America, such as Africa, such as Asia, want to, let us say, infiltrate the world being what they are, through the path of the nation's sovereignty, and not already through the path of post-nationalism. I think Brazil has come to add to this group.

Well, in this context, it is interesting to observe what is happening in Europe, in the European countries, impulses and movements such as the *gilets jaunes*, in France, and the UK itself leaving the European Union, with Brexit. I am not saying I am in favor or against any of those movements, but I think it is important that they are studied in depth, and not simply discarded like that, from the start. This is what has many times taken place, isn't it? Any movement which speaks a

little of people, of nation, in Europe (throughout the world as well, but that is very clear in Europe), is immediately dubbed populist, xenophobic.

I think that today a large part of international (and national, certainly here in Brazil) media is a labeling industry, isn't it? It is simply a matter of taking two or three labels and attaching them to any phenomena, these two or three labels. The *gilets jaunes*, in particular, it is a ... let's call it a movement, because it is a very spontaneous thing (this is also interesting about it; it is not directed), it has elements considered to be from the left, elements considered to be from the right, and, in any way, it is surely an anti-system movement, which evades these labels. And I was thinking of something: why is this movement so vilified by the media, by the establishment, isn't it? And then, to compare it to May 68, also in France. Why is this movement today not awarded the glamor of May 68? Due to the media, I am convinced of that.

I think that, in 1968, at that time, the media, the big media, reported reality, in some way, I think that, maybe, with some distortion, with some partisanship, but it told what was happening. Of course, reporting, narrating, is always a selection, it is never perfect, but there was this concern and this

ethos in the media, of, somehow, reporting, recording reality. Today there is no such thing. And that is why today the media is this labeling company, the media is this company for direction, and that is why this movement, in this case, does not find resonance in the establishment, in society as a whole. It is always considered under a negative light. Anyway.

Just to give an example, in this question, it strongly called my attention, in this matter of the media, the distortion of the media, and also here without any criticism or taking sides, but the other day I saw a headline about that event in Ceará, which we all followed, and the headline was: “Cid Gomes shot while driving a tractor.” We all saw the scene, right? Luckily it was filmed. So, whoever saw it can tell me if that headline portrays reality.

Well, that is also what we are living today. That is an aside. We have to be attentive to that. In this case, you have the video, and you have the headline, and still people prefer to believe the headline, isn't it? But at least the video is there, so you can compare. In cases where you have no video, where people did not film it (and no one can watch all of the YouTube videos in the world as well, and video is also a selection, but, anyway), the headline, and then the article, which many times does not correspond to the headline,

directs us to things that are completely different from reality, which are completely different.

And another example, just one more, which has more to do with us, here. The presidential visit to India. I think it was an excellent visit, we accomplished a lot, a huge highlight to Brazil, given by India, a great power, treating us like a great power, seeking to deepen the relation with us in all areas. Then one of the headlines read: “Indian Prime Minister signs fifteen agreements with Brazil.” I think “with Brazil” was there; now I don't remember it that well, but I think Brazil was little, like that, wasn't it? “Prime Minister signs fifteen agreements.” He just went: “oh, I want to sign an agreement.” No, he signed it with President Jair Bolsonaro, didn't he? But the press will give us no credit, usually, for anything. Anyway, let us stay alert for those things.

Where was I? Well, and still this matter of the principles of foreign policy, in this case, and not specifically one or another, but that is something we work on daily, which is the tension between principles and interests, or between values and interests, if you will, between ideals and interests. This tension exists, this tension will always exist. I think it is impossible to make a foreign policy, or any human activity, simply based on principles,

but it is also impossible, and maybe counterproductive, to base it simply on interest. This tension must exist.

A policy based solely on what we call interests, it is a shapeless thing, which makes no sense and falls apart with the first breath of air. On the other hand, of course a policy based simply on principles, it is deadlocked, because principles will also never exhaust reality. So, it is necessary for us to work and accept this tension, which many times is a contradictory tension, because there is not just a tension between principles and interests, there is also a tension between the principles between them, between any principles between them. That is the human being, the human being is contradictory, human life is contradictory, and it lives in this tension.

So, bringing it back, just to give an example within the principles of article 4 within the Constitution, there is the principle of the prevalence of human rights, and there is the principle of non-intervention. So, how do you exercise the prevalence of human rights in cases where there is a country, a State, where they are systematically violated, without intervention? Well, you have to make do.

It's like that, I remember a French movie I watched once, I think it was called *Lagardère*, which is a, anyway, a man of the

people, there, in France, in the 17th, 18th century, I think, who befriends a nobleman; well, then one day they are having lunch, and this man, this commoner with no education, with no refinement, we could say, was eating with his mouth open, talking with his mouth full, and the nobleman says: "Look, we don't chew while we speak." And then he: "But how will I speak and eat at the same time?" "*C'est comme ça, débrouillez vous.*" That's the way it is, deal with it. So that's it, there is a tension, I think we are here for that, to live and act within this tension.

The very tension between the defense of the peace and the peaceful solution of controversies, which are two principles, and that of self-determination. Many times you can be in conflict, because many times self-determination is exercised in some sort of conflict, and then, if you systematically defend peace, you'll then say "no, you can't defend this self-determination." So, there is a tension there. I am not saying they are incompatible, these principles, I am saying there is a geometry there, which is complex, a fractal or three-dimensional geography, I don't know, fourth dimension, of multiple dimensions, and not something plane, linear, easy to equate.

An aside, in relation to peace. In my opinion, of course, peace, it is there. Now,

returning to the theme of the nation, the idea has formed somewhat that peace will be reached through the erasure of nations, and I think this peace won't do. Firstly, because I don't know if it is true. One can argue that in Europe it happened more or less that way, it has been more or less that way, but I think it is a little, let us say, dismissive of one of the sides of the tension. Then it is no good, you've solved nothing. It is like that, you're playing chess, you've thrown away the board, you've flipped the board over. That is not the game.

To end conflict among nations by ending nations will not do; I think it will not do. Especially because, and this is back to the things happening in Europe, this denial of the nation, denial of nationality, ends up creating conflict and tension within the nations.

Well, then (wow, this has gone on longer than I expected), but now a little more quickly, from these considerations, I would like to discuss, not exhaustively, some clichés which frequently arise when we discuss foreign policy, especially, here, Brazilian foreign policy.

For example, the issue of "State positions." I have heard that expression more than once. This was said a few times, soon after President Bolsonaro was elected, that there were ideas we are now trying to implement, in foreign policy, it was said a lot:

"no, you can't change this, you can't change that, because Brazil has State positions, which cannot be changed." Well, I think there is no such thing, I think "State positions" do not exist.

There are two problems here, in this position, first in "positions," then in "State." I think what exists, at each point in time, a country has to, going back, listen to its people and see what are the attitudes, positions, actions it wishes to take at that moment; always within that structural tension, always within that complexity of interpretation, which is the will of the people. But it does not do to simply say: "oh, the people is a collection of people, I don't know what it is, then..." No! This is also throwing away the board, this is also throwing away the tension, which is the structural tension of life.

But then, at each point in time, and sometimes it consolidates and lasts for a certain period, but sometimes it crystallizes, and petrifies, and becomes the so-called "State position." But there is no such thing. Are there permanent interests for Brazil? Of course there are, but how do you interpret these interests at each point in time? In some moments, they will have to result in different positions, positions that contradict previous positions, or that modify previous positions.

But then you can say: “oh, it’s hard to interpret, how am I to know?” Yes, it is hard; you have to try; that’s what we are doing. Otherwise we’re not doing our job. Because the temptation of easiness is easy, the temptation of escaping tension, of escaping contradiction, is always very strong. So, this temptation is very often revealed in this sort of petrification: “oh, it is a State position, so I won’t change, I don’t need to think.” I don’t need to consider if it adapts to the current will of the Brazilian people. It is there, it is here, “State position,” here, and there you go! No! We have to dissolve this rock, and see whether there is still something valid inside it or not.

Well, and also this idea that there are permanent State positions, it stems from this worship of the State, in detriment of the nation. It forgets that the nation in what gives life to the State, and the State is an instrument of the nation, as we were discussing earlier.

Something else, in this sense is: “oh, relations are relations between States, and not relations between governments.” It doesn’t exist; this also doesn’t exist. Governments are the actor, the instrument, ultimately, of the nation (actually, I mean, I said it is the State, but anyway), in this sense that, of course, someone must go and do things, and that is

the government, which has the constitutional mandate to do so.

So, what does it mean to say that “it is a relationship between States, and not between governments?” It means petrification. Whoever wants petrification. “Oh, then you can’t express anything different from a given government, when government changes, because relations happen between States.” This presents several problems.

This presents the problem, for instance, of you not taking advantage of the opportunities you have when there is an affinity between governments, that is something we have been saying frequently in relation to some countries. So, a country X, today, if there is an affinity, so we will do some things, we are doing some things with several countries with which we have affinities. If tomorrow that other country’s government changes, or if it changes here (ultimately, in democracy, it can always change), but if government changes in that other country, then we’ll do different things. But it is not because government can always change and bring new positions that we’ll just reach a lowest common denominator, based on that idea that politics is done between States and not between governments.

Because the government is what represents that moment of that people, of that

nation. With all the imperfections that it may bring, but it is the mandate, that is how it is predicted, that is how things must fit together, in the manner that is possible; therefore, always with imperfections. But saying that there is no politics between governments, only States, that is refusing to do politics, it is that thing: “no, I want it looking good here, on a piece of paper, bi-dimensional, which I can do.” No. It is a four, five-dimension reality, much more complex.

And something else: positions. We have become very accustomed to viewing foreign policy as a collection of positions. So you have a theme, and: “oh, for every theme, Brazil has a position.” Okay, but this view is somewhat the result of a petrification, it is a fragmentation. This had been, to me, the case of our foreign policy for many decades: the progressive thematization and fragmentation of our action. So, you have a theme, “oh, Brazil has a position.” A cute position and all, liked by everyone, but nobody considered whether those positions made sense as a whole and where they led, and if they correspond, always coming back to that, to the original and determining will of the Brazilian people.

So, this idea that the objective of foreign policy has a position on each subject, people ask: “what is Brazil’s position? What is the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(MFA) on such and such thing?” Okay, at each point in time, what is our position within a context, within an objective, within a negotiation, within a strategy? But this idea that “oh, they announced their position, it’s okay, it’s done, we can go home and rest.” It also goes back to that theme of seeking comfort, seeking to escape contradiction, escape tension. Creating a position, okay, and resting. We are trying to dilute that a little.

Multilateralism. Brazil as a multilateralist country. That also means nothing. Saying a country is multilateralist means absolutely nothing, because multilateral bodies are not a content. You’re saying nothing about content; you may be saying something about the method, but you’re saying nothing about the content of your politics when you say it is a multilateralist country. You’re saying, aren’t you? But, rigorously, multilateral bodies are there so that each country can come and say what they think, and see if something comes from that, and not as a content, as a determining element.

There it is, in practice, it starts to be this way: how do you direct your action? You have to see what the UN is saying, you have to see what organization X, Y, Z is saying. No! This, once more, is returning to that comfort zone and avoiding the idea of having to think, the need for considering what the will of the

people is, what the will of the country is. Because it is there, ready. It is funny today, because the international bodies today have positions. They are not supposed to. Isn't it true? International bodies are for countries to gather, and the position is the position that, in some manner, is formed as a consensus between the countries. But "the UN's position..."

Of course, with all due respect to the character, to the role that these bodies have. The legitimacy, the prestige they hold can many times be used in a very positive manner, when these bodies have good leaderships, their secretariats, it can be used in a positive manner. But without forgetting this fundamental character of what a multilateral body is. So, this, saying that Brazil is a multilateralist country is, once again, the search for comfort and of non-thinking.

Oh, here it is, I have spoken a little about this matter of "global themes," haven't I? Today it is enough to say that a theme is global, and you start questioning the sovereignty of the countries, the sovereignty of the nations. So, climate: "oh, it's a global theme." What does that mean? In practice, it means you want to do things against the will of those individual countries. "Migration is a global theme." I don't know. You can say it is or it isn't. What does it mean? It means that

certain currents of thought, some political currents want to use the theme of migration to limit, to question the sovereignty of countries.

So, we have to look out for that. It isn't saying that the themes don't have a, so to speak, world-encompassing character, but the adjective "global" is a label that leads to something specific. When you see the label on the bottle, you see that you're drinking something against sovereignty.

And something else: the idea that there is a "global power shift." This has been said a lot; it has been said for twenty years, especially to say that: "no, there is a power shift from the North Atlantic to Asia," something of the sort. Well, I don't know. I mean, there is, of course, an emergence of Asian countries, in terms of increase of importance, decrease of relative importance of others, but, when you generally speak of that, what's also behind it? It's behind it like this: "look, Brazil is in no condition for any sort of action; we have to simply go along with whoever is leading." And it is not that. I think we have to shift the global power towards us, I mean, I think this is one of the ambitions of the Brazilian people, to be more influential, to be more present in the world.

So, this sort of passive thing, such as "oh, power is shifting, it is always on one side or

another,” it doesn’t matter if it is on one side or another if we’re not on this axis. It matters in a sense, of course, each thing has its dimension, but I say this not because I am for or against it, on one side of the axis or the other, but to say that this idea that “oh, there is a global power shift, and Brazil must follow that” is a reflex of not wanting to think, not wanting to act, it is a reflex of having automatic positions, of wanting to remain in one’s comfort zone, and of not thinking we can influence.

And there is also another cliché, which goes like: “it has nothing to do with us; the Middle East, Israel, Palestine, oh, it has nothing to do with us.” It all has to do with us, it has to do with us because we’re in this world; it is not because Brazil is large, is larger, but I think everything has to do with everyone. But, in our case, certainly. And this ambition of ours of being a country, an influential nation in the world, it goes through erasing that notion that things do not concern us. Or else, what does concern us? Is it just our region? Is it just trade? Is it just what?

When the ideas that are in shock, flowing in the world, they are determining for our region as well, they are determining for the structure of our trade, they are determining for the capacity for economic growth. So, if we don’t take part in this, because it “doesn’t

concern us,” I’m not only talking about the geopolitical issues, but, above all, of the great debates of ideas, especially the debate between nationalism and anti-nationalism, if we don’t put forth our opinions, if we don’t take part in this, we’re letting ourselves be influenced, we’re renouncing our responsibility of trying to influence the world in favor of our interests and our principles.

I think that’s it. Also the matter of “international prestige,” yes, they say: “oh, Brazil is losing international prestige.” It is not, okay? It is not; it really isn’t. I have seen that clearly across the world, Brazil today is seen with much more interest, with much more attention than it was in the past, because today we have, I think, this attempt to assert ourselves as someone who is saying something, as someone who is not simply reproducing the workings of the system.

In information theory, from the little I know of it, especially in the beginning of information theory, with [Alan] Turing and... – they are two, the pioneers who begin the advance of computing, it begins with information theory, there in the 40s: how you make a computer, how you make a machine. I think it is Turing who says this: you have a machine, a computer that performs certain operations as you give it memory and working capacity, it

can perform operations of increasing complexity. But it needs an oracle, he calls it an oracle. The oracle, in this case, is the human being. The machine can never program itself. Basically, I think that's it, if I understand it well (if there are any mathematicians here, you can tell me if it's wrong). But that's basically it, it has to do with the famous incompleteness theorem, by Gödel: a mathematical system will never be capable of exhausting itself; there will always be an incompleteness, there will always be something that needs some sort of external agent. But, above all, in the matter of the machine, it needs an oracle.

So, you have an international system, which is, in this sense, a machine that works in a given manner, but I think Brazil has the capacity to be an oracle, among others, of that system. I think each nation must and needs to be an oracle, something that influences the programming. You cannot allow the system so self-program, because if you allow the system to self-program, it is not, in fact, self-programming, another oracle is programming this system. And you don't know if it is for or against your interests, it will probably be against them. So, this anti-nationalism is a bit of that today, it is allowing the system to self-program. And there is no such thing. There is an interest behind it,

always. There is an oracle. I don't know if it is good or bad. So, we must be one of those oracles, we must influence the programming of the machine.

That's basically it. I would like to open the floor for questions. Thank you.

– Good morning, Minister. My name is Diógenes, from the class of 2019. My question is about, in your view, what would be the fundamental characteristics of the Brazilian people that today influence our foreign policy. Thank you.

– Thank you, Diógenes. Yes, there is that whole difficulty in interpretation, and all interpretation will be flawed, won't it? Who am I, who is anyone to interpret? But I think it is necessary. I think a great element is, you can call it the *latu sensu* conservative feeling of the Brazilian people, that is, the entire spectrum of faith, family, the concern with security, with the capacity of parents to determine, let us say, the education of their children. Ultimately, this sphere of the conservative, of the conservative feeling, I think is very determining and it has been strongly denied to the Brazilian people.

I think the Brazilian people, many times, by our elite, is seen outside in, I have been speaking about that. Always with the concern of "oh, how am I going to present this people out there?" So, if in these international,

multilateral scopes, these sorts of sentiments are not well regarded, so “no, I’ll say that the Brazilian people is something else.” It isn’t. You have to work from what it is, I think.

So, I think it is basically this conservative heart. It is a word that has long been pejorative, it has no reason to be so. Conserve, you conserve what is good. I think everyone must be conservative with what is good and revolutionary with what is bad, ultimately. And, therefore, it has to do with this sphere of nationality, of the feeling discussed by Cardinal Robert Sarah, of attachment to the land, attachment to the roots, the matter of roots.

And this, I think, how do you translate this into action? Of course it is hard, but I think we have to capture this sort of feeling. For instance, the idea that Brazil is a multicultural country. I think that is completely mistaken, and that it is jargon which comes completely from the machine, that is not the oracle speaking, no. Brazil is a profoundly monocultural country. It is multiethnic, of course. But saying the country is multicultural is trying to fragment it a little, trying to break this unity of the Brazilian people that exists, I think it exists, deeply. So, we sometimes unwittingly repeat things, and end up repeating them outside, things that are against this unity of the people.

But I think perhaps, above all, this. Not just the content, but the very fact that the Brazilian people feels like a people, a unit, which is something, I think it is very, I mean, it is deep in history, but it is simultaneously recent, this expression. I think this expression of nationality, of wanting to be a unit, wanting to be a people, I think it is absolutely determining in what we’re living, it is absolutely determining in the election of President Jair Bolsonaro, who is the only Brazilian leader with this type of vision. And I think that is why he is so loved by the people like he is, because he is perceived as an expression not of political positions X, Y, or Z, of economic options X, Y, or Z, but of the very identity of the Brazilian people.

So that’s it. I think I’ve answered very partially, but I’ve at least tried to point in a certain direction. Thank you.

– Good morning, Minister. Again, thank you very much for your presence. My name is Francisco, I’m a student here at the Rio Branco Institute. You mentioned national independence, addressed in article 4 of our Constitution. In extreme cases, it is very easy to determine what that independence is; a completely subjugated nation is certainly not independent. But in the world today, where interactions (even facilitated by technical, scientific and informational mediums) are

increasingly denser, more constant, I would like to know what the distinctive sign of this national independence would be in the Brazilian action. Thank you.

– Yes, thank you, Francisco. This is a huge discussion, because, as you said, it is easy to point out independence in this institutional sense, which, of course, is one of the essential aspects. Of course, above all in this virtual world, of communications, it is more complicated. On the other hand, no; on the other hand, I think that, this is interesting, with all the emergence of the Internet, of the virtual world, of cross-border communications, it would seem that this would be another element, another nail in the coffin for the nation, and it is the opposite, isn't it?

In these last twenty years, more or less, after dial-up Internet ended, since the beginning of the Internet, but especially in the last fifteen years, perhaps, all the growth of the networks, about which they said "no, it's a thing that's going to fragment people, Facebook and all," actually, what is happening is that this universe has become a field where there was a revival, it is especially there where the national sentiment was revived, where the idea of identity was revived, the idea of the people. And that is the way; not in the large traditional media, as you

know, not in the establishment, it is in this jungle of the Internet.

Of course there are risks, as in any jungle, but you're not going to tear down the jungle because there's risk; returning to the matter of comfort and the need to coexist with contradictions, with risks and with dangers. If you don't want risk, you don't get out of bed in the morning. So, that's where it is, I think, the strength of national sentiment, as that of many other feelings. And because there are negative feelings expressed on the Internet, which is what many people want today, to use all that to curb all that.

So, all the universe, all this complex of political, intellectual currents, which are against the nation, which are against the conservative sentiment, they want to end freedom of speech on the Internet, under the pretense that there's only bad stuff on the Internet. There are bad things, of course. But, why? Because that's where it is, that's where it lives, today, in a complex manner, in an unexpected manner, the matter of national identity, among so many others, the matter of the conservative sentiments.

That, just to remind of another of those instances of labeling. Back then, anyway, still in 2018, I wrote a text on my blog in which I discussed this matter of fake news, and I tried to say what appears to me to be a fact, that

precisely because of this emergence of conservativeness, let us say, in the Internet, the establishment then began to label it fake news, precisely to denigrate that and to maintain its hold, which it was losing. Then an article about me, later, in some periodical, said I was defending fake news, “Ernesto defends fake news.” It isn’t. Of course it isn’t. You have to read the thing. But it seems that no, I want it to happen, that people put fake stuff on the Internet. Well. What actually proved my point, that is the fact that this universe of the networks, etc, is something that scares the system, we can say.

So, anyway, I’m not sure I answered completely, but within this whole complexity that we’re discussing, and multidimensionality, I also tried to point in the direction you asked.

– Good morning, Minister. Thank you for the magna class. I am Ângelo Santos, also of the class of 2019. You did well in remembering that the convergence of governments with similar views frequently gives us a possibility to seize opportunities, but the circumstances don’t always lead us to entertain relations with governments with whom we have some proximity, some affinity. My question, then, is: in these cases, are there opportunities? And what can we do to seize such opportunities?

– Thank you, Ângelo. Yes, then we would have to look at it, evidently, case by case, isn’t it? All I’ve said here was broadly in a very abstract sense, and I recognize you always have to come down down abstractness to concreteness, in some manner, and that’s also where problems always start. Then comes the problem of how you can translate principles and interests from one another, and how to conjugate, let’s say, principles and interests, which is always going to be something that in some manner will not fit.

But within that, anyway, I think that this must be evaluated case by case, and that we must always try to identify, in each relationship, what we can do at that point in time, that which is the priority for the other party, that which is the priority for you, and see where you can find a common constructive plan. Whenever possible, right? When the other party wants to starve their people to death, as is the case with Venezuela, it’s sort of hard to find common ground.

That is another problem, another catchphrase, of: “oh, we have to always find a middle ground, to strike a balance.” It depends, doesn’t it? A balance between genocide and freedom, I think it... is a little genocide, right? Sort of complicated. Anyway.

But that's it, then, but in normal situations, when you have fewer affinities, you sometimes have a sort of ceiling in a given relationship, but you try to use that space and build something common. When you have a much higher ceiling, you try to make use of that ceiling, without this reflex that you can't make use of this higher ceiling because the other one is lower, or that this ceiling may eventually change. No. I think there is this matter of adapting to the moment. But I think that with this vision we have of maximizing opportunities within an idea of a large country, within an idea of a country that wishes to speak to the world, this idea of oracle country I have just spoken about.

But then it comes, again, this tension between principle, reality, there are cases in which it's harder, there are cases in which it's easier. So, to come down to reality in the concrete case always involves, in some manner, a bet, a risk, to take a given risk. If you don't want to take a risk, you'll do nothing, you'll limit yourself severely in what you can do.

Okay? Thank you.

– Good morning, Minister. My name is Bruna Veríssimo, I am from the current class of 2020, and I believe one of the tensions you glimpse is the one between the need to reclaim our values, our traditions, and

adapting the rigging of the State to the new demands of Brazilian society. I would like to know, in your opinion, what the role of the MFA would be in harmonizing this tension, that is, in the promotion of our values and in the necessary adaptation of the State to the demands posed by Brazil in 2020.

– Thank you very much, Bruna. I think that, first and foremost, recognizing that these values exist, and that we, the MFA, are part of these values, of this people that has these values so complex and hard to define, but of which we are part. Because I think that's it, the MFA is part of this national ocean, and not as if we were an island. That is something fundamental to me, which I think was sort of the trend. Facing the difficulty, precisely of interpreting what the values are and of promoting those values, the idea of: no, let's sit this one out. And to keep saying: look, how interesting is the Brazilian people, look at what it is like. No, we are part of this.

Above all, this idea of the open MFA, the MFA within the government. This is also something else, as if the MFA were some sort of – not even the Central Bank is still totally independent, much less the MFA – but the idea that the MFA was a sort of Central Bank, independent, like: “The government says some things here, but I'll take my traditional State positions, and the government can deal

with it.” That was the previous idea. So, the MFA is part of the government, we sit down, every day, and we have to coordinate and to be within this process. Especially a government which brings a project for transformation, a project for the regeneration of the country.

So, as you know, I’ve been trying to establish this spheres of values as one of the fundamental axes. I’ve been trying to divide, somewhat rationalize all this into four axes, and this axis of values, which is the most diffuse, the hardest to manage, as one of the fundamental axes. So, but this is an enormous challenge, a challenge that will be yours, of all of us, it’s not just ours here, let’s say, mine, the Secretary-General’s, the secretaries’; it is a job for all of us. And to be attentive to that, to what people are saying, what people want. I say: it is hard, because the press is not a source for us to know what people want, what people are thinking; it’s necessary to try to absorb that, try to absorb and translate that into concrete actions. But it’s a matter of listening permanently.

That’s why I also talked about, the other day, here, to the class taking office, how important it is that you don’t enter here and cease to be what you are outside, each one of us. I know, I’ve been through this, the experience of joining diplomacy, joining the

MFA, is something very dense, very heavy, it’s cool, but it’s heavy in the lives of each of us, and we tend to say: “no, now I’m a diplomat.” No, it’s okay, you’re a diplomat, but you’re still you, we continue to be ourselves. That is the tendency, because it’s another way to escape tensions, to run from contradictions, to say: “no, now I’m this right here.” No. You and the, I don’t want to say young crowd, because then it seems like I’m not, but the younger crowd, then, has a fundamental role in this, absolutely fundamental.

I dearly wish that, we all want it, that there is a larger flow, that is something I’ve always wanted, since we took office (and it’s also hard to do), that there is a larger, deeper flow of ideas in here, without that much concern with the position, with the perception. I may be completely mistaken, sometimes, in things I say, but I do it all with conviction, but this matter of interpreting the people, of translating the Brazilian values into international action, that is complicated and demands this permanent tension.

– Good morning, Minister. My name is Bernardo, I’m from the class of 2019 as well. I would like to thank you for your magna class, in which you have highlighted the tension arising from the apparent conflict between constitutional principles of article 4. I would

like to ask about another tension that also arises, which you've mentioned, about, on one side, democracy, the sovereignty of the people, in which power emanates, even metaphysically, from the people, and, on the other, the structure of the liberal democracy, based on constitutional rigidity. So, I wanted to ask if, from your viewpoint, we can consider that the constitutional principles consecrated in article 4, of international relations, can be considered State positions, on which we should be based, and, to the extreme, if we interpret that the people today, or at any period in constitutional time, desire, aspire for something that is not written in the Constitution. To whom should we listen, to the people, who may no longer want the prevalence of human rights, sovereignty, national independence, cooperation among the peoples, or the representatives of the Constitutional Convention of 88, who manifested themselves more than twenty years ago? Thank you. More than thirty years.

– Yes. Interesting. Thank you, Bernardo. There are several things here. Well, the matter of principles as State positions, well, I think it's a way of looking at it; they represent a certain rigidity; they're a parameter. But I think they're not necessarily the positions, I think the principles are precisely a guidance

and a challenge for the making of the positions.

A discussion, in literary theory, is the role of the old rules, especially in theory, isn't it? And we see, for instance, classical poetry, Greek and Latin, long considered superior to all that followed it, subject to very strict rules; the French poetry of the 16th century as well, very strict rules, no hiatuses, things of the sort, anyway. Then there was a whole thing for freedom, free verse, etc. Why do I say this? Many people defend that imposing rules stimulates creativity. So, in this case, I would say that the need for you to be oriented by a small set of principles must be seen not as a limitation, but as a challenge for diplomatic creativity, in this case – one can say that there is no such thing as diplomatic creativity, but I think there is and there must be.

How is it that from “oh, the verse must have ten syllables, it must rhyme, and such, there cannot be hiatuses, and that's it.” While sometimes freedom would place you in a magma that wouldn't be as prone. Once more, the matter of contradiction and living with contradiction, living with tension. So, guidance by principles is necessary to maintain this creative tension. If we could do anything, it wouldn't be, perhaps, there wouldn't be this challenge of creativity. This in all things, and I think it applies to this specific case.

Maybe extrapolating, perhaps the whole Constitution (I don't want to theorize too much here), but a Constitution is necessary for this, to allow free and creative action by society within this dialectic tension, in some manner. If you had a Constitution that changed with every passing moment, this might not be, would not generate this need to rethink. It is the need for the society to adapt at each moment to its Constitution that generates dynamism. Of course, in an extreme case, you can imagine a constitutional reform, a plebiscite, as countries sometimes do, as Chile is doing, which modifies everything due to a specific desire, but this desire will be antiquated the following day, then you'll need to make a new Constitution.

When I lived in the United States, which is a country that has this, which lives intensely the matter of the Constitution in the political debate, daily, precisely because it is an old Constitution, seldom modified, then many people say, for instance, that the matter of the Electoral College – which is practically the only large element of the American Constitution that our republican Constitution didn't absorb –, but they say: "oh, the Electoral College is an antiquated thing, something that was created by those late-18th-century elites to ensure..." Okay, but I don't want to defend or not, but I think it's a

very clear example, because it is a Constitution that is, perhaps, one of the oldest, and it is so influential over ours. So the idea that each generation is going to rewrite the Constitution, because they are antiquated things or not.

But I think that this being antiquated is what many times drives us forward, like the idea of *national independence*, which is in our Constitution, which is an antiquated idea, in a manner, as I said in the beginning. Like the idea of the *power that emanates from the people*, right? Today no one would write that, if they were to write the Constitution today, with our current ideas. It exists because, in the previous Constitution, it had already been said that power emanates from the people; I don't know when that expression was created, but that is a case of survival. Today, if they were to write a Constitution like that, "politically correct," they wouldn't talk about power emanating from the people, they would say, well...

But then, of course, this is a debate that is very lively today in Brazil, all that between the Executive and Congress, all that popular momentum for change, for national transformation, which sometimes feels that given actions are against it; but even this momentum, it doesn't complain about the existing rules, in this case, the Constitution; it

complains about the enforcement of these rules, but not about the rules themselves. It is a very lively momentum we have today, in Brazil, and people are really reading the Constitution, saying: “hey, where does it say this? Where does it say that?” Of course it’s a very long question, therefore it creates even more complexity.

But I think our government is about that, it’s an effort, a very deep national transformation, very large, with absolutely no, zero contestation of our constitutional framework, living entirely in our constitutional framework. That thing of sometimes “oh, threat to democracy,” absolutely not! Absolutely not! There is no element in our government that questions any constitutional rule or element, absolutely! So, that’s it, trying to make sense within the existing rules, in this idea that creativity comes precisely from respecting the rules.

I think it’s a bit of that. Thank you.

– Minister, I think today you have already given us an excellent class. I would like to thank you, not as the Director of the Institute, but as a student, today. Today, I think your lesson was, anyway, I sat here as a student. And I would like to thank you, you who have been here this long time, who gave the other students this magnificent class. You came to

this point, I thought it was extremely interesting, this reduction you made by coming to the machine of the oracle, and I even remembered that there is an American company, precisely in that field, called Oracle. So, it really led to a, to us understanding all you’ve said, and I think your time, which is obviously much more important than any of ours here; you’ve given us an enormous slice of your time for today. So, on behalf of all students, of all colleagues, of all of use here, and as a student, I repeat, I would like to thank you very much for your presence and to say that, obviously, the whole house is yours, but this here is yours whenever you wish to come and give us another of these presentations of yours which only aggrandize us all. Thank you very much.

– I am very happy with your words, they are really touching. Thank you very much. I thank you all as well. I would like you all to save any questions you have, for the next opportunity, which I hope is soon, of coming here and continuing our discussion. Thank you for highlighting this point. I think that’s it, if I could sum it up that way, I think the Brazilian people must be the oracle of our foreign policy, that is basically it.

Thank you very much, Ambassador.
Thank you all.

