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The Anthropocene as concept and diagnosis: implications for multilateralism and from Brazil's perspective

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The Anthropocene as concept and diagnosis: implications for multilateralism and from Brazil's perspective

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Introduction

Since the Anthropocene concept was launched by climate scientists and after the intense exchanges that followed among physicists, chemists, geologists and oceanographers at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the debate in the human and social sciences about its causes and implications has advanced significantly, bringing innovations and pointing out contradictions expressed in the proposed categories of *capitalocene*, *plantationcene*, *chthulocene* and *phallocene*. In International Relations and Foreign Policy Analysis, theoretical, methodological and empirical advances that adopt the concept and diagnosis of the *Anthropocene* as a premise are still timid. In the field of public policies, diplomatic practices and debates on the necessary reforms of multilateralism, there are great challenges, especially when analyzing Brazil's regional and global role in this scenario. In this policy paper, I argue that the adoption of the anthropocene diagnostic concept implies a profound rethinking of the role of the State in development models, but also of the institutional design and the definition of responsibilities of contemporary multilateral organizations. To develop this argument, the policy paper is organized in three sections: (i) the anthropocene as concept and diagnosis; (ii) the anthropocene in international relations, with emphasis on development and security issues; (iii) implications for multilateralism and challenges posed to Brazil.

The Covid-19 pandemic, the accelerated loss of biodiversity, the increasing deforestation rates in Brazil, and the climate emergency are political agendas that have produced intense public debates about the responsibility of the State, urban and rural development models, agricultural strategies, the role of mining, environmental-economic recovery programs (also known as Green New Deals)¹, ecological and social transition scenarios, projects to overcome the fossil fuel energy model, new patterns of consumption and lifestyles, the relationship (including necessary solidarity) between human and non-human forms of life, among many other topics.

Often, such debates start from the premise that we will have to reinvent ourselves as a society and civilization, that we will have to rethink economic and political models that allow us to overcome these crises immediately, in the short term, but also in the medium term, in order to ensure our viability as a human species in the future. As Leticia Cotrim, oceanographer and professor at UERJ, said, the problem of climate change does not endanger the planet Earth, whose resilience is confirmed with an approximate age of 4.5 billion years, but the permanence of humans (and non-human forms of life) on the planet².

The experience of the Covid-19 pandemic "is characterized by the unmistakable mark of complexity," having promoted, at the same time, "the relative suspension of economic practices and social exchanges, on all continents, by the imperative horizontal social isolation, which was duly established by the discourse of science and institutionally guided by the World Health Organization³. In addition

1. Cf. Ann Pettifor, *The Case for the Green New Deal*. Londres, Verso, 2019.

2. Cf. Leticia Cotrim's lecture at the First Cycle of Webinars of the Interdisciplinary Observatory on Climate Change (IOMC) on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocxKbFj7VHE>

3. Cf. Joel Birman, *O Trauma na pandemia do coronavirus. Suas dimensões políticas, sociais, econômicas, ecológicas, culturais, éticas e científicas*. Rio de Janeiro, Civilização Brasileira, 2020, pp. 11-12.

to the rupture, or at least radical discontinuity of practices of sociability and intersubjective ties across the planet, the pandemic has broadened and deepened the perception and the objective dimension of threats related to health and the environment, thus bringing more theoretical and political legitimacy to the Anthropocene in order to rethink, in this policy paper, international relations, the role of the State, and multilateral organizations.

The Covid-19 pandemic crisis has represented the greatest health event on the planet since the Spanish flu of 1918, with effects even more catastrophic than the HIV-AIDS pandemic that began in the 1980s. The confluence between the current pandemic, hegemonic disputes and rivalries between the U.S. and China, the recent China-Russia alliance, financial crises, and the Anthropocene as a concept and diagnosis produces something new, which leads us to reimagine the role of multilateral organizations, in general, and the United Nations (UN), in particular. As the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, reminds us in the document published in September 2021, entitled Our Common Agenda - Report of the Secretary-General, “we have been reminded of the vital role of the State in solving problems, but also the need for networks of actors stretching well beyond States to cities, corporations, scientists, health professionals, researchers, civil society, the media, faith-based groups and individuals”⁴.

In this scenario, the main argument that I try to develop in this policy paper is that the adoption of the anthropocene diagnostic concept implies a profound rethinking of the role of the State in development models, the institutional design, and the definition of responsibilities of contemporary multilateral organizations. After all, transnational threats to the security of States, to the security of populations and individuals, as well as to the security of the biosphere, cannot be truly addressed as long as the paradox that is expressed in the coexistence between, on the one hand, the modern utopia based on rigid borders between sovereign (but not necessarily responsible) nations, preventing, at least greater coordination (not to mention collective action) and effective commitments are possible at the global level, and, on the other hand, neoliberal models

of development, in which finance, big banks, and the fossil fuel complex in the international economy have ultimately functioned not only as the economic reason, but also as the moral and political reason for legitimizing individual and collective decisions, the State and economic operators, in recent decades⁵. Paraphrasing Thomas Piketty, the intellectual, institutional, and political justifications constructed to explain the inequalities and, I would add, the environmental, ecological, and climate crises, risk leading us to the breakdown of the entire social and political structure erected nationally and internationally⁶.

Therefore, the challenge that is posed is of considerable intellectual and political magnitude. The answer given, in this policy paper, is, of course, very modest, leaving me only the possibility to suggest to the readers that they interpret this paper as an invitation to reflection and to such an important exercise of political imagination in the Brazil of tomorrow. I organized this paper in three parts: first, I analyze how and why the concept of the Anthropocene challenges modernity, development and the international system; second, I discuss some of its consequences in international relations, mainly in the fields of security and development; third, as final considerations, I sketch some notes on the challenges posed to multilateralism, dialoguing with the UN Secretary General's report, mentioned above, and trying to highlight which roles Brazil could play in the context of future reforms.



The challenge that is posed is of considerable intellectual and political magnitude.



4. Quoted in p.11 of the report. Cf. <https://www.un.org/en/un75/common-agenda>.

5. Cf. Jacques Rancière, *O ódio à democracia*. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014; Wendy Brown, *Nas Ruínas do Neoliberalismo: a ascensão da política antidemocrática no Ocidente*. São Paulo, Politeia, 2019.

6. Cf. Thomas Piketti, *Capital et idéologie*. Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2019, p. 13.

The Anthropocene as concept and diagnosis

The concept of the Anthropocene was coined in 2000 by Paul Crutzen, who won the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1995, and by biologist Eugene Stoermer⁷. Since then, one of the main debates among natural scientists has been to define the beginning of what would be a new geological era, a task that has occupied the working group of the Stratigraphy Committee of the Geological Society of London. Chronologically, what would bring us closest to this beginning of the Anthropocene are the following historical events: the colonization of America (1492-1800), the Industrial Revolution (1760 to the present), the detonation of nuclear weapons (1945 to the present) and the presence of persistent industrial chemicals (1950 to the present)⁸.

Despite the controversies over the attribution of an initial date to the Anthropocene, the term made popular by Crutzen and Stoermer has serious conceptual implications: accepting the Anthropocene as a diagnosis means recognizing the, so to speak, structural incidence capacity, and the potential for human interference in the functioning of the Earth System. That is, the concept of the Anthropocene results from an accumulation of scientific evidence about the global impact of anthropogenic activities, such as the increased concentration of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the troposphere and its consequent effect on the global temperature of the planet, the acidification of the oceans and the melting of polar ice caps, among others.

The public dissemination of the term Anthropocene may be recent, but the content to which it refers is not. For example, in his famous book *The Biosphere and the Noosphere*, published in Russian in 1926 and in English in 1945, the Soviet geochemist Vladimir Vernadsky had mentioned the impacts of human activity on the environment as a powerful geological force. According to him, human civilization, its thought and work were faced with the problem of the transformation of the biosphere into the noosphere. In the social sciences, we can find important references about the contradictory relations between human society and nature

in Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, particularly in Chapter 15 of Part Three of his work⁹. The perception of the human and capitalist impacts on nature, the environment, ecosystems, and the planet is not new. What is new is the broad scientific consensus about its systemic effects, to the point that in 2021, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) made a series of unprecedented statements, such as:

- Observed increases in well-mixed greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations since around 1750 are unequivocally caused by human activities (p. 4);
- It is virtually certain that the global upper ocean (0–700 m) has warmed since the 1970s and extremely likely that human influence is the main driver. It is virtually certain that human-caused CO₂ emissions are the main driver of the current global acidification of the surface open ocean. There is high confidence that oxygen levels have dropped in many upper ocean regions since the mid-20th century and medium confidence that human influence contributed to this drop (p. 5).
- Human influence has warmed the climate at a rate that is unprecedented in at least the last 2000 years (p. 6).
- The scale of recent changes across the climate system as a whole – and the present

7. Cf. Paul J. Crutzen & Eugene F. STOERMER, *The Anthropocene*. *Global Change Newsletter*, n. 41, pp. 17-18, 2000.

8. Cf. Mark Maslin, *Climate Change: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

9. Cf. Karl Polanyi, *A Grande Transformação*. Lisboa, Edições 70, 2012 [1945].

state of many aspects of the climate system – are unprecedented over many centuries to many thousands of years (p. 8).¹⁰

From the moment that the social sciences began to focus on the concept and, therefore, to enrich this debate, new meanings began to emerge, highlighting limitations of the original concept, centered on the responsibility of humanity as an absolute, homogenous, and perhaps reified whole.¹¹ One of the simplifications pointed out concerns the construction of the “we” of climate change. Timothy Luke, for example, reminds us that it is a “conflicted, contested and contradictory ‘we’ that climate change activists believe must change in a cohesive, coherent, and complex fashion”¹².

There is no denying that the climate change crisis and the Anthropocene, as emergences of the present, are considered disruptive elements in the history of the connection between past and future. However dissent there may be between social scientists and natural scientists on either side, there is broad agreement that the Anthropocene appeals to our sense of human universals, while challenging our capacity for historical understanding by recognizing the end of the distinction between natural and human history. However, there is a necessary problematization of the historical sense of humanity, because integrating this perception of the human as a geological agent implies rethinking the senses of freedom and prosperity, as well as the historical processes of construction of inequality and difference¹³. Thus, as a critique and also as a constitutive element of the Anthropocene crisis, signifiers such as capitalocene, chthulocene, plantationocene, phallocene, among others, have emerged that have sought to fill the conceptual gaps of the Anthropocene by pointing out its deficiencies. In

a summarized and very schematic way, we will define each of these concepts that contradict and complement the Anthropocene as a diagnosis of the crisis we are going through.

The capitalocene locates the cause of the current climate change emergency in the economic system (capitalism) and abandons the broad and universal conception of humanity to historical and spatial concepts of class, inequality, and asymmetry of power, which anchor specific discourses and practices of domination, exploitation, and oppression. A significant part of humanity is not part of the fossil economy (of oil and gas consumption) and still consumes energy from coal, wood, and organic waste for domestic purposes. There are varying degrees of vulnerability at all scales of human society, which is why thinking only in terms of the “human species” could lead to mystification, explained by the early leadership of the natural sciences in public debates about the Anthropocene¹⁴.

The concept of chthulocene, on the other hand, proposed by Donna Haraway, places different species on a non-hierarchical plane and appeals to the various tentacular forces and powers of planet Earth, making solidarity between species (or between human and non-human forms of life) the core of her critique of the inadequacy of the anthropocene (very human-centric)¹⁵.

At least two relevant contributions emanate from ecofeminist theories. First, the phallocene, which symbolizes the translation of sexual difference into inequality in the ways of producing harmful effects on the planet, such as GHG emissions. In this sense, it indicates that any alternative proposal to femicide, ethnocide, ecocide, and geocide goes through the recognition of the gender dimension in the crisis of the Anthropocene. Second, the plantationocene, which points to the devastating transformation (of nature and some humans) of farms, grasslands, and forests into extractive and slave labor-based plantations, which continues in global industrialized meat production, monoculture agribusiness, and the

10. Cf. IPCC, Climate Change 2021, The Physical Science Basis, Summary for Policymakers. Available at: https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM_final.pdf.

11. Cf. Carolyn Merchant, *The Anthropocene and the Humanities. From Climate Change to a New Age of Sustainability*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2020; Dipesh Chakrabarty, “The climate of history: Four theses”, *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35, pp. 197-222, 2009; José Mauricio Domingues, *Mudança climática e sociologia, subjetividade coletiva e tendências de desenvolvimento*. Rio de Janeiro: Cadernos do OIMC, 2021. Available at: <http://obsinterclima.eco.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Cadernos-OIMC-02-2021.pdf>.

12. Cf. Timothy W. Luke, The climate change imaginary, *Current Sociology Monograph*, vol. 63, p. 286, 2015.

13. Cf. Pierre Charbonnier, *Abondance et liberté, une histoire environnementale des idées politiques*. Paris, Editions La Découverte, 2020.

14. Cf. James W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. Londres/Nova York, Verso, 2014; Andreas Malm & Alf Hornborg, The geology of mankind? A critique of the Anthropocene narrative. *The Anthropocene Review*, v. 1, n. 1, pp. 62-69, 2014.

15. Cf. Donna J. Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulocene. In: Moore, J. W. (ed.), *Anthropocene or Capitalocene: Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism*. Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016.

immense substitutions of multispecies forests for monocultures¹⁶.

From the radicalism that is proper to critical thinking in the social sciences and humanities, summarized here to its extreme, comes the recognition that the concept of the Anthropocene represents a great advance in the purpose of apprehending the specificity of the current geological era. However, the different dimensions of inequality, asymmetry and hierarchies need to be evidenced, for example, with respect to the main historical and current GHG emitters; the way that socially and environmentally unsustainable rural and urban development models affect individuals and social groups unequally and differently; or, still, with respect to differences in consumption patterns and lifestyles with unequal impacts on climate change and the contemporary crisis of the Anthropocene.

The political diagnosis built on the premise of the Anthropocene, intended by the criticism made in the debates about the Capitalocene, Chthulocene, Plantationocene, and Phallocene, is that we have reached a tipping point in the possible effects of the current economic system, thus changing the perspective of life (human and non-human) on Earth. Climate change is an interconnected and interdependent set of natural, social, economic, and political problems that relate to possibly unprecedented severity, scale, and complexity. On the planet we live on, climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic are associated, to our collective harm, and from local to global, with the enormous burden of toxic chemicals, the loss of ecosystems (or the reduction of their complexity), the decimation of indigenous populations, the depletion of lakes and rivers, and the acidification of oceans, generating a set of production, circulation, and consumption patterns that, linked to each other and repeated over time, can lead to system collapse. Therefore, in addition to recognizing that the Anthropocene is a new geological era in which humanity (in its inequality and difference) becomes the main driver of systemic changes, interfering with the normal functioning of nature's cycles, it is essential to remember that previous patterns of stability have been lost, that we will have to learn to "live with the problem", and that the new point of equilibrium on/of the planet must necessarily be the result of the work of this same unequal and different humanity¹⁷.

16. Cf. Anna Tsing, *Margens Indomáveis: Cogumelos como espécies companheiras*. Ilha, vol. 17, n. 1, pp.177-201, 2015; Isabella Lamas et al., *Ecofeminist Horizons, Ambiente e Sociedade*, v. 24, pp. 1-13, 2021; Maristela Svampa, *El Antropoceno como diagnóstico y paradigma. Lecturas globales desde el Sur. Estudios, Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana*, v. 24, n. 84, pp. 33-54, 2019.

17. Donna Haraway coined the expression "staying with the trouble" to refer to this state of mind that very well synthesizes the attitude expected of contemporary citizens, businessmen, and policy-makers. "Living with the trouble" is a fundamental attitude for the future development of precaution as an ethical and political principle. Cf. Donna J. Haraway, *Antropoceno, Capitaloceno, Plantationoceno, Chthuluceno: fazendo parentes. ClimaCom Cultura Científica - pesquisa, jornalismo e arte*, v. 3, n. 5, 2016; Olivier Godard (ed.), *Le principe de précaution dans la conduite des affaires humaines*. Paris, Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1997.

The Anthropocene, the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change in international relations

Realistically speaking, the Covid-19 pandemic showed the genuine contemporary significance of risks and threats to the survival of humans on the planet, generating important interconnections between the development and security agendas in international relations. No borders, no military capacity, and no economic power was able to stop the worldwide spread of the new coronavirus.

Moreover, the complexity of the pandemic linked local and global scales, natural and social conditions, which means that it is necessary to understand where these scales and conditions intersect in order to be able to analyze its spatial, economic, political, and sociological consequences. The new coronavirus alone has not discriminated against individuals, but preexisting cultural, social, political, and economic inequalities ensure that the virus discriminates against the individual and collective conditions of experiencing the pandemic in different societies and in diverse contexts.

The virus did not spread through virgin territory. There were variations in national trajectories, demonstrating that Covid-19 evolved in realities shaped by previous social, political, and economic systems. The Covid-19 pandemic further exposed the stark reality of social and economic inequalities, in Brazil and around the world. The construction of human vulnerability diagnoses has forced us to recognize “vulnerability” as a process in which health, environmental-ecological, cultural-educational, and political-economic issues have been dialectically intertwined¹⁸.

Unlike climate change, where subjectivity in risk perception, access to information, climate data modeling, and data interpretation play a central role in constructing anthropogenic climate change as a political problem, Covid-19 has been an individual and collective experience that occurs without many actors intervening in the primary construction of its social representation. Climate change appeals to long-term social

representations of sustainable livelihoods on the planet, while Covid-19 presents the threat of rapid death to known people, health workers, and family members, with a more direct understanding of the emergency.

The relationship between climate change and security, despite being widely disseminated in academic debates, continues to be contested in the practices of States, not being converted, even today, into effective policies of pro-climate strategies at the global level, despite the countless promises made in different COPs since 1994 (Conference of the Parties, in reference to the signatory States of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change - UNFCCC - signed in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992). Economic interests, especially those linked to the oil and gas industry and to backward (but still the numeric majority) agribusiness segments, play a central role in this imperfect connection between security, development, and climate change.

This has little to do with the alleged lack of scientific consensus for denialist and obstructive climate policy networks, including in Brazil¹⁹. In fact, it is increasingly difficult, from the scientific point of view, to ask whether climate change is real or not, whether it is anthropogenic or not, or whether its consequences are or will be serious. All this is already established and accepted almost unanimously by the scientific community. What is still being debated is the scale of the phenomenon, the speed at which temperatures

18. Cf. Jesse Ribot, Cause and response: vulnerability and climate in the Anthropocene. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, v. 41, pp. 667-705, 2014.

19. Cf. Carlos R. S. Milani, Guy Edwards et al., Is Climate Obstruction different in the Global South? Observations and a preliminary research agenda. Brown University, The Climate Social Science Network, Position Paper n. 4, 2021, available in: <https://www.cssn.org/is-climate-obstruction-different-in-the-global-south-observations-and-a-preliminary-research-agenda/>

will rise, the rate at which glaciers will melt and sea levels rise, the way in which global warming will aggravate ocean acidification, among many other uncertain aspects. For this reason, the IPCC has used “scenarios”, from the most optimistic to the most pessimistic, for public and private managers, decision-makers and society in general to design public policies of mitigation and adaptation to the phenomenon, from local to global, in the short, medium and long terms.

Regardless of the singularities of each phenomenon, however, what would bring the risks associated with climate change and the threats brought by Covid-19 closer to the global stage in terms of international relations? How do climate change, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the diagnosis of the Anthropocene affect international politics, in particular the development and security agendas?

Without claiming extensiveness, I answer these questions around just five points. First, climate change and pandemic threats are global and systemic. They are not the only phenomena of this nature: financial crises, for example, have this same characteristic. Such transnational threats lack an internationally articulated response by States in the intergovernmental system (and multilateralism) and reinforce the disjunction between the phenomenon and the locus of political responsibility with the capacity to produce effective solutions. They affect identities and the construction of loyalties in international relations: national identity remains important, but climate change intensifies relations in which other identities emerge significantly, such as gender identities, indigenous identity, race identity, as well as cosmopolitan environmental identity²⁰.

Second, different actors have varying responsibilities in the causation and implementation of adaptation and mitigation policies. Sometimes they may be considered “intruders” in multilateral negotiations, but the nature of these phenomena leads one to think of the expanded responsibility of the actors, and no longer of international relations centered only on the diplomat and the soldier, as Raymond Aron²¹ would say. Corporations in the business world have a central role in production, technological innovation, and the circulation of goods and

services, aiming to build future scenarios of a low-carbon economy. Progress and devastation have always gone hand in hand in the construction of the economic system throughout history, but today it is no longer possible to maintain the dynamics of business as usual. Companies play a dual role: they are the main producers of GHGs, but they are also the main sources of technological innovation²². Individual consumers and individual citizens, NGOs, social movements and transnational activist networks, religious organizations, the media (traditional and social), scientists from all fields, as well as subnational entities and different state political institutions, among others, should be called upon to assume responsibilities in the multilateralism to be built.

Third, both the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change are issues that affect different sectors of public policy. Situated between environmental debates and economic, energy, and security debates, but also involving collective health issues, both refer to different institutions at the national level (different ministries and secretariats) and at the multilateral level (World Health Organization, United Nations Environment Program, United Nations Development Program, etc.). How to deal with complex issues with sectorial regulations and responsibilities still remains a challenge to be overcome. The concept of “one health”, associating the health of humans with the health of animals and a healthy environment, for example, is an interesting attempt to generate interconnections in the field of public policies, contrary to excessive specialization and sectorialization²³. The politics of climate change and the specificity of the regime (versus the transversality of causes and effects) do not keep up with the multidimensionality of the problem. As Matías Franchini, Eduardo Viola and Ana Flávia Barros-Platiau say, “*the fundamental limit of international politics has been to assimilate the environmental agenda as a series of specific problems and not as a complex system, in which everything is connected and must be managed cooperatively in a long-term perspective*”²⁴.

20. Cf. Josepha Laroche, *La loyauté dans les relations internationales*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001.

21. Cf. Raymond Aron, *Paz e Guerra entre as Nações*. Brasília: FUNAG; Editora Universidade de Brasília, 2002.

22. Cf. Christopher Wright & Daniel Nyberg, *Climate Change, Capitalism and Corporations: Processes of Creative Self-Destruction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

23. Cf. Tânia S S Chaves & Nancy Bellei, SARS-COV-2, o novo Coronavírus: uma reflexão sobre a Saúde Única (One Health) e a importância da medicina de viagem na emergência de novos patógenos. *Revista de Medicina* (São Paulo), v. 99, n. 1, pp.i-iv, 2020.

24. Cf. Matías Franchini, Eduardo Viola & Ana F. Barros-Platiau, The challenges of the Anthropocene: From international environmental politics to global governance. *Ambiente & Sociedade*, vol. 20, p. 188, 2017.

Fourth, the crises of the Anthropocene refer to politically non-consensual conceptions of justice. The diffuse nature of agency and responsibility makes building such a fundamental consensus even more challenging, for example, in trying to combine conceptions centered on efficiency and others on distributive justice in climate justice²⁵. How can the costs related to reducing GHG emissions be equitably distributed among states? Which countries should take responsibility for helping the most vulnerable populations adapt to the harmful effects of climate change? Should we, as humanity, consider compensation policies for the losses caused by rising sea levels and extreme events (hurricanes, typhoons, floods)? Answering such questions involves understanding how to share the climate burden and therefore leads us to debates of a descriptive nature (in understanding the phenomenon) and a normative nature (of political and moral philosophy, that is, how the problem should be solved)²⁶.

In fifth place, the political diagnosis of the Anthropocene leads to the amplification of the meanings of threat, risk, damage and insecurity. From narrow conceptions of security (national and territorial, guided by the threat of invasion by enemy armies) we pass to the need for an expanded conception of global human security, integrating the security of states (and their territories), of populations and societies, but also that of ecosystems and non-human forms of life. The mobilization of the lexicon of security in the definition of global human security (or planetary security)²⁷ can generate criticism of what would be the processes of “securitization” of the health and environmental agendas²⁸. What is relevant, I believe, is not to lose sight of the necessary connection between the security and development agendas. The focus on health threats and risks associated with climate change as a global human security problem can give rise to new metrics for screening and monitoring national and international public policies. Policies that increase global human insecurity by reducing people’s access to water, sanitation, health services, and basic needs should be negatively evaluated in development indicators. Policies that compromise population security and the safety of vital biosphere systems should also be negatively valued. This is particularly important now that the Human Development Report has begun the process of revising the human development indicator to include the ecological dimension and the environmental dimension in its basket of development indicators²⁹.

25. Cf. Denis Arnold (ed.), *The Ethics of Global Climate Change*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011; Edward Page, Distributing the burdens of climate change. *Environmental Politics*, v. 17, n. 4, pp. 556-575, 2008.

26. Cf. Michel Bourban, *Penser la justice climatique*. Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 2018.

27. Cf. Thiago Rodrigues, Segurança planetária, entre o climático e o humano. *Ecopolítica*, n. 3, pp. 5-41, 2012.

28. Cf. Thomas Diez, Franziskus von Lucke & Zehra Wellmann, *The Securitisation of Climate Change, actors, processes and consequences*. Londres, Routledge, 2016.

29. Cf. UNDP, *Human Development Report 2020, The Next Frontier, Human Development and the Anthropocene*, available in <http://www.hdr.undp.org/en/2020-report/download>.

Final remarks: implications for multilateralism and challenges facing the Brazil of tomorrow

In the recent report published by the United Nations Secretary-General, Our Common Agenda, António Guterres recalled that the SARS-COV-2 crisis continues to affect the most vulnerable in the most poignant way, having made the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 an even more challenging global responsibility³⁰. Because of the fear it aroused, the human losses, and the socioeconomic impacts it caused in different countries, the pandemic may have contributed to increase humanity's awareness about the relevance of solidarity and collective action in the construction of global responses to health crises, which also pose a threat to human security. However, the most recent indicators show that, concretely, the pandemic has reversed many of the social achievements of recent years, especially in terms of job creation, global poverty reduction, and environmental protection³¹.

In view of this diagnosis, the Secretary-General's messages in the aforementioned document are clear:

"That is why Our Common Agenda is, above all, an agenda of action designed to accelerate the implementation of existing agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals. First, now is the time to re-embrace global solidarity and find new ways to work together for the common good. Second, now is the time to renew the social contract between governments and their people and within societies. Third, now is the time to end the "infodemic" plaguing our world by defending a common, empirically backed consensus around facts, science and knowledge. The "war on science" must end. Fourth, now is the time to correct a glaring blind spot in how we measure economic prosperity and progress. Fifth, now is the time to think for the long term, to deliver more for young people and succeeding generations and to be better prepared for the challenges ahead.

Sixth, now is the time for a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations. Effective multilateralism depends on an effective United Nations, one able to adapt to global challenges while living up to the purposes and principles of its Charter. For example, I am proposing a new agenda for peace, multi-stakeholder dialogues on outer space and a Global Digital Compact, as well as a Biennial Summit between the members of the Group of 20 and of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General and the heads of the international financial institutions. Throughout, we need stronger involvement of all relevant stakeholders, and we will seek to have an Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments".³²

In a very forceful way, the Secretary-General summarized the main challenges that States face at the domestic level (a new social contract, public policies to reduce poverty and inequality, abandoning anti-vaccine wars and anti-science perspectives in governments and societies) and at the multilateral level, the main focus of the report. He recalls that, in the face of the socially pervasive perception of existential threat that Covid-19 and the climate emergency have

30. Cf. Our Common Agenda – Report of the Secretary-General, Nações Unidas, 2021. Available in: <https://www.un.org/en/un75/common-agenda>.

31. Cf. OXFAM, *Shelter from Storm: the global need for universal social protection in times of Covid-19, December of 2020 and available in: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/shelter-storm-global-need-universal-social-protection-times-covid-19>*.

32. Cf. *Our Common Agenda*, 2021, pp. 3-4.

produced in all countries, the multilateral system remains the best available option to discuss and deal with the challenges that the Anthropocene poses to us. This is even more valid in the case of small countries and intermediate powers in the South, such as Brazil.

Four proposals formulated in the document are noteworthy. First, the defense of the global commons and global public goods as a priority agenda in defining the role and institutional design of the United Nations. According to the report, *global commons* generally refer to natural or cultural resources that are shared and benefit everyone, including the high seas, the atmosphere, Antarctica, and outer space. *Global public goods*, on the other hand, are understood as those goods and services provided by and for the benefit of all societies to the extent that they cannot be adequately provided by one state alone, as exemplified by effective policies to respond to the climate emergency and the Covid-19 pandemic. Global public goods can be defined as those whose benefits cross borders, whether they are borders between states, generations, populations, or between rich and poor. The eradication of smallpox in 1977 is a good example: once the disease was defeated, all of humanity enjoyed the benefits, both present and future generations, richer and poorer classes. The debate around global public goods brought two implications to the development agenda that are worth highlighting: the need to increase dialogue and cooperation between states and non-state actors, on the one hand, and the configuration of an agenda of major themes that involve communication between three main areas of UN agencies, programs, and funds: development, human rights, and security.

In the case of these two categories of goods, the multilateral system is not yet prepared to respond effectively and fairly to crises in global public health, the global economy, and the financial system, or to planetary crises related to climate change and accelerated biodiversity loss. Moreover, in order to strengthen the governance of global commons and global public goods, instead of creating new institutions, it would be important, according to the UN Secretary-General, that member states agree to increase the funding of multilateral bodies through budgetary resources, thus ensuring independence and capacity for the different UN agencies to fulfill their respective mandates.

Second, the Secretary-General proposes a set of institutional changes within the UN. The main one is the transformation of the former Trusteeship Council, whose activities were suspended in 1994, into a kind of intergenerational Council for the governance of the global commons. Furthermore, based on the principle that the United Nations also needs to adapt in order to respond to contemporary challenges, he proposes that its agencies assume a leadership role in the production and dissemination of data and scientific evidence with a view to informed and rational decision making, maintain their ability to convene debates on major global issues and be open to the participation of new actors within their decision making spaces:

The United Nations has a universal convening power that gives all 193 Member States an equal voice, increasingly joined by representatives from the private sector, civil society and academia, along with a unique role in safeguarding global values, ethics and norms and a global presence and technical expertise. As some spaces of decision-making become increasingly exclusive, there is a need to safeguard a space for all voices (p. 72).

Another institutional proposal is to expand the use of universal periodic reviews in the monitoring and evaluation of member states' commitments on health and climate change, as already occurs in the field of human rights. Such tools can be important to improve transparency and accountability systems of states to their respective societies and among states themselves:

While international law is essential in delivering global public goods and I have called for a renewed commitment to its development, we also have ways to encourage mutual accountability through other frameworks, including peer-review models (such as the universal periodic review) and mechanisms for sharing good practices and transparent data gathering (p. 68).

Thirdly, the Secretary-General emphasized the relationship of solidarity needed between different generations in order to ensure future scenarios of peace and development:

Young people today, along with future generations, will have to live with the consequences of our action and inaction.

Today's generation of young people is distinct from future generations. However, it is time to find ways to give more weight to their collective interests and to make our systems work to safeguard their futures. This renewal of solidarity between generations is an integral part of the other actions identified in this report, otherwise the social contract that shapes the future will be designed exclusively by those who will not live to see it realized (p. 39).

In defending the principle of intergenerational equity, António Guterres proposes to increase the political responsibilities of youth, even proposing the creation of a “youth in politics” indicator that measures the openness of political spaces in different regions of the planet, the creation of a High-Level Advisory Council that would help the UN in the preparation of a Future Summit, as well as the appointment of a Special Envoy for Future Generations, following a proposal by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, formulated in 2013. This Special Envoy would represent the interests of future generations in the different UN agendas, acting across the different programs and agencies. Finally, he also suggests the development of “Laboratories of the Future”, aimed at the production of knowledge and the international circulation of good practices that bring together the short and long term, that bring different generations into the dialogue, and that promote strategies to adapt today's world to the challenges of the future.

Fourth and finally, Our Common Agenda outlines proposals for changes in the current development models by recalling that:

A renewed social contract at the national level and stronger intergenerational solidarity must find expression in a new deal at the global level. The COVID-19 pandemic reminded us that we are more interconnected and interdependent than ever before in human history. International cooperation mitigated some of the harms caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the response to the pandemic also exposed serious gaps in the effectiveness of multilateral action when it was needed most (p. 48).

Among the economic and political proposals are the holding of biennial summits between the

G-20 and ECOSOC members for states to discuss trade agendas, tax avoidance and illicit financial flows, tax solidarity measures to be applied to large corporations, and a review of the role of multilateral development banks. The premise underlying the Secretary-General's economic proposals is that the transition to a green economy would involve abandoning subsidies to fossil energy (oil, gas, and coal) producers and suppliers and implementing the \$100 billion a year solidarity package for climate adaptation projects in developing countries. In supporting his proposals, the Secretary-General points out some current inconsistencies in the economic system: for example, air pollution from fossil fuels and other pollutants is responsible for the deaths of 7 million people each year, with costs of \$5 trillion annually; the transition to a green economy would produce direct economic gains of \$26 trillion and generate 65 million new jobs by 2030 (p. 55); G-20 members provided more than \$3.3 trillion in direct support to coal, oil and gas industries between 2015 and 2019 (p. 58).

In light of the proposals made by the UN Secretary General and summarized here, what role could be imagined for Brazil in the future? Counting on its diplomatic capacity, Brazil could rebuild solidarity and cooperation ties with its South American neighbors and with other countries that exercise political leadership in the multilateral South, in order to once again play its role as a mediator and build bridges and normative and institutional proposals in the scope of the UN. A megadiverse country, endowed with strategic resources and with a recognized historical trajectory in the defense of civilizational and universal values that are so dear to UN multilateralism, Brazil could lead the construction of a South American Green New Deal, in dialogue with the main powers that today play a central role in this debate (the European Union, the U.S. and China)³³. Despite the climate denialism that nourishes the proposals and actions of the current Brazilian government, at the recent COP-26 in Glasgow, Brazil presented the largest delegation (with 479 members, behind the British hosts) among all the 195 and 2814 bodies represented, including ample representation from civil society and traditional populations. However, Brazil was one of the few among the

33. With the support of the Climate and Society Institute, federal congressman Alessandro Molon presented, during the COP26 in Glasgow, a green development proposal for Brazil, which can be a first step towards this very relevant debate in the country. Cf. Alessandro Molon, *Green New Deal Brasil*, novembro de 2021, 28 p.

G-20 members not to be represented by its head of state, alongside countries such as South Africa, Saudi Arabia, China, Mexico and Russia.³⁴

A fundamental point: thinking of Brazilian diplomatic action also as the international projection and the continuity of domestic policy, several tasks still await a future Brazilian government in the environmental and sanitary fields, in the fight against illegal deforestation, in the valuation of science and in the redefinition of relations between "*developmentalism*", energy transition and ecological and social scenarios of sustainability. The debate on agricultural development and the strategic function of the biomes (Amazon, Pantanal, Cerrado) in the generation of wealth for the local communities, for the Brazilian society and not just for the big investors, needs to be at the center of the attention of the Brazil we want in the future. Only a socially, economically, ecologically and politically renewed Brazil, which reaffirms its commitment to democracy, science and international cooperation, will be able to dialogue with the great world leaders around the issues posed by the United Nations Secretary-General in *Our Common Agenda*.

34. It is curious to note that, as a whole, the oil and gas corporations had a large number of participants. British Petroleum sent 4 representatives, Chevron 3, Shell 5, and Petrobras also 3. If it were a single delegation, the oil companies together would be the largest delegation at COP-26, with more than 500 members, according to the organization Global Witness. Cf. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/press-releases/hundreds-fossil-fuel-lobbyists-flooding-cop26-climate-talks/>.



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