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Article

Coffee, Ships, and Peace: Brazilian and US diplomacy at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference

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Abstract

This article explores the relations between Brazil and the United States during the 1910s and revisits Brazil's participation at the 1919 Peace Conference. It argues that the Brazilian delegation would not have succeeded as it did in Paris had it not been for the construction of close and respectful diplomatic relations between Brazil and the United States over the decade of the 1910s, a rapprochement to which Domício da Gama, the Brazilian ambassador to Washington between 1912 and 1918, contributed decisively.

Keywords: Brazilian foreign policy; 1919 Paris Peace Conference; Domício da Gama, Brazil-US diplomatic relations.

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Introduction

In the correspondence exchanged with Itamaraty (Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) while crossing the Atlantic on his way to France in January 1919, Epitácio Pessoa, head of the Brazilian mission to the Peace Conference, expressed his concern about two problems of direct interest to Brazil set to be discussed in the French capital: the payment of the marks withheld by the German government during the war, which were obtained from the sale of a large quantity of coffee sacks from São Paulo state that were being stored in European ports, and the fate of the German ships seized in Brazilian ports and loaned to France during the Great War[1]. Not coincidentally, these issues primarily reflected the interests of the country's hegemonic political-economic axis, namely the coffee economy and the corresponding political mechanisms of the period. The issues of the ships and the coffee

[1] Pessoa to the Foreign Ministry, Telegram no. 2 1/15/2019, published in Pessoa 1961, 7.

would be satisfactorily resolved at the Peace Conference, and the outcomes of the negotiations were included in the articles of the Treaty of Versailles.

In Paris, the Brazilian delegation succeeded in another matter that probably had not even been considered before its departure, given that no reference was made to the topic in the correspondence between Rio de Janeiro and Paris until it was discussed at the Conference. Although the newspapers in Rio mentioned that US President Woodrow Wilson would create a "general association of nations … for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small States alike"[2], all evidence points that the matter had failed to attract the attention of Brazilian authorities. Among other reasons, this was because the authorities were focused on the issues of the coffee and the ships that, if addressed satisfactorily, could alleviate Brazil's troubling economic situation. The country faced new challenges as the outbreak of war disrupted international trade, severely impacting coffee exports and Brazil's modest industrial production. Therefore, achieving a favorable outcome in the ship and coffee negotiations became a matter of urgency. Once in Paris, not only did Brazilian diplomats obtain satisfactory results on these issues, but also the country was chosen to be a non-permanent member of the Council of the League of Nations during its first year in 1920. The main organ of the new international organization would have nine members: Brazil, Belgium, Greece, and Spain, which had non-permanent seats, while the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan were permanent members.

This article explores the relations between Brazil and the United States in the 1910s and revisits Brazil's participation at the 1919 Peace Conference. It argues that the Brazilian delegation would not have succeeded as it did in Paris had it not been for the construction of close and respectful diplomatic relations between Brazil and the United States over the decade of the 1910s, a rapprochement to which Domício da Gama, the Brazilian ambassador to Washington between 1912 and 1918, contributed decisively. In February 1912, when Barão do Rio Branco, who had been pivotal in deepening the ties between the two countries, passed away, the strategy of rapprochement appeared to be jeopardized (Smith 1991, 72).

The relationships Domício da Gama developed with the United States administration during his tenure as Brazil's representative in Washington proved particularly valuable during his brief position as Minister of Foreign Affairs (November 15, 1918 to July 28, 1919). This period coincided with the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where he collaborated with United States authorities in both Washington and Paris on issues critical to Brazil's interests. This article focuses on the intensely disputed formation of the diplomatic mission set to attend the Paris Conference, the various challenges Foreign Affairs Minister Domício da Gama faced during the negotiations for the establishment of the League of Nations and, in this context, the selection of Brazil as one of the non-permanent members of the new international organization. Although Epitácio Pessoa, the

[2] The last of the Fourteen Points, announced by President Woodrow Wilson in January 1918, outlined principles to be used for peace negotiations to end the First World War.

head of the Brazilian delegation to Paris, was a well-known politician with experience as a Supreme Court justice, Minister of Justice, and lawyer in international disputes, his "greatest weakness was that he lacked direct diplomatic experience" (Streeter 2010, 79). Despite this, he played a more significant role in the negotiations over São Paulo coffee and former German ships.

The successful negotiations at the Conference were a testament to the good relations that had been re-established between Brazil and the United States. These relations had also decisively benefited from Brazil's involvement in the First World War on the Allies' side, making it the only South American country to do so. Additionally, and no less importantly, Brazilian diplomacy, bolstered by the factors mentioned above, enjoyed the support of President Woodrow Wilson.

Similar to various topics from the history of the First Republic, and in stark contrast with the extensive bibliography on the Rio Branco period (1902-1912), the relations between Brazil and the United States in the 1910s have not been as extensively studied. However, some important works deserve mention, such as the studies by Moniz Bandeira (1978), Leuchars (1983), Smith (1991), and Bueno (2003). Specifically regarding the Brazilian participation in the Peace Conference at the end of the decade, the literature has been enriched over the last three decades. Leuchars's (1983) doctoral thesis was probably the first full-length study to explore this theme. The book by Francisco Vinhosa (1990) provides an in-depth study of Brazil's participation in the First World War and also describes the Paris negotiations in detail. Similarly, the sometimes acerbic but always thought-provoking memoirs of Heitor Lyra (1972, 86), a contemporary of Domício da Gama, were extremely useful. A few other studies have been made based on consultations of the diplomatic sources (Santos 1996, Garcia 2006, 2013, Streeter 2010).

In this article, we aim to shed light on Brazil's significant vulnerabilities during the 1910s, a period that coincides with Domício da Gama's tenure as the Brazilian ambassador to the United States. We will examine the extent to which the ambassador's ideas were translated into political action and how they influenced Brazil's relations with the United States. To address these aspects, we rely on the existing high-quality bibliography.

To address the Paris Conference, where Brazilian diplomacy not only defended its direct interest, but also played a more active role in European and global affairs, we rely primarily on documents published from various sources, and the bibliography presented throughout the article. First, our sources include *Obras Completas de Epitácio Pessoa*, *Conferência da Paz, Diplomacia e Direito Internacional*, and *Relatórios Apresentados ao Presidente da República*. From the United States, we reference the *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS), which include volumes exclusively dedicated to the Paris Conference. We also draw upon the memoirs of Robert Lansing, then US Secretary of State, and the testimonies and works of David Hunter Miller, Woodrow Wilson's most important advisor on League of Nations matters and one of the experts who documented the Paris Conference. From the United Kingdom, we reference the *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office* (BDFA).

The article is divided into three parts. The first contextualizes Brazil's domestic environment during the First World War, examines Brazilian relations with the main sides involved in the

conflict, and explores the emergence of key issues such as the São Paulo coffee and the former German ships. These were the primary concerns of Brazil's representatives when they departed Rio de Janeiro for Paris.

The second part focuses on the evolution of Brazil's relations with the United States, particularly from 1911, when Domício da Gama arrived in Washington. It examines the serious problems that the ambassador faced shortly after his arrival and the ongoing issues that persisted over the following years until Brazil entered the global conflict. Moreover, this section underscores the transformations brought about by the war, especially in terms of Brazil's relations with the United States.

Finally, the third part emphasizes the critical role played by Domício da Gama during his brief tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs, coinciding with the Peace Conference negotiations. The proximity and bonds of trust he built with the US administration while in Washington were instrumental in the Brazilian delegation's successful negotiation of crucial issues in Paris.

Brazil goes to war

Although the coffee economy is indisputably central to understanding the workings of the First Republic, the historiography also highlights the relevance of other themes, such as the dynamics of the oligarchical disputes, the operationalization of politics among different states, their degree of stability, and the relationship between their political and economic levels (Viscardi 2000).

Above all else, coffee enabled Brazil to participate in the global economy and ensured the flow of foreign currency into the country. Coffee producers and public authorities engaged in the international financial markets to secure loans, aiming to stabilize coffee prices amid fluctuations in international demand and overproduction. The Great War marked the first in a series of external shocks that began in 1914 and continued into the 1920s (Fritsch 2014, 45).

In 1913, after the end of the rubber boom and with falling coffee prices, Brazil experienced its first trade deficit in decades (Albert 1988, 18). When war erupted in Europe in August 1914, Brazil remained economically vulnerable. In response to the outbreak of war, the government implemented emergency measures, including a prolonged bank holiday, to buy time. The 1914 funding loan and similar agreements with foreign creditors eased the balance of payments problem. The devaluation of the mil-réis and the low levels of imports, resulting from the 1913-1914 recession, compensated for the decline in prices of Brazil's main export products. However, the Great War gradually exacerbated the economic difficulties. The drop in coffee prices reduced Brazil's capacity to import goods, leading to a decline in revenue due to the Union's heavy reliance on import tariffs and resulting in a persistent fiscal imbalance (Albert 1988, 183-198; Fritsch 2014, 54-55).

In November 1914, the Allies included the North Sea as a war zone. In retaliation, the German government declared the seas around the entire British Isles a war zone in February

1915, announcing that any enemy ship found in this zone would be sunk without warning. Ships flying a neutral flag that entered the zone would also do so at their own risk. In 1916, the British Parliament approved the Trading with the Enemy Act, which stipulated that any companies or individuals considered enemies would be placed on a blacklist and banned from establishing or maintaining trade relations with British subjects. This created a problem for Brazilian exports. At the time, the German and Austro-Hungarian markets consumed 22% of Brazil's coffee exports. In addition, German firms played a significant role in Brazil's commercial infrastructure, especially in the banking and marketing systems. In 1918, more than 500 firms operating in the country were included on the British blacklists (Albert 1988, 79, 82).

At the end of January 1917, the situation worsened considerably when the German government announced its decision to expand the maritime blockade beyond the coasts of the British Isles, which had been a war zone since February 1915, to include the coasts of France and Italy, along with the eastern Mediterranean. This unrestricted blockade meant that Germany would prevent the passage of unarmed commercial ships from neutral countries. Moreover, the probable involvement of the United States in the war threatened to paralyze Brazil's foreign trade completely.

One of the two issues of direct interest to Brazil, which its delegation would bring to the 1919 Conference, began in 1914. At that time, a large quantity of coffee was deposited in German and Belgian ports as collateral for loans contracted by the state of São Paulo in 1913 and 1914 in London, Berlin, and Paris. When war broke out, the German government announced its intention to confiscate the coffee being held in storage. In response, the São Paulo government opposed the move and decided to sell the coffee to prevent it from being confiscated. The proceeds from the sale were deposited in marks at S. Bleishröder in Berlin between November 1914 and March 1916, as stipulated in the loan agreements. However, when the São Paulo authorities attempted to withdraw the money to pay off the loan bonds, they were informed that the German government had banned any withdrawal until the end of the war to prevent funds from being transferred to the British (*Relatório Apresentado ao Presidente da República* 1920, p. ii; Vinhosa 1990, 212).

The German ban on withdrawing the marks obtained from the sale of coffee by São Paulo authorities provoked considerable agitation and declarations in favor of abandoning Brazil's neutrality in the war. This action further bolstered the already predominant position of the Brazilian elite and press in favor of the Allies.

The second issue of direct interest to Brazil at the 1919 Conference had begun almost three months before Brazil declared war on Germany and was directly related to the deteriorating relations between the two countries. On April 3-4, 1917, German submarines torpedoed the Brazilian merchant ship *Paraná*, prompting the Brazilian government to break diplomatic and commercial relations with Germany on April 11, 1917. On June 2, the Brazilian government requisitioned the 45 German merchant ships that had been seized in Brazilian ports since the start of the war for various reasons, including violations of neutrality legislation (Vinhosa 1990, 89; Leuchars 1983). Some of these vessels were lent to France during the war.

Like many countries worldwide, the Brazilian economy was heavily dependent on the flow of ships for importing and exporting products. Brazil was particularly vulnerable due to its reliance on coffee exports, which were already heavily compromised by the war. At this time, Brazil's merchant fleet amounted to 297,800 tons. The seized German ships represented more than a quarter of Brazil's own fleet (Garcia 2006, 57).

On October 25, 1917, President Venceslau Brás informed the National Congress that a fourth Brazilian ship, the *Macau*, had been torpedoed by German submarines. The next day, October 26, Brazil declared war on Germany[3]. The precarious condition of the Brazilian armed forces in the 1910s is worth noting. This situation became glaringly apparent when war broke out, as Brazilian authorities were unable to realistically consider dispatching troops to Europe.

Aside from lending France some of the 45 German ships seized in Brazilian ports, Brazil's military involvement in the war become concrete in 1918, albeit in a very limited form and in three areas. The first initiative was to send thirteen airmen for training in England. Eight of them joined a Royal Air Force squadron on anti-submarine patrols, while the others served primarily in the French army, fighting on the western front.

The second initiative involved the Brazilian Navy, whose minimal role in the war operations largely reflected its inadequacy. The Naval Division in War Operations (*Divisão Naval em Operações de Guerra – DNOG*), with its steam-powered ships, faced a lack of fuel and numerous mechanical breakdowns throughout its mission. The DNOG was sent to patrol the west coast of Africa against German submarine attacks, but its precarious state was further exacerbated by the outbreak of Spanish flu. When it stopped in Dakar at the end of August 1918 for refueling and repairs, the crew was hit by the influenza virus, resulting in 125 deaths among its 1,500 crew members (Bonalume Neto 2012; Scarrone 2014; Vinhosa 1990, 169-172).

Finally, a Military Medical Mission was dispatched to France to set up a hospital in Paris. The mission departed for France in August 1918, aboard the French ship *Plata* and also stopped in Dakar, where various members contracted Spanish flu and demised.

Brazil and the United States in the 1910s

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the approach implemented by Rio Branco (1902-1912) toward the United States was guided by the interests of Brazil's coffee export economy. The United States, the world's largest coffee consumer, had a booming economy and was seeking opportunities in Latin America. While Brazil maintained ties to the European powers, its economic dependence on them waned over the years, especially after the outbreak of the Great War (Albert 1988, 94).

[3] Moniz Bandeira 1974,198, Vinhosa 1990, 99-127, Smith 1991, 112-116, Garcia 2006 and Leuchars 2023, 2340-2368 discuss what they consider to be the motives behind Brazil's recognition of a state of war with Germany.

Evidence of closer relations between Brazil and the United States can be identified by the promotion of the Brazilian legation in Washington to embassy status in 1905 – the first embassy that Brazil established. This was mirrored by the corresponding promotion of the US legation to embassy level in Rio de Janeiro. The rapprochement between the two countries was further strengthened by the appointment of Joaquim Nabuco to represent Brazil in the United States. Nabuco admired the United States, consolidated stronger ties with the country, and was highly successful in circulating among the political circles in Washington. He remained in the post until his death in 1910.

To the delight of the Brazilian elite, Rio de Janeiro hosted the Third Pan-American Conference in 1906, one of the clearest and best-known manifestations of this closeness. The conference was highlighted by the visit of Elihu Root, the first acting Secretary of State to come to a South American country. Europe, nevertheless, continued to be the cultural mirror in which the Brazilian elite wished to see themselves reflected.

The first years of the 1910s were a visible low point in the relations between Brazil and the United States, while US relations with Argentina were at a high, highlighted by Buenos Aires hosting the Pan-American Conference of 1910. "When Rio Branco died in February 1912, the strategy of approximation appeared to be in ruins" (Smith 1991, 72). Throughout the Rio Branco years, US authorities were consistently concerned about the trade imbalance, which was highly favorable to Brazil. With the end of Theodore Roosevelt's presidency (1901-1909), and even before Rio Branco's death, the Dollar Diplomacy of William H. Taft (1909-1913) and his administration's insistence on obtaining higher customs concessions from Brazil for American imported products had led to a deterioration in relations. These did not immediately improve with Domício da Gama's arrival in Washington in 1911.

As historiography has amply demonstrated, Rio Branco sought stronger ties with the United States but never at the expense of Brazilian interests. This approach was also shared by Domício da Gama, a close ally of the minister. He viewed the relations between Brazil and the United States pragmatically, clearly perceiving the significant power asymmetry between the two countries. Domício da Gama recognized the importance of Brazil developing close relations with the United States without implying any kind of subservience.[4]

Domício da Gama did not share Nabuco's admiration for the United States. On the contrary, he took a very critical view of the constant threats to tax coffee, which were intended to leverage bigger trade concessions from Brazil (Smith 1991, 75). Upon his arrival in Washington, amid already worsening relations with the United States, da Gama had to address the so-called coffee trust issue, which lasted from 1912 to 1913. This was the most severe problem the ambassador faced during his time in the United States, until he left Washington in 1918 to head Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The trust was a scheme to artificially increase the price of coffee on

[4] Bueno (2003, 367-374) deals extensively with Domício da Gama's international positions, especially concerning the United States, as indicated by the suggestive subtitle of his book, 'The Dissenting Voice of Domício da Gama". For further insight, see also Moniz Bandeira, 186-188. (Leuchars 1983).

the US market by monopolizing the product's distribution through a committee headed by a major American trader. This practice violated US antitrust legislation (Smith 1991, 82).

Communication problems within the United States government bureaucracy, the difficulties encountered by the Brazilian embassy in addressing the issue with US authorities, and the measures demanded by the Justice Department, which acted without informing the Brazilian embassy in Washington, all provoked a very negative response from the Brazilian ambassador. At a meeting of the representatives of the Pan-American Union countries held at the Pan-American Society on May 27, 1912, da Gama gave a strongly-worded speech. In it, he criticized the practices of American businessmen who enjoyed government support, which, he said, "seem[ed] disposed to enforce it even at the sacrifice of a long-standing international friendship" (quoted in Smith 1991, 76).

Although the speech was a response to the controversial boost in coffee prices, it was perceived as a direct criticism of the Taft administration and its Dollar Diplomacy. At the same time, it was very well received by most of the Latin American audience. Da Gama continued to deliver critical speeches, leading to rumors that he would return to Brazil. In Rio de Janeiro, there was talk of the low prestige of the United States as a consequence of the Taft period (Smith 1991, 83; Leuchars 1983).

When Woodrow Wilson's government took office in 1913, he and his Secretary of State, William J. Bryan (1913-1915), sought to resolve the coffee price issue, as they were concerned with other pressing international problems. Thus, "[a]fter vigorous action from the ambassador Domício da Gama, on the initiative of the White House itself, a case [involving] Brazilian coffee was closed in May 1913" (Vinhosa 1990, 71). Da Gama refused to yield to pressure from the United States authorities and remained strongly critical until the negotiations were concluded. The coffee stored in the United States was sold, and the price valuation committee was dissolved. Upon assuming the presidency, Wilson sought and succeeded in finding a solution to the diplomatic crisis, ending the coffee trust issue, thus showing his intention to improve relations with Brazil. With the issue resolved, "relations between the two countries returned to a friendly climate" (Vinhosa 1990, 71)[5].

The way Domício da Gama handled various issues clearly demonstrated the significance of his activities at the Washington embassy in reorienting relations between Brazil and the United States. A notable example is the communications between the ambassador and the Brazilian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lauro Müller (February 14, 1912 to May 7, 1917), following the outbreak of a revolution in Paraguay in 1912. When Müller asked the ambassador to consult the US State Department's position to guide Brazil's response, da Gama carefully replied, ensuring he did not offend the minister's sensibilities, that he believed that "Brazil did not need 'hypothetical protection' but rather 'friendship without dependency'" (Bandeira 1978, 187).

It is perhaps no exaggeration to suggest that during Lauro Müller's tenure at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Brazilian embassy in Washington became "virtually an adjunct of Itamaraty."

[5] On this topic, see also Bueno 2003, 374-382.

Although Müller was an independent-minded minister, all indications are that he closely heeded to the opinions of the ambassador Domício da Gama, probably due to his diplomatic inexperience, "and in this way Brazil's friendship with the United States could proceed at an orderly yet restrained pace" (Leuchars 1983).[6]

When Wilson began his first term as US president (1913-1917), he primarily intended to include domestic reforms and reverse his predecessors' interventionist and aggressive foreign policy. Republicans had run the country since 1897. However, Wilson became increasingly embroiled in international issues, such as intervening militarily in Mexico in 1914 and engaging the United States in the First World War, in which the country would assume a leading role. In Brazil, Lauro Müller pursued a policy of stronger ties with the United States, visiting the country twice in 1913 and 1916. He maintained that Brazil's rapprochement with Argentina and Chile, which had been negotiating the ABC Pact since 1909, aimed to bring the three countries closer without implying an anti-American stance. This became evident when the United States intervened in Mexico in 1914. The intervention did not escalate into a larger conflict due to the mediation of Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. The United States government asked the Brazilian legation to look after US interests in Mexico (Vinhosa 1990, 73).

The steps leading up to the United States entering the Great War began on January 31, 1917, when the German government notified neutral governments in Berlin that, henceforth, all ships sailing in a zone covering most of Europe's waters would be destroyed by German submarines without warning. A few days later, on February 3, the United States broke off relations with Germany. Minister Lauro Müller had anticipated the US stance towards the rest of the Americas and exerted intense pressure on the neutral countries to break off their diplomatic relations with Germany as well. However, this pressure proved to be unproductive and even counterproductive. Brazil, for instance, did not break diplomatic and commercial ties with Germany until April 11, 1917. As Leuchars (1983) observes:

> This diplomatic pressure proved to be a tactical error by the U.S. government, for it was regarded as an interference in the affairs of other nations and aroused South-American sensibilities. [Domício da] Gama explained that if Brazil broke relations now, then history would declare that it had done so to follow unconditionally the United States.

The situation worsened irreversibly when the Brazilian merchant ship *Paraná* was torpedoed by German submarines on the night of April 3-4, 1917, without prior warning, killing at least one crew member. On April 11, the Brazilian government broke diplomatic and trade relations with Germany. The United States had entered the war a few days earlier, on April 6.

[6] For more on Lauro Müller's lack of international experience and his differences with Domício da Gama concerning Brazil-US relations, see, for example, Bueno 2003, 363-366).

On May 3, 1917, Lauro Müller left his position at Itamaraty, and Nilo Peçanha took over as Foreign Affairs Minister. As Germany's stance became more aggressive, the fact that a minister of German descent now headed Itamaraty – unjustly accused of being a Germanophile – became untenable. It is important to note that despite the US government's appeal to the Monroe Doctrine and its expectation of a reciprocal attitude from Latin American countries, the Brazilian government only proclaimed a state of war against Germany six months later, on October 26, 1917.

The 1919 Peace Conference

The organizers of the 1919 Peace Conference looked to the 1815 Congress of Vienna for guidance. However, a century had passed, and the reality they confronted was entirely different. More than thirty countries were represented in Paris, many of which had yet to even exist in 1815. At the time, Latin America had been part of the Portuguese and Spanish empires. By 1919, many delegations represented democratic governments that had to consider public opinion, upcoming elections, and the appeal of competing nationalisms (MacMillan 2003, xxviii-xxxi).

Paris, referred to by an upset Lloyd George as "[Clemenceau's] bloody capital," was chosen to host the Conference, symbolizing the tragedy imposed on the defeated nations. This choice reflected the French desire to maintain this symbolism, which heightened the punitive nature of the event. The Conference was organized without the participation of less powerful nations, despite significant differences between the major and minor powers. For instance, the human losses were substantial for the United Kingdom and its colonies (nearly 1 million), France (1,398,000), and the United States (114,000), far exceeding those of the smaller powers (Steiner 2005, 4).[7]

United by the war, the Allied Powers with General Interests (the United States, Britain, France, Japan and Italy) continually diverged. They made decisions behind closed doors, using the conference's plenary sessions merely to ratify what had already been decided (MacMillan 2003, xviii). This approach did not go unchallenged, as the smaller powers voiced their criticism. Pandiá Calógeras later described the atmosphere at the start of the discussions, "it was the continuation of the war in another form" (1926, 7).

Paris emerged from the war badly damaged, chaotic, and overcrowded. As the host of such an important and heavily attended conference, the city faced food and coal shortage. It was cold even in the grand hotels, and its inhabitants were still grappling with the Spanish flu, which had caused more deaths than the war itself. At the luxurious Hotel Crillon, which hosted some American delegates, military doctors treated those affected by the flu, suggesting that smoking was an excellent preventive measure (MacMillan 2003, 145). Due to the lack of accommodations, the Foreign Office librarian, who had the difficult task of housing nearly 400 British delegates

[7] Among the losing powers, Germany had 2,037,000 deaths, Austria-Hungary 1,100,000, and Bulgaria and Turkey combined 892,000 (Steiner 2005, 4). The total losses for the Allies amounted to 5,421,000, while the losing powers suffered 9,450,000 casualties.

(MacMillan 2003, xxix; Steiner2005, 16-19), described the lodging at the Hotel Majestic on Avenue Kléber as a "vast caravanserai [that] had been constructed almost entirely of onyx for the benefit of the Brazilian ladies who, before the war, could come to Paris to buy their clothes" (Marks 1970, 155).

In early December 1918, when the name of Epitácio Pessoa was suggested as a possible head of the Brazilian delegation, the senator for Paraíba responded to press inquiries by stating he had not been invited and that Rui Barbosa "was the man naturally indicated for this high investiture, not by a group, nor by a political faction, but by the entire Nation" (*A Rua*, 12/10/1918, quoted in Pessoa 1961, 1). His careful response was justified, given Barbosa's susceptibility and *furor discursandi*, to use the expression of Heitor Lyra (1972, 31).

Furthermore, Rodrigues Alves, who had served as president from 1902 to 1906, had just been re-elected for the 1918-1922 term but was too ill to take office. At seventy, an advanced age for thatiod, Alves had been suffering from health issues for some time. The Spanish flu, which arrived in Brazil in September 1918 aboard the ship *Demerara,* further compromised his health. Alves died on January 16, 1919, possibly due to the virus, his existing health problems that had afflicted him for years, or a combination of both.

With Rodrigues Alves' health impediment, Vice-President Delfim Moreira stepped in. The situation surrounding the presidency was quite uncertain. Domício da Gama, who had spent seven years in Washington addressing significant issues between Brazil and the United States, returned to head Itamaraty, "initially critical of the United States, (…) his views gradually changed so much so that State Department officials welcomed his appointment as foreign minister in 1918" (Smith 1991, 78).

When handed the Foreign Affairs portfolio, Domício da Gama thought about heading the Brazilian delegation in Paris himself. Upon arriving in Rio de Janeiro, he immediately took the necessary measures to prepare for the mission and faced no apparent opposition from Rodrigues Alves's group or the acting president. On the contrary, they were ready to collaborate with the new minister. However, days after taking office, da Gama learned that Rodrigues Alves had invited Rui Barbosa to head the mission. Despite seeking out the senator himself and personally confirming the invitation to head the Paris delegation, Rui Barbosa declined the post, feeling offended by the perceived delay of the invitation (Lyra 1972, 79-101). He even accused the US ambassador to Rio de Janeiro, Edwin Morgan, of conspiring with Domício da Gama to block his appointment to head the Brazilian delegation[8].

By the end of December 1918, the Brazilian government had not received an invitation to the Peace Conference, not even informally[9]. Under pressure from the Chamber of Deputies and the press for information on Brazil's participation in the conference, Domício da Gama leveraged his extensive network of contacts from his seven years as head of the Brazilian embassy

[8] Brazil. Annual Report, 1919. In BDFA, Part II, Series D, vol. 1: 68.

[9] Lansing (Paris) to Polk, Under Secretary of State (Washington), 12/27/1918. In FRUS, *1919, The Paris Peace Conference*, vol. I, p. 228.

in Washington. His connections included the US Secretary of State Robert Lansing and President Wilson, who had already arrived in Paris on December 18, 1918. Even before the Council of Ten (composed of two representatives from each of the five major powers: the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, and Japan) had decided which countries would participate in the conference and to which extent, the Americans suggested that da Gama appoint "two or more representatives"[10]. Epitácio Pessoa, João Pandiá Calógeras, and Raul Fernandes were then nominated. Olinto Magalhães was the fourth delegate, though not formally appointed.

Later, the five major powers finally decided that each of them would have five plenipotentiaries. Among the smaller powers that had participated in the war, termed "powers with specific interests," only Serbia and Belgium, both heavily damaged by the conflict, would have three plenipotentiaries each. To avoid disrupting the already formalized Brazilian delegation, Domício da Gama once again turned to the Americans to allow Brazil to maintain its delegation with three plenipotentiaries. On January 13, President Wilson secured the agreement of Britain and France for Brazil to keep its appointed delegation[11].

The exception made for Brazil provoked "widespread surprise" (Temperley 1920, 248) and the indignation of the Portuguese, who considered the decision a "slap in the face" (Macmillan 2003, 73), since they were only granted two plenipotentiaries despite having sent 60,000 soldiers to the Western Front. This response indicates that the concession made in favor of the Brazilian government was significant. Like Portugal, seven other countries were allowed two representatives: China, Greece, Hejaz, Poland, Romania, Siam, and Czechoslovakia. The neutral powers were only invited to attend if and when deemed necessary (Temperley 1920, 248).

In the correspondence exchanged between Washington and the US representatives in Paris, two arguments seemed to have justified acceding to Domício da Gama's request. They noted that Brazil was the only South American country to have participated in the war and deserved representation due to its solidarity with the Allies and broader alignment with US policy. It was also argued that forcing the Brazilian government to revise its representation in Paris "would cause widespread cheer among countries like Argentina and Chile, envious [of Brazilian relations with the US government] and the allies"[12]. However, Wilson's primary motive for persuading France and Britain to accept the three Brazilian plenipotentiaries was quite different. He reminded them of his concerns about the large German presence in southern Brazil compared to other Latin American countries. This presence made it necessary "to distance Brazil from Germany (…) [I] f it were assured an exceptional position – for example, if three delegates were accepted, [Brazil] would be bound to the interests of the Allies themselves"[13].

[10] Lansing (Paris) to Polk (Washington), 12/27/1918, in FRUS, *1919, The Paris Peace Conference*, vol. I, p. 228.

[11] Secretary's Note of a Conversation Held in M. Pichon's Room at the *Quai d'Orsay* on Monday, 13 January 1919, at 4 p.m. In FRUS, *1919, The Paris Peace Conference,* vol. 1: 234-235 and vol. 3: 533.

[12] Polk (Washington) to US delegation (Paris), 1/10/1919. In FRUS, *1919, The Paris Peace Conference*, vol. 1: 234.

[13] Secretary's Note of a Conversation …, 1/13/1919, at 4 p.m., In FRUS, *1919, The Paris Peace Conference,* vol. I: 234-235 e vol. III: 533.

It may seem that Wilson was exaggerating the issue of the German-descendant population in the south of Brazil. However, it is noteworthy that in November 1914, the Brazilian embassy in London consulted the Foreign Office to inquire whether the British government was aware of any German claim to the region. The British response confirmed a lingering concern that Brazil's declaration of neutrality had failed to dispel: the Foreign Office replied that while no such intention had been declared by Germany, it would be unsurprising if, considering Germany's ambition to dominate Western Europe, it sought to extend its conquests should it emerge victorious[14].

When Wilson arrived in Paris on December 18, 1918, one month after the armistice, almost nothing had been prepared for the peace negotiations. At his insistence, the creation of the League of Nations was discussed at the very beginning of the conference. Wilson was convinced that if the League's Pact was not approved at the start, when his prestige and American influence were strongest, it would not be approved later (Walters 1952, 26 and 31). Moreover, Wilson considered the League essential for preserving European peace, including mechanisms like arbitration to avoid armed conflicts. The League's founding document would address and adjust deficiencies in the peace treaties. This conviction was shared by experts, diplomats, pacifists, and the public opinion of war-participating countries, who believed that the League should be created quickly to prevent future wars (Walters 1952, 4).

Margaret MacMillan (2003, 97) notes that Wilson's focus on the League of Nations had the unfortunate consequence of diverting his attention from the peace treaty negotiations, thereby compromising European peace and security. Several historians mention Wilson's obsession with the League, highlighting his insistence in chairing the Committee in Charge of Drafting the Covenant of the League of Nations. In contrast, Clemenceau and Lloyd George did not participate in the committee; instead, they appointed representatives to handle the matter, as it interested them little.

The United States, France, Britain, Italy, and Japan formed part of the Committee on the League of Nations. Under pressure from smaller powers, the Committee was expanded to include Belgium, Brazil, China, Portugal, Serbia, Greece, Poland, Portugal, Czechoslovakia, and Romania (Miller 1928, 84). The meetings of the Committee were conducted with "exemplary speed and efficiency" (Walters 1952, 33).

The second stage of the Peace Conference began after an interval during which Wilson returned to the United States and later came back to Paris. This phase "was not distinguished by the harmony of the first days. Two months of intensive negotiations on the countless problems of peace-making and of current policy had done much to undermine the unity of the victorious nations" (Walters 1952, 37). This further underscores the validity of Wilson's concerns regarding the prompt approval of the Covenant were probably well-founded, as were those worried about the timely negotiation of the peace treaties[15].

[14] Grey (London) to Robertson (Rio de Janeiro), 11/12/1914, BDFA, Part II, Series D, vol. 1: 8-9.

[15] Walters reminds that "[t]here were deep divisions over French claims on the Western, and Polish claims on the Eastern, frontiers of Germany; over Italian claims in the Adriatic and Japanese claims in Shantung. None of these matters was the direct concern of the League Committee: but the change of temper which had affected the whole ambit of the Conference was perceptible there also" (Walters 1952, 37).

Wilson's original conceptions did not include creating a restricted body, but only an assembly of delegates. However, the idea of creating a council emerged in many later projects and was supported by the argument that the League of Nations should reflect the Allies' victory. Hence, the Council would be composed by the great powers: a body capable of making quick decisions, with execution guaranteed principally by its members. However, during the Committee on the League of Nations work, four temporary seats were added, again at the insistence of the representatives of the smaller powers. It was in this context of this discussion that Epitácio Pessoa made one of his notable interventions, which, though rare, "always made an impression." He asserted that if the Council were composed solely of the great powers, it would not be a body of the League of Nations but rather "a kind of tribunal to which the world would be subjected" (Miller 1923, 162, 317; 1928, 424).

The four temporary members of the Council would be chosen annually by the Assembly of the League of Nations. Those selected to be part of the Council when the League began functioning in January 1920 would be chosen at a plenary session of the Peace Conference. Before this session, Epitácio Pessoa sought Domício da Gama's help to secure a place for Brazil among these temporary seats. He insisted that the minister send an appeal from Rio de Janeiro to President Wilson, emphasizing, "You understand the prestige that such an appointment would bring us"[16]. Brazil was the only South American belligerent[17]. Domício da Gama then requested Robert Lansing (Lansing 1926, 13), who officially headed the US delegation in Paris, to inform President Wilson that "because of his position in the government, it would be very unfavorable to him [Domício da Gama] were Brazil not to obtain a seat on the Council of the League" (Lyra 1972, 94). On April 28, the proposal for the Covenant was presented in a plenary session of the Peace Conference. Alongside the five great powers – the United States, France, Britain, Italy, and Japan – Wilson put forward Brazil, Belgium, Spain, and Greece as temporary members. The proposal was approved.

Since February, Domício da Gama had spared no effort lobbying the Americans, ensuring that his appeals for Brazil to obtain the coveted seat had reached President Wilson. Given da Gama's previous interventions and the favorable outcomes he had obtained for the Brazilian government, the minister's actions were likely extremely important, if not decisive, for Brazil's inclusion in the Council. Equally significant was President Wilson's support.

On April 13, 1919, Epitácio Pessoa was elected president of Brazil. This curious election, unusual even by the standards of the First Republic, likely influenced US diplomacy to pay greater attention to Brazil and offer more assistance, partly due to Brazil's new status as a plenipotentiary (Garcia 2006, 36-37; Smith 1991, 129). However, according to Streeter (2010, 110), there is "little hard evidence to suggest Pessoa's new status as president-elect increased his delegation's negotiating power".

[16] Epitácio Pessoa to Domício da Gama, 13/2/1919, *in* Pessoa 1961, 14.

[17] Pessoa to da Gama, 2/13/1919. In Pessoa 1961, 14.

In this regard, we corroborate Vinhosa's argument (1990, 191), which posits that "Domício da Gama faced the formidable task of overcoming the antagonism of Clemenceau and Lloyd George, not by invoking military collaboration in the conflict (...), but by solely leveraging his prestige with the members of the American administration".

The issues of the former German ships and São Paulo coffee, discussed in the first part of this article, are not included here. While it is plausible that Domício da Gama played an important role in mediating between the Brazilian and the US delegations, thus aiding Brazil's success in these negotiations, the available Brazilian, American, and British sources do not allow us to determine the extent of Domício da Gama's involvement. Instead, more emphasis is given to Epitácio Pessoa, as several works have demonstrated (Bueno 2003; Garcia 2013; Leuchars 1983).

Conclusion

Brazil entered the 1920s with significant credentials, leading its elite to believe that the country had ascended to a new international status. The 1920s would reveal how much of this perception would guide Brazilian foreign policy and to what extent this expectation would be confirmed. If the due amount of ink has yet to be spent on the foreign policy issues of the 1920s, the reason is certainly not any absence of important aspects to be explored. Unfortunately, as Eugênio Garcia Vargas (2006, 20-21) reminds us, "[t]he twenties have long been relegated to a historiographic limbo in the area of international relations". The 1910s and 1920s are often seen merely as decades preceding the 1930 Revolution.

We have seen that during his seven years at the Washington embassy, da Gama did not position Brazil as an unconditional friend to the United States. Upon his arrival, he immediately confronted the important issue of the coffee trust, strongly defending Brazil's position and risking the already strained relations between the two countries, especially compared to the closer ties between American and Argentine diplomats. However, da Gama successfully navigated the coffee trust controversy, and by the time he was called to head Itamaraty in 1918, relations with the United States had improved significantly. Over time, after he arrived in Washington in 1911, high-ranking officials from the US administration, especially from the State Department, came to admire and form close relations with Domício da Gama. When the ambassador eventually left the United States, these officials lamented his departure.

We have also seen that President Woodrow Wilson insisted on negotiating the creation of the League of Nations before addressing issues of immediate importance to Europeans, more directly linked to peace. Wilson arrived in Paris as a great hero with enormous charisma, given the decisive role the United States had played in the defeat of Germany and its allies. Europeans accepted Wilson's proposal, establishing the Committee on the League of Nations. Thanks to Domício da Gama's insistence, Brazil joined the Committee, an achievement that few of the smaller powers accomplished.

In the lead-up to the conference, before the number of representatives each delegation could send had even been decided, Domício da Gama had to resolve a series of problems in Rio de Janeiro related to this issue, as Brazil was initially allotted just one plenipotentiary, despite having several candidates. By appealing to his colleagues in both Washington and Paris, da Gama ensured that the Brazilian delegation would eventually comprise three formal plenipotentiaries.

On the Committee on the League of Nations, repeated appeals, principally from Paris, were made for Domício da Gama to contact the Americans to secure one of the four non-permanent seats on the Council of the League of Nations for Brazil. Domício da Gama's efforts were successful, and with President Wilson's intervention, the wishes of the Brazilian diplomatic corps were met.

The correspondence between the minister Domício da Gama and the Americans in Paris and Washington, between the Americans themselves, as well as the documents on the Paris Conference and the Committee on the League of Nations, abundantly show that da Gama's role was fundamental in ensuring that issues of interest to Brazil were addressed at the Peace Conference. The seven years Domício da Gama spent in Washington prior to the start of the organization of the Peace Conference had enabled an improvement in the relations between Brazil and the United States, as well as ensuring mutual understanding and close relations between the minister and the US administration both immediately before and during the Peace Conference.

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