Regional Hegemony and Elite Socialization: Brazilian Cooperation in Diplomatic Training

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Abstract: Regional hegemons resort to a variety of means in expanding their influence abroad, from material resources to ideational strategies. In this paper, we focus on the latter, analyzing more specifically how a regional hegemon uses elite socialization to promote the consensual dimension of its hegemony. Using the case of Brazil, we look at cooperation programs set up by its Ministry of External Relations, also known as Itamaraty, to train diplomats from other countries. We find that, through such initiatives, Brazilian ruling elites seek to socialize those individuals into the institutional culture and norms of Brazilian diplomacy, while also exposing them to bureaucratic arrangements and practices that could be construed as alternatives to models promoted by the Cold War powers or, more recently, by Northern aid donors. However, we also find that these cooperation programs highlight anew some of the social biases that have historically been built into the culture of Brazil’s foreign policy making and implementing apparatus.

Keywords: regional, hegemony, Brazil, cooperation, diplomacy, elites, socialization

Introduction

Regional hegemons have long sought to enhance their regional influence through a variety of means. However, such powers often face regional contestation to their bids for regional leadership, and their capacity to project power abroad is constrained by domestic factors such as persistent development challenges and political challenges to foreign policy decisions, particularly when they entail heavy expenses. As a result, such states often resort to ideational strategies, either as the centerpiece of their regional projects, or

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