

NERINT STRATEGIC ANALYSIS

Russian Geopolitics and Its Sense of Insecurity

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At the end of the Cold War, in 1991, some terms were widely publicized in debates on international relations, as well as in the press in general. Perhaps the most well-known term is Francis Fukuyama's "end of history". The author, using the thinking of the philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel, no longer believed in the progression of history through ideological changes or great political and military leaps, as in the case of Napoleon Bonaparte's conquests against the Ancien Régime in Europe. With this end of history, for Fukuyama, under the demise of the clash between the United States and the Soviet Union, the resulting international system should not undergo sudden changes, but palliative ones.

Thus, the struggle between territorial states (as is demanded in geopolitics) for natural resources, space and other consecrated items of international politics, should give way to a new global agenda, whose premise would be that of the environment, human rights, parliamentary democracy, free trade and, currently, green power², possibly integrated into programs for the administration of world values. And for the resolution of external conflicts there would be the use of soft power through a regulatory power of order, the United States, and international law applied to international regimes.

In the conservative-realist camp, Samuel Huntington also sought to take a position in the debate by launching his equally famous Clash of Civilizations, which should be the keynote of high-intensity international conflicts that, in part, would replace struggles and wars of classical and geopolitical projections. Conflicts over values and cultures could replace the old ones of territorial or material color. Somehow, the two professors agreed on one point: the decrease of the territorial state relative importance.

If the premises shown above cannot be ignored, in the same way,

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² Within green power there are efforts to replace nuclear energy and fossil fuels, as well as coal, in favor of renewable fuels. This intention is part of efforts to "decarbonize" the international economy. The European Union has been pursuing these policies quite intensively.

there is no way to turn our backs on the fact that the old geopolitics has not been exhausted, especially by that group of states called great powers, which includes Russia, the United States and China. In the case of the Kremlin, it became clear that the disappearance of the Soviet Union was interpreted as an incalculable political tragedy for Russian power, whose desired recovery will not occur without suffering for Europe, as in the case of Ukraine or Central Asia, Georgia and others.

It would not be credible to observe the conflict between Russia and Ukraine without taking into account the geopolitical movement in which Moscow seeks to present itself as a rising power and, to that end, use its fear of increased national security to mark its position. At this point, set out in Ukraine, Russia makes clear its view that it will not allow the presence of multinational NATO forces, or the employment of agents and institutions of a liberal, cosmopolitan composition, carrying values considered contrary to Russian interests.

There is a problem here. In the composition of Russian power, its expanded national security is not only defined by the border known as the “near abroad”, Ukraine and Belarus, at first hand, but also by countries that are ingrained with what can be called the spirit or genesis of what it is to be Russian. The idea that Western forces entered Ukraine during the current century promoting the new agenda constrains Russia, since this presence can bring out effects, in contradiction to the country’s ruling elite, of which President Vladimir Putin is the most important known character. The most feared effect would be the destabilization of Russian power.

This is a result of a process in which Kiev has been seen as a testing ground for the movement of groups in favor of the political, economic and cultural program of the European Union, which is more open, but in conflict with the position represented by Moscow. The Western step forward to Maidan Square (Euromaidan), in 2014, and the prompt entry of Russian forces into Crimea, as a counter-response, are exemplary of this fear of insecurity expressed by Russia in the face of the liberalization process of its near abroad and its attempt (real or not) of joining the Atlantic Alliance.

In the first place, the linking of Ukraine to Western expansion projects, would already be an indication that there would be a geopolitical dispute in Eastern Europe between the United States, with material assistance from some NATO powers, and Russia for regional preeminence. The current war can also lead to another observation, quite complex for the moment: what is the role of international law, treaties, and national sovereignty? For example, why Ukraine could not be affiliated with institutions and values considered modern?

In the scope of power politics, in which geopolitics is an integral part, the proximity with law is hampered by the fact that the former is not developed by the ideal or virtue, but by the correlation of forces existing between powers. Therefore, Ukraine is in a paradoxical situation, as a result of the positive peculiarities of Ukrainian geopolitics. Why is Ukraine paradoxical? Due to its geographical location, its cultural genesis similar to the Russian one, for its economy with a progressive aspect, and for being the passage of an intricate network of gas pipelines towards a good number of European States.

In fact, Ukraine has become a prisoner of its own geopolitical situation, practically intertwined with Russia's most complex interests that emerge from cultural, political and logistical particularities. At least 80% of the energy consumed on the continent passes through the Ukrainian territory – natural gas and oil from Russian or adjacent reserves. Of course, as an “energy hub” Kiev's role is fundamental for Russian movements in terms of Moscow's power projection in Eastern Europe.

On the cultural side, it should be noted that Ukraine's admission to the European Union would minimally disturb Russia in what it thinks are fundamental values of Slavophilia, but it would not be overdramatic, as money is always welcome. However, the most delicate step that the neighbor could take would be to apply for NATO membership in the face of the weight exerted by Moscow abroad. Ukraine represents the most sensitive area for the Russian geopolitical view that, in the long term, intends to establish a connection called Eurasianism, having the center of gravity in Russia and spilling over to Eastern Europe, bordering Germany and embracing Central Asia, in Kazakhstan, for example.

Due to the issues exposed above, it is possible to envision the current war in Eastern Europe not only as an expression of an international system in disarray, but also as an unfolding of geopolitical projections, whose neuralgic points are still boiling and not completely exhausted by the powers in question – maybe not even in the near future. Knowing the nature of international politics, without yearning for virtuous achievements, could be the first step towards achieving an international concert with some reasonableness. In this, the right and the duty are not guaranteed to prevail, because security issues still matter for Russia, the United States, China or the European States.

Crisis in Ukraine: War and Games

Francisco Carlos Teixeira da Silva³

Xi Jinping is said to have conditioned support for Putin for “definitive” action in the Black Sea and Baltic Sea to the end of the Beijing Winter Olympics, which will take place between February 4th and 20th. The attempt of a “Color Revolution” in Kazakhstan, the Chinese border near Xinjiang, and the Lithuanian provocation over Taiwan, convinced Beijing: there is a need to draw red lines. Past agreements, whether on the militarization of the post-Soviet zone or on the “One China Policy”, are being put to the test by powerful forces in the West.

Coincidentally, the challenge against both Russia and China (the recognition of Taiwan) came from the new Baltic/Black Sea countries. By analyzing the weakness of the West, as shown from the Afghanistan fiasco to the lukewarmness of their leadership, Moscow and Beijing had decided that this is the moment.

Only the United Kingdom of Elizabeth Truss — the warmonger on duty — remains in a position to support Kiev at any cost. In Germany, Olaf Scholz, in the government, and Friedrich Merz, in the opposition, have already warned that Berlin will not follow any war or new sanctions. Macron distanced himself in anger at the betrayal of the AUKUS (Australia, United States and United Kingdom), for which he lost his military contracts with Australia.

Russian and Allied readiness in Kazakhstan, supported by China, spelled out Moscow’s full willingness to push NATO back to 1997, or even 1991, after the reunification of Germany and the signing of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe in Paris. What Moscow wants, more than a destructive war for all, is a new Helsinki Agreement, as in 1975, this time enshrining a new world order. But before that, it must make clear the status of the post-Soviet areas, still under dispute—and among them, the borders of Ukraine and the demilitarization of the ex-Soviet “near abroad”.

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The Return of Russia: the Military and Diplomatic Dimensions

Francisco Carlos Teixeira da Silva⁴

We have to go beyond information warfare (on both sides) and stick to the structural: Russian military planning is classic. One-off attacks on transport, communication and infrastructure nerve centers paralyzing Ukraine, in addition to intense cyberattacks. Thus, airports, railways and road-railway rings are the central targets. We are not seeing cities being bombed en masse, barring mistakes on both sides — all terrible for the civilian population. What we are seeing are peripheral areas of junctions and infrastructure nodes, in addition to the occasional terrible errors.

With Ukraine's mobility capacity paralyzed, the operation of "punctual" occupation of political-administrative centers, such as ministries, barracks and, of course, the presidency begins. These are the fights we see on television, even if poorly documented (day, time, place, troops). Due to the development of the projected actions, there is no total territorial occupation plan. At this stage, Ukraine would be willing to negotiate with the invaders.

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Figure 1: Ukrainian territory occupied by the Russians, 26 February



Source: Institute for the Study of War via BBC.

The alternative would be the fall of the government and the imposition of a puppet regime. At the moment, for Russia, the most convenient thing is to negotiate with the weakened Zelensky government, instead of imposing a puppet without any international recognition. The Ukrainian president signing the peace would make a good photo for the Russians. After that, it is possible for him to be knocked down. But direct negotiation with him is highly legitimizing for Russians. Everything will depend on the price of peace — “Woe to the vanquished” (*Vae victis*, from Latin), as we have known since Antiquity.

What will be on the table: (1) The transfer of the entirety of Donetsk and Lugansk; (2) A neutrality statute for the rest of Ukraine; (3) Optional use of the Russian language in the national education system. And explosive clauses: the state of sovereignty over Odessa, Mariupol, Krakov and their oblasts.

In every confrontation we must highlight the position of the so-called “West”, in this case NATO and the European Union. Before the war, there was

clear support for Ukraine, showing material guarantees of security for the new country. In particular, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg behaved as if there was a guarantee of Ukrainian sovereignty. However, within the European Union there was no cohesion as announced by President Biden about “Atlantic solidarity”.

After the start of the war, Germany, Italy and Austria immediately refused to make a radical break with the Russians. Economic and strategic interests imply lessening the US emphasis on sanctions. European losses are already high with them (agricultural market, machinery, and equipment and, of course, gas and oil), forcing the change of commercial axis, more expensive around 25% and 30%, towards the United States and the US companies in the Middle East.

Everything is still very fluid.

Joe Biden's Summit of the Americas

Leonardo Granato⁵

The events surrounding the recent installment of the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles invite reflection on the role of this forum for dialogue and consultation for Latin America, and on the strategy of Democrat leader Joe Biden in this framework. In this sense, we seek to bring here some questions that contribute to the analysis.

The IX Summit of the Americas took place in June 2022 and, for the second time in the forum's history, the United States hosted it. The first time was in 1994, as in the first Summit in Miami, which focused on the launch of the US proposal for hemispheric integration called the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). This first summit meeting reactivated, under new guises, the 1990's Initiative for the Americas, the first post-Cold War US strategy aimed at Latin America since the Alliance for Progress in 1960. Of course, the question that emerged was about the real purpose of having a forum that overlapped with the institutional framework of the Organization of American States, aimed at discussing issues that affected the entire Western Hemisphere.

During the 1990s, in a context of full expansion of neoliberal capitalism, the Summits of the Americas were part of a set of initiatives that the United States carried out at the political, economic and military levels, in

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order to keep the newly redemocratized Latin-American region under control. At first, the neoliberal structural reforms based, among other assumptions, on trade liberalization and financial deregulation, were part of the new prescription of the American power, that subsumed to the US the standards of growth and the external insertion of Latin countries. Secondly, as a way of offsetting its external trade deficit at the expense of the Latin American region, the hegemon promoted bilateral free trade agreements that, while the FTAA project advanced, sought to cover the entire continent. At the military level, as the hegemonic position achieved by the United States depended on its “secure” relationship with the rest of the continent, military bases and intelligence forces for Latin America proved to be a priority.

However, in the 2000s, the 2001 attacks, the 2008 financial crisis and the rise of China and Russia as major players in the international system showed a context of multipolarity different from that of the 1990s. In this framework, the new popular and progressive governments, committed to neoliberal reform agendas, sought to implement policies of socioeconomic development and regional integration, in open defiance of US interests in the region. In fact, it was at the 2005 Summit of the Americas, held in the city of Mar del Plata, that the discussions around the FTAA as a common horizon to be reached were ended under the argument of the great asymmetries and inequalities that permeated the countries of the continent. However, despite the difficulties in achieving the original objectives of US power, the Summits of the Americas have survived over the years.

Such survival becomes more expressive when we consider the events of recent years. Four years have passed since the 2018 Lima Summit, which Donald Trump did not attend. In the midst of a post-pandemic context and a restrictive international scenario, largely as a result of the war in Ukraine, it was to be expected, on the part of the Joe Biden government, a pragmatic diplomatic posture that not only favored a space for a unifying dialogue in its “own backyard”, as opposed to the attitude of its predecessor, but also guaranteeing concrete material incentives, translated into the expectation of favoring a certain level of commercial flow and investments in the region. Such a stance would have avoided an even greater distance between the United States and the Latin American region, immersed in a critical socioeconomic situation, and under the growing influence of the interests of China – the only country that, according to the Biden administration’s own National Security Strategy, would be able to muster enough power to threaten American hegemony.

In fact, according to the June 2022 report by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which analyzes the repercussions of the war in Ukraine in the region, 33.7% of the regional

population will be in poverty by the end of the year, while 14.9% were in extreme poverty. This is just a sample of a broader critical and complex picture in which the region is inserted. Regarding the second question, even though the Chinese presence in Latin America has been reaffirming the continent's external dependence by stimulating the traditional agricultural export pattern, there is no way not to draw attention to the role that the Asian giant has been playing in terms of trade and investments, as evidenced by data published in the LAC-China Network Monitor.

However, despite having a whole “favorable” scenario to make the Los Angeles Summit an instrument that honors the motto “Building a sustainable, resilient and equitable future”, the United States has shown itself, once again, negligent to the reorientation of the stagnant relations with Latin American countries. In fact, after Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela were left out of the Summit, and the negative resonances expressed in the criticism and in the absence of several leaders in the region, the Biden administration's lack of interest in adopting a responsible strategy that covered ideologically and territorially became evident for the whole continent, which would be up to the demands of the current conjuncture.

As a closure, we draw attention to at least two elements that stem from that framework. One of them, of a broader geopolitical nature, concerns the setback and frustration that, once again, the Summit of the Americas as a mechanism for dialogue and cooperation expressed (and, this time, amidst, as already mentioned, the growing Chinese influence). The second element, related to US domestic politics, refers to the Biden administration's electoral promise to implement a new strategy of cooperation with Latin American neighbors, which would represent a clear change in the practices of the Trump administration. What happened at the recent Summit confirms that Biden is falling short of the aforementioned electoral promise. But it also confirms the imperative need for Latin America to maintain its own spaces of integration and political consultation, articulators of socially inclusive and sovereign projects and agendas, which favor the expansion of the strategic action margins of states, in a world in transformation.

Brazil and the Biden Administration: Ongoing Messages

Cristina Soreanu Pecequilo⁶

Since Joe Biden took over the US presidency in January 2021, the analysis and perceptions regarding Brazil-US bilateral relations present alternate moments of disappointment, distancing and euphoria pending political sidelines. These sidelines can be divided into two major positions: the opposition and the situation. In 2002, the midst of Brazil's electoral context, this dynamic is repeating itself. But it is necessary to avoid the shadows and understand these stances and the concrete policies that the democratic government is applying to Brazil.

These positions mostly represent Brazil's internal fragmentations and the way the US (and its stances) are instrumentalized to uphold a stronger coalition within these domestic and are less representative of US interests in the country and in the region. Mostly, this applies to the distancing dimension that is linked to situation forces. As Donald Trump left power, these forces searched for an adaptation of the bilateral agenda that could be able to reconcile the preservation of political priorities of the social, cultural, and religious camps, that are essential to the Executive's political coalition sustainability, with other economic national sectors. These sectors are related to the financial sector, the agricultural business coalition and parts of the Minister of Foreign Relations that seek to establish some sort of balance. Therefore, quite often, there is a detachment of speeches and non-convergent positions amongst the Executive and these other players.

For its turn, in the disappointment and euphoria axis, the Brazilian opposition agenda is placed, representing both Brazilian and US interest groups that were expecting a tour de force of the democratic government against Brazil's human rights and environmental agenda. During 2021, this euphoria was replaced by disappointment as there were no open criticism towards Brazil or the proposition of sanctioning actions. However, this was never representative of an absence of strategic and diplomatic movements from Washington in the country. From July to August 2021, the visits of CIA William Burns da CIA and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, White House high profile members, showed the country's geopolitical and geoeconomics relevance, apart several differences.

Agendas such as 5G, energy, China's advancement (defined in all

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of Biden's presidency as the largest and multidimensional threat to US interest) and the security dimension of the nation's presence in the region, considering the hemispheric neighborhood and the South Atlantic were debated. For most of the time, there was a certain inertia. Nevertheless, this reality started to change in January 2022, beginning with the indication of Elizabeth Bagley for US Ambassador to Brazil.

Biden maintained his stance on appointing names that belong to his closest circle of trust, and that were previously present in other democratic governments (such as Bill Clinton and Barack Obama), Bagley also is a part of the "revolving door" State-private companies in the US, and active in the law and telecommunications sector (cellular companies). In addition, is one of the most relevant individual sponsors of campaigns and bundler of democratic electoral campaigns⁷. As the OpenSecrets site defines, "bundler" is a definition that applies to people that, added to their individual contributions for the party till the allowed limit, function as fundraisers for additional resources for the party either/or representatives from other persons or companies.

Also, Bagley's indication showed a change in Biden's positions regarding Brazil's situation which led to some euphoria. This change is brought by two reasons: the closeness of the already mentioned 2022 electoral cycle and the deterioration of local domestic conditions in social, economic, and political terms. Beforehand, the US abandoned a low-profile stance whereas considering Brazil's democratic regimes conditions and a series of messages about the need for the electoral process and the transition of power to follow their due course, respecting institutions and the electoral results were sent.

This offensive position is demonstrated by three related events: the recollection, by the media, of news about Burns visit in 2021, in which the CIA head, had already warned the Brazilian government against the authoritarian menace, US Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland declarations in a recent passage to Brazil about the importance of free, fair elections and under the law elections and, last but not least, Bagley's Senate confirmation hearing in which the potential future Ambassador stresses the same argument as Nuland: that elections in Brazil should be fair and transparent, due to the resilience of Brazilian institutions.

These events were once more instrumentalized as proof that the US was paying attention to the attempts to destabilize the Brazilian political scene and were acting as some sort of "guardians" of the electoral process. In

7 OPEN SECRETS. Disponível em: <https://www.opensecrets.org/search?order=desc&page=2&q=elizabeth+bagley&sort=D&type=donors> e <https://www.opensecrets.org/biden/bundlers>. Acesso em 19 maio 2022.

addition, in the euphoria-disappointment axis, these statements were linked to an April 2022 report produced by several academic institutions and class groups from both nations⁸. This document presented a risk warning that the events of the Capitol invasion on January 6th could repeat themselves in Brazil, and that the threats to national democracy were real, and calls up the international community and multilateral organisms to follow the elections.

Apart from this report, US perspective is more solid because of the two concrete issues already presented here, to which we can add two more: the Executive stance on Russia-Ukraine crises that, even though is being balanced by Itamaraty in the United Nations with acts of condemnation of Russian actions, had created and is still creating, some discomfort and the potential presidential absence from the Summit of the Americas that will take place of Jun 6th-10th (and also the possibility that Mexican President Lopez Obrador do not take part as well).

Despite its global projection and the image that is “not interested” in the region, US attention would never, or will ever, be lacking in its sphere of influence and towards the intra and extra regional threats that exist. If China emerges as an offshore menace, instabilities in countries such as Brazil, and the potential revival of an alliance of progressive governments are seen as regional threats. Biden’s recent offensive is amid this euphoria, disappointment, and distancing climate. After all, one may suggest that, for the Americans, the Brazilian situations rises as the worst of these scenarios of institutional crises, political changes either/or a combination of both trends.

Partnership for Prosperity in Brazil’s Relations with China and the South Atlantic

Paulo Antônio Pereira Pinto⁹

Statements such as “strategic partnership” and “zones of peace and cooperation” become repetitive and indefinite, to the point where the question is often asked that “the rest of the world knows what it wants from Brazil, but Brazil does not know what it wants from abroad”. This criterion would mainly apply to relations with China and Africa.

8 BBC Brasil. “Governo Biden recebe dossiê de acadêmicos com alerta de ‘versão mais extrema de ataque ao Capitólio’ no Brasil”. Disponível em: <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/internacional-61267152>. Acesso em 19 maio 2022.

9 Retired Brazilian Ambassador.

In this perspective, regarding China, I propose a reflection on a “partnership for prosperity”, with Brazil, in order to create mutual advantages (“win-win situations”), mainly in joint projects to be developed in Africa and Latin America. There are frequent criticisms in these countries that, once they are included in the “Belt and Road Initiative” (BRI), regarding Authoritarian practices and production means, that would be restricted to Chinese nations. So, there would be an exclusion of inhabitants of countries where PRC companies operate. There is also criticism about concentrating profits for Eastern investors, while local recipients would acquire excessive debt.

From this perspective, there could be an effort to align “Chinese efficiency and needs for access to inputs for their continued economic growth”, with our ability to “promote dialogue between different cultures”¹⁰, as well as to seek common solutions to shared problems, whereas seeking to generate mutual benefits.

As far as Africa is concerned, in addition to maintaining peace and intensifying cooperation – concepts that can be seen as “horizontal” – it would also be appropriate to introduce the vector of “prosperity across the Atlantic”, which would give a better idea of “vertical” progress towards a higher-level scenario.

In this sense, initially, regarding relations with China, it would be necessary to clearly define our goals of international insertion, which could not be reduced to “reacting” to Chinese proposals for a BRI. Then, would there be the creation of a “partnership strategy”? It is worth thinking about a Brazilian “path”.

The Terrestrial Pacific Ascension and the New Silk Route

By the way, at the end of 2020, we were surprised by the reference of the former Ambassador of the PRC in Brasília, Mr. Yang Wanming, to a line by João Cabral de Melo Neto, in the poem “Tecendo uma Manhã¹¹”, in order to clarify the foreign policy of his country.

The aforementioned Chinese diplomat then declared, using the metaphor of the Brazilian poet, that the verse “a rooster alone does not weave a morning” may suggest Brazilian relevance, in the search for a “new world order”.

In this sense, he made an analogy with the current international insertion of his country. “Only when all countries, big and small, rich and poor, can respect each other, resolve their disputes through dialogue and reduce their differences with negotiations, can humanity hope for a better tomorrow”, he said, to everyone’s surprise; we who are used to quoting “old Chinese sayings” to explain different situations. We then hear a representative

from China resorting to a Brazilian quote to explain the PRC's strategic option.

"A rooster alone does not weave a morning: he will always need other roosters. Of one that catches that cry and that he throws it to another: of another rooster that catches the cry of a rooster before and throws it to another; and that other roosters with many other roosters cross the threads of sunlight of their rooster cries for the morning, from a tenuous web weave, among all roosters", follows the work of João Cabral.

In his talk, Wanming said that for the PRC "the new model of international relations breaks with the traditional paradigm in which the strongest countries seek hegemony or engage in a zero-sum game. And it leaves behind the Cold War mentality that divides the world into friends and foes, allies and antagonists."

"We are going to open a new way of interaction between countries dictated by dialogue instead of confrontations, by partnerships instead of alliances. We do not intend to challenge or replace anyone, nor change the world, export institutional models or engage in ideological confrontations," he added.

From this perspective, the future of relations between Brazil and China cannot be reduced to the fact that we are major food producers, while the PRC is a huge consumer, due to the obvious fact that it has about one and a half billion inhabitants.

In simplified terms, considering the ongoing rise of China, it is worth remembering that most of that country has no coastline, which leads the country to turn much more to the land than to the ocean. "Zheng He's contribution¹², therefore, meant both the propagation of Chinese 'land civilization' (through Southeast Asia) and the internal dissemination, in China, of the experience of contact with 'maritime civilizations'. The 21st century will be directed towards the Oceans. Ocean thinking means openness and civilization, advancement and progress. It is therefore necessary to rescue the spirit of Zheng He and march towards the opening provided by the peaceful development of a broad maritime civilization".

The quote is part of Beijing's current discourse of resorting to history, to demonstrate the importance of the Oceans to the interaction between "Chinese land civilization" and overseas civilizations, while seeking to give a benign version of Admiral Zheng He's voyages, which took place 600 years ago, to Southeast Asia.

There are, however, severe critics of the current thesis of Chinese leaders, regarding the effects of Zheng He's journeys. Sectors of opinion

¹² People's Journal, in Beijing, on June 12, 2005. Article: "Why do we commemorate Zheng He?".

describe these travels as predatory and intended to create bonds of dependency between the “visited” nations and the then-mighty Chinese Empire.

The Chinese leaders intend, in any case, to rescue the aforementioned historic maritime expeditions as a record of their “peaceful intentions” and an example of the permanent search for “harmony” – as opposed to “hegemony” – in China’s relations with its neighbors to the south of China. its borders. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), therefore, strives, both internally and in terms of relations with abroad, to convince that, at all times of emergency in the country – 600 years ago, as now –, China can be strong without posing a regional or global threat.

Moreover, there is a recent Chinese proposal to create a new silk route – better known as the “belt” – as a strategic project that aims to transform Central Asia from its current condition of “landlocked” (without access to the sea) into “land-linked” (with land connection) thus providing access for Chinese products to markets and ports in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf and Atlantic Ocean.

Its implementation will undoubtedly represent the improvement of the rail network through the region, linking Iran with Tajikistan, crossing Afghanistan and reaching the border with China. In its “Eurasian land bridge” dimension, sets of railways, roads and pipelines will carry goods and natural resources, in both directions, between the port of Lianyungang, in eastern China, through Kazakhstan, in Central Asia, to Rotterdam, and between the Pearl River Delta, in Southeast China, through Southeast Asia, and also Rotterdam. It is worth remembering that the Trans-Siberian railway already exists, on the route from Vladivostok, in eastern Russia, to Rotterdam.

The PRC understands, in this perspective, a “New Silk Route” as a land connection to facilitate its supply of natural resources and the sale of products “made in China”. To this end, the Chinese intention is that this intense capillarity of railways, roads and pipelines in the area to be covered by such transport routes has military protection provided by Beijing¹³.

It is worth remembering that the aforementioned “silk route” is located in a region that separates China from Central Asia and Europe and is one of the most inhospitable in the world. Most of it is covered by the Taklamakan desert and suffers from the absence of rain and frequent sandstorms. Despite few roads, in terrible conditions, caravans made their way for centuries.

Instead of trading silks, porcelains, carpets, pearls and spices, the Chinese today sell electronics, automobiles, telecommunications devices,

¹³ Lin, Christina. “Visiting Scholar at the Center for Transatlantic Relations at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies”, – Abstract of work entitled “China’s New Silk Road to the Mediterranean: The Eurasian Land Bridge and Return of Admiral Zheng He”, October 2011. “ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security”.

while investing in ports, railways, roads, oil and gas exploration projects and mines.

“Either the East wind prevails over the West wind, or the West wind prevails over the East wind”, wrote Mao Zedong in 1957, in his language at once poetic and bellicose, to describe the bipolar conflict then existing. Six and a half decades later, the current leadership in Beijing is getting the East wind to pick up steam through “belt and road” initiatives.

What was remarkable in this cynical proposal was the fact that the first train to travel from China to the United Kingdom was called the “East Wind”, having taken 16 days to cover 12,000 kilometers, crossing Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany, Belgium, France until reaching the London area. It is estimated that he would have made the journey using one-fifth of the time that would have been spent by sea.

An extensive bibliography is available on the values, quantities and composition of the transported goods, in the round-trip crossings of the referred train. The paths that would lead “the East wind to be, today, stronger than the West wind” have also been exhaustively described, insofar as the current Chinese geopolitical gains are praised.

On the other hand, broad criticisms are aired regarding this expansion of the Chinese economy and values of Chinese governance – as a result of the project – in terms of conflicts with cultural identities, excessive gains from China and, even facilitating new channels for the spread of viruses, with possible origin in the PRC, among other harms of the same proposal.

At the moment, China is expanding its interests, seeking access to natural resources and new markets in Africa and Latin America, where, as mentioned above, it has encountered incentives and resistance.

Hence, in the suggested perspective, the Brazilian “soft power”, in the sense of the ease of “cultural negotiation” and the identification of shared interests, with a view to the prosperity of all parties, could, gradually, come to configure the “strategy of partnership” that is intended to be established between Brazil and China.

The objective is to establish a flow of free trade and exchange of ideas, in order to promote future market integration and coexistence between different forms of governance. Thus, the Sino-Brazilian partnership would aim at new “networks” of cooperation integration (“connectivity” to use the term preferred by Beijing) between the countries to be “connected by the Chinese belt and route” and by an eventual Brazilian “path”.

Prosperity Across the Atlantic

A Brazilian Foreign Policy for the South Atlantic is a priority. In

addition to the large number and density of multilateral and bilateral initiatives promoted over the course of decades, in order to consolidate in the South Atlantic a region of peace, cooperation and sustainable development, it is also necessary to consider the importance of the South Atlantic for the formation of our own national identity.

A route through which about 95% of our foreign trade passes, a source of great mineral and biological wealth, the potential of the South Atlantic is still not fully exploited by Brazilian society.

It is up to foreign policy to guarantee the conditions for Brazil to be able to make the South Atlantic space more and more a vector for development and integration. In this sense, as the largest country in the region, both in population, geographic and economic terms, it is up to Brazil to assume increasing responsibilities in the management of this space and in the concert between African and South American countries, in order to reconcile distinct national interests and maintain the region away from geopolitical tensions.

A brief historical perspective reminds us that the South Atlantic is not a “new axis” for Brazilian foreign policy, but rather a fundamental factor for the definition of national identity, a vector of integration of the Brazilian economy to the international economy, and the first form of integration of Brazil’s own territory.

It would be appropriate, however, to introduce a dynamic concept, such as “shared prosperity” to consolidate in the South Atlantic a region of peace, stability, democracy and development. The South Atlantic presents itself as an immense source of opportunities, not only for Brazil, but for all the countries that border it.

Our ability to transform these opportunities into concrete benefits for the Brazilian people depends on increasingly close coordination with the other countries in the region. Supporting the development of the South Atlantic countries, increasing the flow of intra-regional trade, and deepening technical and scientific cooperation must be objectives of our foreign policy for this very important region.

Regarding the proposal of a statement of “prosperity across the Atlantic”, it is worth resorting to the legacy left by the late Professor Severino Cabral – who died last year – with the suggestion that a future scenario should be reflected that values a “tri-oceanic”, “taking into account our influence on both sides of the Atlantic, in the Pacific and in the Indian Ocean”.

Professor Cabral proposed that “the imaginary of the consolidation of a partnership between “America Lusa” and “Africa Lusa” be revived, as a factor that would contribute to the identification of new forms of cooperation that would identify common solutions to shared problems”.

By the way, it appears that the emergence of the New Africa is present

both in the history, geography and politics of the contemporary African region, as well as in the evolution of the integration process of the South American region, which is formed from our side of the South Atlantic, in the southern subcontinental space of America. However, both regions still suffer the influence of their past in the visualization of their itineraries and their strategic trajectories in the 21st century.

In this sense, the great disputes over the Oceanic routes that led to wars in the 17th century, which began with the Dutch attack on the Northeast of Lusa America, the resistance and the Portuguese Atlantic victory followed by its defeat in the Indian Ocean, ended with the rise of maritime power. Anglo-Saxon to the status of “lady of the seven seas”.

These events came to determine the end of the Iberian Union, and the inevitable decline of Portugal and Spain. In this way, the contesting powers – Holland, England, and France – were completely successful in “unraveling and making the landmark of Tordesilhas disappear”.

As always according to Severino, “after the collapse of the Iberian colonies of the New World and, above all, the rupture of the ties of the Brazilian Empire, with the African side of the Portuguese sea, in the 19th century, a period of globalization took place by closed”.

In his view, the partition of Africa and the invasion of the Chinese Empire by European powers ushered in a new era. Given the new conditions of the world ecumene dominated by British hegemony associated with France (Pax Britannica), which was threatened with the rise of industrial powers such as Germany, Russia, the United States and Japan, “a new stage of the world order opens up and announces a wave of disputes on all horizons”.

This intensifies and thickens with the crystallization of North American hegemony over the world megamarket, which was generated after the war by the generalization of the industrial and urban system. The end of bipolarity put the foundations of this system in crisis by pointing to a new stage with the emergence of new poles of power in the world.

“In the international conjuncture experienced in this second decade of the 21st century, there is a real possibility of resuming the project of the new Brazil under new structural bases. They are constituted by the growing process of integration of the southern American space around MERCOSUL, the Andean Community and the Amazon Arc. It is a movement that, in a way, inaugurates a space already contained in the old map of the Iberian Union, responsible for the unification of the Portuguese and Hispanic Americas. In this new period, this movement reveals the emergence of a new pole of world power based on the creation of the South American mega state. A bioceanic space that will unite the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic and the Amazon basin to the Rio da Prata basin”, taught professor Cabral.

In this context, a “Bioceanic Corridor” would be of great importance, linking Porto Murtinho (MS) with Paraguay and then reaching the ports of Chile. Chinese investment, for example, in this project would have special value, in order to facilitate the flow of our commodity production, which is a large part of the trade we have with China, as well as making this production cheaper.

On the other side of the Atlantic, the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique are advancing in the direction of a development anchored in the immense natural resources at their disposal. In their trajectory towards the construction of an urban-industrial society, like their Portuguese-Brazilian sister in America, they need to integrate into the region to develop an economic, political, sociocultural, technical-scientific space capable of sustaining their respective national projects.

From this perspective, a project for the physical integration of the Southern Cone, uniting Angola and Mozambique through a complex and modern infrastructure network (transport, communication and energy), supporting both sides of Africa, is crucial for the integrated development of the economies of the South. Perhaps, there is a point of convergence between the Chinese “route” and the Brazilian “trail”, which also benefits an African “avenue”.

This project would generate a remarkable political-economic bloc for the process of the economy of the 21st century, as it would establish a link between the Atlantic with the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, generating the possibility of a “tri-Oceanic access” for the group formed by the Southern countries of America and Africa.

If the proposals with a specific order are not consolidated, in this sense, we know what are the global goals that society pursues: democracy, respect for human rights, development, social balance, protection of the environment, eradication of poverty, etc. These are the parameters from which diplomacy must define its objectives.

The reconstruction of Brazilian foreign policy is urgent to put back at the center of diplomatic action the defense of independence, sovereignty, dignity and national interests, values such as solidarity and the search for dialogue, which diplomacy helped to build as a heritage and source of pride for the Brazilian people.

Every monkey on its branch, every rooster on its perch, every country on its route, trail or avenue, in search of shared prosperity¹⁴.

¹⁴ By the way, in December 2010, former Chancellor Celso Amorim gave an interview to journalist Susan Glasser, from *Foreign Policy* magazine, with the following initial question: “What is the big idea, as far as you see it, for Brazil’s role in the world? Some people have argued that Brazil is a negotiating power, or a symbol of the emerging world order. What is

Crisis in Kazakhstan: Colorful Revolution or Popular Demonstration?¹⁵

Guilherme Geremias da Conceição¹⁶

After the disastrous withdrawal of US troops from Kabul last year, Central Asia returned to the Western media in early 2022. In January, protests possibly related to the rise in the price of liquefied gas¹⁷ erupted in the main link of convergence between Russian and Chinese conceptions for Eurasian Integration, namely Kazakhstan¹⁸. In this context, if, on the one hand, the Kazakh political system is the center of an intraoligarchic national dispute for control of the State apparatus, on the other hand, its economic space is intrinsically related to hidden international interests. Thus, in order to understand the interaction between the two levels of analysis, for whatever the possible domestic and external causes of this crisis may be, it is necessary to recapitulate the process of political-social formation of Kazakhstan and its post-1991 global insertion.

With the end of the USSR, the country of Turkish-Mongolian origin came to be governed by a complex arrangement of power distribution and control of resources between national clans, at the time symbolized by the political rise of former Soviet leader and former president Nursultan Nazarbaev, member of the country's largest tribal confederation, Elder Zhuz. This policy of concessions and favoritism, especially with regard to the right of economic exploitation of Kazakh oil and hydrocarbons, has fostered enmities with other groups, among which the representatives of the minority horde, region of the Caspian Sea coast, of where such resources are extracted.

your view?

Celso Amorim: I would say, of course it's a negotiating power. But it would be very simplistic to think Brazil always looks for consensus' sake. We also have a view of how things should be, and we tend to work in that direction. We struggle to have a world that is more democratic, that is to say, more countries are heard on the world scene – a world in which economic relations are more balanced and of course in which countries in different areas can talk to each other without prejudice”.

¹⁵ The author is grateful for Professor Paulo Fagundes Visentini guidance and João Pedro Mascarello Funck qualified revision and translation of this fragment.

¹⁶ Undergraduate from the last semester of International Relations at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS). Member of the Brazilian Center of African Studies (CEBRAFRICA) and of the Brazilian Centre of Strategy and International Relations (NERINT), Brazil.

¹⁷ Widely used as fuel and main source of domestic energy in Kazakhstan.

¹⁸ In addition to being a security pivot, Kazakhstan represents 60% of Central Asia's GDP, massive oil/gas and mineral resources and high-tech industries.

Adding to domestic resentment is the fact that, since 2019, liquefied gas has been traded electronically in Kazakhstan, which not only makes it difficult for the government to establish a price cap policy, but also explains why the country, despite being a major energy exporter, needed to increase the value of the input. This situation, aggravated by high inflation and domestic prices, can be listed as one of the side effects of the westernized “multi-vector” policy adopted by the Nazarbaev administration. However, what was most clearly observed was a response to the false promise of reordering political arrangements in the regional alliance game, a change long awaited by fractions of the national elite, especially after the negotiated arrival of Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to the presidency in 2019.

With the transition of power frustrated, Tokayev, as a member of the same tribal confederation as the ex-mandatory and member (until January of this year) of the same party, Nur-Otan, remained alongside figures close to his predecessor and gave Nazarbaev, now 82 years old, the position of arbiter of domestic politics. So what had supposedly started with the government’s decision to raise fuel prices soon began to demand complete regime change in the country under the slogan *Shal, ket!* (“Down with the old man”), so that, even revoking the increase and removing Nazarbaev from the command of the National Security Council (KNB), Tokayev necessitated to activate the mechanism for the establishment of a peace operation managed by the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)¹⁹.

As a consequence, in addition to the dissolution of the Prime Minister’s cabinet and the mass resignation of high-ranking members, former KNB directors Karim Massimov, Samat Abish and his brother, businessman and former security agent, Kairat Satybaldy, were arrested on charges of attempted coup d’état for participating in the apparently disorderly uprising of protesters²⁰. “Apparently” if we take into account that the turmoil, which started in the oil city of Zhanaozen, close to the Caspian Sea, quickly took national proportions and “spontaneously” spread towards the main financial and business center of the country, Almaty, and not to the capital Nur-Sultan, former Astana. Given this coincidence, it should be noted that, due to its geographical position (close to the Chinese and Kyrgyz borders) and economic importance, Almaty can be considered a sensitive point for regional stability,

19 In 2020, the Russian-led security structure (with the participation of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) established another peace operation in Kyrgyzstan to resolve “lightning” protests in Bishkek that, similarly to those in Kazakhstan, called for the overthrow of the government.

20 For the Kazakh government, both Massimov, a former ally of Nazarbaev, and the brothers Abish and Satybaldy, nephews of the former president, were directly involved in the riots within the KNB.

as it is also home to the largest population of Kazakhstan.

Another aggravating factor in the domestic dimension, which certainly affected part of the revolt, was the external dissemination that the demonstrations received from Muchtar Ablyazov, former president of the Kazakh bank Bank Turan Alem (BTA) and founder of the opposition party Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (QDT), now in asylum in Paris. It was also speculated that radical Islamic groups could have infiltrated the demonstrations, an argument based on the long history of activities of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in Central Asia. Which is not an absurd assumption if we take into account that the ISIS-Khorasan cells, now located near Turkmenistan, or even the Xinjiang rebels could easily move to Almaty. However, the rapid and simultaneous outbreak of protests remains without an objective explanation, even considering the domestic aspects that point to what would be the articulation of a coup carried out by forces in the Kazakh political scene.

In this sense, the heart of the matter seems to be in the international scenario closest to regional-global economic interests. Thus, while Kazakhstan for the Chinese holds the undisputed position of a bridge between Europe and Asia in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)²¹, for Russia the Kazakh state plays an even more relevant strategic (and historical) role: it is the nation with which it shares its longest land border, in addition to maintaining the language and a population of around 3 million Russians in its territory. This characteristic certainly made Vladimir Putin agree with Erlan Karin, Secretary of State of Kazakhstan, to send CSTO troops to the country, also in recognition of the hybrid character of the attack.

After all, considering the hypothesis of a coup engendered by internal or external forces, or even by both, the facts point to an unquestionable (and ill-fated) attempt to intimidate Russia, which took place (almost exactly) ten days before the round of talks on the Ukrainian question between Moscow and NATO, in Geneva and Brussels. The strategy of forcing the Russian retreat at that time, causing continued disturbance on its borders and keeping the country on two simultaneous flanks, was deliberately published in a 2019 *RAND Corporation* report called “*Extending Russia*”, where, in Chapter 4, the provision of “lethal aid to Ukraine”, the promotion of “regime change in Belarus”, and the intention to reduce “Russian influence in Central Asia” were minutely detailed items.

However, even though the international causes can also be visualized, there is, to date, no face behind the coordination of the riots or even a

²¹ Initiative launched by Xi Jinping at Nazarbaev University in Kazakhstan in 2013 and seen by the Kazakh government as a way to solidify its economy.

consensus on who were responsible for the instrumentalization of the Kazakh crisis and what their long-term objectives were. As opposition, Abyzaov could even become the newest NATO and US alliance option on the ground, but the businessman is far from a real alternative to power in the country. What's more, there are old allies nearby. Here it is worth mentioning the regional role that Ankara has been playing as a spearhead subordinated to the interests of NATO in opposition to Moscow on the various fronts on which it has been acting, from the Syrian War to the recent Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict. More precisely, it can be considered that since 2009 Turkey has approached Central Asia with the aim of increasing its local political influence, a move that stimulates the clash with the Sino-Russian concept of integration for the region²².

In this sense, a provocation to the Russians in their sphere of influence would be part of a broader movement, where not only Russia's strategic interests would be at stake, but also those of the Eurasian agenda, so that a coup d'état in Kazakhstan would doubly benefit the West. The attempt to destabilize Russia and China in their political and economic projects for the locale (BRI/EAEU/OCX), and consequently share the significant gains of the enterprise with regional allies, was quickly understood by Tokayev. Thus, the recent referendum held in Kazakhstan, which summarily removes Nazarbaev's shadow over the country²³, inaugurates a new stage in Kazakh domestic politics and symbolizes not only the strengthening of the current president as a key player in the development of regional projects, but also the victory of his alliance with Beijing and, above all, Moscow. It remains to be seen whether Erdogan's meandering approach will continue to be viewed with pragmatism by the Kazakh government and how this relationship can influence future events in the country.

22 With the creation of the Turkic Council, Ankara has been alternating Soft and Hard Power practices over Central Asia. Examples of this approach are the pressure that Recep Tayyip Erdogan established for Kazakhstan to adopt the Latin alphabet and the negotiations involving the transfer of military technology from Turkey's military-industrial complex to the Kazakh state and neighboring Uzbekistan.

23 The referendum proposed by Tokayev, approved in June by the Kazakh parliament, envisage the reduction of the president's power, an increase in the legislative role, in addition to various "sanitary measures" to isolate the former president's relatives from the party life and the country's economy.