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# **THE MULTIPLE CHALLENGES** of Contemporary International Relations

Charles Pennaforte  
Editor

**THE MULTIPLE CHALLENGES**  
of Contemporary International Relations



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# **THE MULTIPLE CHALLENGES** of Contemporary International Relations

Charles Pennaforte  
Editor

Pelotas, 2024



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# INTRODUCTION

The book that reaches the reader is the result of work developed by the Laboratory of Geopolitics, International Relations, and Antisystemic Movements (LabGRIMA) at the International Relations Program of the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPEl), Brazil. Since 2019, LabGRIMA has been dedicated to studying and promoting its work outside Brazil. This is the fourth book edited in English by the UFPEl Publisher. To achieve this, they seek partnerships with academics and experts, who have a critical perspective on International Relations. The goal is to provide analyses that offer an understanding of major contemporary events beyond the traditional, exclusively Anglo-Saxon, perspective.

Shortly after the end of the Soviet Union, it was believed that many political and geopolitical rivalries declined significantly. The typical idea of the “end of history” and the victory of the U.S. worldview shortly after the dismantling of the socialist bloc provided a broad analytical repertoire of a unipolar world. However, what we observed over time was a rearrangement of the international stage, mainly by Russia, reasserting its role as a global geopolitical player in the 21st century. Simultaneously, the emergence of a group of countries known as BRICS has a significant capacity to influence the international stage as well as the increasingly pronounced presence of China as a global player. All of this occurs within what constitutes the decline of US hegemony, not only economically, but also ideologically and geopolitically (Arrighi, 1994; Wallerstein, 2003).

Despite the reluctance of Anglo-Saxon mainstream academia to recognize the decline of US and Western European influence, or at least to downplay it, we can clearly see signs of this decline. The current international geopolitical landscape is extremely challenging for geopolitics and international relations analysis. Therefore, we aimed to provide insights into such challenging landscapes across various themes. To achieve these goals, we have contributions from researchers not only from Brazil but also from Belgium, Russia, Romania, and Italy. Therefore, the reader can find a collection of articles and essays by our guests.

For this purpose, we have the contributions of Mateus José da Silva Santos and Charles Pennaforte from the Federal University of Pelotas with their piece titled Paths of International (Dis)order: The Decline of American Primacy, Ukrainian Conflict, and Systemic Uncertainties in the 21st Century. They provided an analysis of the emergence of different critical perspectives, both within and outside the Anglo-Saxon world, regarding strategic impasses involving NATO and Russia in the post-Cold War era.

Considering the intellectual contributions of Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira, John Mearsheimer, and Perry Anderson as exercises in interpreting international politics over the last three decades, this chapter highlights how these authors understood the deterioration of the political situation in Eastern Europe from the first half of the last decade through an analysis of the misguided policy of expanding the Western sphere of influence into old Russian areas. Among factors such as the production of a mismatch between US strategies in global operations and the broader trends in international relations in terms of affirming multipolarity, the process of Russian reengagement in international relations, and the escalation of tensions in Ukraine, these perspectives are relevant in light of the emergence of a war in 2022, showing their accuracy in understanding more general developments.

From the Université Catholique du Louvain in Belgium, we have the contribution of Professor Amine Ait-Chalaal with the article *The Israel-Palestine Issue and Some of Its Main Political and Legal Components*. This topic, with over half a century of significance, returned to full force after the Hamas Group's attacks on Israeli territory in October 2023 and Israel's military response to the Gaza Strip. Professor Amine provides a retrospective overview of the advances and setbacks of the Palestinian issue and points out five central issues in the construction of a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. This is a subject of great contemporary importance that has filled geopolitics and international relations books for over half a century, involving a complex network of interests, primarily from the United States.

Retired Brazilian diplomat Paulo Antônio Pereira Pinto, who has worked in Central and Eastern Asia, contributes to the rise of two important countries: China and India. In *China and India - The Asian Peaceful Rise*, the diplomat provides an analysis of the growth of these two nations and their impacts on the international economy, with a focus on the influence of 'Culture' as an important aspect for understanding the recent political developments in both countries.

This is an interesting perspective to understand the growth of these two countries at the international stage. His approach goes against numerous analysts who view China's rise, for example, as extremely dangerous to 'Western values.'

Russian specialist Victor Jefreits from the Latin American Studies Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences concluded our book with the article *The New Challenges for Russian Policy in Latin America*. His analysis focuses on Moscow's search for new allies while re-establishing old partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in the face of competition from the United States. Jefreits provided an interesting analysis of Russian foreign policy in the LAC, reinvigorated in the 21st century, and building on historical contacts dating back to the time of the USSR. The new reality generated in 2022

by the invasion of Ukraine has certainly increased the need for new partnerships with the LAC, as evidenced by the increased trade with the region.

From Romania, we have the contribution of Vasile Simileanu with *The Geopolitical Challenges of the Black Sea*. Romanian experts highlight the importance of the Black Sea in terms of European security and defense. For Simileanu, a region characterized by ethnic and religious tolerance should be a primary concern for the European Union, and its management should be based on cooperation, equality, and governance through democratic legislation.

In conclusion, we have contributed to Italian researcher Gagliano Giuseppe with the text, *The Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Hegemony of the United States*. The researcher provides a panoramic view of the current geopolitical landscape, addressing topics of great relevance and complexity, offering insights into the synergy between the aerospace industries of the United States and Ukraine, as well as naval cooperation between the United Kingdom and Odessa. It explores the objectives of the French, Americans, and the British in using Ukraine as a “buffer” against Russia, and the role of China in the international economic scene through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its impact on Eurasian connectivity. This perspective is analytically significant.

As we can see, the topics analyzed in this book aim to enhance the understanding of an increasingly complex and dynamic international landscape. The decline of the United States in geopolitical and economic terms is the basis for the emergence of a new global reality that will undoubtedly shift away from the current centers of power. We thank the contributors in advance, and hope that the book provides new insights into the topics covered.

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# 1

## Paths of international (dis) order: the decline of American primacy, the Ukrainian conflict and systemic uncertainties in the 21st century

*Mateus José da Silva Santos and Charles Pennaforte*

Since the dissolution of the USSR, it has been possible to witness a series of narratives about the supremacy of the US and its liberalism as the most advantageous model for the world. The “end of history” was even marked as the new phase of capitalism in which there would be no more competitors. On the other hand, it was possible to observe a series of systemic contradictions that deepened over time. We can mention the rise of China as an economic power and the 2008 crisis that, for example, exposed the fragility of the system in the face of the predominance of the financial sector as the foundation of the current process of capitalist development.

In the geopolitical scope, what seemed to be a kind of new *pax americana* did not take shape. Numerous hotspots emerged and/or remained in the interstate system: North Korea and Iran with their nuclear programs, China and the desire to regain control of Taiwan, Russia’s return to the geopolitical stage with the resumption of Crimea in 2014 and the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. With such a scenario, a new geopolitical space is configured in a totally different way from previous periods according to our vision.

In this sense, this article proposes an analysis of the different meanings attributed to the Ukrainian conflict and its geopolitical impacts on the interstate system from the identification of critical and systemic perspectives on the process even before the Russian invasion. Reconstituting the contributions of intellectuals such as the Brazilian Luiz Alberto

Moniz Bandeira<sup>1</sup> (1935-2017), the British Perry Anderson (1938) and the American John Mearsheimer (1947), we seek to observe how, inside and outside the so-called Anglo-Saxon world, Different perspectives on international politics over the last few decades have drawn attention to the worsening situation in Eastern Europe, with the central plan being the unresolved strategic impasses with the end of the Cold War and the US stance towards the Russian Federation since the 1990s.

The text is divided into three parts. First, the foundations of what can be classified as a deepening of the systemic crisis from the Ukrainian War are established, considering it as another milestone within a long process of the decline of US primacy and the opening of a moment of transition in international relations. It then proposes a recognition of the main perspectives on the suggested intellectuals that corroborate with a critical reading of the situation in Eastern Europe over the last decade, establishing a line of continuity between the war and the tensions registered since the deepening of the expansion process of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) towards Russian borders. Finally, in the last three decades, advances have been made in understanding the so-called Late Cold War as a geopolitical concept characteristic of the global reordering process.

### **Is a new geopolitical order emerging? The decline of US primacy in the face of systemic decentralization**

In the 20th century, the US was not an isolated geopolitical player on the planet. The idea of US hegemony does not withstand a historical review of facts. Incidentally, Joseph F. Nye Jr. in the article *Is the American Century Over?* (2015) addressed this issue, and what

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1. Understood as an “interpreter of international politics” (Maldonado, 2021, p. 220), Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira was born in Salvador (Bahia) in 1935. In Rio de Janeiro, during the 1950s, he completed a legal course at the Faculty of Legal Sciences. With the 1964 coup, he went into exile in Uruguay and returned to Brazil a year later. During the dictatorship, he was arrested on at least two occasions between the 1960s and the 1970s (Rocha, 2018). From the point of view of his intellectual trajectory, he developed different analyses on Brazilian Foreign Policy (PEB), the History of Brazil, the History of America, and other dynamics of the world system from an interdisciplinary point of view, reconciling, to a greater or lesser extent, historical science with the fields of Political Science and International Relations. Among the main titles are *Presença dos Estados Unidos no Brasil* (Presence of the United States in Brazil), *O Governo João Goulart: as lutas sociais no Brasil (1961-1964)* (The João Goulart Government: the social struggles in Brazil 1961-1964), *A Segunda Guerra Fria: Geopolítica e Dimensão Estratégica dos Estados Unidos* (English version: The Second Cold War: Geopolitics and the Strategic Dimensions of the USA. Springer Nature, 207) e *Formação do Império Americano* (The Formation of the American Empire) and *A Desordem Mundial: o espectro total da Total Dominação* (English version: The World Disorder: US Hegemony, Proxy Wars, Terrorism and Humanitarian Catastrophes. Springer Nature, 2019).

seemed to be correct to designate the period is the term “primacy” or “prominence.” We opted for primacy based on the verified geopolitical reality<sup>2</sup>.

According to Victor Coutinho Lage (2007), events in international space constitute one of the three vectors that historically influenced the development of International Relations as an interdisciplinary field<sup>3</sup>. Analytical efforts regarding the present and future aspects that shape the international system and the relationship between the most different actors mobilized some theorizing processes at different times.

In this perspective, authors such as Giovanni Arrighi, Immanuel Wallerstein and Robert Cox, based on different theoretical formulations, established lines of analysis about a set of systemic processes that converged to the existence of a new phase of transition in international relations. Whether from World-Systems Analysis or through the so-called Critical Theory<sup>4</sup>, the belief about a decline in US global hegemony would gain strength as an explanatory factor regarding changes in the structure of capitalism and the difficulties in reestablishing a relatively international order stability and in the development of a series of possibilities for the reconfiguration of the global system, including starting from its own overcoming.

In *The Long Twentieth Century*, Italian sociologist Giovanni Arrighi (1996) established some of the main interpretative bases about the process of global crisis from the end of the 1970s, involving the contestation and disruption of the main characteristics of the international order centered and organized by the US from World War II. Among the main characteristics of this movement for change, the loss of the monopoly on world

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2. As we have seen, the term “hegemony” is too imprecise a concept to be useful in defining “the American century.” Sometimes it means having a preponderance of power resources, sometimes the behavior of setting the rules for others, and sometimes getting the outcomes one prefers. Because of this ambiguity, we cannot date when it begins or ends. Noam Chomsky even argues that the “loss of China” was the first major step in “America’s decline,” or about the time that many others see ascendance. If there ever was a U.S. hegemony, it would have been from 1945, when the United States had nearly half the world economy as a result of World War II, to 1970, when the U.S. share of world product declined to its prewar level of a quarter of world product. Yet during this period, the United States often failed to get what it wanted — witness Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons; communist takeover of China and half of Vietnam, stalemate in the Korean War, Soviet suppression of the revolts in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Fidel Castro’s control of Cuba, and so forth. Thus, instead of “hegemony,” I prefer to use the terms “primacy” or “preeminence” in terms of a country’s disproportionate (and measurable) share of all three types of power resources” (Nye Jr: 2015).
  3. In addition to the aspects related to the dynamics of the international system, the same author draws attention to the existence of an internal vector to the field, composed of questions that comprise the development of the discipline itself, and an interdisciplinary dimension that concerns the contact of International Relations with other areas of knowledge (Lage, 2007).
  4. As a Critical Theory for International Relations, the heterodox effort to review the main epistemological bases of the field’s traditional theorizing processes, launched by Robert Cox (2021) in the late 1970s, is understood. theory as a product and raw material of the social, Critical Theory opposed the model of problem-solving Theory (Cox’s interpretation of neorealism) based on its questioning character about the current order, the recovery of the historical dimension as a factor of analysis, interest in research on perspectives, and adaptability in the face of changes in the world system. Among the main issues debated based on this proposal was the reading of the development of the world system over the last two centuries, considering the application of the method of historical structures, seen as an image of the particular configuration of forces (ideas, material capacities, and institutions).

liquidity from the strengthening of the private sector, the emergence of powerful blocs composed of governmental and business organizations, and the existence of a crisis of legitimacy regarding Washington's role in conducting different global processes were leading the world towards yet another end of a systemic cycle of accumulation<sup>5</sup>. In the midst of such a scenario, aspects such as the adoption of an accommodation policy by the US, accompanied by an offensive in the strategic military field, and the growth of East Asian economies signaled the possibility of structural changes in the geography of global capitalism<sup>6</sup>.

Robert Cox and Wallerstein discussed this historical process. For Canadian theorists, changes in class and production relations, in addition to the emergence of alterations in the forms of the state, stimulated the advancement of the process of disaggregation of the so-called *pax americana*, signaling the possibility of redesigning the global order (Cox, 2021). Aspects such as the internationalization of states in the face of the demands of global capitalism, the new configurations of the international division of labor with the fragmentation of world production, and the development of a global class structure were presented as potential characteristics of a new international structure of still imprecise configurations<sup>7</sup>.

On the other hand, the American sociologist developed, based on the so-called World-Systems Analysis, an interpretation of the process of decline in US hegemony, con-

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5. In his reading of the formation process of a system – capitalist world since the 15th and 16th centuries – Giovanni Arrighi (1996) established the existence of different moments of relative systemic stability, marked by the existence of an actor capable of exercising hegemony and occupying the condition of centripetal force in the process of capital accumulation. Considering the aforementioned cutout, Italian sociologists see at least four periods (cycles) with such characteristics: Genoese-Iberian, Dutch, British, and American.
  6. Analyzing the changes in the world-system since the 1970s and projecting some possible scenarios regarding its possible directions, Giovanni Arrighi considered that given the current stage of development of capitalism, the end of the US cycle would open a framework of uncertainties regarding the capacity of the system to rebuild from broader bases. Despite speculations about its own survival, one of its diagnoses about the most immediate situation resided in the recognition of the “replacement of an ‘old’ region (North America) by a ‘new’ one (East Asia) as the most dynamic center of capital accumulation processes on a world scale” (Arrighi, 1996, p. 344).
  7. Within the diagnosis of a possible end to US hegemony, Robert Cox (2021) established at least three possible scenarios, in light of the international events that marked part of the 1970s and the 1980s, of the reorganization of the global order. In the application of the historical structures method and its consequences for the identification of the movement of social forces, the constitution of new predominant forms of State, and the reorganization of the global system, a first possibility described by the main exponent of Critical Theory concerns the formation of a new hegemony based on the global structure of social power generated by the internationalization of production, having as characteristics the deepening of the internationalization of States, the protagonism of the transnational managerial class, and an order led by the US, Germany, Japan, OECD, and OPEC countries, in addition to certain Third World actors such as Brazil. A second possible result resided in the establishment of a non-hegemonic world structure based on conflicting centers of power, sustained from a coalition between sectors of labor and national capital, and having the Social Welfare State as its privileged political configuration. As a third possibility, but less likely according to his perspective, the emergence of a counter-hegemony based on a third-world coalition would establish an order led by the so-called Global South, with the state classes and union leaders as the main Social Forces of action, in addition to valuing a Strong and Interventionist State.



sidering the existence of different rhythms, intensities, and uncertainties throughout this process. In the exercise of a dialectical understanding of this movement, the symptoms of the end of the order constituted from the Second World War could be observed, according to him, in episodes such as the World Revolutions of 1968, the Vietnam War, the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the attacks of September 11, 2001. Amid the process of increasing inter-capitalist competition from the emergence of new forces, questioning the ideological and institutional bases that underpinned US hegemony and the end of the Cold War as a geopolitical configuration of this phase of the world system pointed to the possibility of a new phase of transition that, given the characteristics of the expansion of capitalism in recent centuries, could even lead to its own overcoming.

Dialoguing with such perspectives on the trajectory of the world system in recent decades, the War in Ukraine, understood as a military expression of a geopolitical conflict involving NATO and Russia, can be framed within a critical reading of the mismatch between the US strategies that aimed to recover its position at the global center and the pace of systemic transformations in recent decades. According to Immanuel Wallerstein (2004), within the geopolitical project of the New American Century undertaken by US neoconservatives<sup>8</sup>, the diagnosis of a decline driven by alleged flaws in Foreign Policy led to a review process that had, among other characteristics, the appreciation of unilateralism as an international insert vector. In the midst of the redesign of an order that was heading towards a multipolar framework, such a strategy proved to be wrong, accumulating different failures or wear and tear in actions such as the so-called War on Terror after the September 11 attacks.

The gap between US expectations and strategies on different fronts in world politics in the face of global transformation has also been observed in Eastern Europe. Even at the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the USSR, the Russian transition process towards capitalism under neoliberal bases and its relative disengagement from international relations during the years of Boris Yeltsin's government did not culminate in the retreat of Washington's distrust in relation to Moscow. Among the main manifestations of this trend, the waves of NATO's advance in the region and US actions in the face of the process of disintegration of Yugoslavia evidenced the eagle's interest in reinforcing its hegemony on the European continent and, at the same time, deepening security and defense agendas towards Russian borders.

The principle of continuity of such a policy was established even in the face of changes at systemic and regional levels. Within the design of a tendentially multipolar order,

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8. The New American Century was a geopolitical project of US leadership built by neoconservative segments during the 1990s. In diagnosing a relative decline in US primacy in the world system, the paths for a resumption of protagonism were established from the defense of unilateralism as a basic factor of international insertion, a strong political-military, and diplomatic commitment to affirm its condition vis-à-vis the other actors in the system (Wallerstein, 2004). Such perspectives have survived the different transitions between Republicans and Democrats for more than 20 years.

stimulated by the Chinese assertion as a global power, the rise of different Emerging States such as Brazil and India, within the scope of the main debates on the global order, a process of reemergence of Russia in global political architecture established a new meaning in the foreign relations of that country. Among the main bases of a movement initiated by the arrival of Vladimir Putin to the Government (2000-2008), stimulated by vectors such as the growth in the price of products related to the energy sector, in addition to the so-called commodities, and the reorganization of relations between the and the country's economic elites<sup>9</sup>, the perspective of Russia's reinsertion as a global player obeyed an abandonment of Yeltsin's potentially Westernist line, reaffirming the country's autonomy at the regional and global levels<sup>10</sup>, bringing it closer to initiatives such as the BRICS and deepening relations with strategic countries such as China.

In this changing environment, the reaffirmation of Russian protagonism and its security agenda in the so-called post-Soviet space exhausted some of the possibilities for a more stable relationship with the US:

Externally, Putin followed the path of recovery from the country's international prestige based on economic improvement. With the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 in the USA, there was a rapprochement between Putin and American President George W. Bush in the common fight against terrorism. However, from 2004 onwards, during their second presidential term, increasingly assertive Russia began to clash with the US on certain issues, such as the expansion of the NATO military alliance towards Eastern Europe and the proposal of a NATO anti-missile system to be installed in Poland and the Czech Republic and turned against Iran (towards Russia). Seeking to regain its traditional status as a great power, Russia was especially sensitive to developments in its traditional sphere of influence: the former Soviet Republic. Thus, the two countries were on opposite sides during the Pink and Orange Revolutions in

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9. Influenced by the increase in oil and natural gas prices since the 2000s, the improvement in the Russian economy during Putin's first two terms can be seen in the existence of a growth rate of approximately 7% per year, reduction in inflation, increase in real wages, and reduction in poverty rates (Segrillo, 2012; Taibó, 2018). From the point of view of relations between the State and the economic elites, the then president established changes regarding the connections between the Kremlin and so-called oligarchs. In addition to recovering part of the State's economic participation in strategic sectors, the formation of a tacit agreement with a portion of the elites that enriched themselves in the face of the privatization process of the 1990s was established based on the interest in removing such segments from politics, training of regulated capitalism, and, on the other hand, a relative tolerance of the Kremlin in relation to its businesses (Taibó, 2018).
  10. The suggestion of a predominantly Occidental line to Russian Foreign Policy under Boris Yeltsin must suffer from two caveats. First, authors such as Taibó (2018) identified at least two phases in the trajectory of Russian international insertion over the indicated period. At first, amid the legacy of the final years of the USSR with a strategic retreat of the superpower and the political and economic challenges to be faced by independent Russia, the first four years of foreign relations were marked by a relative rapprochement with the so-called Western world, materialized in movements such as Russia's accession to the IMF and the IBRD, the opening of dialogue with NATO and support or connivance with certain actions by Washington abroad, as in the context of the Yugoslav Civil War. However, as the same author points out, given the mismatch between US discourse and practice in relation to Russia, a more autonomous path in international relations was sought from 1995 onwards, gaining greater strength in contexts such as the first wave of expansion of the Western Military Alliance in the former Soviet zone of influence and in the US bombing of Yugoslav territory in 1999.

Georgia and Ukraine, respectively, the clashes in South Ossetia and Georgia, and the issue of recognition of Kosovo (Segrillo, 2012, p. 335-336).

On the horizon of resuming a more active role for Russia in the contemporary world, the movements of Russian diplomacy converged on the reintegration of the country in strategic regions such as Africa and the Middle East, the deepening of its rapprochement with the Emerging States, and the reaffirmation of its regional security zone. In this sense, in the face of a world increasingly less hegemonized by the US, the shocks involving a superpower in decline and a power in re-ascension stimulated the development of an environment of tension and conflict that materialized the systemic uncertainties that permeated the world since the end of the Cold War.

In the challenges of interpretation and analysis of that period, intellectuals and theorists such as Luiz Alberto Moniz Bandeira, John Mearsheimer and Perry Anderson, based on different research agendas, made contributions to the field of International Relations that, in the light of the development of world politics in the recent years, show their respective conditions as possible references today. Thus, we move on to a brief analysis of these three subjects and their insertion into debates about the contemporary world.

### **Systemic dynamics of a crisis with multiple dimensions**

If the Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory would constitute one of the main events of the year 2022, its sense of historical deepening in the face of signs of uncertainty from a systemic crisis framework would be associated with more general movements at the global and regional levels, involving some of the main protagonists or supporting actors in this scenario. From this perspective, the selected authors establish the development of variables that, even preceding the context of the armed conflict, contribute to the recognition of the most remote systemic processes that directly or indirectly influence the understanding of the Ukrainian War in its multiple dimensions. For the purposes of this analysis, the readings of the waves of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe from the 1990s onwards, the analyses on the reemergence of Russia in international relations, and the complexities involving its reaffirmation as a central actor in the post-Soviet space stand out. and movements of a global nature, in addition to the contributions of intellectuals, suggested the Ukrainian crisis from 2013 onwards.

As a military expression of the capitalist power bloc in the Cold War, NATO survived the end of the bipolar conflict in the late 1980s, becoming an object of concern regarding the direction of the announced New World Order. In the rhetoric of a supposedly multipolar world, the maintenance of a power structure characteristic of an order in disinte-

gration and its expansion towards the former socialist world was the object of consideration by Perry Anderson, Mearsheimer, and Moniz Bandeira. In general, the three authors present aspects that involved US expectations regarding this action, NATO's role from the perspective of global reordering, and Russia's reactions.

In *North American Foreign Policy and Its Theorists*<sup>11</sup>, Perry Anderson situates such a movement within the more general trajectory of the post-Cold War challenge of global insertion of the US. Contrary to the analyses that announced an End of History with the supposed triumph of democracy and capitalism after the dismantling of the Cold War, British intellectuals highlighted the sense of continuity between the search for the realization of the so-called Grand Strategy of the US, pursued since its rise as a global hegemonic actor, and the new context that was announced. Thus, far from establishing a radical rupture between the Cold War and the perspective of a new world order based on the formulations of the US Foreign Policy, the author highlights the limits between the belief in a unipolar world and the existence of challenges for the realization of Washington's liberal utopia:

The end of the Cold War ended an era. The United States now stands alone as a superpower, the first in world history. However, this did not mean that they could rest on their laurels. The 1950 agenda might have been complete, but the grand strategy of the US state was always broader. The original 1943 vision had been put on hold by half a century of emergency, but never abandoned: the building of a liberal international order, with America at the helm. Communism was dead, but capitalism had not yet found its final form with a universal planetary scene under a single supreme leader. The free market is not yet global. Democracy is unsafe. In a hierarchy of states, nations do not always know their places. There was also detritus of the Cold War to be cleared out of the way, where it had left relics of a discredited past (Anderson, 2015a, p.110).

In the recovery of Rooseveltian uniworldism as a guiding framework for the organization of the global order<sup>12</sup>, the challenges of materializing an international framework favorable to such expectations collided with the speed and intensity of changes in the world system since the 1970s. Evidence from the same author can be found in considerations of US action in the face of increased economic competition in the developed world. If the demands for the reconstruction of global capitalism based on the European and Japanese recovery made

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11. Portuguese Edition: A política externa norte-americana e seus teóricos. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2015.

12. In the unfolding processes of reconstruction of the world order still under the course of the Second World War and at its immediate end, two perspectives regarding the place of the US and the basic characteristics of international politics emerged among the main actors in Washington (Arrighi, 1996). Rooseveltian uniworldism reflected on the constitution of a world considered safer than, under US leadership, articulated a security structure based on negotiations between the allies of the war, including the USSR. In the failure of such a proposal, the emergence of Truman's free world was the basis for a change in relations with Moscow, betting on the policy of containment as an offensive against communism and pressure on capitalist allies.

room for a policy favorable to the development of such poles, the increase in inter-capitalist competition and the macroeconomic problems experienced by the US stimulated the formulation and execution of more aggressive policies, both towards new global competitors and within the so-called developing world, pressured in the face of structural adjustment programs aimed at consolidating neoliberalism as a framework for organizing economic relations involving the state, market, and national societies (Anderson, 2015a).

From a geopolitical point of view, the conditions for implementing the same strategy were immersed in the face of a mismatch between the characteristics attributed to the new international order and the pace of global transformation. Faced with the disintegration of the socialist world and the end of one of the main ideological substrates that supported the notion of a model of organization of State and Society led by the US experience, in addition to the recognition of that country's capabilities in leading the undertaking against the red enemy, the new scenario under construction involved the need to maintain the system of power established during the Cold War and, at the same time, exercise adaptability in the face of new global trends.

In this sense, the readings established by Perry Anderson regarding the NATO expansion movement dialogue with the two highlighted frameworks. The two main engines that drove the expansion of the frontiers of the main defense organization of the West beyond the former capitalist world resided in the diagnosis of the fragility of independent Russia and the perspective of strengthening Washington's hegemony over Europe. In the dialogue between the two processes, the author defines the possible meaning of such an undertaking:

Such a feat would put a safety net on any attempt to revive old Muscovite aspirations and reassure the newly liberated states of Eastern Europe that they were now behind the Western shield. Not only that. NATO's eastward expansion represented an assertion of US hegemony over Europe at a time when the end of the Soviet Union was in danger of tempting traditional US partners in the region to act more independently than in the past. past (Anderson, 2015a, p. 115).

In addition to setting limits on the effects of closer ties involving Russia and the West since the Yeltsin government, the expansion of NATO's borders towards the former socialist world constituted a kind of US response to the translation of the European economic resurgence in the movement of political autonomy. Although not the subject of consideration by the British Marxist, his considerations on the role of the greatest symbol of European strategic dependence on the US are in line with the more general transformations that occurred in inter-European relations in the 1990s. According to Cristina Pecequilo (2014), between the objectives outlined in the construction of the European Union from the Maastricht Treaty was the development of a common foreign

policy and security, from the perspective of building a multifaceted integration process capable of expanding European participation among the major decision-making processes at the national level. worldwide. The maintenance of such expectations in the midst of optimism about the progress of continental integration contrasts with the challenge of establishing common denominators about strategic agendas in the area of Security, Foreign Policy and Defense in the face of US pressure from NATO itself and its performance in the post-Cold War period.

In addition to situating such expansion within the objectives of European containment and the expansion of the conditions for Russia's withdrawal on the international scene, Perry Anderson draws attention to the relative mismatch in the domestic sphere regarding the reception and formulation of perspectives on the subject. In his view, if at the level of the parties such an issue was seen from a relative consensus, within the scope of the strategists, such actions were observed with distrust on the part of some subjects, considering these initiatives as a "dangerous provocation to Russia, susceptible to weakening their newfound friendship with the West and to foment a resentful revanchism" (Anderson, 2015a, p. 115). In this sense, even before the expansionist horizon materialized within the former post-Soviet space, the risks surrounding a change in relations between Moscow and the West were already the object of attention in part of the circles for the formulation of US foreign relations.

Another author who focused on NATO expansion in Eastern Europe and its implications beyond relations between Russia and Western powers was Mearsheimer. Among his main contributions to the debate on the future of Europe in the midst of the transformations in Eastern Europe, the defense of maintaining the US presence on the continent and the development of a controlled process of nuclear proliferation as resources to reduce the uncertainties caused by the end of the stability provided by bipolarity is also accompanied by criticisms regarding the direction of NATO's expansion policy towards Russia's security borders. In contrast to what he classified as forty-five years of unprecedented peace in European history, the American theorist developed, in the 1990s, a relatively pessimistic perspective regarding the possibilities of building stable relations in the old continent at the end of an order that provided greater capacity for dissuasion in the face of the balance of power, reduction of potential sources of conflict, and favoring the development of more precise calculations in the formulation of external actions.

Discussing this question still in the context of the existence of the USSR, the author relates the importance of the Bipolar order for the preservation of the presence of the superpowers as factors of influence in inter-European relations:

The fate of the Cold War, however, is mainly in the hands of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union is the only superpower that can seriously threaten to overrun Europe; it is the Soviet threat that provides the glue that holds NATO to-

gether. Take away that offensive threat and the United States is likely to abandon the Continent, whereupon the defensive alliance it has headed for forty years may disintegrate. This would bring to an end the bipolar order that has characterized Europe for the past 45 years (Mearsheimer, 1990, p. 52).

Observing the role of external actors in the production of a strategic balance that favored the absence of wars on the continent, Within a movement to build a European dependency in the field of Security and Defense *vis-à-vis* Washington, stimulated by fears regarding a possible intervention Soviet power on the continent, an unprecedented situation was formed in the relations between the continental actors, attenuating the rivalries between its main states. However, the defense of the permanence of the US presence in Europe did not translate into a nod to the radical process of expanding NATO's borders towards Eastern Europe. Some analyzes made by the same author about this movement and its implications for the crisis involving Ukraine and Russia from 2013 onwards highlight his reservations regarding the US stance.

In two articles published after the onset of tensions in the past decade, three arguments summarize the author's critical position towards the Western military alliance movement. In the first place, the disregard of the Russian experience in Georgia in 2008 and the permanence of NATO's expansion horizon in the Post-Soviet space constituted a threat to Russian security which, amidst US support for the Orange Revolution (2004) and the new movements enlargement of the EU after the end of the Cold War, constituted obstacles to Moscow's objectives in recovering its structuring dimension as the main regional actor. From the point of view of the formulation of US Foreign Policy, even though such intentions have been the object of consensus among different actors in domestic politics, John Mearsheimer reiterates, similarly to Perry Anderson, the existence of a dissent among some of the main strategists about such an initiative<sup>13</sup>. Finally, establishing the limits between support for the US presence on European soil and the risky action of promoting a new wave of NATO expansion, the theorist establishes differences regarding the first two phases of expansion of the Western Alliance's borders and the intentions of deepening of such a tendency from the Bucharest Conference:

The second part of the story is that the West — and here we are talking mainly about NATO — did not threaten the Russians in any meaningful way. There is no question that the Russians were opposed to NATO expansion. The Rus-

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13. In dealing with the process of formulating the US strategy for NATO expansion in the post-Cold War period, John Mearsheimer established a curious relationship between the support of such a policy in the US domestic environment and the traditional clash between realists and liberals, going back to part of the characteristics of the trajectory of IR Theory in the 1990s. According to the same author, the advancement of the Western Military Alliance in Eastern Europe was the object of support from liberal segments that, when conceiving the existence of a New World Order and an adverse situation for Russia, could contribute to the transformation of the political and economic landscape of Eastern Europe based on the experience of the former capitalist zone (Mearsheimer, 2014).

sians opposed both the first tranche of expansion in 1999, as well as the second tranche in 2004, but the Russians did not view those initial moves eastward as a mortal threat. So, between 1990 and 2008, all was well in Europe. Again, that was because of the American pacifier and because the West was not a serious threat to Russia (Mearsheimer, 2016, p. 28).

In addition to referring to the lack of Russian capabilities to stop the movement of the Western Alliance in the direction of a former Moscow influence zone, Mearsheimer established the Bucharest Conference as a kind of limit regarding a security framework that, even in the face of tensions among the main powers involved, did not advance in the sense of constituting a diagnosis of a real threat to Russians and, consequently, destabilization of the European security architecture. Using history, American theorists substantiate the relevance of Ukraine in Moscow's security and defense strategies by considering its territorial dimension as a challenging factor in the context of the invasion of Russia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Such a territorialist reading of the definitions of the security of a given power gains even more strength in view of the counterfactual exercise carried out by the same author on the possible effects of the constitution of a military alliance between China and one of the US neighbors (Canada or Mexico). Thus, giving meaning to the unfolding of Washington's mistake in Eastern Europe, Mearsheimer established a critical reading of this process from geopolitics, suggesting a mismatch between the US strategy and the regional conditions of Europe at the end of the Cold War.

Similar to Perry Anderson, Moniz Bandeira relates the stimulus to the NATO expansion process within US efforts to maintain part of the structures of its global hegemony. Considering his two contributions to the debate on the direction of international politics in the post-Cold War period, the understanding of the movement undertaken by the Western Alliance stems both from conjunctural aspects and from more central elements of the characteristics of US power and its challenge of preservation. Regarding the last aspect, the importance of the war industry corresponds to the historical continuity of the US throughout the 20th century:

The Imperium Americanum has always needed wars to keep its economy functioning to avoid the collapse of industry and its production chain, as well as the increase in the number of unemployed people and the bankruptcy of many American states, whose income depends on the production of armaments (Moniz Bandeira, 2013, p. 114).

With the war industry as one of the main vectors of the domestic economy, the maintenance of NATO and its insertion as a geopolitical instrument for a new order would also correspond to the objective of preserving the economic power of the US. This argument



is explicit in the World Disorder: *The Specter of Total Domination*. According<sup>14</sup> to Moniz Bandeira, in addition to representing a reinforcement of the asymmetries between the US and Europe<sup>15</sup>, the expansion of the military organization was also seen as an alternative to “enlarge the market for the war industry, increase bank financing, with the sale of armaments to the new members of the Atlantic Alliance” (Moniz Bandeira, 2016, p. 130), constituting a resource of interest to dynamic segments of the national economy<sup>16</sup>.

Another variable under analysis concerns the recognition of Russia’s reintegration into the international arena as a significant actor in the 2000s. This assessment, which is relatively a consensus among authors, stems from the evaluation of the effects of the new international economic situation, the government’s new directives regarding the role of the state in the economy, and the perspective on Moscow’s position in the new global architecture. Additionally, it takes into account the complexities involved in Western strategies for Eastern Europe and Russia’s capacity for rearticulation as a regional centripetal force in the post-Soviet European space.

In an article published in 2015, Perry Anderson (2015b) discussed the contemporary trajectory of Russia since the Putin government, assessing the construction of its image as the Head of State and that of the country itself in the West, in addition to the aspects that would constitute the bases of its power since the beginning of the century. Starting from the fact that there was, on the part of the press and academia, the production of dissent about the so-called Putin Era, the first being closer to a critical line about the neo-authoritarian character of his government and the hostility expressed against the West and having, in the second, the recognition of aspects more favorable to his image, without ignoring the dark sides, the economic growth and relative popularity of the president in Russian society was an object of relative consensus among the means of production of information and analysis of that country.

In an attempt to understand the architecture of Putin’s power in Russia, the British Marxist intellectual advances towards establishing the main articulations involving the Kremlin, institutional, and social sectors of the country. For the author, the origins of the president’s support network can be found in his experience as an assistant in the city hall

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14. Portuguese edition: Bandeira, Luiz Alberto Moniz. *A desordem mundial: o espectro total da dominação*. Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio, 2016.

15. An aspect to be considered is the indirect quotation of Perry Anderson in Moniz Bandeira’s consideration of Washington’s objectives with the expansion of NATO. In a footnote, the Brazilian intellectual refers to the article “American Foreign Policy and its Thinkers”, published in the magazine *New Left Review* in 2013.

16. In the same work, Moniz Bandeira makes another mention of the relationship between the war industry and US political-economic gear. According to the author, “the private banks, which dominate the Federal Reserve System, need military power, wars, to maintain the position of permanent creditors of the State, by financing the continuous rearmament and the production of war material, which is more profitable than granting private credits to agriculture and the consumer goods industry” (Moniz Bandeira, 2016, p. 160).

of St. Petersburg, in which a connection was formed involving new entrepreneurs, the security sector, executive power, etc. In the formation of a system of dualities, Putin's Russia would be noted for a process of revision in its trajectory of transition to capitalism, without necessarily jeopardizing its functioning. As evidence, the increased participation of the private sector in the economy coexisted with the resumption of the state's role in some strategic sectors. In other words, the efforts to change relations between the Kremlin and so-called oligarchs, reducing their influence among power circles, were not reflected in the process of withdrawing such figures from the domestic economic scene.

From a political point of view, the permanence of a constitution and the existence of levels of freedom of expression not much lower than in Western countries would coexist with the existence of super-presidentialism and the maintenance of a power structure (Anderson, 2015b). Regarding international insertion, the reaffirmation of autonomy in the international sphere would coexist with the development of nods towards the West, at least during the first steps of the Vladimir Putin government.

Despite not specifically focusing on the process of Russia's reinsertion as a relevant actor in the world system, based on the contributions selected for this analysis, J. Mearsheimer assesses the recovery process for the country, compared to Yeltsin's times. Having as a central object the relations between Moscow and the West in the midst of NATO's expansion processes in Eastern Europe, US theorists verified a change in posture between the 1990s and the 2000s, also mobilized by domestic conditions. If in the midst of the first expansion steps of the Western Military Alliance, the Kremlin's reaction would have been much smaller in the face of the interpretation of a movement that until then was not so threatening, Mearsheimer's evaluation also encompasses the notion that the country would not present conditions of response to such movements. In contrast, Russian actions in Georgia in 2008 signaled a new moment and perception of its own security.

Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008 should have dispelled any lingering doubts about Putin's resolve to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO. Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, who was deeply committed to bringing his country into NATO, decided in the summer of 2008 to reincorporate two breakaway regions: Abkhazia and South Ossetia. However, Putin sought to keep Georgia weak, divided, and out of the NATO. After fighting broke out between the Georgian government and South Ossetian separatists, Russian forces took control of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 03).

Constituting a persuasive action at the regional level and a dissuasive one at the global level, the reading of the geopolitical meanings of the Russian invasion of Georgia translates, even if indirectly, a new assessment of Moscow's capabilities in the face of what would be stated as a more concrete threat to its security objectives. In Moniz Bandeira's contributions to international dynamics in recent decades, this process is not necessar-

ily limited to Russian response capacity in the face of constraints provided by the West. In *Global Disorder: The Total Spectrum of Domination*<sup>17</sup>, Brazilian intellectuals discuss the process of Russian recovery from the beginning of the 21st century, highlighting various factors, including the reevaluation of relations with political elites and the evolving role of the state in the economy:

President Vladimir Putin confirmed Russia's position as an energy superpower thanks to the policy of leading the state to assume control of a substantial part of gas and oil production, with the acquisition of 75% of Sibneft, owned by the oligarch Roman Abramovich by Gazprom, which paid him \$13 billion, as well as other sources of ore, making energy companies completely open and transparent to investors. Thus, President Putin carried out a policy of commitments through the intermediation of the State, stabilized the political elite, and undertook the construction of a hybrid economic system, in which the State came to control almost 50% of the economy (Moniz Bandeira, 2016, p. 152).

In the conjunction between a favorable moment from the rise of commodity processes and the government's decision-making regarding the direction of the country's economic organization, the new moment experienced by Russia would present the path of opening a new page in the life of that country. If the economic recovery was not enough to return to the levels achieved by the former USSR, distancing from the difficult situation experienced in the 1990s became a political asset for its president and, at the same time, a credential for the country's reintegration abroad. In the first case, in the words of Moniz Bandeira, the Head of State would be noted for having embodied 'the Russian soul' (Moniz Bandeira, 2016, p. 152), observed as a "patriot, with a strong personality, willing to fight" (Moniz Bandeira, 2016, p. 153), leading the country towards a resumption of collective self-confidence and international prestige.

Despite the fact that the Russian re-emergence process was led by a series of measures that demonstrated the country's interest in being a global player within a framework of transition in the world-system, Paulo Fagundes Vizentini (2022) reiterated the relevance of regional issues in the construction of its foreign policy. In the same sense, Bernardino Teles Fazendeiro identified a process of shifting the orientation of Russian international insertion towards the post-Soviet World, motivated, among other things, by the redesign of the international order, regional threats, and the existence of unresolved questions regarding the economic concert between the former Soviet republics. From the point of view of the Putin government, this would materialize from a series of lines of action and strategic objectives:

The quest for dominance resulted in a set of priorities shortly after Putin's arrival to the presidency, in 2000, namely: controlling the production and flow of energy goods throughout the region, which led to disputes regarding the renegotiation of prices and the transport

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17. Portuguese edition: *Desordem Global: o espectro total da dominação*. São Paulo: Civilização Brasileira, 2016.

of oil and natural gas in Eastern Europe and also in Central Asia; contain the expansion of blocs or organizations recognized as rivals to Russian projects; prevent, as far as possible, outside interference in matters within this entire space; and reinforce the role of military power in the region, as well as in the rest of the international scene (Fazendeiro, 2022, p. 12).

Aiming to re-establish its influence on the different sub-regions that made up the post-Soviet space, geopolitics in Eastern Europe were gradually started by the effects of Russian reemergence versus the misreadings of the US about its movements at the regional level and the place itself. to be occupied by Russia in the global architecture. The tense political fabric involving the two parties and its consequences with the emergence of a crisis in Ukraine from 2013 was the subject of discussion by Perry Anderson, J. Mearsheimer and Moniz Bandeira.

According to Perry Anderson, the escalation of tensions within Ukraine, with the clash of interests between Russia and the West as its primary backdrop, represents a resurgence of the Cold War atmosphere. The author's focus is on the dynamics of Ukrainian internal politics and the role played by Russia in this scenario. Anderson draws attention to the oscillations in Kiev, particularly the divisions among the elites regarding Western and Russian influences.

This brand, symbolically represented in a new East-West division of the country, had a strong impact throughout the presidential disputes and in episodes such as the Orange Revolution in 2004, when opposition movements linked to the US questioned the results of the polls. In this sense, almost ten years later, the new tensions about the present and future of Ukraine between two different poles of power would represent a kind of new radicalization in the oscillatory trend registered since its independence.

Analyzing Russian performance in the midst of such a context, amidst the short trajectory of oscillations between success and setbacks, considering the contemporary trigger with Viktor Yanukovich's acceptance of the Russian counter position to the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Ukraine, its subsequent overthrow, and rise of a government favorable to Western interests, in addition to the incorporation of Crimea into Russian territory, Perry Anderson suggests the existence of at least two miscalculations on the part of the Kremlin. From the point of view of the challenge of transition between socialism and the market economy, the first critical question concerned what he classified as a Russian illusion about the possibility of building capitalism interconnected to the West. Faced with the worsening political situation in Ukraine and Moscow's strategy of economic destabilization based on the establishment of sanctions, these would show the limits of movements involving the construction of autonomy and dialogue with the West in terms of its insertion into the more general movements of global capitalism. A second element criticized by the author concerns what he considered a kind of "underestimation"

of Ukrainian nationalism, a characteristic that would go much further than the divisions between its economic elites.

J. Mearsheimer established Western responsibility as the main axis of his analysis of the Ukrainian situation in the Post-2013 period. From Geopolitics, its perspective on the worsening of tensions and its articulation with external actors reinforces the mistake of NATO's expansion policy under US leadership. In his view, the horizon linking Ukraine as a strategic piece of the West in Eastern Europe would prove to be utopian in the face of Russian opposition to such movements, seeking to dissuade Kiev from such an undertaking by offering the possibility of retreat or even destruction. For American theorist, the main way out in the face of what he already considered an increase in instability at the regional level and with consequences for other external arrangements involving Russia and the Western powers was the emergence of a policy of neutralizing Ukraine:

Instead, we must work to make Ukraine a neutral buffer state, which it was effectively between 1991 and 2014. I am talking here about returning to the status quo ante. This means, of course, that NATO expansion must be explicitly taken off the table, and it means that EU expansion must also be explicitly taken off the table. And, it means that the United States and its European allies have to stop democracy promotion in Kiev that aims to put in power individuals who are pro-Western and anti-Russian (Mearsheimer, 2016, p. 30).

Reinforcing the critical impressions of Western policy in Eastern Europe and the deepening of tensions from the advancement of the three strategies of involvement of strategic territories such as Ukraine in the most general frameworks of an anti-Russian policy, the author recognizes the need for a change from the West, dismantling the main bases of a policy that would jeopardize not only the future of Ukraine, but also the very architecture of European Security, which has been destabilized since 2008.

Based on Moniz Bandeira, the understanding of the emergence of a new crisis in Ukraine and the interplay between systemic and domestic factors takes on various contours. First, we consider the strategic dimension of Eurasia within the US geopolitical objectives and the diagnosis of a possible change in Russia's retraction trends in international relations in the post-Cold War period. According to Brazilian intellectual, one of the main objectives of Washington in maintaining a relatively offensive policy in the face of a Russian resumption as an exponent in the world system consisted of a way of combating a possible reestablishment of "hegemony in the Eurasian space" (Moniz Bandeira, 2016, p. 302). From this perspective, curbing movements of Moscow's Foreign Policy in order to guarantee the resumption of its influence over strategic territories for its security, in addition to its relevance in matters surrounding the post-Soviet space, such as Syria, would make two of the main objectives of the US strategy.

Regarding the conjunctural aspects, Moniz Bandeira draws attention to US economic interests in an area rich in natural resources and the role of Ukrainian political elites in the midst of such a scenario of escalating conflicts over the strategic position of the country at a global level. In the first case, according to the author, the interest in “exploitation of shale gas” would be well regarded both by portions of the local elites that sought greater autonomy from Moscow and by the US private sector (Moniz Bandeira, 2016, p. 327). In this way, the definition of the course of Ukrainian economic policy and foreign policy would go through the transition between the decrease in Russian presence and the increase in Western penetration of strategic sectors.

In this game, the trigger for the contemporary crisis also assumes relevance. While the interest agenda of segments favors the country’s rapprochement with Western power structures, the Free Trade Agreement with the European Union represents an important chapter in the considerations of the Brazilian author. Deconstructing the notion that such a move would serve as a kind of reaffirmation of Kiev’s autonomy, such a commitment would result, according to the author, in damage to economic relations with Moscow, which Ukraine could hardly give up entirely, in addition to promoting setbacks in relation to the industrialization of the country, submitted to domestic and foreign competitions.

In addition to the consequences at the local and regional levels, Moniz Bandeira warned about possible directions in the face of the deepening of the crisis that, until then, was marked by the fall of President Yanukovich and Moscow’s reaction to the incorporation of Crimea. For Brazilian intellectual, the consolidation of this movement towards rapprochement between Ukraine and the West after the signing of the Agreement with the EU could lead to the possibility of setting up military bases or foreign armies at the doors of Russia, returning to the classic episode of the so-called Crisis of Missiles in the Cold War, when a failed Soviet move nearly triggered a potential conflict between Moscow and Washington.

Inside or outside the Anglo-Saxon world, different intellectual contributions about the trajectory of international politics in recent decades have emphasized the development of a critical framework involving relations between Russia and Western powers. Having as variables considerations on the expansion of political-economic (European Union) and strategic-military (NATO) structures to the strategic surroundings of Moscow, Russian efforts to recover a more assertive role in international relations, in addition to the conformation of a civil conflict environment in Ukraine, Perry Anderson, John Mearsheimer and Moniz Bandeira were configured as authors and, at the same time, witnesses of a changing world, evidencing a sense of continuity regarding the uncertainties of a process of reconfiguration of the international order from genuinely different bases compared to the one that dissipated after the end of the historic Cold War.

## Ukraine: The Late Cold War

As we have already pointed out, the expansion of the EU and NATO towards the east followed the same logic as in the Cold War period. That is, the geopolitical isolation of Russia as heir to the power of the Soviet Union but without the ideological character of the clash between socialism and capitalism. Indeed, Russia continued to be a major danger to US geopolitical interests by remaining large enough to counter western expansion towards its borders in both Eastern Europe and the Caucasus and Central Asia. Additionally, it has an important border with China.

While the media generally approaches a “Cold War 2.0” we judge better the term Late Cold War, since what we are looking at is a continuation of 1989 (Pennaforde, 2022a). For Washington, the war had never ended. It continued under new bases, but its essence is the same: an enemy to be defeated, not under another production system, but under another geopolitical perspective.

The consolidation of China as a major capitalist economy, global investor, and with its own geopolitical project, alongside the return of Russia to the chessboard in recent years, demonstrates that the US and the European Union (the “West”) are no longer in control of the economy and society. world ideology, or more precisely, liberal democracy as an absolute value emanating from countries committed to human rights. For example, John Mearsheimer analyzed this process (Mearsheimer, 2018).

Mearsheimer (Sayers, 2022) suffers several criticisms of having made a logical, realistic, and geopolitical reading of the NATO-Russia dispute. One of the few analysts who did not give in to the war-like ideological establishment of the White House. Henry Kissinger also saw NATO’s eastward expansion as provocation. He then changed his mind to follow mainstream Washington (Billot, 2023).

As we have already pointed out (Pennaforde, 2022b), the invasion of Ukraine (2014-2022) is the dividing line of this new geopolitical cycle of power that is emerging. Much more than the Russian invasion itself, the West’s failure to isolate Russia demonstrated that something had completely changed. The low influence of the US and EU in enlisting other nations to follow the sanctions strategy against Moscow demonstrated that much more is needed than the rhetoric of the territorial violation of Ukraine. The lack of global legitimacy of Washington’s policy is evident when the US maintains privileged relations with Israel, which has illegally occupied the West Bank and the Golan Heights since 1967. In addition, the supposed defense of democracy as a fundamental pillar of its foreign policy becomes a fragile object when high-level diplomatic relations are maintained with Saudi Arabia or China, countries with a history of systematic violations of Human Rights according to the organizations that oversee the theme around the world and are based in the US and EU.

Matias Spektor, in *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2023), with the article *In Defense of the Fence Sitters: What the West Gets Wrong About Hedging* analyzes the causes of the so-called Global South not having embarked on the adoption of Western positions against Russia. It is a good guide for understanding what might happen in international relations and the future.

Another sign of change was the arrival of the BRICS, encompassing countries with great global projections in economic terms, and later the creation of the New Development Bank as an effective body in the democratization of access to international credit outside the traditional center created in the post-war period as the Fondo International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank. This is an important detail for this new geopolitical and economic configuration, despite the obvious asymmetries between its founding members. The possible rise of BRICS to BRICS Plus with other countries postulating to join the group demonstrates that something is outside the traditional pattern that we know.

Cliff Kupchan, chairman of the Eurasia Group, in an article on the Foreign Policy website entitled *6 Swing States Will Decide the Future of Geopolitics*, already sees that the new geopolitical dynamic is changing for new players such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and Turkey. Countries that are not in the direct US sphere of influence should receive more attention from Washington, according to the author. These nations did not support the sanctions promoted by the EU and the US against Moscow and sought to establish their own lines of action based on their economic and geopolitical interests.

Another important and coherent contribution to the reality of the geopolitical dispute between NATO and Russia was Samuel Charap's article, *An Unwinnable War Washington Needs an Endgame in Ukraine*, and also in *Foreign Affairs*. The logic of extending a war in which Russia may not even win but is unlikely to be defeated only serves the interests (economic and geopolitical, for example) of the US. In addition, it increases the dangers of the military and even nuclear escalation. Europeans and Ukrainians are mere pawns in Washington's logic. It must be recognized that Moscow will have complaints heard sooner or later. Even if common sense does not find an echo in Washington, several analysts have already realized this.

Based on the current scenario, the world is entering a new phase that will not be led by the US and the EU. Therein lies the biggest problem for Europeans and North Americans: recognizing that their cycle of power is coming to an end, but not accepting this end in a coherent way. What does this mean? Maintaining the same lines of action in the Cold War, that is, systematically creating "enemies" to enlist allies and maintaining a belligerent line in foreign policy is a serious flaw that will not change the final result: the geopolitical and economic decline of the US as a power dominant and of Europe as an important geopolitical region.



## Final Considerations

In the challenges of interpreting the course of a systemic crisis, the War in Ukraine constituted one of the most intriguing episodes in the contemporary world, bringing Europe back to a war scenario and deepening the trends of a hegemonic transition involving the trajectory of rupture of order global leadership led by the US and the emergence of possible new centripetal forces. Despite being a relative surprise for part of the epistemic community of International Relations and intellectuals close to the field, the events in Eastern Europe in 2022 are configured as a kind of “announced tragedy” under a retrospective look at the theoretical and historiographical production on the world and Europe in the post-Cold War period.

The From the perspectives of Moniz Bandeira, John Mearsheimer and Perry Anderson, critical considerations about Western strategy in Eastern Europe were developed over several years in the 21st century, pointing, among other things, to the mismatch between the global vision of US and the more general transformations of international relations in the post-Cold War, the reemergence of Russia and the interests of reaffirming its condition as a central actor in the post-Soviet space and the worsening of tensions involving Ukraine in a new configuration of the East-West in European relations.

In the midst of a changing world, the new stage of divergence between NATO and Russia from the armed conflict between Kiev and Moscow calls attention to the challenges imposed on internationalists and other stakeholders in the direction of International Politics to offer explanations that value the specificities of contemporary phenomena and, at the same time, resume heterogeneous contributions about the historical meaning of such transformations. In this challenge, the resumption of the war environment in Europe is a kind of meeting between an inconclusive past, a reflection of the maintenance of structures and strategies inherited from the Cold War and adapted in light of systemic uncertainties, a disturbing present, in the face of risks to food security energy, as well as the economic consequences of the conflict and a future about which little can be speculated.

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# 2

## The Israel-Palestine Issue and some of its Main Political and Legal Components

*Amine Ait-Chaalal*

The issue of Israel and Palestine has been at the forefront of the international landscape since 1947<sup>1</sup>. It is a very complex issue and without a serious, comprehensive and solid peace agreement, there will be no regional and international stability. The Middle East as a whole will continue to be destabilized by this issue, and consequently the Middle East will continue to destabilize the rest of the world. There are no easy outcomes to the many issues at stake between Israelis and Palestinians. However, there are five main issues that constitute the core problems for a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians:

1. The status of East Jerusalem.
2. The issue of Palestinian refugees.
3. The issue of Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the Palestinian West Bank.
4. The issue of the Israeli wall built inside the territory of the Palestinian West Bank.
5. The issue of water management in the Palestinian West Bank.

All these issues are complex, with intricate details and subtleties. However, since the publication of the “Clinton Parameters” at the end of 2000 and the Taba negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian officials in January 2001, the main elements for resolving these complex issues are well known to the parties on the ground and at the international level. They are based on international legality, clearly articulated in numerous United

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1. This article constitutes an updated, amended, revised and expanded version of part of an article published under the title “The Situation in the Middle East in 2017”, *Cadernos de Política Exterior*, vol. 4, num. 7, year 2018, pp. 123-137. Editorial note: This text was completed in July 2023. A clear and useful synthesis on the Israeli-Palestinian issue can be found in the document published by the Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP): BEININ Joel & HAJJAR Lisa, *Palestine, Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict. A Primer*, which provides insightful elements about the main aspects of the issue: [https://merip.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Primer\\_on\\_Palestine-IsraeliMERIP\\_Feb-uary2014final.pdf](https://merip.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Primer_on_Palestine-IsraeliMERIP_Feb-uary2014final.pdf). Many useful maps, statistics and documents can be found on the website of the Jerusalem-based Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA): <http://www.passia.org/> The website of *Le Monde diplomatique* (<https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/index/pays/procheorient>) also provides a significant amount of materials on the Near East.

Nations Security Council resolutions. The most important are: 242 (1968), 338 (1973), 446 (1979), 452 (1979), 465 (1980), 476 (1980), 478 (1980), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008) and 2334 (2016). It is also important to underline the significant Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of July 9, 2004. The main elements for a peaceful outcome that respects the legitimate aspirations of the two people are contained in these documents and are well known to local, regional and international actors. In addition, the Quartet, composed by the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia, was formed in 2002 to relaunch the peace process.

Numerous efforts have also been made by other international actors. In this regard, the Arab Peace Initiative of Beirut in 2002, renewed in Riyadh in 2007, is an important contribution to a positive outcome. What has obviously been lacking for years, even decades, is a strong and real political will, on the ground and at the international level, to reach a serious, viable and solid peace treaty with the goal of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace, security and mutual respect. The Clinton administration (January 1993-January 2001) and the Obama administration (January 2009-January 2017) both tried to create the conditions for a peace treaty between the two parties. Unfortunately, these efforts were unsuccessful. The G. W. The Bush administration (January 2001-January 2009) did not do anything substantial to reach a real agreement between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Moreover, during the Obama presidency, the Netanyahu government has continued to pursue obstructive policies that are clearly against any real peace agreement with the Palestinians. In this regard, despite the continuous efforts of the Obama administration, and especially of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton during the first term and John Kerry during the second term of President Obama, the Netanyahu government took numerous measures, including the expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which were highly detrimental to the peace process. This behavior partly explains the adoption (with the abstention of the United States) of UN Security Council Resolution 2334 on December 23, 2016; and also, the clear and strong speech on the peace process delivered by the outgoing Secretary of State John Kerry on December 28, 2016.

The arrival of President Donald Trump in the White House in January 2017 was warmly welcomed by the Netanyahu government. The Trump administration's appointment of David Friedman as the U.S. ambassador to Israel, with his record of vocal support for Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the Palestinian West Bank, was seen as a significant sign of support for B. Netanyahu's policies in his relations with the Palestinians, and especially with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas.

In this context, President Trump's decision on December 6, 2017 to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem was a clear sign that, whatever its intentions, the Trump

administration was not seriously prepared to play the role of peacemaker (or even “honest broker”) between Israelis and Palestinians. In addition to all the destabilizing consequences of such a decision, this act represents a drastic violation of international legality embodied in numerous UN Security Council resolutions since 1967, and also a complete reversal of US policy implemented by all US administrations, Republican and Democrat, since President Harry Truman. The disapproval of international actors towards this decision is clear: on December 18, 2017, a draft UN Security Council resolution disapproving the Trump administration’s decision was voted by 14 members of the Security Council and was not adopted only due to the - obvious - veto of the US envoy. Moreover, on December 21, 2017, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution against the Trump administration’s decision with 128 votes in favor, 9 against and 35 abstentions (the remaining states did not participate to the vote). It should be underlined that, to the great surprise and astonishment of many UN observers, the vote in the General Assembly was preceded by some very vocal, unprecedented and unusual threats by the US envoy to the members of the UN General Assembly. The efforts of the Trump administration seemed more focused on the establishment of diplomatic relations between some Arab states and Israel: The United Arab Emirates, Bahrein (both in September 2020), Sudan (October 2020) and Morocco (December 2020). It was already the case of Egypt since 1979 in the framework of the peace treaty signed under the supervision of President Carter. It was also the case of Jordan in 1994 under the supervision of the Clinton administration. In the first case, it was carried out by Egyptian President Sadat and led to Egypt’s isolation in the Arab world for a decade. In the second case, it was carried out in the context of the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians, which was formalized by the signing of the Oslo Accords in Washington on September 13, 1993.

In a region that is already highly destabilized, useless and inappropriate decisions should certainly be avoided in the interest of Israelis and Palestinians, as well as all the peoples of the region. It is also highly necessary to bring peace and stability to the Middle East. No real and solid peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians means that there will be no stability in the region and, consequently, the perpetuation of a disastrous matter of discontent, anger and destabilization for the region and beyond.

In this regard, the decision taken by the Brazilian authorities under President Lula in December 2010 to recognize Palestine as a state within its 1967 borders and to upgrade the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Brasilia to the level of an embassy was a courageous, useful and fruitful decision. A courageous decision because it was a wise way of injecting “a bit of fresh air” into the process, to quote an expression used in September 2007 by then Foreign Minister Celso Amorim<sup>2</sup>. And also, to prove that the Middle East is not the private property of a limited number of actors, especially in light of the failures of the Quartet

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2. The complete sentence is as follows: “Perhaps a bit of fresh air will benefit the peace process” (Amorim, 2008, p. 189).

since 2002. A useful decision, because it opened the way for others, and subsequently led to similar decisions by a significant number of Latin American states. It was also a fruitful decision because it reaffirmed that the “two-state solution” is clearly the general consensus on the international scene.

In this regard, the votes at UNESCO in 2011 (Palestine obtained the status of full member state) and at the UN General Assembly in 2012 (Palestine obtained the status of observer state) were also important acts on the international scene. They underline the fact that Palestine is now recognized worldwide as a state and that, whatever the obstacles, whatever the ill will of some protagonists, whatever the drawbacks, the perspective should be and must be the creation of a Palestinian state as it was conceived in 1947 by UN General Assembly Resolution 181.

Since January 2021 and the arrival of President Biden (who was Vice-President during the Obama administration), a more balanced and constructive approach seem to be again on the agenda at the White House. Nevertheless, the political instability in Israel (five legislative elections between 2019 and 2022: April and September 2019, March 2020, March 2021, November 2022) and the return of Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister in late December 2022 at the helm of a far right government (and among many controversies about attempts to breach the independence of the judicial branch) represent new steps of the dismantling of the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians.

In this regard, the reference to the UN Security Council resolutions remains highly pertinent as fundamental elements for a comprehensive and fruitful peace process. The UNSC resolution 2334 of December 23, 2016 represents a clear, precise and powerful synthesis of what are the elements that must be taken into account in order to fulfill the aspirations for a peaceful agreement between Israelis and Palestinians, which will correspond to the norms of international legality.

UN Security Council Resolution 2334 underscores some basic facts about the peace process:

(...) Guided by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and reaffirming, inter alia, the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force,

Reaffirming the obligation of Israel, the occupying Power, to abide scrupulously by its legal obligations and responsibilities under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and recalling the advisory opinion rendered on 9 July 2004 by the International Court of Justice,

Condemning all measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character and status of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, including, inter alia, the construction and expansion of settlements, transfer of Israeli settlers, confiscation of land, demolition of

homes and displacement of Palestinian civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law and relevant resolutions,

Expressing grave concern that continuing Israeli settlement activities are dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-State solution based on the 1967 lines,

Recalling the obligation under the Quartet Roadmap, endorsed by its resolution 1515 (2003), for a freeze by Israel of all settlement activity, including “natural growth”, and the dismantlement of all settlement outposts erected since March 2001, (...)

Stressing that the status quo is not sustainable and that significant steps, consistent with the transition contemplated by prior agreements, are urgently needed in order to (i) stabilize the situation and to reverse negative trends on the ground, which are steadily eroding the two-State solution and entrenching a one-State reality, and (ii) to create the conditions for successful final status negotiations and for advancing the two-State solution through those negotiations and on the ground (UN, 2016).

After stating these basic principles, UN Security Council Resolution 2334 establishes some important pillars for achieving a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Some of them are important to consider:

1. Reaffirms that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace;
2. Reiterates its demand that Israel immediately and completely ceases all settlement activities in occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and that it fully respects all of its legal obligations in this regard;
3. Underlines that it will not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines, including with regard to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations;
4. Stresses that the cessation of all Israeli settlement activities is essential for salvaging the two-State solution, and calls for affirmative steps to be taken immediately to reverse the negative trends on the ground that are imperiling the two-State solution;
5. Calls upon all States, bearing in mind paragraph 1 of this resolution, to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied since 1967;
6. Calls for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction, calls for accountability in this regard, and calls for compliance with obligations under international law for the strengthening of ongoing efforts to combat terrorism, including through existing security coordination, and to clearly condemn all acts of terrorism;



7. Calls upon both parties to act on the basis of international law, including international humanitarian law, and their previous agreements and obligations, to observe calm and restraint, and to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, with the aim, inter alia, of de-escalating the situation on the ground, rebuilding trust and confidence, demonstrating through policies and actions a genuine commitment to the two-State solution, and creating the conditions necessary for promoting peace;
8. Calls upon all parties to continue, in the interest of the promotion of peace and security, to exert collective efforts to launch credible negotiations on all final status issues in the Middle East peace process and within the time frame specified by the Quartet in its statement of 21 September 2010 (UN, 2016).

This UN Security Council Resolution of December 2016 highlights with great care and precision what are the main pillars of what could be a reasonable outcome for a peaceful agreement between Israelis and Palestinians. Unfortunately, the resolution also highlights what has not been done over the past decades to pave the way for this peaceful agreement.

In this regard, the issue of Jerusalem underscores the complexity of achieving a peaceful outcome on the ground. Jerusalem concentrates many aspects of great importance to Israelis, Palestinians, and many others around the world. It concentrates several dimensions: historical, political, religious, territorial, demographic, and legal. Historically, centuries of history are claimed by Israelis and Palestinians, but in very different ways. Politically, there is a strong will on both sides to make Jerusalem the capital of their state (present for the Israelis, future for the Palestinians). From a religious perspective, Jerusalem is a highly symbolic and emotional city for Jews, Christians, and Muslims in the region and around the world, underscored by the presence of Holy Sites for the three monotheistic religions. From a geographical point of view, the situation is very complex. From 1948 to 1967, the city was divided between West Jerusalem (under Israeli rule) and East Jerusalem (under Jordanian rule). Inside East Jerusalem is the “Old City” and within it are the Holy Sites. The situation changed drastically with the war of June 1967. Since then, the entire city has been under Israeli administration. This led to an increase in the Israeli population in the eastern part of the city. Furthermore, in 1980, Israel decided to unilaterally declare Jerusalem as its capital. It should be noted that this unilateral decision was not recognized by the UN Security Council. Three important resolutions should be mentioned in this regard.

First and foremost, in its terms and content, UN Security Council Resolution 252 of May 21, 1968 is very clear:

The Security Council,  
Recalling General Assembly resolutions 2253 (ES-V) of 4 July 1967 and 2254 (ES-V) of 14 July 1967,

Having considered the letter of the Permanent Representative of Jordan on the situation in Jerusalem (S/8560) and the report of the Secretary-General,  
Having heard the statements made before the Council,

Noting that since the adoption of the above-mentioned resolutions Israel has taken further measures and actions in contravention of those resolutions,

Bearing in mind the need to work for a just and lasting peace,

Reaffirming that acquisition of territory by military conquest is inadmissible,

1. Deplores the failure of Israel to comply with the General Assembly resolutions mentioned above;

2. Considers that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, including expropriation of land and properties thereon, which tend to change the legal status of Jerusalem are invalid and cannot change that status;

3. Urgently calls upon Israel to rescind all such measures already taken and to desist forthwith from taking any further action which tends to change the status of Jerusalem (UN, 1968).

Twelve years later, in July 1980, when the Israeli Knesset unilaterally decided to declare Jerusalem as its capital and formally annex East Jerusalem, the UN Security Council adopted two substantive and clear resolutions based on the fact that this decision was contrary to international law. The first was UNSC Resolution 476, adopted on June 30, 1980 (prior to the Israeli Knesset's decision), which states:

The Security Council,

Having considered the letter of 28 May 1980 from the representative of Pakistan, the current Chairman of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, contained in document S/13966,

Reaffirming that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible,

Bearing in mind the specific status of Jerusalem and, in particular, the need to protect and preserve the unique spiritual and religious dimension of the Holy Places in the city,

Reaffirming its resolutions relevant to the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, in particular resolutions 252 (1968), 267 (1969), 271 (1969), 298 (1971) and 465 (1980),

Recalling the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of August 1949,

Deploring the persistence of Israel in changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and the status of the Holy City of Jerusalem,

Gravely concerned about the legislative steps initiated in the Israeli Knesset with the aim of changing the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem,

1. Reaffirms the overriding necessity for ending the prolonged occupation of Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967, including Jerusalem;

2. Strongly deplores the continued refusal of Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly;

3. Reconfirms that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem have no legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and also constitute a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East;
4. Reiterates that all such measures which have altered the geographic, demographic and historical character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem are null and void and must be rescinded in compliance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council;
5. Urgently calls on Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by the present and previous Security Council resolutions and to desist forthwith from persisting in the policy and measures affecting the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem (UN, 1980).

The second was Resolution 478, adopted on August 20, 1980, after the Israeli Knesset voted on July 30, 1980, to declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel, which constituted an annexation of East Jerusalem. The resolution was a strong rebuttal to this annexation:

- The Security Council,  
Recalling its resolution 476 (1980),  
Reaffirming again that the acquisition of territory by force is inadmissible,  
Deeply concerned over the enactment of a “basic law” in the Israeli Knesset proclaiming a change in the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, with its implications for peace and security,  
Noting that Israel has not complied with resolution 476 (1980),  
Reaffirming its determination to examine practical ways and means, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, to secure the full implementation of its resolution 476 (1980), in the event of non-compliance by Israel,
1. Censures in the strongest terms the enactment by Israel of the “basic law” on Jerusalem and the refusal to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions;
  2. Affirms that the enactment of the “basic law” by Israel constitutes a violation of international law and does not affect the continued application of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, in the Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since June 1967, including Jerusalem;
  3. Determines that all legislative and administrative measures and actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, which have altered or purport to alter the character and status of the Holy City of Jerusalem, and in particular the recent “basic law” on Jerusalem, are null and void and must be rescinded forthwith;
  4. Affirms also that this action constitutes a serious obstruction to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East;
  5. Decides not to recognize the “basic law” and such other actions by Israel

that, as a result of this law, seek to alter the character and status of Jerusalem and calls upon:

- (a) All Member States to accept this decision;
- (b) Those States that have established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City (UN, 1980b).

In the same spirit, 24 years later, at the request of the General Assembly of the United Nations, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued on July 9, 2004<sup>3</sup>, an Advisory Opinion on the “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory”. Among the many legal aspects highlighted by the ICJ, the following deserve special mention:

The Court notes that Israel is first obliged to comply with the international obligations it has breached by the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Consequently, Israel is bound to comply with its obligation to respect the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Furthermore, it must ensure freedom of access to the Holy Places that came under its control following the 1967 War.

The Court observes that Israel also has an obligation to put an end to the violation of its international obligations flowing from the construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel accordingly has the obligation to cease forthwith the works of construction of the wall being built by it in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem. In the view of the Court, cessation of Israel’s violations of its international obligations entails in practice the dismantling forthwith of those parts of that structure situated within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem. All legislative and regulatory acts adopted with a view to its construction, and to the establishment of its associated régime, must forthwith be repealed or rendered ineffective, except where of continuing relevance to Israel’s obligation of reparation (ICJ, 2004).

Furthermore, the conclusion of the Advisory Opinion is relevant to quote in light of its scope, which goes far beyond the “Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory” and deals with the more global issue of a peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians:

The Court considers that its conclusion that the construction of the wall by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory is contrary to international law must be placed in a more general context. Since 1947, the year when General Assembly resolution 181 (II) was adopted and the Mandate for Palestine was terminated, there has been a succession of armed conflicts, acts of indiscriminate violence and repressive measures on the former man-

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3. The summary of the Advisory Opinion can be found at the following address: <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/131/1677.pdf>

dated territory. The Court would emphasize that both Israel and Palestine are under an obligation scrupulously to observe the rules of international humanitarian law, one of the paramount purposes of which is to protect civilian life. Illegal actions and unilateral decisions have been taken on all sides, whereas, in the Court's view, this tragic situation can be brought to an end only through implementation in good faith of all relevant Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The "Roadmap" approved by Security Council resolution 1515 (2003) represents the most recent of efforts to initiate negotiations to this end. The Court considers that it has a duty to draw the attention of the General Assembly, to which the present Opinion is addressed, to the need for these efforts to be encouraged with a view to achieving as soon as possible, on the basis of international law, a negotiated solution to the outstanding problems and the establishment of a Palestinian State, existing side by side with Israel and its other neighbours, with peace and security for all in the region (ICJ, 2004).

All these elements provide a strong basis for achieving a peaceful outcome between Israelis and Palestinians. However, the situation on the ground, the lack of international willingness to implement the numerous resolutions adopted by the United Nations Security Council, and the nature of the policies implemented by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu each time he has been in power are elements that are highly detrimental to any kind of peaceful and negotiated basis for negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians.

In addition, numerous international and local NGOs have published reports in recent years highlighting the deteriorating human rights situation in the region. For example, in January 2021, the Jerusalem-based NGO "B'Tselem - The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories" published a document on the nature of the policies implemented by Israel in the Palestinian Territories (2021). In April 2021, Human Rights Watch published a lengthy report on Israeli policies in the Palestinian Territories (2021). In February 2022, Amnesty International published an extensive report on the situation in the Palestinian Territories (2022).

At the UN level, and more specifically in front of the United Nations Human Rights Council, the issue was also raised by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories on March 25 (2022). Within the framework of the UN Human Rights Council a resolution was adopted on May 27, 2021 establishing an "Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel". Since its creation, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry has published several reports and other documents (UN, 2024).

From a legal standpoint, the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a statement on March 3, 2021, which begins with the following sentences: "Today, I confirm the initiation by the Office of the Prosecutor ("Office") of the International Criminal Court ("ICC" or the "Court") of an investigation respecting the Situation in Palestine.

The investigation will cover crimes within the jurisdiction of the Court that are alleged to have been committed in the Situation since 13 June 2014, the date to which reference is made in the Referral of the Situation to my Office” (2021). The ICC website states: “This followed Pre-Trial Chamber I’s decision on 5 February 2021 that the Court could exercise its criminal jurisdiction in the Situation and, by majority, that the territorial scope of this jurisdiction extends to Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem (ICC, 2024)”.

In addition, on December 30, 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution (resolution 77/247) requesting an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice on the “Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem” (Guterres, 2022)<sup>4</sup>. The Order of the ICJ of the 3rd of February 2023 fixed the first time-limits of the procedure (ICJ, 2023).

A mutually acceptable peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians could be achieved if the political will to implement a two-state formula is accepted by the two parties on the ground. But it will not be achieved if there is no strong international action on the protagonists on the ground. In this context, and (not) to conclude, two quotations from President Barack Obama on the Israel-Palestine issue remain, in retrospect, highly relevant. The first is an excerpt from the speech (entitled “A New Beginning” by the White House) that President Obama delivered at Cairo University on June 4, 2009 (less than 5 months after his arrival at the White House) (The White House, 2009)<sup>5</sup>.

Now is the time for Palestinians to focus on what they can build. The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people. Hamas does have support among some Palestinians, but they also have to recognize they have responsibilities. To play a role in fulfill Palestinian aspirations and to unify the Palestinian people, Hamas must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, and recognize Israel’s right to exist.

At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel’s right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine’s. The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop.

And Israel must also live up to its obligation to ensure that Palestinians can live and work and develop their society. Just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel’s security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank. Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be a critical part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress.

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4. An other relevant documents concerning the ongoing procedure at the following address: <https://www.icj-cij.org/case/186>

5. NB: the mention (*Applause*) that appears in the transcript provided by the White House is not present in the present excerpt.

The second quote is an excerpt from President Obama's speech at the State Department on May 17, 2011. The speech was delivered in the wake of the Arab uprisings in many countries in the Middle East and North Africa:

Now, ultimately, it is up to the Israelis and Palestinians to take action. No peace can be imposed upon them – not by the United States; not by anybody else. But endless delay won't make the problem go away. What America and the international community can do is to state frankly what everyone knows – a lasting peace will involve two states for two peoples: Israel as a Jewish state and the homeland for the Jewish people, and the state of Palestine as the homeland for the Palestinian people, each state enjoying self-determination, mutual recognition, and peace (The White House, 2011).

So, while the core issues of the conflict must be negotiated, the basis of those negotiations is clear: a viable Palestine, a secure Israel. The United States believes that negotiations should result in two states, with permanent Palestinian borders with Israel, Jordan, and Egypt, and permanent Israeli borders with Palestine. We believe the borders of Israel and Palestine should be based on the 1967 lines with mutually agreed swaps, so that secure and recognized borders are established for both states. The Palestinian people must have the right to govern themselves, and reach their full potential, in a sovereign and contiguous state.

More than a decade later, these principles remain at the forefront of any favorable outcome between Israelis and Palestinians

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# 3

## China and India - The Asian Peaceful Rise

*Paulo Antônio Pereira Pinto*

Since the beginning of the process of opening of the People's Republic to the outside world in the 1980's, the Chinese were already attracting worldwide attention. The Indians, more recently, began to raise enormous curiosity with the ongoing gradual break up with a traditionally closed development model, in contradiction with the ongoing phenomenon of globalization.

This article reflects upon the influence of "Culture" on recent political developments of these two countries (Rao; Walton, 2004, p. 03). The focus is on the fact that the current emergence of the two most populous nations on the planet is often analyzed only from the perspective of the growing international insertion of their economies, as well as from the greed for access to hundreds of millions of their potential consumers to foreign products and services being offered.

Such assessments would be more appropriate to the debate that prevailed in the last decades of the 20th century, when the process of globalization began to prevail over closed and centrally planned economies. Thus, the priority focus on the economic dimension, until the end of the last century, led to the belief that technological progress in communications would promote greater cooperation and understanding among peoples. With greater access to information, voters could become more independent and rational. To the extent that societies became more affluent, it was believed, they would overcome "tribal" passions or extreme nationalistic feelings, while globalized institutions would consolidate themselves, even creating a new international order.

However, the opposite seems to have happened, because as the world has become richer and better informed, religious beliefs have also strengthened. Nationalism and tribalism have not disappeared either. In practice, transnational institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union have become weak and subject to crises.

We now know that the creation of a global economy and the emergence of new technological forces have not eroded local cultures and values. On the contrary, it was realized that, to the extent that people had access to more information and education, their cultural differences became more pronounced - not less. In this process, different groups

have shown to pursue different visions of well-being, as well as reacting aggressively to perceived threats to their cultural dignity (Harisson; Huntington, 2000). People now appear less as selfish individuals, geared towards material satisfaction, and more as beings inserted in their respective societies.

The study of the current emergence of China and India should take into account, therefore, that the great challenge of the current century is the understanding of how cultures evolve, adapt, or remain stable.

The main focus of this study aims to identify the trends that may result from these changes in the international scene. In this sense, special attention is drawn, on the one hand, to statements made by China, starting in 2005, that its current condition as an emerging power must be understood as a new historical phase, marked by the country's "peaceful rise", and destined to benefit the countries in its close surroundings, as well as its external relations (Pereira Pinto, 2005). According to this Chinese narrative, the resurgence of the political and cultural influence that the old Empire of the Center had over the nations located south of its borders was practically underway. That is, historically - always according to Beijing - ties were maintained with Southeast Asia, based on a "peaceful" relationship, which the PRC (People's Republic of China) would now seek to "rekindle" (Pereira Pinto, 2000, p. 15).

On the other hand, India neither seeks to expand its culture, nor its democratic institutions. What the Indians seem to evaluate with greater precision are the requirements necessary to preserve the security of their multiculturalism, in the context of an immediate peaceful environment (Kisinger, 2006). The current Indian leadership seems to understand that a worldwide unrest, sparked by ethnic and religious rivalries, could also affect the stability of their own country. Hence, New Delhi seeks to engage in a wide range of dialogue with other cultures (Cohen, 2001, p. 36).

## **The Origins of the two Civilizations**

It appears that, while there are social characteristics common to all humanity in the Eastern and Western parts of the world, China and India have historically been influenced by specific forms of organization, determined by the regional climate and geographical landscape, and by a set of beliefs and values that led to different political institutions and ideologies. Geographical constraints, therefore, have contributed to shaping the civilizations of those two countries. Although different in many ways, they both share the benefits of a natural environment that is both rich and invasive.

The climate, in this perspective, makes it possible to clearly distinguish the geographical regions that make up Asia. To the north, continental Asia extends to include Siberia;

in the center, huge deserts appear; in the west, the Mediterranean climate predominates, with some variations - all of these climatic types find equivalents in other parts of the world. In the Indian subcontinent, however, there is an original phenomenon, with no replication elsewhere. These are monsoons, which generally occur from April to September, and are characterized by heavy rains, which, on the one hand, help to develop agriculture and, on the other, can cause floods and put human life at risk.

Life in that region is linked to variations in this monsoon climate, which causes winds from the oceans towards the continent in the summer, and from the continent towards the oceans in the winter. The geographical landscape also influenced human occupation, as it reduced the options for habitable areas (Girard, 1966, p. 399).

Organized human occupation in Asia occurred in China from the third millennium BC. Chinese civilization developed on the great northern plains, where the land is yellow, called "loess," and favors agriculture. India was populated about a thousand years later, with the emergence of cities with basic structures. The great rainfall was, without a doubt, the reason that attracted successive waves of new inhabitants.

Monsoon Asia presents a complex mix of civilizations of diverse origins, resulting from successive invasions. One cannot speak, neither in the past nor today, of "ethnic unity", as different "races" divided this region and occupied it in different areas and periods (Dobs-Higinson, 1993).

Due to its landscape, India remains close to Central Asia. The immense barrier imposed by the Himalayas solidly separates the Chinese plain from the Ganges River Basin. In contrast, India opens itself towards the West. Despite being almost a desert, the Iranian plateau - neighboring the Indian subcontinent - is not insurmountable and, therefore, successive waves of immigrants arrived in India, coming from West Asia and crossing Persia (Hopkirk, 1994, p. 36).

India is also open to the outside world via the Gulf of Bengal, providing it with a maritime vocation and ancient commercial links with different parts of the world.

According to available data, the first inhabitants of India were "Aryan" or "Indo-European" tribes, originally from Europe. The "Aryans" (Aryas) did not change the cultures found in the territory they occupied. However, they introduced the system of dividing society into "castes", which would change social relations permanently (Keay, 2000).

Due to the influence of these new migratory waves, ties with Indochina were strengthened, but without this caste system being exported to that sub-region. However, it is registered that the "civilizing period" that took place in Southeast Asia started in the year 1000 BC (Raisingam, 2006), and was of Indian origin (Devare, 2006, p. 160).

Meanwhile, China - separated from India to the south by the Himalayas - opens to the north and northwest, interacting with people from Mongolia, Turkestan, the Caspian

plain and the Black Sea. Chinese contacts abroad are made by land. China is therefore much less oriented towards the sea than India. Its influence extends to Japan, passing through the Korean peninsula. It also reaches part of Indochina. The Chinese world is therefore more focused on itself than the Indian world.

The human settlements in these regions are very old. Successive populations arrived, wave after wave, adapting themselves to natural conditions, learning to use the land creatively, and becoming agricultural societies.

In the Chinese and Indian rural world, great empires were founded and extended for centuries. Invasions from abroad played a determining role in the cultural evolution of China and India. The arrival of Europeans, however, caused growing nationalist awareness in those countries.

Asia is a geographical expression. It does not correspond to a particular civilization. Very diverse human groups have spread across its territory. An “Asian civilization” appears only in the Far East. In that area, in fact, human life is more related to the continent than to the sea and its coastline.

It can be said that two worlds exist: one in the Pacific and another in the Indian Ocean. Each of these must be studied separately. Nature and history have provided for common features to these two vast lands, differentiating them from the Western world.

Despite notable differences between Chinese and Indian cultures, Asian spirituality is marked by submission to the forces of nature, as well as by the search for the pure inner development of individuals.

## **Spirituality in Both Cultures**

It is possible to notice the importance of the cultural dimension in the emergence of China and India, and their different perceptions regarding spirituality. There is an almost mystical submission to the order of things that the human spirit hopes to penetrate in a docile way.

Chinese wisdom does not have the same depth as Indian mysticism. While addressing a village of peasants, Confucianism develops a moral of human sympathy and resignation.

It is known that the beginning of China’s history is marked by the failure of great empires. Thus, according to available historical data, the “Chang” dynasty flourished in the second millennium before Christ, having succumbed to invaders known as the “Tchéous”.

Then, a new Empire is organized, but it is so vast that it is divided into principalities hostile to each other. The civil war intensifies until a stronger family, the “Han”, imposes its authority. The four centuries of peace ensured by the Han are followed by a new period of anarchy, until the Tang dynasty (between 618 and 907 AD) was in power.

Nonetheless, these infightings did not prevent China from extending its influence over the Korean peninsula and Japanese islands.

Such conflicts profoundly marked the Chinese mentality in two main aspects. The first was that the peasants had always lived in ignorance about the causes of the profound changes in the country's political life, while reinforcing their complete indifference as to what was happening beyond their closest social group. Second, trade and agriculture developed outside the great political movements that shook the Chinese Empire throughout the century.

Meanwhile, until the arrival of the Turkish-Afghan conquerors in the 12th century, successive waves of invaders or new immigrants arriving in India were being absorbed by the civilizations already established in the area. These included the Greeks, Huns, and different groups and tribes from Central Asia.

Along with the Turks and Afghans, a new cultural element also arrived and was not absorbed by Hinduism. This was the religion of Islam.

Even though these two religions remained separate and distinct, the civilization that was created in India, which included Islam, soon began to influence all aspects of local life as well. Some scholars called this an Indo-Islamic culture, particularly in the north of the country.

Two debates arose regarding the relationship between India and Islam. The first is historical. Western scholars describe the Turkish-Afghan dynasties and their successors, Mughals, as the period of Muslim rule in India. Another group of academics disagree. For them, the Muslim community did not exercise power, and in fact, shared power with local community leaders.

The second debate concerns the theory that there would be two "nations" in India after the arrival of Islam in that country. This view justifies the current division of the subcontinent, with Pakistan created as a separate country next to India.

Those who oppose such an interpretation point out that the feeling of nationality arose in India only in the middle of the 19th century. There was a Muslim elite at that time, but the country was ruled by the English.

Such debates may seem obscure, but they lead to the heart of the question of Indian identity, insofar as it puts the country in a position to absorb external influences, without losing its sense of identity.

It would be appropriate, for example, to compare Chinese and Indian postures, in the process of absorbing Western influences from the beginning of the 18th century onwards.

As far as China is concerned, the foreign contributions took place at a time when its civilization and governance system were weakened. The external pressures were therefore more traumatic than in India.

In the Chinese case, there was an evolution towards “nationalism” and totalitarianism, which merged during the Maoist era. In India, external influences have led to a vigorous democracy.

It appears that the Western Judeo-Christian mind developed and favored an optimistic view of the evolution of humanity and, in the process, a faith in the ability of men to improve himself through better planning, using technology, expanding his education, and opening up opportunities for all.

Meanwhile, through an Asian mindset such as a Hindu-Buddhist thinking, feels at the mercy of destructive forces, among them, that of nature (such as diseases), that of men (such as war) and the passage of time, which, in the course of long history of the nations of that part of the world, has swallowed individuals, kingdoms and cities.

In the west, human genius is valued for inventing, organizing and disciplining the geographical space, in order to control the mobile forces of nature. Thus, individuals are the agents that bring about change - nature remains the same. This can be achieved by scientific analysis and can be overwhelmed by the advances of humanity.

European thinkers of the 18th century believed in a “collective enlightenment” in wisdom, as a fight against the darkness of ignorance, to make society perfect, noble, and pure. Those of the 19th century valued material and collective progress, the conquest of the forces of nature, the abolition of violence, slavery, injustice, and victory over suffering and premature death. The west arrived in the 20th Century, aware that only with intensive and extensive planning and organization can human civilization be saved (Girard, 1996, p. 407).

In the western world today, the fragility of human life no longer causes obsession in the way our ancestors suffered during the XV and XVI centuries. Instead of an attitude of acceptance, resignation, and contemplation, a life of constant movement is cultivated. This causes changes at every turn, by improving and planning things, and subjecting the growth of the world to predictable changes. In short, instead of trying to understand life and the cosmos as a whole, we seek control over concrete details.

Asian spirituality has always been intense, to the point of permeating art, and often making it a typically religious expression.

In China, during periods like the Tang Dynasty (between 618 and 907 AD), huge statues and pagodas were built. But the Chinese experienced moments when an art disengaged from any divine concern flourished (Shouyi, 1982, p. 174).

India, for its part, has always been entirely devoted to religious speculation. The first large Indian buildings date from the 2nd millennium BC and are sanctuaries. Then the “stupas” were built, which are immense “hemispheric” or conical constructions, as mystical symbols and commemorative monuments.



Between the ninth and eighteenth centuries A.D., India is covered with temples, while Indian spiritual influence extends across Southeast Asia. The immense ensembles of Angkor Vat in Cambodia and the temples of Bangkok are some examples of the spiritual role played by India.

Monsoon Asia, however, was not the cradle of any religion - in the sense that it provided a set of rules, dogmas, and precise religious revelations, accompanied by imperatives. Asian spirituality, therefore, does not follow a practical order, along the lines to which the West is accustomed to. It is, above all, an exercise in meditation, and focusing towards oneself, and an effort to concentrate.

A superficial analysis of Indian spirituality seems to indicate that it approaches religious forms in the West. At the time of the Indo-European invasions, India is witnessing the implantation in its territory of a religious tradition which is given the name "Veda" (the Knowledge). The Veda is a revelation "from above", but it cannot be compared to revelations in the form conceived by "Mediterranean religions" (Zimmer, 1952, p. 19). The "Knowledge" would come from the "Brahma" which is, to a large extent, the "word", the "Absolute Spirit." Brahma is the "unity," and each soul is an outstanding part of this unity, which merges back into the "whole."

This belief was called Brahmanism or Hinduism, with its major or minor "gods" and its temples and ceremonials. Thus, a ritual of Brahmanism developed, parallel to a purely spiritual aspect, which is the wait for the return to the "Universal".

In the 6th century BC, a new spiritual concept, Buddhism, arrived from the Himalayas. Buddhism did not intend to innovate, complement, nor fight or replace Brahmanism. It developed alongside Brahmanism, without confirming or contradicting it.

Buddhism was introduced to India at a time of great social upheaval, caused by internal wars and external invasions. It would be, to a large extent, a form of consolation to rural settlements that did not have high expectations about their own existence. The close relations between nature, the deep connection in a peasant world, limited by family ties, are even more sensitive in the Chinese universe than in the Indian space.

Buddhism had a significant influence on China. During the Tang Dynasty (618 to 907 AD), it manifested itself through the influence on the development of sculptures. The Chinese kept from Buddhism, above all, detach from the things of this world. However, they often follow their own paths. (Wing-Tsit, 1963, p. 134).

In the sixth century before Christ, Confucius came to offer solutions quite different from Buddhism. Starting from his contemporary society as well, Confucius reached a solution quite different from that of Buddhism. This is because the "present moment" also did not seem perfect - far from it - but he identified possibilities for changes. These would happen through the control of personal impulses. It would not be necessary, as Buddhists believe, to "escape everything". On the contrary, it would be necessary to adapt.

Thus, Confucius presents a philosophy that considers man within nature, which is expressed by the cult of the past, considered as a better Era, and by communion with the material world. For his followers, the permanent search for harmony that manifests itself through his taste for extraordinary writing. The calligraphy is beautiful in its smallest details. Landscape painting, as if reflecting the state of the soul, is also taken to extremes of good taste.

Painting, for example, is influenced by another aspect of Chinese thought, which was Taoism, and is a more recent doctrine than Confucianism. Taoism is a form of meditation on the order of nature, much more mystical than Confucianism, insofar as it submits to the essence of the world in order to penetrate it (Tung, 1980, p. 204).

Some thinkers conclude that Eastern spirituality has greatness and weaknesses, insofar as, on the one hand, it is superior to Western thought, which never knew how to dedicate the same humility and search for understanding - like Eastern spirituality - to the laws of the world, accept them and go beyond them (Girard, 1966, p. 405). The “universal sympathy” which, however, subjects Asian thought to passivity, makes it difficult for people in that part of the world to struggle against the forces of nature, the destruction caused by successive wars and the conditioning of habits consecrated by ancient legacies.

Indian society, for example, is the result of the assimilation of hundreds of cultural influences, originating in Europe and Asia. Therefore, India incorporated customs and beliefs of the different civilizations that invaded or settled there. As a result, there are now 17 official languages in the country and a few hundred dialects.

But India was not just an “importer” of culture. It was also an “exporter”. Sanskrit, as we know now, is a language that originated in India and is the root of Indo-European languages, such as Greek and Latin.

Buddhism was born in India, derived from Hinduism, but has practically disappeared from its country of origin, spreading across Asia and other regions. Hinduism, however, was widespread in Southeast Asia, but it continued to flourish mainly in the Indian territory.

It turns out that Hinduism adapted perfectly to Indian society, and some say that, in this case, religion influences society and vice versa. That is, the profusion of “gods” offers a wide choice of devotion to the faithful that would have helped in the establishment of caste systems that have survived for 3,000 years.

## **Conclusion**

As mentioned at the beginning of this article, China and India now occupy almost identical spaces in global attention. The Indian subcontinent lives now at a similar moment - keeping in mind the geographical and cultural differences that is sought to be exposed in

the article - to the experience, for example, after Deng Xiaoping's tour of the south of his country, in 1993, when he declared that "to be socialist is to be rich".

There is also a prevailing mood in India of growing expectations that all obstacles will be overcome, in favor of exponentially sustainable economic growth. The fundamental difference, however, is the fact that, in India, the process occurs from the determination of civil society. It will depend on popular support, and from different sectors of the economy, to definitively overcome the bottlenecks created by market forces through the mechanisms inherited from centralized planning.

The greater importance of the current emergence of China and India lie in the analysis of how these cultures evolved and adapted to the successive historical challenges that were imposed on them. What kind of influence will these changes have on the international scene? China has reiterated that its current status as an emerging power should be understood as a new historical phase, marked by the country's "peaceful rise", designed to benefit its immediate surroundings and relations with the outside world. In this context, it is worth examining Beijing's growing commitment to the nations south of its borders, which would represent the regional group where this "Chinese rise" would take place, primarily.

As for the Indian phenomenon, it is necessary to assess whether there is, in fact, a sustainable process of growth, or whether it is not just a promotional exercise by the government of New Delhi, with its publicity campaign for "India everywhere", or, on the other, of counteroffensive by multinational companies frightened by their excessive dependence on the Chinese economy and, therefore, interested in creating an alternative for their investments.

The Indians never sought to expand their culture or their democratic institutions. Their main concern seems to be the guarantee of the internal security of their country's multiculturalism, in a stable international environment. The current Indian leadership seems to understand that worldwide unrest, caused by ethnic and religious rivalries, could also affect their own country.

As the emergence of these two countries is consolidated as well as more intense cooperation and exchange of lessons on how to manage their respective exponential growth processes develop, there will undoubtedly be a significant impact on the political International order.

One should remember that, just over 50 years ago, both sponsored the so-called Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. It would now be desirable for them to contribute to an international relationship based on mutual respect between different cultures.

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# 4

## The New Challenges for Russian Policy in Latin America

*Victor Jefeits*

### Introduction

More than three decades of Russian policy in Latin America and the Caribbean (hereinafter, LAC) were marked with several continuities of the previous Soviet policy, but this policy also has some new features that differ the contemporary Russian approaches from those applied by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which effectively directed the national foreign policy even when formally implemented by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Following the disintegration of the once-powerful USSR in December 1991, Moscow had to rethink its perceptions of the distant region, starting with almost absolute indifference towards LAC (the Soviet withdrawal from Cuba during the last months of perestroika was one of the markers of this approach). Then, changes in the system of international relations and the growing recovery of Russian political power pushed Moscow to search for new allies and determined its attempts to reestablish old friendships in order to compete more safely with the United States of America. This reactivation of Russian relations with the LAC countries was described by some experts as “the return of the Russian bear,” and several authors even speak about the “new Russian imperialism” in the Western Hemisphere. However, Moscow’s policy in the 21st century can hardly be matched with what the USSR had been accustomed to doing in its relations with the Latin American countries. The Russians managed to expand substantially the volume of their trade with Latin American partners, were able to occupy considerable spaces in local arms markets and influence the minds of Latin Americans with their soft power and the media. The BRICS group (the informal club of several emerging international actors) is also an important phenomenon for analyzing Russian relations with LAC.

The so-called Left-Wing turn at the beginning of this century somewhat facilitated the expansion of commercial and political connections between Moscow and LAC, although

it was never the only determining factor of the new Russian politics. Some years later, the decline of “21st Century Socialism” and the gradual shift to the center and right center in many LAC countries, apparently, complicated the state of affairs for the Russian Federation, and forced it to seek a change in patterns of its interaction with partners in Latin America. From 2019 to today, a series of things have also notably affected the challenges that Moscow faces, opening up possibilities or, on the contrary, closing several existing paths: the Venezuelan systemic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and, recently, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine that reached the military phase and inevitably involved Russian-Latin American relations in the game. All this was and is a test for the Kremlin that has to demonstrate whether or not it can remain an influential actor in LAC.

### **The origins of Russian policy in LAC**

Although Soviet relations with LAC were largely ideologized (Cuba became the number 1 partner since the triumph of the revolution headed by Fidel Castro, and in 1979 it was followed by the Sandinista Nicaragua, Moscow also knew how to establish connections and links with Latin American nations without including the ideological factor. This basically was the case of Mexico, which established relations with the USSR in 1924 (were broken in 1930 and reestablished in 1942) and despite several ups and downs, the two countries maintained a notable volume of trade for decades. The Argentinean case was similar in that the USSR and South American countries managed to have important commercial connections despite the Cold War and very different ideological positions. However, relations between the USSR and Chile ended immediately after the coup d'état committed by Augusto Pinochet in September 1973. This ability to maneuver skillfully between ideological Scylla and economic Charybdis was one of the basic markers of the USSR's activities in LAC during almost the entire Cold War (Jeifets; Khadorich; Leksyutina, 2018).

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the new Russian authorities were above all interested in transforming the convulsed national economy towards the market model without serious political competition with the US-only superpower. Within this paradigm, Latin America was perceived as a region that was too distant from commerce and technologically underdeveloped to make or receive investments. Since 1998, Russia began a gradual shift in its foreign policy, distancing itself from Washington and trying to contribute to the construction of the ‘multipolar world’ (the concept proposed by the Russian foreign minister and then Prime Minister Evgenii Primakov). (Bain, 2008, p. 129-130).

Despite Moscow's growing interest in LAC, the countries of the region were still not among Kremlin's priorities. Most of the agreements signed during Primakov's tour to LAC were never implemented. The visible change of Russian policy came after Vladimir Pu-

tin's speech delivered in Munich in 2007 (when Moscow refused to be an obedient follower of the existing model of international relations favorable to Western nations) (Putin, 2007). At that time, Russia was already especially interested in the LAC countries due to its increased independence in matters of foreign policy (examples of such trend were the Rio Group's statement on the bombing of Yugoslavia by NATO in 1999 and then the votes in the UN Security Council in 2003 when Mexico and Chile managed to ruin the British-American draft on the armed intervention in Iraq). In Moscow's vision the additional role was occupied by Brazil due to its membership in the BRICS group and its ambitions to become a new permanent member of the UN Security Council. Moscow welcomes the repeated criticism made by Latin American governments about the "price" that the region's economic systems have to pay and the negative impact on their social projects, when adopting costly measures related to the fight against climate change and to contain carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. Declarations about the need for multilateralism in the 21st century became an almost obligatory part of the discourse of many Latin American politicians and diplomats, and some of them (especially those representing countries governed by the radical left forces) began to highlight the need to cooperate with the Russians to ensure the independence of South America<sup>1</sup>.

During the short war with Georgia in the South Caucasus in August 2008, Moscow unexpectedly obtained the political support of Nicaragua and Venezuela, which recognized the independence of the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and (to a lesser extent the support of Cuba, whose ex-leader Fidel Castro condemned Georgia's attitude (Castro, 2008), although Havana always avoided recognizing the change in borders). This support had important significance for Russia in the circumstances when the 'traditional' allies (Belarus and Kazakhstan) did not show solidarity with the Kremlin. Furthermore, the growing (at that time) process of subregional integration raised Russia's hopes that the new and powerful regional blocs would increase the international weight of Latin American countries in world politics, strengthening multilateralism. The Kremlin, as Vladimir Rouvinsky highlights, saw in the rapprochement with LAC an opportunity for a reciprocal response to Washington and NATO (which was expanding towards Russian borders) and their activities in the countries that Russia considers "the near abroad" (a term that differs them from countries that are not within Moscow's sphere of immediate interests) (Rouvinski, 2015).

Moscow would like to benefit from the growing weight of LAC in the world and to combine geopolitical, political and commercial reasons by implementing its diplomacy. In this aspect we do not agree with Armando Chaguaceda who talks about the Russian "return" (Chaguaceda, 2019); in our opinion, Kremlin's new Latin American policy is much

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1. See, for example, the declaration by the President of Bolivia Evo Morales: Nodal.Am (2018).

broader and, rather, multifunctional. Nor should we forget that the expansion of relations in the world and, in particular, in LAC is part of Russian domestic politics (the often used slogans “Russia is standing on its knees” and “Russia is gaining new allies”) that tend demonstrate Moscow’s growing weight in solving key problems in the world. In any case, despite the increase in contacts, the growth in the volume of commercial exchange (we will talk about that below), and the coincidence of many approaches between Russians and Latin Americans, this cooperation always had its limits. While some radical governments in favor of the concept of “21st Century Socialism” (Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba and – at that time and to a lesser extent – Ecuador) were willing to enter into a range of economic and cultural, political and military alliances with the Russians, the center-left regimes such as Chile, Argentina and Brazil were not simply thinking of joining the competition between Russia and the United States by playing the fat off Moscow, but were pursuing the goal of increasing their own prestige and international weight.

Some foundations for Russian policy in LAC were laid in the Foreign Policy Concept (2008 edition) when Moscow declared its desire to expand cooperation with its “strategic partners” (Argentina, Cuba, Venezuela and Mexico; in the next edition of the document Nicaragua was added to the list (MFA, 2013). However, even Russia’s tireless discourse on increasing connections was not able to raise LAC countries more than to penultimate place in the Kremlin’s hierarchy of priorities. The reconfiguration of priorities and objectives in the 2016 edition of the Concept seemed to give more confusion to the issue: all references to LAC nations disappeared with the exception of Brazil, however, this reference was made in relation to the BRICS group (MFA, 2016). The Russian political and economic line seems to be more reactive tactics than a long-term strategy.

With the beginning of the new Cold War (whose prolegomena were visible in the clashes between Russia and the West during the war in the South Caucasus in 2008 and, later, in the territory of Syria and around the Ukrainian issue (since the annexation of Crimea in 2014), Kremlin was and is looking for possible allies. Latin America and the Caribbean, in Russian estimations, could be a favorable terrain for this. In November 2008, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev visited Peru, Brazil, Venezuela and Cuba going so far as to affirm that the LAC nations were “friends with whom Russia would maintain special relations” (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, 2008). Visits and summits at the level of Russian and Latin American Presidents and Prime Ministers became almost customary, and at least every year a high-level Russian politician crossed the Atlantic to negotiate with his counterparts or express common points of view. Furthermore, Russia showed its teeth to the world by sending several armed ships and strategic bombing planes to Venezuela in November 2008 to participate in joint maneuvers with the Venezuelan army and fleet. This military activity turned out to be the first such exercise since the collapse of the USSR (Weitz, 2010, p. 33). A similar visit was made in the



fall of 2013 to Nicaragua, and there is little doubt that it was a reciprocal Russian response in the Caribbean to the US approach to Russian borders.

In 2014, Russia achieved a benevolent position of several Latin American nations during the voting in the UN General Assembly of the draft resolution in support of Ukrainian territorial integrity (Nicaragua, Venezuela, Bolivia and Cuba voted against resolution A/68/L. 39, while Brazil, Argentina and Mexico (the three largest economies in LAC) were among the countries that abstained). No Latin American country wanted to join the sanctions imposed on Russia by the West, considering them “unilateral” and Bolivian President Evo Morales even went so far as to call these measures “economic terrorism” (Morales, 2014).

For several years some LAC countries took positions similar to that of Moscow regarding the crisis in Syria, etc. Instead, Russia always offered its support to Brazil (in its claims for a permanent seat on the Security Council), to Argentina (in its territorial dispute with Great Britain over the Malvinas) and to Cuba (against the unilateral US embargo). Several times Moscow demonstrated its interest not only in developing bilateral relations, but also with economic and political integrationist groups and blocks such as CELAC, Mercosur, ALBA and SICA (Schetinin, 2017). In turn, LAC countries took advantage of the Russian and Chinese presence in the region as an opportunity to “establish business relations outside the US and Europe” (Sitenko, 2016).

One of the indications of the new type of relations with LAC developed by Moscow is the extensive use of soft power. Russia has been implementing a project for some time to deploy the Spanish-language broadcast of Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik Mundo in the LAC region. RT set itself the task of becoming an alternative source of information and managed to find its niche in the local audience and a higher rate of increase in the number of viewers compared to other foreign media. The importance of RT can be demonstrated in the fact that the first international interview given by the current president of Argentina, Alberto Fernández, was carried out on this television channel. The content of RT programs is often a reflection of Western criticism of Russia (accusations of corruption, violation of human rights and international law, all topics that concern Latin American audiences); however, the factual series cited during the broadcast indicates the prevalence of these problems in the West (Rouvinski, 2017).

Participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the development of Moscow’s contacts in LAC countries is another new feature. In February 2016, a historic meeting between Pope and the Russian Patriarch was held in Havana. Cuba turned out to be an ideal place for this, simultaneously showing at the same time the continuity of the policy of the former USSR towards this country, the expansion of contacts with Havana after the start of normalization between the United States and Cuba in 2014, and the fact that Moscow

took seriously the role of Latin American countries as an international actor. Visits to the Patriarch became an almost unchanged part of the routine during Latin American leaders' trips to the Russian Federation, demonstrating the symbolic role that the Russian Orthodox Church plays in post-imperial Russia today. Moscow, in turn, is ready to promote the interests of the Russian Orthodox Church in Latin America, since expanding ties with the Russian diaspora is a common interest of the church and state.

Another important indication of the difference in the relationship pattern customary for Soviet times is the search for business partners without depending at all on ideology (and, generally, Russia does not have any ideology formalized at a legal level) and political and international positions. Since the end of the 20th century, Moscow was developing connections with Colombia and Brazil (neither of which had been a partner of the USSR) and established them before the so-called turn to the left in LAC. The size reached by trade between Argentina and Russia already in this century was not negatively impacted by the political changes in the South American country, when the center-right achieved electoral victory and later, when the neo-Peronists returned to power.

The contemporary Russian policy in the region is often dedicated to the propaganda of "universal traditional values" that seek support among some segments of Latin American society. However, the left's support for "traditional values" cannot be unlimited; many leftist militants (the Uruguayan, Chilean, and Argentinean cases, for example) have long advocated the expansion of human rights, and the articulation of theses about "conservative values" would never cause much enthusiasm among this segment of the Latin American population; the conservative sectors of LAC that might share such an approach, on the contrary, are not very interested in expanding relations with Moscow.

At the same time, the Russians, by politically supporting governments in LAC, do not necessarily show solidarity with their economic models. The example of such a position is the type of relations with Venezuela: Russia maintains a firm position of recognition of the government of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro, however, it does not share the economic ideas of the "21st Century Socialism" of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia (Pavlova, 2011). On the contrary, the Russian economy still tends towards market models, while in the "Bolivarian" nations one can, above all, observe the growing presence of the state in the economy.

More than once, Moscow demonstrated its respect for the sovereignty of LAC nations and non-interference in their domestic affairs. While the President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff (considered by the Kremlin as one of the close allies) was impeached, the Russian MFA rejected any possibility of intervening given that the replacement procedures were within Brazilian legality. A very similar position was taken in the fall of 2019 during the drastic political changes in Bolivia, when Evo Morales had to flee his homeland and right-

wing politician Jeanine Áñez was proclaimed Interim President. Although Moscow stated that what happened “looked like a coup d’état,” it also clearly expressed that “Russia is not considering the possibility of recognition or non-recognition” because it was all a domestic matter for Bolivia (MFA, 2016b; MFA, 2019).

The above does not exclude geopolitical considerations from Russian policy in LAC, no matter how pragmatic it became during the decades following the disintegration of the USSR. The most vivid example of such an approach was Moscow’s stance during the Venezuelan crisis.

## **Roller coaster for Moscow in Venezuela**

For many years, the Kremlin was firmly supporting the Venezuelan government. In November 2017, Moscow decided to convert the USD 3.15 billion of existing debt accumulated by Chávez and Maduro into various loans and postpone mandatory payments until after 2023 (Gurganus, 2018). In this way, the ruling regime in Caracas could breathe easier. However, it was not a Christmas gift: Moscow instead obtained several benefits by accessing the oil and gas reserves of that South American nation, and the main beneficiary was the Rosneft company whose director Igor Sechin was considered one of the closest people to the Russian President Vladimir Putin. Among other things, Rosneft helped the Venezuelan PdVSA transport oil abroad. However, the Venezuelan economic slack continued to expand until it became a systemic crisis, and after the controversial presidential elections around 60 countries (many of them were Latin American) refused to recognize Maduro’s re-election, on the contrary, they supported the president of the National Assembly Juan Guaidó who proclaimed himself Interim President in 2019.

This whole situation turned out to be a contradictory challenge for Moscow. Russia was aware of the loss of regional prestige by the post-Chavist government and not necessarily shared much of the economic approaches of Maduro and his team. Still, the Kremlin was unwilling to lose an ally, no matter how weak it became. Moscow had invested considerable amounts of money in the Venezuelan oil and gas sector and recognized risks of losing all or a large part of its investments if the opposition managed to overthrow the post-Chavist government. Furthermore, Russia did not want to demonstrate possible weakness and leave other countries to consider the virtual setback in Venezuela as an indication that Russia was losing ground and influence.

Throughout the development of the crisis, Moscow demonstrated its ability to take advantage of several tools: it used its right to impose a veto in the UN Security Council, as also provided the Maduro government with the logistics to transport oil, sell gold and acquire finance. Finally, several groups of Russian military personnel continued to provide

advice to the Venezuelan army, always leaving room for doubt: if it were not an indication that the Kremlin was going to militarily support Maduro in the event of a possible US intervention. Moscow's insistence on the dichotomy "Maduro or nobody" affected negatively Russian relations with several LAC nations that did not hesitate to call the Venezuelan President a "usurper" and "dictator." While some Russian assets in the Venezuelan oil sector were under increasing risk (due to the sanctions imposed by Washington on several local companies), it was not surprising that Rosneft decided to apply the exit strategy and sell its assets in the South American country to the Russian government (Hess, 2019). The new company, Roszarubezhneft, demonstrated that Moscow's presence in Venezuela continues to exist, however at that time it was not linked to companies or people under US sanctions. However, Roszarubezhneft's economic activities were inevitably declining due to the general crisis in the Venezuelan oil sector and the difficulties in shipping crude oil to other countries.

The failure of the blitzkrieg organized by Washington at the beginning of 2019 with the aim of removing Maduro from the Miraflores Palace and imposing a politician loyal to the US to the Venezuelan presidential chair, the crisis and dispersion of the opposition forces in Venezuela and the fantastic ability of Chávez's heir to remain in power apparently opened some prospects for Moscow. Russia, like China, Turkey and Mexico, was insisting on the need to resolve the Venezuelan crisis peacefully, legally and by the forces of the country's own nationals without external interference. Although until now all attempts at direct and indirect negotiations have failed to find a magic formula to end the endless crisis in the South American nation, several intermediate events could be detected: while Maduro shared part of the control over the Electoral Court with opposition, the European Union withdrew its recognition of Guaidó; Maduro's cabinet managed to partially stabilize the economy giving some relief to Venezuelans. Relations between the Venezuelan government and Latin American governments are improving and Venezuela no longer feels like a besieged fortress.

Much still depends on this issue in Moscow, Washington and Beijing. Russia weighed various tactics and was looking for ways to turn Venezuelan stone into a philosophical stone that could contribute to the resetting of Russian relations with LAC. Throughout 2019-2022, Russia's loans to Venezuela were not released, or at least their amounts were not significant. Moscow simultaneously maintained assistance in military logistics without making prepayments for Venezuelan crude oil. That could be considered a non-formal invitation to Washington to reach some kind of compromise on Venezuela (as long as Beijing's interests would also be taken into account). The three countries would like to get out of the impasse into which they were pushed by the Venezuelan crisis: both Washington was worried about possible Russian counteraction in the case of a military intervention,

and Russia was trying to avoid the implementation of such a scenario; Beijing, in turn, needed the oil supply from Venezuela to be maintained and that no one try to remove the Asian giant from the region. This tactic, apparently, did not work according to Moscow's calculations, however US pressure on the Maduro government became less violent.

## **Trade and cooperation between Russia and LAC in the 21st century before 2022**

Trade and cooperation in industrial sectors became a priority for Moscow since the disintegration of the USSR. Some progress could be detected in these areas. Russia once again became one of the largest sellers in the Latin American arms market (even taking into account that some parts of the purchases were made thanks to Russian loans). Venezuela had purchased Russian weapons for several billion dollars between 2001 and 2013, before the acute phase of the Venezuelan crisis began. Among other things, Caracas received the S-300VM anti-missile defense system to protect itself from possible US attacks (La Nación, 2008). Peru, Brazil, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia were other buyers of Russian weapons since the end of the 20th century and the beginning of this century (Berman, 2014); Mexico purchased several helicopters for its police forces. Nicaragua received a wide variety of weapons, installed a training center for Mi-17V-5 helicopter pilots and joined the work of the Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) in 2017 by opening the Russian satellite base in Nejapa. Perhaps the most significant case of this military-technical cooperation was the inauguration of the police training center in Las Colinas for all of South America; doubts still persist among experts as to whether this Center is intended to displace the United States in anti-drug efforts in the Hemisphere or is a legal cover for military activities (Farah; Reyes, 2015, p. 113). In the second half of 2022, the President of Nicaragua Daniel Ortega allowed Russian military ships and aircraft to make stops in national ports in humanitarian operations (however, it is not about establishing military bases in the territory of this Central American nation). Indeed, there is a lot of trust between the Nicaraguan and Russian militaries regarding the exchange of intelligence; and these military or semi-military facilities mentioned are the only ones in LAC where Moscow has direct control, and their location in the region is very strategic.

The size of military-technical cooperation between Moscow and several LAC nations was explained more than once by an open competition with the US and an attempt to convert the LAC countries into a politically and militarily consolidated bloc against Washington's hegemony (Blank, 2009; Shuya, 2019). We do not agree with this approach: while it is true that geopolitical reasons were and are very important for Moscow (and there is no reason why Latin America should be a total exception), the USSR and then

Russia have historically been one of the key actors in the arms market, and the Latin American cases could be considered as a search for new markets. Moscow never limited its military-technical cooperation with politically close countries. Peru has been a buyer of Russian weapons since Soviet times, and even Colombia, a country historically more oriented towards Washington, bought several Russian helicopters during the presidency of Ernesto Samper (a new contract was under discussion since 2017, however, the Russian alliance -Venezuela was a deteriorating factor in relations between Moscow and Bogotá and made new purchases impossible). In 2013, Russia and Brazil signed several agreements on the purchase of the “IGLA” and “Pantsir-S1” anti-missile systems, however, this contract expired in 2017 without being fully implemented (Lima, 2013); Michel Temer’s government was cutting its spending to try to get out of the economic crisis, and military cooperation was one of the inevitable victims. Brazil in February 2002 signed a contract with Russia to build an atomic submarine (Vzglyad, 2022), however, this did not lead to the activation of other areas of military-technical cooperation.

The arms sales figures presented by the prestigious Swedish institute SIPRI differ visibly from the data announced by the Russian ministry (Rosstat), however, the cause of differences is methodical (while SIPRI only counts direct sales, the ministry Russian is also taking note of post-sales maintenance), (Connolly; Sendstad, 2017; Alekseeva; Goreslavskiy, 2020; Jeifets; Khadorich, 2022) and the average volume of weapons manufactured by both the USSR and Russia is around 20-25% of the national military capabilities of various LAC armies. However, lately this trend has been decreasing due to the loss of purchasing power by LAC nations in the second decade of the 21st century, due to the application of the CAATSA law (Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act), adopted by Washington in 2017 to “counteract adversaries through sanctions” (Verdes – Montenegro, 2022), in addition, due to the increase in tariffs by maritime transport companies on Russian goods starting in 2014, all those factors seriously decreased the competitiveness of Russian arms in Latin American markets.

The Cuban case deserves a special reference given the enormous size of the cooperation between the USSR and the “Island of Freedom” that had and has a strategic position near the US border. During his visit to Havana in 2014, Russian President Vladimir Putin announced that Moscow was liquidating 90% of the enormous Cuban debt (more than 30 billion dollars) and at the same time expressed his country’s desire to contribute to Cuba becoming a transportation hub (Putin, 2014). This series of statements was the apparent attempt to reestablish the Russian presence on the island, especially taking into account the growing Chinese economic interference and the possibilities of improving relations between Washington and Havana. At the same time, neither Russia nor Cuba were willing to reestablish the previous size of military and technical cooperation, although the

Cubans demonstrated their interest in obtaining several Mi-17 helicopters and towards the creation of a repair center for helicopters previously sold to other LAC countries in Cuba. The Cubans did not forget about the lightning departure of the Russians from their country in 1990-1991 and did not want to depend on Moscow again, however they are pragmatic and need to increase cooperation with Russia and China in view of oil supply cuts from Venezuela.

Russian trade with LAC countries started from the sum 2.2. billion dollars in 2000 to reach 14,081 billion before the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. This increase was not constant; the best data was achieved in 2011 and 2013 (17.2 and 18.8 billion respectively); however, it could be observed that Russian trade with the region managed to recover after the economic crisis both in Russia and in the LAC countries in 2015-2016<sup>2</sup>. Conquering LAC markets is still a challenge for Moscow; the weight of Latin America in reference to all trade flows in the period of 2014-2021 (despite surpassing Soviet numbers) was insignificant – no more than 2-2.5% of Russian foreign trade, with Brazil, Ecuador and Mexico as major partners<sup>3</sup>.

Formally, during the period analyzed, Russia maintained trade relations with almost all countries in the region; however, almost a third of this trade was concentrated in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Ecuador. The once large volume of trade with Venezuela became almost invisible due to the collapse of that country's economy; at the same time, Russia managed to significantly increase its investments in the Venezuelan oil and gas sector (at least 14 billion dollars in 2016-2018<sup>4</sup>) and help Caracas in the creation of its cryptocurrency, petro.

The importance of some LAC countries is notable in certain areas of trade. Brazil is one of the largest markets for the export of Russian mineral fertilizers (and vice versa, although the volume of Brazilian-Russian trade is barely less than a few percent, fertilizers imported from Russia supply the agricultural sector which accounts for almost 40% of the export sector of this South American nation), it is the largest market for Russia in the import of beef and tobacco, and second in importance for the import of sugar and sweeteners for the chocolate industry; Ecuador is the most important supplier of fruit to Russia, and Paraguay has become a significant supplier of beef. In total, LAC countries purchased around a third of the industrial machinery exported by Russia and more than 11% of its radio-electronic production in this period. It should be noted that the Russian export structure has not changed substantially over several decades and consists mainly of the production of metals, the chemical industry, crude oil and, – in some cases – weapons,

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2. Calculations made by the author based on UN COMTRADE statistics until January 2020 (ITC Trademap, 2020).

3. These data do not include arms sales, because they are not fully accessible.

4. In 2019, *Rosneft became the only foreign oil company exempt from paying value added tax in Venezuela* (CNTD, 2019).

industrial machinery and electronics (in this case sector, a certain increase could be observed in the cases of Argentina, Paraguay, Brazil and Cuba).

Russia and LAC countries very often apply anti-dumping measures in their bilateral trade (illustrative cases are Brazilian meat in Russia and Russian steel in Brazil). Moscow could not adequately take advantage of the possibilities of European and American sanctions imposed in 2014 to replace imports from the West with Latin American goods (this substitution was expected by several experts) (Yakovlev, 2015). Although some new agreements on food sales were reached with Mexico, Brazil, Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay in 2015, in 2016 the volume of trade in the food sector was drastically reduced (Regnum, 2015). The reorientation of food suppliers from LAC towards Russia was hampered by growing demand in China, by the low value of both the Russian currency and that of Latin American nations, and last not least, Moscow was not able to get rid of its own customs restrictions. At the same time, Russia made notable investments in the oil and gas sector in Venezuela, Argentina and Peru; the Rusal company became one of the largest investors in the extraction of bauxite in Guyana; Rosatom is participating in the construction of nuclear plants in Argentina, while the Russians participate in the construction and development of hydroelectric plants in Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil and Mexico. Other areas of cooperation are railways and the automotive industry. At the same time, the amount of trade and investment is very modest compared to what China, India and the European Union do, and never corresponded to the very high level of political cooperation between Russia and LAC. Furthermore, a certain ideologization (although only at the level of political rhetoric) of relations with Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia led to a complete absence of contacts with opposition forces, which created serious risks for Russian business in the event of political changes. It was no accident that the interim government of J.Áñez in Bolivia announced the possibility of reconsidering treaties previously signed with Rosatom.

The fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, apparently, gave a strong impetus to the reactivation of links and rapprochements between Russia and the LAC nations: while the gap between the “golden billion” countries and the “periphery” countries was increasing (the most developed countries were only providing their vaccines to the rest of the world by ending up saving their own populations), vaccine diplomacy became a strong tool of Moscow. At the end of 2020, Argentina authorized the use of Sputnik V (registered as Sputnik Vida), and some other Latin American countries followed suit. At the same time, Russia made notable investments in the oil and gas sector in Venezuela, Argentina, and Peru and became one of the largest investors in the extraction of bauxite in Guyana. Rosatoms participate in the construction of nuclear plants in Argentina, whereas Russians participate in the construction and development of hydroelectric plants in Argentina, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, and Mexico (Tatunts, 2022).



In fact, in 2021-early 2022, there was an (almost certain) assumption that Argentina could become a springboard for expanding and expanding Russian business in LAC, starting with the healthcare sector. The visit of President Alberto Fernández to Moscow in February 2022 was demonstrating several political coincidences: both heads of nation states expressed themselves in favor of independent politics and multilateral cooperation in the multipolar world and for the rejection of Washington's "dictate" (TASS, 2022).

## **The Chinese challenge for Moscow in LAC**

Throughout the 21st century, China became one of the key partners of many LAC countries. Pursuing its "multidimensional strategy of extreme pragmatism" based on the priority of economic reasons (Serbin, 2016; Xinhua, 2016), Beijing imports raw materials from the Western Hemisphere and sells its industrial parts, weapons and technologies. Despite the unofficial and increasingly stronger alliance between Russia and China, it can be clearly detected that in some important positions the Chinese are definitely gaining competition over the Russians.

While Moscow barely managed to triple the volume of its trade with LAC in this century, China increased it more than 17 times during the same chronological period and is now the main export market for Brazil and Chile (Serbin, 2016b), the second trading partner for Peru, Cuba and Costa Rica (Heine, 2018). China is encouraging and promoting free trade agreements on a bilateral basis, and Moscow, in turn, prefers to act through integrationist groups, which lengthens the process and depends heavily on controversies within those groups. China is already the key financial player in LAC, investing more than 110 billion dollars after 2003; Chinese trade with LAC reaches more than 500 billion dollars (Russian trade with LAC does not exceed the limit of 20 billion), and Chinese direct investments are more than 250 billion (ten times more than Russian ones). While Moscow barely invests money in four or five LAC nations, Chinese businessmen take money almost anywhere. Russian companies with work manage to receive support from their national banks to operate in LAC, at the same time Chinese projects almost always have financing from Chinese banks. Moscow did not create anything like the China-CELAC Cooperation Fund (which manages more than 5 billion dollars) (Cachinero, 2015). Russia, in general, prefers to limit its contacts with the ruling parties, while the Chinese expanded a network of links with more than 90 political parties and organizations (Sudarev, 2015).

Russia and China are both partners and competitors, and also in LAC. Beijing would like to gain more participation in areas considered by Moscow to be its "natural fields of cooperation" (such as nuclear and hydroelectric plants, satellites, the oil and gas sector). China, Russia and the South American giant Brazil are members of the BRICS, and both

Moscow and Beijing are talking about strategic partnership with Brasilia, but the Brazilian press always emphasized the connections with China more, sometimes ignoring cooperation with the Russians (Ehrmann, 2016). Although in 2017 Russia and Brazil managed not only to restore the level of their trade observed before the economic crisis in Brazil, and although Russian Hi-Tech companies expanded their activities to the Brazilian markets (Yakovlev, 2017), they did not reach the size of Chinese operations in the same markets.

In 2016-2021, both Russia and China were helping the Maduro government in Venezuela economically to counter its growing isolation and supported him several times in the UN Security Council (Gurganus, 2018). However, since 2016, several differences have been detected between Chinese and Russian diplomacy in Venezuela. While Beijing tried (although unsuccessfully) to reach an agreement with the opponents of Chavism, to secure its investments made in Venezuela, Moscow was persisting in its hard line of support for Maduro, considering him the only legitimate negotiator (Rozenal, 2016; Ellis, 2017a). China until recently was more successful in penetrating the Venezuelan oil and gas sector, supplying Caracas with larger loans than the Russians. Only when the danger of a US intervention seemed possible and even imminent after the proclamation of J. Guaidó as the Interim President, Maduro definitely turned to Moscow, perhaps hoping to receive military support in case of direct conflict with Washington (Chaguaceda, 2019), while China seemed unlikely to provide such help.

Generally, Sino-Russian competition becomes open competition only in a limited number of cases, at least for the time being. Most of the Chinese investments are directed to extractive industry sectors where the Russians do not have much interest. The membership of the two nations in BRICS also helps to coordinate activities (for example, this was the case of the BRICS summit in Brasilia in November 2019, where Beijing and Moscow made a common front against Brazilian approaches to discuss the Venezuelan issue, and the two defended the Maduro government). The BRICS New Development Bank was created to be a cooperation tool (among other things) for Russia and China in various parts of the world. At times, China was willing to leave room for Russia in its megaprojects (this was the example of the construction of an interoceanic canal in Nicaragua: it was assumed that the Chinese and Nicaraguans would take care of the infrastructure, while the Russians would have to supply the equipment of security)<sup>5</sup>.

The greatest challenge for Russians in cooperation between themselves and the Chinese is that Moscow would not want to become a junior partner of Beijing; on the contrary, Kremlin plans to use China to form a polycentric and multipolar world.

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5. However, later this megaproject lost its importance after the bankruptcy of the Chinese investor and due to the rapprochement between Panama and China (El Financiero, 2018; Ellis, 2017b).

## **The prospects for Russian policy in LAC after February 24, 2022**

The beginning of the war phase of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine (Moscow prefers to call it “a special military operation”) not only meant that the traditional board of international relations was kicked over to try to create new rules of the game (undermine the rules of the liberal order based on the norms of existing international law and the financial system, and the Bretton-Woods world trade), but also impacted seriously relations between Moscow and several nations of the world (including those of the LAC). With the start of Cold War 2.0 between Moscow and the bloc of Western countries led by the United States, Russia is desperately trying to maintain the partners it once acquired and perhaps find some new allies in this acute measurement of forces.

We had already referred to the approach to reciprocity used by Russian elites throughout the first two decades of the 21st century (within such approach LAC was considered the priority area of Washington’s political, economic and social concern, and, consequently, the Russian government wanted to pay the United States in kind for its interference in the “near abroad” territories (considered by Moscow to be the area of its “natural domain” (Paul, 2022). Arguments of this type were expressed by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov on the eve of Russian troops entering Ukraine in February 2022 in several statements made in Havana, Managua and Caracas (Sequera, 2022).

The impact of Russian diplomatic efforts on Latin America is significant. Moscow has diplomatic relations with all LAC countries and Russian embassies play an active role in spreading the narratives of Vladimir Putin’s government. They use both traditional diplomatic channels and a presence on social networks popular among Latin Americans to influence public opinion by giving Moscow’s version of what is happening in the world (Rouvinski, 2022). Furthermore, diplomats in several countries have the support of civil society organizations – compatriots, graduates of Russian and Soviet universities – and this in several cases contributes to mobilizing support for the Russian cause beyond the diplomatic sphere.

RT and Sputnik Mundo (both directly controlled by the government) are other tools used by Moscow to bring ALC to its side. The RT signal was available in all parts of the region at the beginning of 2022, and in some cases, it was part of the public television transmission systems (Argentina, Venezuela and Cuba) or as part of the state satellite system (Bolivia). In Colombia, hundreds of small local cable networks were broadcasting RT programming on their networks. There were cases when RT paid cable operators to carry its signal on allied networks and therefore made it difficult to identify the origin of broadcast programs. This approach allowed RT to extend its reach to potentially millions of ad-

ditional viewers in Latin America. Furthermore, even as some cable television providers took urgent measures to limit RT's reach, the channel remains available for free 24 hours a day and online; more than 18 million followers of RT in Spanish on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/ActualidadRT/](http://www.facebook.com/ActualidadRT/)) became an important group; another five million subscribers were watching the broadcasts of RT in Spanish, the YouTube channel; more than 3.5 million people followed RT in Spanish on the Twitter account ([twitter.com/actualidadrt](https://twitter.com/actualidadrt)). Sputnik Mundo, in turn, maintains its own websites in addition to traditional and digital broadcasting in three dozen languages, but is part of the same organizational framework as RT television (Rouvinski, 2020). With the start of military activities in 2022, these broadcast channels were highlighting the thesis that the US was resisting the process of recovering Russia's due influence and its proper place in the international arena; in this version, Moscow was supposedly only advocating establishing the multipolar world, with the participation of partners from the Global South. This version was and continues to be well received by a considerable part of Latin American societies that were divided on the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and on the policy to be followed by their own governments regarding the conflict. It should be noted that numerous sectors of Latin American society are resisting attempts to limit the presence of Russian media in LAC by referring to the norms of freedom of expression.

However, the search for allies does not promise to be an easy path, and not only because of the pressure from Washington and the European Union on the LAC countries, but also because the objectives of Russian policy have to be reformulated and Moscow has to find new arguments to negotiate with its partners in LAC and be able to explain its reasons to them. The entry of Russian troops into the territory of the neighboring country on February 24, 2022 became a serious challenge for Russian diplomacy, which would have a difficult task of saving Moscow's image as a serene and reasonable actor within the system of international relations (the Kremlin previously advocated non-interference in domestic affairs, national sovereignty and respect for international law).

Both the short war in the South Caucasus in August 2008 and the annexation of Crimea in March 2014 could be explained in this or that way (by the Georgian attack on South Ossetia and on the legally installed peacekeeping troops, and due to the coup d'état in Ukraine in 2014, respectively). However, the march of the Russian army towards Kiev and the northern regions of Ukraine in 2022 did not fit into these schemes and explanations. From that moment on, Russian narratives about the need to protect civilians in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions from ferocious bombing lost much of their value for Latin Americans. While Latin American governments and elites considered Moscow's concerns about NATO expansion reasonable, Russian proposals on the "denazification" and "demilitarization" of Ukraine raised fears about the supposed Kremlin's desire to end Ukraine's

independence. Furthermore, this situation of certain Russian weakening is going to be taken advantage of by other nations interested in strengthening their positions in LAC: China, Turkey and the European Union.

If Moscow was calculating that the reaction of the LAC countries after the start of clashes between Russian troops and the Ukrainians, was going to be the same as in 2014 (of a semi-favorable neutrality), it was noticeably confused. It is true that the current conflict is not perceived by Latin Americans as a merely isolated episode and they realize that it is located within the broad process of the reconfiguration of powers on the great global board, within the processes of inclination of the economic weight from the West to Asia and the economic wars between the US and China as an indication of a confrontation between the Global North and the Global South (Davydov, 2019). However, it is also necessary to remember that what is happening in Ukraine is perceived by Latin Americans not through the Russian paradigm (as a need to stop the expansion of NATO because it is a matter of national security<sup>6</sup>) but through the Latin American paradigm (the large countries often tend to take advantage of the weaknesses of less powerful countries to pressure and attack them) and on the basis of their own traumatic experience of the US and European imperialist interference. The mirror strategy used by the Russian government and the RT and Sputnik Mundo networks in reference to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict is not of much use in LAC, because the references to the fact that the US and NATO “were always doing the same thing” have no other result in Latin American eyes than to equalize the image of Moscow with that of Washington (not very positive one).

Only a small (although relevant) group of Latin American nations have shown direct support for the Russian approach (Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela), but the level of support has decreased compared to what was demonstrated in 2014. Taking all history into account of Russian-Venezuelan alliance in recent decades, one should not be surprised by the statements made by Miraflores in support of the Russian position (it should be noted, at the same time, that the main emphasis was not the issue of military activities, but rather the rejection of the involvement of Washington and NATO in the conflict) (El Diario, 2022; Fajardo, 2022).

The negative attitude taken by Colombia, a country traditionally located in the orbit of Washington’s politics, was foreseeable: on February 24, 2022, President Iván Duque uploaded a tweet condemning what Russia had done and expressing his support for the

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6. The formula proposed by the director of the Department of Foreign Policy Planning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Alexey Drobinin (“The conflict situation is rather a norm for any country that possesses the geography and interests of Russia”) is far from being agreeable to Latin American governments. It should also be noted that in this programmatic text by the senior Russian official, Latin American civilization was not even mentioned as an independent civilization, while there are references to the Eurasian community, to China, to the Anglo-Saxon community (with the US at the front) and the European continental community. It is assumed that these communities are the ones that would form the virtual multipolar world (Drobinin, 2022).

Ukrainian government. However, the country's position became somewhat more lukewarm with the change of powers in the summer of 2023: the winner, the leftist Gustavo Petro, although he maintained his rejection of the possibility of changing borders by military force and condemned the use of weapons by Russia., also took a more distant position towards the US and advocated for a diplomatic resolution of the conflict; However, it cannot be considered alignment with the Kremlin, but rather a desire to focus on Colombian internal problems without getting involved in "European affairs." A clear and explicit condemnation of Moscow was expressed by the Ecuadorian government of Guillermo Lasso and the Uruguayan government of Lacalle Pou (Infobae, 2022). Nor was the position of the leftist Chilean president Gabriel Boric a big surprise, who is not only one of the most arduous opponents of the Russian position in this conflict, but was the first head of the Latin American state who admitted the possibility of judging his Russian counterpart at the Court of The Hague. Although within the Chilean ruling coalition there are members wary of being seen as close to US politics, the issue of human rights was always very important for Boric's electoral campaign and in this sense his speech repeats the position of European social democrats (who had condemned Moscow).

The voting in the UN General Assembly showed that almost all Latin American governments criticized the entry of Russian troops into Ukrainian territory and supported the demand to withdraw them immediately. Only Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua (in 2014 they voted in favor of Russia), and El Salvador abstained; Venezuela did not participate in the voting (for not paying annual UN fees). Brazil and Argentina, which abstained in 2014, this time voted against the Russian action. This change in attitudes was a blow to Russian policy on the LAC. Perhaps, the beginning of the military conflict put an end to discussions in LAC about Russia as a counterweight to US imperialism and as an alternative to the West (with its harsh use of force). Moscow was no longer perceived as such an alternative, although it is still perceived as an important trade partner.

At the same time, the Kremlin is visibly pleased by the fact that this rejection is not the same as the rejection demonstrated by European nations. While leftist Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador rejected Russian interference in Ukraine, he has also resolutely refused to impose economic sanctions on Russia, explaining that Mexico would maintain good relations with "all the governments of the world" and that his country does not want to lose the exchange of more than 2 billion dollars it had with Moscow. The right-wing president of Brazil, the "Brazilian Trump" Jair Bolsonaro, also made it clear that his country would take "neutrality" in the face of the conflict and would not join the economic sanctions because they are not approved by the UN. Argentina, despite the previous closeness with Moscow (President Alberto Fernández had visited Russia and even went later to China together with his Russian counterpart) made clear its position of political rejection

(the country that presided over the UN Human Rights Council also voted to suspend Russian participation in the Council), however, the Argentinian president never considered the opportunity to join the economic sanctions despite the insistence of several diplomats from his country. In any case, this position was not exceptional: so far, not a single country (except the Bahamas) in LAC wanted to participate in the anti-Russian sanctions at the government level.

Despite the political position assumed by Latin American governments, the conflict and the sanctions war between the West and Russia seriously impacted the rest of the world, including the LAC nations. In particular, it should be noted that Russia is an exporter of a large part of mineral fertilizers important for agricultural countries (Brazil is one of the spectacular cases); Also, Ukraine before the start of conflict was a great grain dispenser. In addition, Russia was or still is a notable importer of dairy products and meats in Latin America. The decrease in fertilizer imports due to the cutting of several logistics routes in Europe and the blocking of Russian bank transactions affects Brazil, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru, while Paraguay and Brazil had to reduce their beef exports (Gutiérrez, 2023). The drastic drop in Ecuadorian banana and flower exports to Russia (for the same reason) made the authorities of that South American country look for different buyers for their products (perhaps the price of this change would be the intensification of Quito's position regarding the possibility of economic sanctions against Russia) (EFE, 2022), although the process is still unfinished.

Attempts by several Russian companies to reorient themselves quickly to LAC markets due to the loss of European markets do not seem to be successful at the moment. The formal numbers are encouraging for Moscow: Russian exports to LAC grew (compared to 2021) 3.8%, and the trade volume barely decreased from 17.5 billion to 17.3 billion; among the products that had the most demand are fertilizers, oil, wood and aluminum (Riac, 2023). However, much of this trade-off is the result of momentum built into 2020-2021 and international currency price changes, and the 2023 numbers are likely going to be worse. Although imports grew in the case of Brazil (24%), there is a general decrease of 7%.

Several factors hinder the arrival of Russian businessmen: most of them have little knowledge of the mentality and the rules of the game in LAC, they have no idea about national legislation in Latin American nations, an adequate system of banking transactions outside of Swift is not yet exists (and Chinese analogues do not cover the needs), the remote distance and lack of free trade agreements does not help trade either. But, perhaps, the main factor is precisely the aforementioned lack of correspondence between political ties and economic ties. For two decades, Moscow did not find enough money and desire to invest in Latin American companies and to widely reach LAC markets (Russia does not even have commercial representations in most of the countries of the Western Hemi-

sphere). Today, Latin American businessmen do not understand why they should reorient themselves towards cooperation with the Russians, especially when these changes mean aggravation of relations with Washington and Brussels (partners number 1 and 3 in trade with LAC, respectively). Only some unexpectedly generous offers from Moscow could help improve the situation, but Russia is still considering what it could do in this or that case.

The growth in prices of Russian export products in several cases has as a consequence the increase in inflation, according to Professor Víctor Mijares (Riac, 2023). This factor forces several Latin American governments to seek diplomatic paths to resolve the conflict that is plaguing the entire system of international relations. At the same time, they prefer to assume strategic equidistance, and although they are far from supporting Moscow, they also prefer not to choose another side and would like to maintain the autonomy of their foreign policy. Brazilian President Lula Ignacio da Silva, Russia's once strong ally, distanced himself from the Kremlin's actions: "(Russian President Vladimir) Putin cannot keep the territory of Ukraine. Maybe Crimea will be discussed. But what was invaded recently, he has to rethink it" (AFP, 2023). However, he strongly stated that Ukrainian President Volodimir Zelensky "cannot want everything" either (Infobae, 2023). After his trip to China in spring 2023, Lula declared that "the United States should stop encouraging war" and called on the world to start "talking about peace" (Paraguassu, Boadle, 2023). These approaches received an immediate response from John Kirby (the spokesman for the US National Security Council) who stated that the Brazilian President was only "repeating Russian and Chinese propaganda".

Both Brazil and other LAC nations repeatedly rejected possibilities of selling weapons and ammunition to Ukraine (despite repeated requests from Kiev, the EU and Washington) although they sent humanitarian aid. More than a year after the start of the so-called Russian "special military operation", this Latin American approach was confirmed at the CELAC-Latin America summit in July 2023 when the heads of LAC states, condemning "the invasion of Ukraine", did not allow in the document direct reference to guilty country (Infobae, 2023b). Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, El Salvador and Uruguay did not sign the declaration of the Organization of American States (OAS) of February 26, 2022 that condemned "the invasion carried out by Russia"; the same countries, along with Mexico and Honduras, abstained from the decision to suspend Russia as a permanent observer state (France 24, 2022). At the Mercosur summit in July 2022, Brazil opposed the participation of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, considering him irrelevant to the internal affairs of the integrationist bloc. At the end of the same month, at the XV conference of defense ministers, the representatives of Argentina, Mexico and Brazil (the three main economies of LAC) expressed their reservations about their power to condemn Russia's actions in the Ukrainian issue and expressed their opinion that the UN should take charge of the matter.



This position of equidistance has both its benefits and contradictions, since it is very difficult for governments (which advocate the priority of international law) to avoid condemning Russian activities. At the moment they are balancing between political condemnation and the rejection of sanctions, but this situation could not last forever either. Even among the militants of the political forces known as allies of Russia there are strong anti-imperialist sentiments and many young people do not see much difference between the contemporary actions of Moscow and the well-known actions of Washington (to observe this it is enough to take a quick look at the corresponding groups in Facebook). In fact, already in the spring of 2022, Argentina and Uruguay began to harden their stance towards what Russia was doing in Ukraine. Both governments needed to demonstrate that their lukewarm stance is not due to political and/or economic closeness with Russia (or the BRICS) and avoid increasing reputational costs.

The cases of Venezuela and Cuba are also significant. Already in March 2022, the announcement about the meeting in Caracas of the envoys of Joseph Biden's government and senior officials of Nicolas Maduro's government has caused some surprise. Not so much the position of the United States, which tried to supply an increase in exports of Venezuelan crude oil to stabilize the oil markets, was surprising, but rather the attitude assumed by Maduro, previously considered a firm ally of the Russians. The Venezuelan President is quite pragmatic and he needs to take advantage of several possibilities to get out of the desperate situation of the economic crisis. The availability to negotiate with Washington goes hand in hand with the process of de facto dollarization of the economy; the post-Chavist regime in Caracas understands very well that Moscow's possibilities to help it have been reduced, while Venezuela needs to survive.

A notable increase in Venezuelan oil exports is unlikely in the short term due to the problems already existing in this branch of the national industry; however, Washington's main bet is not this. The purpose of the risky American game is to achieve distance between Caracas and the Russians. Moscow understands this perfectly well, and that is why the visits of senior Russian officials to Venezuela have not stopped in recent months to try to avoid the freeze. However, Russia's free hand is no longer unlimited, and, perhaps, one of the few factors that Moscow can take advantage of is that the hawks in the US Congress are unwilling to allow the considerable weakening of restrictions and embargoes against Venezuela as long as Maduro and his party remain in power.

The Cuban case is not absolutely similar, but in some ways resembles Venezuelan history. Cuba was left without a large part of Soviet oil, and then of Venezuelan oil, which exacerbated serious problems for the Cuban economy. Although Moscow rushed this time to replace the Venezuelans by sending tons of oil to the "Island of Liberty", as well as soybean oil and industrial production (bilateral trade increased three times from 2020 to

2021), Havana has it very clear: this time Russia is not going to repeat the Soviet experience of total support and is not even capable of doing so again. The Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel gave his indirect support to Russia and Cuba is not willing to break drastically with Moscow (among other things, because it understands that the US does not plan to seriously weaken the sanctions, much less lift the embargo) (Cibercuba, 2022). However, the Cubans are seeking some form of normalization with the United States. While they have hopes of achieving this in the Presidency of Joseph Biden, it is impossible to imagine that Cuba would directly support the Russians in the conflict between Moscow and Kiev, especially in the situation when Russia is no longer perceived as a counterbalance to the West, but as a country that resorts to slogans in defense of the “Russian world” (which for many Latin Americans is a kind of imperialism).

The new edition of the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation signed by President Vladimir Putin on March 31, 2023 clearly states that there are three Latin American nations that Moscow considers “allies”: Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela. Of these three, only Nicaragua seems to be the most unconditional one (Confidential, 2023). Managua and Moscow do not maintain a large volume of trade (in fact, this volume is 300 times less compared to what Nicaragua exports to the US) and the economic aspect is not of much concern to the Kremlin. Russia, yes, has certain agreements with Nicaragua in several areas (for example, in cooperation in the pharmaceutical industry and science), but their implementation is slow unlike cooperation in the military and geopolitical sphere. The above-mentioned Russian facilities in Nicaragua can, if necessary, help Moscow guide high-precision weapons and facilitate the navigation of ships of the Russian fleet and military aviation. Very illustrative was the permission given by President Daniel Ortega to the entry of 180 Russian troops, ships and military aircraft so that they could carry out their training activities “in security operations and humanitarian assistance”.

There is also data on the use by Russians and Nicaraguans of the System for Operational Research Activities (SORM, for its acronym in Russian) to spy in Nicaragua. According to two American researchers, Douglas Farah and Marianne Richardson (2023), access to this technology has been part of the operations of a network of groups and people who supposedly maintain links with the Russian intelligence services and are professionals specialized in cryptology and cyber activity; however, the study does not provide sufficient evidence for such an approach. All of this does not represent a very large expense for Moscow (not even compared to the size of military aid to Cuba during the USSR!), but it allows it to have geostrategic positions. Nicaragua, in turn, with the growing isolation of Daniel Ortega’s authoritarian government in the world, is not in a position to impose many requirements on Russia and is ready to express its support on an almost unlimited scale.

Moscow, as seems, realizes the problems it faces on LAC. In spring 2023, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov undertook a new tour of the region (this being the first time since the start of the military conflict in Ukraine in 2022) to strengthen existing links and save what can be saved. He visited just the LAC countries mentioned in the current edition of the Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation as allies or partners (Brazil, Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela) (Corrêa, 2023). The trip did not so much have the objective of evading Western sanctions (the countries visited – with the exception of Brazil – do not have much trade with Moscow) as the diplomatic objective of maintaining, at least, neutrality of the Latin Americans in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The Russian Foreign Minister listened to what he liked (his Brazilian counterpart, Mauro Viera, confirmed that his country was not willing to join the unilateral sanctions), however he ignored Brazil's statements about the urgent need to put a ceasefire in place in Ukraine. In Venezuela, the Russian minister announced the new and extensive bilateral cooperation in the production of oil, gas, agriculture and new technologies (however, without giving precise details, which raises doubts about the scale of possible efforts given the decrease in economic capabilities of both countries). Certain improvement could be seen in the case of Russian-Brazilian trade (it rose to 9.8 billion dollars in 2022, the best result in the 21st century; Russia became the 13th trading partner for the South American country, although very far from China and the US, which occupy 1st and 2nd place, respectively). At the same time, trade is not the main factor that defines Russian-Brazilian relations. For neither of these countries is big enough to be a determining factor, and bilateral relations are, above all, a way to achieve more balanced international relations that would take into account the interests of the Global South. In this regard, the most that Moscow could hope for is the "neutral formula" previously announced by Lula. The President of Brazil could not at all get closer to Russia in that regard, nor could he increase hostility with Washington given the extensive economic relations between Brazil and the US. Brazil's interest consists in ending the military phase of conflict but it does not mean its willingness to accept border changes through military means.

### **The BRICS as a lifeline for Moscow?**

While the economic relations between Russia and the LAC nations may suffer some deterioration due to Western sanctions that impacted the entire transport communications system and the purchase/sale of goods, and while the Russian discourse on the construction of a multipolar world has greatly lost Part of its attraction for Latin Americans, Kremlin still has an alternative option and takes advantage of the BRICS group to maintain its positions within the Western Hemisphere. This informal club of emerging economies is perceived by

many experts as a platform to ensure the fairest world order for the Global South and for the economies on the periphery of the 'developed' world and to end dependence on the financial and political institutions where the West maintains strong hegemony. Although Russia is a member of the BRICS, this group is broader and cannot be identified exclusively with Moscow, thus making it a neutral way for many Latin Americans to continue demanding the redistribution of influences without associating too much with the Russians (yes, it implies a stronger alliance with China, but this alliance now has fewer negative connotations).

Russia, in turn, is interested in BRICS cooperation mechanisms to evade Western sanctions more efficiently (resorting to trade and loans in national currencies and forming a bloc of nations opposed to unilateral sanctions in general). It is not about forming a single currency and the economic asymmetry between the BRICS members would hinder the process, however both Russia, Brazil, South Africa and India expressed their interest in increasing the weight of national currencies. The growing interest of the LAC nations towards the BRICS is notable, and the countries that requested entry into the group are very different (Argentina was the first country to do so, and its history of negotiations goes back years, while Nicaragua, Cuba, Venezuela, Honduras and Bolivia barely did so in 2023). However, interest in the group does not equal plans to integrate it (the Mexican case), or the approaches of this or that country at the moment do not coincide with the perceptions of the BRICS members themselves. On August 24, 2023, the BRICS summit in Johannesburg announced invitation for Argentina (which came as a surprise to Buenos Aires, which had given up its attempts to enter; and there are certain doubts about the Casa Rosada's position towards the BRICS after the autumn 2023 elections, but none of the representatives of the "21st Century Socialism" group had any luck in being admitted to the club. The most likely causes of this are both the small size of their economies, and resistance to several BRICS members to increase open anti-Americanism in their ranks.

However, it is still difficult to draw conclusions about the possibilities of Russia using BRICS as a tool for improving its relations with Latin America. Until now, only one Latin American nation (Argentina) was invited to join, and the prospects for its entry are not so clear, as the presidential elections of the fall of 2023 can drastically change this vector of Buenos Aires' policy. It is impossible to wait for a new wave of BRICS expansion until, at least, in the summer of 2024, and one year is now too long, when the international system is changing unpredictably. Even if such a new expansion would take place, nobody can say definitively if Moscow's Latin American allies would join this club. It also looks improbable that Mexico and Colombia (the biggest LAC economies after Brazil and Argentina) would try to become members of BRICS due to the scope of their trade and other relations with Washington. It is even more difficult to imagine how future BRICS behavior looks and if it would maintain neutrality in the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

There is no formal scope of rapprochement between the LAC region and the BRICS quintet (until 2024). The BRICS summit in Fortaleza in Brazil in 2014, which was attended by several Latin American representatives, could not be repeated in the same format in 2019 in Brasilia, when disagreements over the Venezuelan issue prevented the outreach idea from being implemented. The approach to the LAC region has been in individual terms (Giaccaglia; Dussort, 2023), with China being the most active actor.

The idea of de-dollarization of trade between the BRICS is still in the air, and the BRICS lack a common perception of the issue. Even though the Russians would be interested in ditching the dollar, it is unlikely that they would be able to do so anytime soon in their trade with Brazil, a member of the BRICS and their No. 1 trading partner in LAC (Brazil buys much more in Russia compared to Russian imports from that country, and Moscow would not need such large amounts of Brazilian currency), it is more likely that both nations will take advantage of yuan as a currency for commercial exchange. Neither Brazil nor Argentina (if the admission process is completed by January 2024) are willing to completely abandon the US-controlled financial system due to their extensive involvement in this system. Also, the New BRICS Development Bank (now chaired by Moscow's former ally, the Brazilian Dilma Rousseff, has announced that it does not consider new loans viable for projects in Russia due to the desire to avoid Western sanctions against the Bank.

BRICS could not be considered the unequivocal support of Moscow's actions: while in Johannesburg, Russian President Vladimir Putin's speech repeated the narratives that his country is open to talks to end "the 18-month war", but only if take into account the "new realities" (that is, integration of part of Ukrainian territories into Russia) (Voz de América, 2023), South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and his Brazilian counterpart Lula da Silva responded clearly that they advocate peace and diplomacy, but that did not mean joining to the Russian position on everything that Moscow wanted. The members of the BRICS throughout the Russian-Ukrainian conflict preferred to act based on their own needs and perceptions, and while India improved its energy security and Russia had to get closer to China, the prominence of Brazil became visible and of China who proposed a club of peace negotiators and the Global Security Initiative, respectively, ideas that Moscow does not entirely share. Despite these disagreements and contradictions, the Kremlin finds in the BRICS interlocutors willing to listen to its point of view (unlike the West) and at that point it believes it is sufficient.

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In short, Russia's policy towards the region tends towards pragmatism. LAC nations are interested in maintaining stable economic relations with Moscow and several areas of cooperation exist, both in trade and in the sphere of investment, science and culture. Latin American governments are seeking pragmatic relations with both Russia and the

rest of the world (including China and the US), as long as this allows them not to be part of opposing blocs and allows them to remain an autonomous center of regional power. and global that pursues its own interests.

From time to time the Russian authorities neglect economic expediency, even though they do not possess sufficient resources to match Soviet capabilities. Old problems remain a major obstacle to establishing new dynamism. Even the general comparison shows that our partners in the BRICS, China and India, managed to establish a better volume of trade and investment with Brazil and with the LAC countries as a whole than Moscow.

While the concept of fairer international relations is important to both Russia and LAC nations, their approaches are not the same. Latin American governments (and those of the center-left, above all) assume a very rigid position regarding the priority of human rights and international law, which automatically makes them reject the use of weapons to complement political arguments. Sharing Moscow's concerns about NATO's expansion towards Russian borders, Latin American governments doubt the need to resist it by sending troops into combat. This means that the left political parties, which two decades ago were the main base for expanding Latin American relations with Russia, today are not the bastion of those relations, on the contrary, they are partners quite critical of the Kremlin's actions. Furthermore, while Russians prefer to talk about the multipolar world, Latin Americans more advocate the concept of multilateralism, which excludes the possibility of changing the known imperialism of the United States for the hegemony of other world powers.

Moscow still has possibilities to develop its ties with LAC, however, if Russia fails to remodel some lines of its Latin American diplomacy, it would reissue Soviet policy in that region, with the unpredictable results.

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# 5

## The Geopolitical Challenges of the Black Sea

*Vasile Simileanu*

By having the capacity and resources to act in this regard, Europe is creating the conditions necessary to promote its own interests and, at the same time, honoring its responsibility for international peacekeeping by promoting the principles unanimously recognised by the States Parties:

1. the ability to build confidence;
2. capacity to promote arms control;
3. disarmament;
4. cooperation in the interests of common security;
5. the capacity for crisis prevention and effective crisis response.

In a world where we do not want to know where “the road leads, or even where it should lead” (E. Hobsbawm), Romania’s membership in an artificial political system, imposed by force, has distorted the geographical truth and included the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space in geopolitical structures that have done us great harm.

The latest injustice was Romania’s non-inclusion in the European Union, at a time when countries with less geostrategic endowments and lower economic potential were accepted, even though they did not fully meet the accession criteria. It is possible that by 2007 there were many more criteria, because — and this is the truth — after each wave of accession the criteria multiplied for those who wanted to ‘re-enter Europe’ and join this political and economic structure. We believe that it is necessary for all states to meet the criteria originally imposed on the founding of the European Union, in the spirit of equality and Western democracy, in order to eliminate any discrimination!

In order to remain relevant and at the same time accessible, the original objectives pursued by the European Union must indeed be defined against the background of the changing political situation, provided that the priorities remain the same. To this end, we will refer to two strategic objectives of European policy, objectives that have been pursued since before 1989 and which are still strictly topical:

- ◆ The security of the continent. This security cannot be complete as long as the Ponto-Danubian geostrategic area is excluded!
- ◆ Economy. The economic potential of Romania and Bulgaria is significant in this part of the continent. Indeed, industry in the two countries is a stealer of products and not a consumer, as in the case of some countries accepted into the Union this year. Perhaps the geo-economic specialists have not noticed that the most important part of the Danube and the link with Asia has been excluded from the geopolitical area of this accession!

Today, we have to realize that the ‘Soviet’ threat, which was predominant in the European area, has been replaced by the diffuse threat from the economic, ecological and common European security spheres. So far, these issues have not been resolved to any great extent. The structures created have been ineffective and have had to be reorganized time and again.

‘Funding from external sources’, ‘decentralization’, ‘Euroregions’ or ‘profit centers’ are important but — at the moment — ineffective phrases capable of generating internal crises. These crises of the Union are simmering, against the backdrop of the non-existence of the European Constitution and of legislation that should be for the benefit of all and not for the benefit of a few countries with high economic potential, which founded the regional organization. Unfortunately, geo-economic asymmetries and those generated by the priorities of certain states will make it difficult to have a dialogue with equal status for all European states, whether members or those in the process of accession.

The critical debate on this issue must not end with pompous statements about the rightness or wrongness of pursuing and achieving certain objectives. It is vital to recognise that under current political conditions, both the old and the new objectives promoted by the West cannot be achieved by the same means as when the Union was founded and, secondly, “the objectives inherited from Western policy, imposed by a long historical process, are not compatible with each other, and even end up being opposed”.

According to analyses carried out by the West, namely by the Vienna International Institute for World Economic Studies, raising the economic level of the former socialist states in the Danube region to the level of the Western economies is a difficult criterion to meet. However, Romania and Bulgaria have a chance of meeting the standard of living, even if this has required the rather harsh restructuring of national economies. Unfortunately, the state of a functioning market economy has imposed and still imposes the need to curb excessive consumption and adopt a ‘Protestant morality’ (M. Weber).

In this context, the possibly long-term energy and economic dependence on Russia of some countries (including those that have recently been accepted into the European Union) takes on new connotations that call for ‘cooperation’ between Russia and the European Union. On the one hand, Russia is seeking to maintain this dependence (particularly

in the supply of raw materials: oil and gas), while on the other hand the European body is seeking to incorporate its markets (even if some are small) into its economic circuit. Under these circumstances, the debt circuit of these countries will run between the European Union and Russia. This phenomenon is all the more striking as Russia – after a period of regression – is making great efforts to regain the strategic importance which its opening to the West had given it.

We are convinced that goods from the countries of the Ponto-Danube area represent serious competition, especially in terms of the range of products from the extractive industry, the steel industry (especially steel), the textile industry and agricultural products (with better standards than those in the Union). Invading the Western market with products from the East would revitalize the EU market, but would at the same time lead to the collapse of traditional Western markets. This was a determining factor in the choice of new European partners, but inevitably led – by 2007 – to a new division of the continent, which put Romania and Bulgaria at a disadvantage. At the same time, the current European Union is open to interpretation. Today the EU border separates the Catholic from the Orthodox and Muslim areas. And all this at a time when there is increasing talk of the importance of the Danube geopolitical area and the importance of the ancient geopolitical system of the Black Sea as the future indestructible bridge between the West and the East.

We should not forget that the Black Sea, which together with the Baltic Sea constitutes the geopolitical space between the Baltic Sea and the Black Sea (the axis of which runs through Historical Moldova), is one of the two maritime segments of the former Iron Curtain, and has not lost its geostrategic importance, even if this is tending to change. Until recently, the vital area for naval maneuvers, which was reserved exclusively for the naval forces of the riparian states, has once again become, in terms of sovereignty, free for navigation (including commercial navigation), an entirely open sea. Its geographical situation is the same, but it is at the centre of a heterogeneous whole (Eastern Slavic world, the Balkans, the Anatolian peninsula, etc.) in which there are old or recent tensions (Russia/Ukraine, Greece/Turkey) and two regions whose political instability is well known (the Caucasus and the Balkans).

Commercial navigation, established since the 10th century by the varegi with Byzantium, is today confined within certain limits. Trade shifts are mainly along the west and north coasts: Burgas and Varna in Bulgaria, Năvodari, Constanța, Eforie, Mangalia in Romania, Odessa and the ports of Crimea in Ukraine and Novorossiysk (an oil complex accessible to 200,000-tonne ships) in Russia. Commercial traffic in the Bosphorus Strait is worth 140 Mt per year (157 Mt in Panama and 347 Mt on the Suez), and exports of oil products from the Russian Federation are still low.

In June 1992, Istanbul, Bulgaria, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Turkey, and Ukraine (Black Sea riparian states), together with Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, and the Republic of Moldova, established the Black Sea Economic Community (BSEC). This body was designed to intensify links between participating states in the fields of transport, public works, telecommunications, infrastructure, and environmental protection, with the ultimate aim of establishing a free trade area.

In the following we will briefly present the states bordering the Black Sea and the geopolitical systems that include them.

## **The ancient Black Sea system**

The Pontic geopolitical system is the oldest geopolitical system in Europe, of particular strategic importance for Romania and the riparian states. In recent years, the Black Sea has become a reality for the Euro-Atlantic community.

While in the 19th century it was the theater of confrontation between the great powers, since the 'keys' of the system were the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits (controlled by Turkey and disputed with Russia) and the Crimean peninsula (with the naval bases of Sevastopol, Simferopol and Balaklava (disputed between Russia and Ukraine), the Black Sea has become the pole of attraction for military alliances and economic exchanges, taking on a new perspective after 1989.

Even though geographically, Crimea divides the Black Sea into two symmetrical parts of 250 km each, the relations between the states in the area of the geopolitical system determined by the Black Sea basin are collaborative and ensure regional security.

After the demise of the Tsarist and Ottoman Empires, the geopolitical system was divided initially into the central Balkans and Caucasus, then into four, with the addition of the North Pontic and Anatolian centers. Today, Turkish and Russian interests intersect less in the Black Sea basin and more in the area of the Turkic-Muslim republics of Central Asia, with Turkey's means of influence in the area far superior to Russia's against Turkey.

These assets give Romania the role of south-eastern trade gateway, comparing it to the Netherlands which is considered the north-western gateway to Europe, by:

- ◆ the establishment of the free economic zones Sulina on the Black Sea, Ungheni and Giurgiulești in Galati, those with Hungary, Siliștea - Calarasi with Bulgaria, and with Yugoslavia;
- ◆ Romania's connection to the international gas and oil transport network via the Iran-Central Europe and Caucasus-Central Europe pipelines will ensure high security and energy independence (also via the Cernavodă nuclear power plant);



- ◆ trade is basically carried out along the western and northern coasts: Burgas and Varna in Bulgaria, Constanta in Romania, Odessa and Crimea in Ukraine and Novorossiysk in Russia;
- ◆ trade traffic in the Bosphorus Strait is of similar value to that in Panama and Suez, and the development of CIS oil product exports will reactivate the port of Constanta as the largest port on the Black Sea and possibly revive the Romanian fleet;
- ◆ Freedom of navigation in the Turkish straits has always been an important Russian concern, and the renegotiation of the Montreux Convention (1936) in Turkey was not accepted by Moscow. However, Turkey, citing the safety of navigation and protection of the marine environment, demands that oil exports from the CIS not be through straits. Ankara therefore proposed a pipeline linking the Caucasus oil fields with a Mediterranean Turkish port;
- ◆ bringing part of the energy exports under Turkish control does not seem to please Moscow;
- ◆ free navigation in the straits will not be possible unless there is a certain degree of freedom in the exit to the Mediterranean, i.e. via the Aegean Sea. This is a key element in the Greek-Turkish dispute over the delimitation of maritime sovereignty zones, as well as in Ankara's claims to certain Greek islands close to the Turkish coastline. If the Black Sea could be seen as a battleground in the great confrontations between East and West, it will become a space for local and regional collaboration;
- ◆ even if there are currently local conflicts, such as those in the eastern part of the area between Armenians and Azeris, Abkhazians and Ossetians, not to mention the Kurdish conflict in Anatolia, this region, a veritable ethno-religious mosaic, which throughout history has been at the mercy of empires (Ottoman, Tsarist, Persian, Soviet...), has experienced freedom for all nations since the disappearance of the last one. Neither the Russian Federation nor Turkey nor Iran can remain insensitive. This region is, however, a link between East and West, from the Black Sea to Central Asia, across the Caspian Sea, and between North and South, from the Slavic world to the Persian Gulf. At the same time, the Black Sea is (potentially) very rich in hydrocarbons. The countries to the east of the sea are subject to both economic and political uncertainties linked to the consequences of the war in Yugoslavia (especially for Bulgaria and Romania) and, on the other hand, to the regional territorial changes that have arisen as a result of the disappearance of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact (Ukraine and, for example, Moldova). In this disturbing geopolitical context, it is clear that the most important and therefore strategically important stake is the domination of the Black Sea;
- ◆ For Romania, the development of the Caspian-Black Sea-Mediterranean relationship is vital from an economic and commercial point of view, this perspective can be of great importance in our country's relations with the Western world, through the development of maritime and river navigation.

According to French politico-military specialists, Russia has never abandoned its project to "open a window" to the south. The current Russian-Ukrainian rivalries over the

future of the Black Sea Fleet and its military bases have no other stake than the authority over this sea. Ukraine wants to gain dominance over maritime resources, while Russia does not want to lose its only access to the “warm seas”.

The penetration of Western powers into the Caspian-Poto-Caucasus area, especially after the decline of Russian tutelage, has triggered an influx of transnational companies into this area, with the outbreak of major conflicts in the Arab world. “Energy resource policy’ is becoming the main concern of the promoters of global policy applied by the power poles. The corporate empire must not leave states with key geopolitical roles in the strategic space, as has happened in the current wave of European integration.

In this ‘energy-economic war’, Russia, like Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Georgia, is looking for new alternatives. Unfortunately, Russia chose Burgas and not Constanta!

These disputes imposed by the complex geopolitical situation of the Black Sea, but also by Turkey’s intention to consolidate a pan-Turkish bloc (with the undeclared aim of driving Russia out of the Caucasus), has led Russia to lean heavily on Iran. This development could create conflicts with undesirable consequences for the Punjab-Carpathian-Balkan geopolitical space, with repercussions for Romania and Bulgaria.

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# 6

## The Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Hegemony of the United States

*Gagliano Giuseppe*

Emerging victorious from the long years of the Cold War, the United States was the first to fully grasp the new international and strategic reality devoid of the opposition of the two blocs. The new American approach unfolds in a renewed focus on the economic field, of fundamental importance not only for the overseas superpower but also for the rest of the world: determined to conquer a hegemonic role also in this field, the United States uses every kind of means to fight the economic war. The effects of this new attitude are especially visible in the strong growth of American foreign trade and in the employment rate created by this sector. In a world where the international influence of the United States is increasingly measured by the criterion of the number of markets conquered, “trade diplomacy” is evidently revealing of the new American perception of global challenges. The US “trade diplomacy” for the conquest of new markets is based first and foremost on an intense mobilization of the American administration. The tip of this enormous iceberg, which therefore should not appear as an isolated and spontaneous act, is the individual initiative of President Bill Clinton who, since his installation at the White House, has not ceased to use every means at his disposal to ensure an effective promotion of national economic interests. Examples of this presidential interventionism are the pressures on the Saudi king to assign the telephony company AT&T the realization of an important project or, more generally, the signing of large commercial contracts within the White House.

Another important activity in supporting the competitiveness of American companies has been, on the part of the administration, Taiwan, Indonesia, South Korea, and India in Asia, Poland and Turkey in Europe, South Africa in Africa, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Singapore. Collectively, these countries represent a combination of emerging economies and so-called “pivot states,” a geopolitical concept denoting nations whose regional influence and economic potential demand particular attention from the United States.

In parallel with the identification of the economic sectors in which US companies are especially competitive (environmental technologies, information, healthcare, transportation, energy, and financial services), the new “trade diplomacy” has established three phases of market conquest action. Firstly, there is the preparation of the playing field, through the liberalization of trade and the definition of rules favorable to American interests (for example, within the European Union, through intensive lobbying activities). The next phase involves the collection and dissemination of strategic information among key players, which implies the creation of a sophisticated economic intelligence system that provides companies with the analytical capabilities available to the executive branch. In this phase, the CIA also intervenes, especially in the case of destabilization operations of companies or competing states. Finally, the actual active phase occurs through the mobilization of structures created specifically for this purpose, such as the permanent inter-ministerial network Advocacy Network, which brings together the expertise of various political-administrative actors (departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce, International Development Agency, etc.) and is charged with monitoring the progress of major projects under negotiation. All these entities are tasked with implementing a veritable “national export strategy,” a significant part of which consists in focusing on the so-called emerging countries.

At the height of its power, to maintain and defend its economic interests, the United States has launched the battle for free trade, which primarily envisages the opening of borders through the creation of vast regional blocks. This strategy, also strengthened by the entry into force of the World Trade Organization on January 1, 1995, which has significantly reduced customs barriers, aims in particular at imposing American norms and standards, as well as consumption habits, on the rest of the world.

However, this opening of borders and markets as the main weapon of the battle for free trade seems to apply only when the United States is the principal actor. Relations with Latin America are a clear example in this regard: first, the extension of NAFTA to Chile, an important partner for US commercial interests, was considered without regard to the opinions of Canada and Mexico, the other two countries participating in the agreement; then, the open hostility towards Mercosur, the Southern Cone’s common market that would hinder the project of American economic integration from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego, was the main message of President Clinton during his trip to Chile, Argentina, and Brazil in 1997. This last stance elicited a negative response from Brasilia, which is strongly intent on marking the autonomy of its emerging economy from the US superpower, and it triggered an arm-wrestling match between the United States and Brazil, the most striking manifestation of which was the elevation of Argentina to the rank of privileged ally outside of NATO.

To ensure the generalization of free trade in line with its own vision, Washington has managed to secure the support of various international (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc.) and regional organizations. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is no exception, as European money invested in the standardization of economic policies in Central and Eastern European countries according to American laws rather than German, French, or Italian.

The United States' interest, which is predominantly economic, can also be analyzed within strategic and political fields. The case of the UN is emblematic in this sense: the United Nations experiences a chronic financial crisis due to the unpaid dues of certain States, amounting to around 2.4 billion US dollars, of which approximately 1.5 billion is owed by the United States. This crisis of the Organization is only seemingly financial, as it reveals a well-marked political will: by refusing to settle its arrears and negotiating its share on a case-by-case basis, exactly as happens with States aspiring to a future seat on the Security Council, Washington effectively places the UN under financial guardianship and makes it dependent on American goodwill in all aspects of its actions (ordinary operations, world peacekeeping, management of international tribunals, etc.).

This context also includes so-called civil-military affairs. It was with the Gulf War that these affairs took on strategic importance in the conduct of operations, demonstrating Washington's ability to skillfully and competently carry out a large-scale operation from start to finish. After the first two phases, the preparation of American and world public opinion for military intervention and the ground offensive, there was a third phase, generally little considered, that of reconstruction. This last phase was conceived as a military action, using the same criteria of preparation, rigor, and precision, with the result that overseas companies secured 80% of the reconstruction markets. Civil-military affairs, therefore, are now part of any military planning, as was also confirmed in the case of Western intervention in the former Yugoslavia, where, in parallel to the deployment of armed forces, there was a deployment of actual battalions of cooperatives and civilian experts charged with assessing the needs related to the reconstruction of devastated Bosnia.

NATO is another strategic-political field on which Washington plays its card of economic and commercial development. After the end of the Cold War, this card has materialized above all in the proposals for expansion to Central and Eastern European countries formerly part of the Soviet bloc, such as Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania, in a challenge that is not only political and strategic but also and above all commercial and financial. Admission to the Alliance has a price for the aspirants, as they must acquire Western armaments and equipment. Officially there is no link between, on the one hand, Bill Clinton's political decision to let these countries into NATO and, on the

other hand, the opening of markets for an American military industry already dominant within the current borders of the Alliance. The reality of the facts is quite different: in the case of renewing fighter aircraft, the deal is already done and the preferences of the local authorities necessarily lean, for political reasons, towards American devices rather than Swedish or French ones. The potential market could reach, for combat aircraft alone, tens of billions of dollars.

In addition to the issue of NATO expansion, other initiatives in the strategic and military field respond, at least in part, to economic imperatives. Numerous officers from the former Soviet bloc participate in internships or joint training with American forces, also within the Partnership for Peace, in the United States, Europe, or elsewhere. This practice is a formidable vector of American influence in the general staffs of the armies of Central and Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union. The deployment of several dozen American Special Forces green berets to Senegal, Uganda, Malawi, Ethiopia, and Mali to train the future African Crisis Response Force (which coincides in the civilian sphere with the strengthening of Peace Corps activities) follows this logic of influence.

However, the “trade diplomacy” applied by the United States is not without controversy, both internationally and domestically, for obviously different reasons. Regarding economic sanctions, for example, it is estimated that in the last four years, the President and Congress have imposed them, or have passed laws authorizing them, in sixty cases against about thirty-five different countries. It is a weapon that, in an era when military actions are increasingly less accepted, the United States has used more and more frequently to impose its own views and suppress everything that is considered anti-American. Two laws, both passed in 1996, which for their extraterritorial scope have drawn heavy criticism, especially internationally: the Helms-Burton Act, which allows American businesses or citizens who have suffered expropriation by the Fidel Castro regime to sue in a U.S. court the acquisition of the expropriated property by foreign investors; the D’Amato-Kennedy Act, which prevents any foreign investment in Iran and Libya in the hydrocarbon sector that exceeds because the proceeds from this sector would finance international terrorism.

Whether one chooses to see “trade diplomacy” as part of a planned strategy of economic superiority and global domination, or rather as the effect of a deeply ingrained market culture in the psychology of the American people, what is clear is that this policy leverages the strategic weaknesses of the United States’ main competitors, who have not always understood the fundamental role of the global economic war for their future.

## International Law as a Tool of Economic Warfare

Given these premises, it is necessary to emphasize that modern international law is undergoing a profound change, thereby calling into question its very legitimacy. It tends to become a real instrument of economic warfare, adapting to the power interests of the most influential countries. This international law is today being emptied of its main substance, which was to govern a set of binding rules for states and to support international justice. Indeed, some states are increasingly engaging, through legal sophistries, to orient their policies towards a goal of geo-economic and geopolitical dominance.

It is clear today that there is a blatant abuse of extraterritorial legislation, with rules that are not valid for all but instead benefit one or a few states, while being unfavorable, and even very harmful to others. This is demonstrated by a series of foreign and community laws that establish legal norms with extraterritorial scope, such as American law or European law. These are ultimately international norms aimed at legitimizing the economic power of the states that are their mouthpieces.

Through the fight against transnational crimes (terrorism, money laundering, financing of terrorism, corruption, etc.), certain states seek to legitimize their rights to assert themselves beyond their borders. However, the fact remains that behind this interest in global security are real specific competitive and commercial objectives of a state or a minority of states. Indeed, in the context of the internationalization of companies and the globalization of trade, every state seeks to resort to legal intelligence. This latter is nothing more than the set of all techniques and means that allow an actor — private or public — to know the legal environment on which it depends, to identify and anticipate risks and potential opportunities, to act on its development, and to have the information and rights necessary to be able to implement legal tools capable of achieving its own strategic objectives.

In short, a new form of power struggle is taking hold among the most developed countries, with the goal of imposing their rights, each in its own way, through the use of legal intelligence tools. One of these techniques is the creation of advantageous norms with extraterritorial reach. If we turn our attention to American extraterritorial law, just mentioning the following norms can give a clear idea of how the USA exercises its right to interfere.

The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), the Helms-Burton Act, the Amato-Kennedy Act, the Patriot Act, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (“Public Company Accounting Reform and Investor Protection Act”), the Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act, and the Cloud Act have enabled the United States of America to force the entire international community to adhere to its strategic objectives.

Over a decade (2008-2018), the American state, through the FCPA, for example, has imposed fines totaling nearly 6.9 billion US dollars, of which just a quarter (1.7 billion



dollars) were on American companies and the rest primarily on European companies. The same is true for US violations of their embargoes and/or anti-money laundering efforts, sanctions which, between 2004 and 2015, generated 16.945 billion dollars again mainly targeting European entities.

It is evident that such sanctioning measures have achieved a dual objective: on one hand, to save the American treasuries, and on the other, to destroy the potential competitors of American companies. Ultimately, the extraterritorial US laws target most foreign competitors.

In conclusion, legal intelligence is undoubtedly becoming a new weapon of influence for states. This contributes to providing economic intelligence with additional tools to enable it to broaden its spectrum of analysis in order to adopt a more effective strategy.

Victim states of this disproportionate legal arsenal should therefore be interested in thinking about developing alternative solutions to avoid their adoption. In this regard, “blocking statutes” or “blocking laws” certainly provide a good example.

This is why new emerging powers, such as China, India, Brazil, Turkey, or even Indonesia, are gradually undermining the international order structured around the United States of America.

## **The Role of Soft Power**

But the use of international law as a tool of struggle for the attainment and expansion of global hegemony is accompanied, in the case of the United States, by the wise and effective use of soft power. It is not possible, therefore, to separate the use of international law from the simultaneous use of soft power to consolidate one’s power globally.

By presenting themselves as the leading country of free competition, the United States carried out the best operation of influence of the twentieth century. They were able to mask their economic aggressiveness by drawing attention to the denunciation of European colonial empires. This rhetorical trick worked well. The stigmatization of the major dominant powers allowed them to disguise their own initiatives of conquest as happened with the colonization of Hawaii. It is in the same spirit that they were able to trivialize their multiple external military interventions as operations to protect their citizens during the crucial period between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

American economic soft power was built around this misunderstanding. The United States supported the emancipation of peoples from colonial oppression and at the same time supported the “open door” and free trade. One of their main criticisms of the European colonial empires was the privileged trade between those empires and their metropolises. The Commonwealth was particularly targeted during the GATT negotiations

(1947), and Washington refused to sign the Havana Charter (1948), which it had desired but which maintained the principle of “imperial preferences” between European countries and their colonies.

Presenting themselves as the guarantors of the discourse on free competition and open markets, the United States built an image of themselves as a “peace judge” in international trade. This cognitive advantage allowed them to disguise their initiatives of conquest. The United States’ grip on oil fields in the Middle East and Iran was the most visible illustration of the United States’ economic war machine. The State Department, intelligence agencies, and oil companies collaborated to impose their will on the countries concerned and potential competitors. The means of action used were often based on the use of force (indirect and then direct participation in armed conflicts in the Middle East, coups such as the overthrow of Mossadegh in Iran in 1953, destabilization of regimes supporting Arab nationalism).

The economic soft power of the United States took shape in the aftermath of the Second World War. Armed with their decisive military superiority, the United States seeks to establish a process of dominance in some vital markets. The designers of the Marshall Plan encouraged the purchase of American soy for animal feed by European agriculture. This desire to establish a relationship of dependence on the United States subsequently spread to other key sectors such as the computer industry and then information technology.

Data storage (Big Data) is one of the areas where the American system is most determined to maintain its primacy and dominant position. To “mask” these logics of dominance and dependence, American elites have resorted to two types of action.

On one hand, there is the formatting of knowledge. Major American universities have gradually imposed their view of how global trade functions, being careful to exclude discussions of geoeconomic power struggles. This omission has had significant consequences, as it has deprived European elites of a critical understanding of the aggressive nature of American corporate practices in foreign markets. Academic disciplines like management sciences or economics have removed any analysis of economic warfare from their purview, a phenomenon the United States nonetheless practiced discreetly.

On the other hand, there’s the capture of knowledge. To avoid being overwhelmed by competing innovation dynamics, the United States has developed a highly sophisticated surveillance system over time to identify sources of innovation around the world in order to contact foreign researchers and engineers as soon as possible, offering them emigration solutions or funding through private funds. If this type of knowledge acquisition fails, resorting to espionage is not excluded.

In this context, there is a systematic use of disinformation and manipulation. The rise of European and Asian economies from the 1970s forced defenders of American economic interests to adapt their economic warfare techniques to the post-Cold War context. Allies and main adversaries were faced before the decisive phase of the emergence of the Chinese economy.

In the 1990s, the United States opened several fronts. The most visible was the economic security policy implemented by Bill Clinton under the pretext that overseas companies were victims of “unfair competition. “The Europeans were the first targets. Unmasking corruption became one of the favored weapons of American economic diplomacy. However, behind this principle, much more offensive operations were concealed. In 1998, the Alcatel group suffered a series of information attacks carried out on the internet, through media leaks regarding the financial transparency of its general management. This campaign led to a historic fall in its stock price on the Paris Stock Exchange. To echo this demand, American industrialists financially supported the creation of NGOs like Transparency International. These proponents of the moralization of business stigmatized countries that did not respect global rules. On the other hand, none of the subjects of this movement were interested in the opacity of the payment methods of the major players in the big auditing firms heavily involved in the underwriting of large international contracts. The instrumentalization of a moralizing discourse is now reaching its operational peak with the extraterritoriality of law.

But the main transformation of American soft power over the past twenty years is the total instrumentalization of the information society.

Everyone remembers the importance of the Echelon system or Snowden’s statements about the extent of American espionage through the internet and social media. In contrast, the techniques of information warfare applied in the economy are still not well known to the general public. The United States is now at war over how to use civil society actors to destabilize or weaken their adversaries. Color revolutions, like the Orange one, are a stark example of the capability for political destabilization implemented by the United States.

From these premises, we can now provide a different reading of recent events and highlight how the current conflict with Russia also stems from the economic war waged by the USA against Russian gas.

## **Russian gas, Germany, and the USA**

The North Stream 2 (NS2) project represents an annual capacity of 50 billion cubic meters of gas. Even as carbon neutrality goals have shifted the share of LNG in the energy mix, the decline in coal production and nuclear power in Germany must be compensated by gas in the medium term. Germany is Russia’s number one gas customer. This greater de-

pendency stems from a dual decision: the end of nuclear power and the gradual phasing out of coal-fired power plants.

European gas imports are distributed as follows: 74% is transported via pipelines, with 41% from Russia, 35% from Norway, 11% from Algeria, 5% by ship from Qatar, 3% from Nigeria, and a portion from the USA. Washington has consistently opposed the NS2 project in the name of European energy independence.

Donald Trump had also expressed his incomprehension regarding a trade policy of Europe, and particularly Germany, which aimed to “strengthen Russian financial capabilities while the United States is spending billions of dollars within the framework of NATO.” He also pointed out the contradiction between Germany’s low GDP share dedicated to defense (1.5%) and the maintenance of 50,000 American troops.

The American power wishes to become one of the main countries exporting gas to Europe, particularly through shale gas. Washington will thus implement a series of gradual measures related to soft and smart power: influence over Poland and Denmark, membership in the Baltic-Adriatic-Black Sea (BABS) project, extraterritorial sanctions, and use of NATO.

Unlike Russia, which maintains that NS2 is a commercial project, the United States asserts that it is a political project, justifying the sanctions within the framework of the American CAATSA (Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) of 2017 and the PEESA (Protecting Europe’s Energy Security Act) of 2019.

In open contrast with Russia, Ukraine and Poland actively support the United States’ interference in this struggle against NS2, but for divergent and contradictory reasons. Thus, it is an alliance of convenience. Ukraine, through which Russian gas passes, opposes the NS2 project because it derives an income of 7 billion euros a year from it. If NS2 were to replace the Soyuz and Brotherhood pipelines, which supply Europe through Ukrainian territory, Ukraine would face additional risks such as energy disruptions and increased pressure from Moscow. The Soyuz and Brotherhood pipelines have so far given it relative autonomy. Gas is for Moscow a source of income as well as a tool of influence over Europe and an economic and political weapon against the United States of America.

However, among the actors involved in this match, there is the Visegrad Group, which includes Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovakia: beneficiaries of European budgets. These countries, however, remain particularly Atlanticist, especially for historical reasons because they have suffered Soviet and German invasions in the past. All these countries joined NATO before entering the European Union. The Visegrad countries also differ from the rest of Europe on economic issues such as recovery plans and energy transitions. However, differences within the Visegrad Group on NS2 remain: Slovakia benefits from a right of precedence thanks to the Transgaz pipeline (extension of the Droujba and

Soyuz pipelines). Hungary is dependent on Russian gas and is also connected to Russia by two VVER-1200 nuclear reactors produced by Rosatom.

Despite these differences, Hungary, Slovakia, and Slovenia are signatories to the BABS (Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Sea) project agreements, a cooperation project between 12 Central and Eastern European countries, which is supported by the United States with a billion dollars. From the American perspective, this would allow the creation of a corridor for US LNG, thus countering dependence on Russian gas.

The signatories to the BABS agreements include Bulgaria, Estonia, Croatia, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. It is interesting to note that Germany's request to join was not welcomed in Poland. On the contrary, Donald Trump was received at the BABS summit in Warsaw in 2017.

In short, Russian gas is a tool of trade war against the United States of America but also against other LNG exporting countries. Moscow is all the more inclined to carry out the NS2 project as it will hardly fit into the framework of the third energy package adopted by the European Community in 2009. The "energy package" contains in particular a right of access to pipelines by third-party suppliers. Like the pipeline that crosses Ukraine, it provides that the same operator may not simultaneously be a producer and distributor. The third imperative is the transparency of gas prices.

Given the geographic position and the path of the pipeline, these legislative conditions seem difficult to satisfy. It is also interesting to note that the conditions of the energy package were scrupulously respected in the South-Stream pipeline project (supply through the Black Sea, arriving in Bulgaria, reentered into the Balkans and Austria, this project was abandoned mid-construction by Moscow, under the pretext of sanctions exercised by the EU on Russia during the events in Crimea. Vladimir Putin then terminated it quite slyly, thereby avoiding any possibility of third-party connection to the pipeline. Just two months after the withdrawal, Russia was constructing the Turk Stream project with Ankara. Since Turkey is not an EU member, it is not affected by the energy package agreements.

As for the USA, Donald Trump had questioned Germany's attitude during a NATO summit. He viewed NS2 from a purely accounting perspective. The basis of his opposition was simple: Russia would earn an annual 10 billion from selling gas to Germany. This argument, more than the volumes traded, would predominate in his statements and would allow him to justify the intention to move 12,000 soldiers from Germany to Poland. The Congress remained responsible for sanctions throughout the Trump presidency; forcing him to sign laws and decrees, Trump always had an ambivalent attitude towards Russia and Vladimir Putin.

Already in January 2018, American Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had opposed the project, along with Poland. Rex Tillerson is a senior energy engineer, having been CEO of

Exxon Mobil from 2006 to 2017. On December 12, 2018, a resolution of the House of Representatives was voted on with the possibility of sanctions against the Russian oil/gas sector. On December 21, 2019, President Trump signed the congressional law, forcing him to adopt sanctions against North Stream 2. Senator Ted Cruz was one of the architects of this text. It is worth remembering that to finance his senatorial campaign, Donald Trump had notably signed a commitment with the billionaire industrialists of the oil sector, the Koch brothers.

Poland has certainly played a very important role in supporting American policy. Its Prime Minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, in Warsaw, had been supported by Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, American President Donald Trump, President of the European Council Donald Tusk, and the UK's Foreign Secretary, in the person of Boris Johnson, who declared that NS2 could leave Europe dependent on Russia. On January 29, 2018, Mateusz Morawiecki stated, "We want the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline to be included in the American bill, which includes among other things sanctions against Russia." The Polish minister would come to harshly criticize the United States of America for not yet having applied sanctions against NS2.

In 2016, Germany believed that American involvement in this NS2 file constituted a commercial intervention orchestrated to sell liquefied gas in the European market. Germany is still particularly determined to maintain its positions, and political analysts believe that dialogue between Vladimir Putin and Berlin will be built, especially on a realpolitik attitude from both sides.

To mitigate the negative perception in Washington, German Vice Chancellor Olaf Scholz proposed in early August 2020 to grant funding of 1 billion dollars for the construction of terminals.

In January 2021, Germany attempted to implement a legal package to circumvent the sanctions of the CAATSA and PEESA laws. The state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the landing point of NS2, established a public foundation that acts as a cover company against sanctions from the State Department and European companies involved in the project. The scope of PEESA indeed excludes legal entities and public persons. This is an unscrupulous response to legal sanctions, which took Congress by surprise. The foundation would be responsible for acquiring supplies and sending orders to service companies. This fund is named "Climate Protection Fund of the State of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania," financed with 20 million euros by the NS2/Gazprom consortium. The foundation is a public commercial structure without profit motive and can thus escape sanctions. However, the financing is facing reluctance from banks, which fear being exposed to compliance issues.

Even though the Biden administration is determined to uphold the law passed in 2019 by Congress, which mandates sanctions for entities involved in the controversial project, there is a contradiction between Biden's objectives and those of Congress.

If Biden was fiercely opposed to NS2 when he was Vice President of the White House in the Obama administration, his goal now is to mend ties between the United States with Europe and Germany. However, he must confront the hardline, majority, and bipartisan consensus within Congress.

Sanctions are being prepared, targeting insurance companies (AXA), the certification company (DNV GL), as well as ship providers (Pioneer Spirit of the Swiss-Dutch company). In total, a list of 120 legal and physical entities is targeted. The effects of hard power have an immediate impact on the companies involved, as well as on Germany and France, which have many private actors involved in the construction of the project. By decree, the US Congress will remove 18 Western companies from sanctions after work stoppage, reiterating the risk for companies that persist in continuing to be involved in the project. In January 2021, in a very small paragraph, the last defense budget voted by Congress was reinforced to allow the application of sanctions against entities involved in NS2.

Clearly, the protection exerted by the United States over Europe and the intertwining of military power in the European geoeconomic sphere can be seen. Economic and military issues are interwoven in this North Stream 2 affair, feeding off each other. The German contradiction comes to light, a country decidedly Atlanticist for its defense issues, for its history but also motivated by its own interests: Germany, which has made NATO the cornerstone of its defense, is divided between its pro-American loyalty, its nationalist approach, and its European project.

North Stream 2 fits into a context of a global economic war, increasingly aggressive unleashed by the United States of America in the world and in Europe, to impose their choices. North Stream 2 also shows the limits of a Europe with divergent interests. We could say, in a certain provocative sense, that Europe has become the soft underbelly of the United States, Russians, and Chinese.

Before the current conflict, Russia was developing its Arctic Yamal and Gydan gas fields, as well as related LNG technologies. The key players in this development are the Russian private company Novatek, and European (Total, Technip, Saipem, others), Chinese (CNPC, Silk Road Fund, CNOOC), and Japanese firms. Russia aims to become a major player in LNG given its resources and also seeks to develop know-how in these technologies.

Global warming makes it possible to exploit these resources and to navigate the Northern Sea Route, despite extreme conditions. This route offers a strategic advantage as it is 15 days shorter to connect the Atlantic to the Pacific without passing through the Suez Canal. Another strategic advantage is Russia's significant icebreaker fleet, with 39 vessels compared to the United States' single operational one. Part of the U.S. strategy is to limit Russian development in the Arctic by implementing coercive measures on navigation through international bodies in the name of environmental protection. In November 2020,

the International Maritime Organization (IMO) banned ships carrying heavy fuel oil from navigating in the Arctic, targeting the Russian fleet.

The United States has become the third-largest exporter of LNG after Australia and Qatar, with Russia in fourth place but with many plans to increase its capacity, leveraging the considerable Arctic resources that depend on the navigability of the Northern Sea Route. The U.S. is trying to contain a competitor in the LNG market, but also Russia's strategic rise in the Arctic, a region that has already become a geopolitical issue.

Beyond the merits or demerits of the Nord Stream 2 project, or American interest in supplying LNG to Europeans, the issue has now shifted to European sovereignty. The United States has crossed the Rubicon. It is in the heart of Europe, on European territory, that the United States wants to sanction European companies through the supposed extraterritoriality of their law. Indeed, the current conflict has achieved a long-pursued U.S. objective of preventing Europe from remaining in the Russian sphere of influence through gas supplies. Their goal, thanks to this war, has been achieved. Let's not forget that before this war started, Biden had surrendered to the Nord Stream 2 project.

## **The premises of the current conflict**

Well, alongside the economic warfare offensive against Ukraine, the United States had long prepared the ground for a conflict between Ukraine and Russia.

The first documented reports of Ukraine and the CIA date back to 2014, when John Brennan was directing the agency. In 2014, the Agency was subject to very harsh attacks from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, criticizing both the detention and the secret interrogation program of the CIA. To overcome this critical phase, the former director of the CIA decided to invest considerable resources in building a close synergy with the internal intelligence service of Ukraine, the SBU.

The investment made by the former CIA director in Ukraine was so significant that the agency's headquarters were established on Volodymyrska Street in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, which allowed it to conduct its operations smoothly and efficiently.

If Brennan decided to invest substantial resources in Ukraine, he did so with the backing of the White House and, in particular, Obama, who through the Authorization Act passed by Congress on December 10, 2014, intended to strengthen its synergy with the intelligence institutions in Ukraine.

This project emphasizes the need for the agency to send more agents to the field to build programs capable of enhancing defensive-offensive cyber capabilities in Ukraine as well as improving information exchanges between the American agency and Ukrainian ones.

Now to 2018. That year, the former director of the Pentagon's Defense Advanced



Research Projects Agency (DARPA), Anthony Tether, was appointed to the supervisory board of Ukraine's largest military-industrial complex, Ukroboronprom, with the aim of designing a DARPA-like agency in Ukraine, which would be called the Government Agency for Advanced Research Development, funded by then Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko.

Given the excellent relations between Ukraine and the United States in this sector, it is not surprising that there are synergies between American companies and the Ukrainian military-industrial complex. For example, the Ukrainian aeronautics industry Motor Sich, which built Antonov An-124, has received several million dollars from American companies, including the Oriole Capital Group, which is closely linked to Boeing.

Let's move forward to 2019. In that year, a new bill known as the "Protecting Europe's Energy Security Act" was introduced by the American Congress concerning the Nord Stream 2 pipeline being constructed from Russia to Europe. The purpose of the bill was to request a detailed report from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence and the Department of the Treasury on what the implications of the pipeline could be in terms of the security of the United States, namely, regarding the strengthening of the pipeline's ability to influence the political choices of the European Union. However, opposition to the construction of Nord Stream 2 did not start with these two important institutions; it was first opposed by the State Department's Bureau of Energy Resources.

Now, let's consider 2021 and the relations between Ukraine and Great Britain. The United Kingdom has built its military synergies with Ukraine both in the naval sector, through six Barzan-class vessels, and via submarine mine hunters. To achieve its objectives, in 2021, at the port of Odessa, Jeremy Quin and Tony Radakin, the Minister for Defense Procurement and the Chief of the Defense Staff, respectively, signed a cooperation agreement in the naval sector. This renewed cooperation in the naval sector is, of course, aimed at countering Russian influence.

Remaining in 2021, but turning our attention to the relations between France and Ukraine, as Asia Times detailed in March of the previous year, the French government believed that the cutting-edge Rafale built by Dassault stood a good chance of winning the bid in the former bastion of Russian industry, thanks to having a significant commercial apparatus already in place.

What political conclusion can we reach? France has undoubtedly had a partnership of a predominantly economic nature in both civilian and military fields; in contrast, America and Great Britain have cooperated with Ukraine not so much and not only for economic reasons, but above all to use Ukraine as an outpost to contain and encircle Russia. As for Russia, it has always tried to bring Ukraine back into its sphere of influence and to distance it from the Anglo-sphere.

Are we therefore making a legal or even moral assessment? Not at all. All this falls within the logic of power struggle, a logic characterized by destabilization, propaganda but also by offensive actions on the military level.

## **The Role of China**

Finally, we must consider another very important player in this war: China. Indeed, how will the Dragon face the changes that will occur because of this war?

Undoubtedly, the current war between Russia and Ukraine profoundly reconfigures the balance of global geoeconomics. We refer not only to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) but also to the European Union's Global Gateway, the United States-led Blue Dot Network (BDN), the G-7 Build Back Better World (B3W), Japan's Quality Infrastructure Investment (QII), the Russian Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) led by Russia, Iran, and India.

But let's focus our attention on the Chinese BRI, which is currently the most significant economic initiative because it involves 140 countries. The Silk Road will be profoundly reconfigured by this war; we must not forget that for China, Russia was a more reliable overland route to enter the European Union market. In other words, Russia, Ukraine, Poland, and Belarus were supposed to be part of a sort of new Eurasian land link based on rail in the Chinese project, and these expectations of land connectivity have been nullified by the current conflict. The 17 + 1 platform, which is known to be a strong synergy between China and the 17 Central and Eastern European countries, had already suffered several setbacks due to the economic war between China and America. Well, this synergy can only suffer a further decline due to the contrast between the West and Russia and, above all, due to the destruction of Ukrainian infrastructure, which makes it practically impossible both short and medium-term to realize this synergy.

At this point, relations between China and the European Union will have to focus on traditional maritime routes. Let's not forget that 80% of global trade is still conducted via sea routes, and so China's enthusiasm for railway routes will have to be set aside for the moment.

China will need to find ways to bypass Russian-Belarusian geography, which means that the BRI will have to give greater importance to other corridors, such as the Central-West Asia corridor that involves the Caspian region, Iran, and Turkey. Through this corridor, the BRI can bypass Russia to reach European markets.

In this sense, the Iranian nuclear deal and, more importantly, the 25-year collaboration agreement between China and Iran will strengthen this corridor further, allowing it to become central. China's close ties with Iran are due to the fundamental role of both

gas and oil, which could be an alternative to Russian supplies and hence give Iran more geoeconomic weight. Alongside Iran's growing centrality, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which provides connectivity to the Indian Ocean, will consequently gain more weight. This corridor is connected to Iran and Turkey via road and rail infrastructure such as the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul railway. This could lead China to integrate this corridor with the Iranian corridor, thereby consolidating connections with Pakistan and Iran to reach Europe by land. From this perspective, Turkey has gained greater importance and weight in China's economic considerations. Indeed, there is no coincidence that Turkey and China have enhanced their synergies in recent years.

Another consequence of these new synergies is certainly the centrality that China will acquire for Russia in the sector of economic transactions. Both MasterCard and Visa have left Russia due to sanctions, and the Chinese UnionPay will become the only possible alternative for Russia. It is not ruled out then that — in the long term — the economic and geographical potential of Russia and the EAEU may be absorbed by the Chinese economy and the geography of the BRI.

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(...) Despite the reluctance of Anglo-Saxon mainstream academia to recognize the decline of US and Western European influence, or at least to downplay it, we can clearly see signs of this decline. The current international geopolitical landscape is extremely challenging for geopolitics and international relations analysis. Therefore, we aimed to provide insights into such challenging landscapes across various themes. To achieve these goals, we have contributions from researchers not only from Brazil but also from Belgium, Russia, Romania, and Italy. Therefore, the reader can find a collection of articles and essays by our guests. (...).

Charles Pennaforte - Editor

