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Peace treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan

Interview with Bruno Cardoso Reis

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Au Kam San detained by Chinese authorities: the decline of democracy in Macau?

By Rodrigo Fialho

On the 30th of July, Chinese authorities detained former Macanese legislator Au Kam San. The pro-democracy figure is suspected of violating the National Security Law for alleged collusion with “anti-China” forces. Human Rights Watch and the European Union have condemned the arrest.

The detention and the detainee

On the website of the Government of the Macau Special Administrative Region (MSAR), the following statement was published: “Today (31/07), the police handed over to the Public Prosecutor’s Office a Macanese individual who allegedly colluded with external anti-China forces; following a preliminary investigation, he has been placed in preventive detention on suspicion of violating the Law on the defense of state security.”

The individual in question is Au Kam San, a 68-year-old man with Portuguese citizenship, former member of the Legislative Assembly of Macau, and a recognized pro-democracy activist. A primary school teacher by training, he became an activist after the Tiananmen Square Massacre (1989), in which thousands of Chinese citizens marched peacefully to the square in Beijing in protest against the government. The Chinese

Communist Party (CCP) deployed the armed forces, who violently repressed the demonstrators, killing from hundreds to thousands of civilians. For 30 years, the Alliance for the Development of Macau, a political party with which Au is affiliated, has held annual vigils in memory of the victims. Kam San has thus been a prominent figure in Macau’s small civil society despite facing workplace harassment and even physical intimidation.

The official reasons

Au Kam San is accused by the Chinese Public Prosecutor’s Office of violating Article 13 of the National Security Law, which prohibits “establishing links with organizations, associations, or individuals outside the MSAR for the purpose of committing acts against state security.” Authorities claim that since 2022, Au collaborated with an “anti-China organization outside the MSAR” that has provided “a large amount of false and provocative information, intended for public display abroad and online on social media.” They further allege that Kam San “has maintained long-term contact with several anti-China entities outside the MSAR, repeatedly supplying them or their media outlets with false information about Macau for propaganda purposes, inciting hatred



Au Sam Kan, former MP arrested (source: Eduardo Leal, AFP)

among Macau residents and even among people abroad who are unaware of the truth about the Government of the People's Republic of China and the MSAR (...)." Authorities also suggest that the former legislator interfered with Macau's legislative elections in 2024.

It is known that in mid-July, Kam San criticized, in an interview with *Lusa*, the disqualification of two candidate lists from the Macau legislative elections by the electoral commission. "The fact that the authorities have once again resorted to severe disqualification tactics shows that, under the pretext of the principle 'Macau governed by patriots' (...), the Legislative Assembly has to be 'perfected' to the point where only pro-establishment/pro-Beijing candidates are allowed to take part in the elections." Following what authorities described as "a long investigation and accumulation of evidence," Au was arrested at his home on the 30th of July. He is currently being held in preventive detention without bail.

The reaction

Human Rights Watch (HRW), an NGO that advocates and reports on human rights issues, has called for the activist's "unconditional release." HRW's China director, Maya Wang, stated: "The arrest of Au Kam San reflects the growing repression that is spreading from China to Hong Kong and Macau under Chinese leader Xi Jinping," adding that "Macau authorities must stop suppressing peaceful criticism (...)."

The European Union's External Action Service also condemned the arrest. A spokesperson for the body declared: "This event deepens existing concerns about the ongoing erosion of political pluralism and freedom of expression in the MSAR. The EU recalls that respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a "central element of Macau's Basic Law and the principle of 'One Country, Two Systems.' It is essential that the protected rights and freedoms of Macau residents continue to be fully respected, in accordance with the Basic Law of Macau, the 1987 Sino-

-Portuguese Joint Declaration, and Macau's commitments under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights."



Tiananmen protesters beside the wreckage of armoured vehicles (source: Menny Ceneta, AFP)

In response to these and other criticisms, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Commission in Macau urged the EU to stop making "groundless accusations" about Macau's affairs and to refrain from interfering in the internal matters of the territory and China. Portuguese Foreign Minister Paulo Rangel has stated that he is "closely following the case."

Democracy in China

Macau was a Portuguese colony from 1557 to 1976, remaining under Portuguese administration until 1999. In 1987, the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration was signed, establishing the transfer of the territory's administration to China on the 20th of December, 1999. It also served as the foundation of the MSAR's Basic Law, which guaranteed fundamental rights and freedoms after 1999.

Alongside Hong Kong, Macau is one of China's two Special Administrative Regions, governed under the "One Country, Two Systems" framework. This principle was proposed by Deng Xiaoping during negotiations over the handover of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China in 1997, and it meant that the regions would maintain some political autonomy and freedom to continue practicing capitalism for 50 years after the handovers, despite China being a socialist country. The same principle was later applied to Macau.

Democracy in China, existing, is certain to differ from the Western concept of the term. China's so-called "people's democracy" is a one-party system, with the CCP playing a dominant role in the electoral process and candidate selection. A vast censorship apparatus is also in place. In this context, Hong Kong and Macau could be seen as democratic enclaves within the Asian giant.

However, as an article published by HK Magazine in 2009 recalled, Winnie Yeung lamented the lack of democratic spirit in Macau, in contrast to Hong Kong. "'Democracy' is not a particularly popular word in Macau. You never hear about freedom or universal suffrage. You never read about these issues in the newspapers. When we stopped people on the streets of Macau to talk about democracy, we were pushed away, ignored, or silently stared at most of the time. This may come as a surprise. After all, Macau is a Special Administrative Region and former colony like us, and also follows

the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle. However, while Hong Kong has had a strong democratic voice since the handover, with countless newspaper articles written on democracy, Macau has remained silent on the matter."

Another source affirms that: "In Macau, there is little pressure for the democratization of the local political system. Even among legislators elected

by direct vote, most are tied to business interests (including the gaming industry), traditional pro-Beijing associations [among others] (...)." As such, the few voices that call for democracy in the territory, like Au Kam San, play the role of David against a Goliath that enjoys widespread local support, provoking only rhetorical concerns from some members of the international community. Democracy in Macau is losing ground without leaving much regret behind.



Macau skyline, also known as the Las Vegas of China. (Krystof Hajek)

Changes in the *Lei dos Estrangeiros* and the reaction of CPLP

By Maria Neves

The Portuguese Parliament passed, last June, a bill seeking to redefine Portugal's migration policy, which has sparked tensions in bilateral relations with CPLP countries.

The legal framework according to the Constitution of the Portuguese Republic

The Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (1976) enshrines a set of articles that generally ensure legal equality between Portuguese citizens and foreigners. In the case of the CPLP, the Constitution provides, in Article 15, paragraph 3, a special status for citizens of Portuguese-speaking countries: *"Save for access to appointment to the offices of President of the Republic, President of the Assembleia da República, Prime Minister and President of any of the supreme courts, and for service in the armed forces and the diplomatic corps, rights that are not otherwise granted to foreigners are accorded, as laid down bylaw and under reciprocal terms, to the citizens of Portuguese-speaking states who reside permanently in Portugal"*.

The *Lei dos Estrangeiros*

The *Lei dos Estrangeiros* (Foreigners' Law in English) is legally based on *Lei No. 23/2007* of 4 July, which *"approves the legal framework for the entry, stay, exit, and removal of foreigners from national territory"*, and has since

undergone several amendments. Thus, it is not a single statute but a legislative framework that incorporates all subsequent changes.

At the first debate on the most recent amendment, during a plenary session of Parliament, the vote revealed an ideological divide: the Socialist Party, LIVRE, Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc in English), People-Animals-Nature Party, Portuguese Communist Party, and Juntos Pelo Povo (Together for the People in English), considered as left-wing parties, voted against the changes, while the Social Democratic Party, CDS-People's Party, Chega, and Liberal Initiative (which later abstained when the amendment was tabled), seen as right-wing parties, voted in favor of the amendment. Given the current parliamentary distribution, the proposal was approved.

This amendment proposal, however, was struck down by the Constitutional Court on the 8th of August 2025. It included, among others, the following changes:

Firstly, immigration visas without a contract or job offer would only be available to highly qualified individuals, with specific pathways created through higher education institutions and a dedicated channel at AIMA.

Secondly, for submitting a family reunification request (as provided for in Council Directive 2003/86/EC), additional restrictions were introduced: among these, the requirement of a minimum of two years of legal residence in Portugal before the possibility of presenting the application. In addition, adults could only apply for reunification from their country of origin, being subject to possible rejection, while minors would be able to initiate the process within Portuguese territory. It also became mandatory to prove the existence of means of subsistence and housing, excluding the possibility of resorting to social benefits. Additional measures of “mandatory integration” into Portuguese society were also foreseen, promoted mainly in the family context

Thirdly, the procedures applicable to citizens from CPLP countries were altered. Although the exemption from ALMA’s opinion remained, it became conditional on the issuance of a report from the Internal Security border unit in the visa attribution process. Nevertheless, residence permits could no longer be requested within Portuguese territory by citizens who did not already hold a residence visa. Without the application of this bill—the current prevailing situation—citizens of CPLP countries may enter with a tourist visa and subsequently apply for residence.

These changes to the law form part of a broader effort by the current Government to strengthen border control and regulate migratory flows.



Parliamentary session deliberating the changes in the Lei dos Estrangeiros (Source: SIC Notícias)

through language learning, and, in the case of minors, through compulsory attendance in the education system. At the same time, the mechanism of tacit approval was eliminated, so administrative silence no longer equaled acceptance of the application by the competent authorities.

The Minister of the Presidency, António Leitão Amaro, stated, in this regard, that there is “a clear reinforcement of requirements and restrictions for obtaining residence permits in Portugal”, while adding that this process must “always be guided by respect for the Constitution and humanist values”.

In this context, the legislative proposal was accompanied by the creation of the National Unit for Foreigners and Borders (UNEF), a specialised police unit integrated into the PSP, and by the preparation of an amendment to the Nationality Law, whose parliamentary discussion is scheduled for September.

The reaction of CPLP countries

At the multilateral level, within the CPLP, the organization's Executive Secretary, Zacarias da Costa, expressed confidence that *"Portugal will know to honor the mobility agreement"*. Said agreement, signed in Luanda on the 17th of July, 2021, and established that *"the mobility of citizens (...) should be as free as possible, except when public interest reasons impose reasonable restrictions"*. This multilateral instrument was incorporated into Portuguese law through *Lei No. 18/2022*, which granted special conditions to citizens of member states regarding the granting of visas and the simplification of administrative procedures.

It should be noted that Decreto Regulamentar No. 4/2022 highlights the usefulness of this cooperation in the sense that it is "an essential instrument for facilitating the safe entry and stay of CPLP citizens in Portugal". It therefore represents the commitment of these countries to facilitate the reciprocal mobility of their citizens, in accordance with the fundamental principles of the organization, namely bringing together geographically dispersed peoples through culture and cooperation in promoting their common language, Portuguese.

In the face of the proposed amendment to the *Lei dos Estrangeiros* in Portugal, statements began to emerge from other sovereign states belonging to the organization, which considered themselves potentially affected by the legal and practical implications that could arise from its approval.

The President of Angola, João Lourenço, considered that the approval of the proposal would represent a legal setback likely to cause "some discomfort". He recalled, in this regard, that "The Portuguese emigrated all over the world, and the least we demand is that Portugal does not treat immigrants who chose Portugal (...) worse than [the Portuguese] were treated in the countries that received them over the years".

By contrast, the Prime-Minister of Cape Verde, Ulisses Correia e Silva, argued that this decision constitutes a "sovereign and legitimate decision of the Portuguese Government", stressing that it should not be extrapolated to the CPLP mobility regime, since the planned changes would not imply "a substantial alteration that worsens the current framework".

Brazil, whose diaspora represents the largest foreign community residing in Portugal, has closely followed the entire process, seeking to ensure the defense of the rights of Brazilian citizens. Nevertheless, the Brazilian Government has favored a position of dialogue, focusing on administrative solutions that facilitate the integration

and lives of the community in Portugal. In this sense, Raimundo Carreiro, Brazil's ambassador to Portugal, recalled the relevance of bilateral relations, stating that these are the "reflection of centuries of historical, cultural, and emotional ties between our countries. The appreciation and protection of these bonds are crucial for promoting mutual development opportunities".

Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste have not, to date, issued public statements on this situation.

Entrevista a Bruno Cardoso Reis

This month we interviewed Bruno Cardoso Reis, a university professor at ISCTE-IUL, where he also directs the PhD programme in History and Security and Defence Studies. He holds a PhD in War Studies from King's College, was an assistant to the Minister of National Defence (2019-2022) and a visiting professor at Georgetown University in Washington DC for the 2024-25 academic year. Interview conducted by Bruno Oliveira.

First of all, I would like to thank you for being here today. I would like to start with the fact that in the 2024-25 academic year, you were a visiting professor at Georgetown University in Washington DC, at a time when the debate surrounding the presidential elections in the United States itself was already quite intense. How do you remember those times there?

Thank you for the invitation and congratulations on the initiative. It was a very rich, very interesting, and very enjoyable experience, despite the drama, polarisation, and radicalisation of American politics. In terms of daily life and academic life, it was a very positive experience. In general, Americans are welcoming. Washington DC is a very pleasant city, very green, with many cultural and academic events related to foreign policy, and many good museums that are usually free. For now, universities are still quite internationalised. I think the American model is preferable to ours, in that most of the courses in the degree programme are optional. In other words, there are few generic courses that are related to the core subject matter of the course, and therefore both teachers and students are primarily involved in subjects that really interest them.



Bruno Cardoso Reis (source: Fundação Francisco Manuel dos Santos)

On the issue of elections, polarisation played a central role, and I think it was felt more strongly in these elections than ever before.

Yes, but there are two aspects that are worth mentioning, so as not to give the impression that I am painting too rosy a picture of the US. The first is violence. I did not experience no unpleasant personal experiences, the most I saw was a crime scene in Dupond Circle. But it is true that there is much more gun crime than in Europe, and people are aware of that. Then there is the issue of healthcare, where everything is much more expensive, and worse, it

is impossible to know in advance the cost of a simple consultation. There is even the terrible phenomenon of medical bankruptcy in the case of serious illnesses.

In relation to this phenomenon of extreme polarisation, we first have a high level of verbal violence. From this point of view, it was interesting to follow the entire presidential election process. I was able to attend Kamala Harris' rally in Washington DC. President Trump did not hold a rally in the capital, but I was able to watch the inauguration from a distance and see the atmosphere among his supporters, as the ceremony this time was held inside Congress, and also the military parade in June. And so, it really gave me a better understanding of how American politics works, with its spectacular dimension. Americans turn everything, including politics, into a spectacle. The difference in the dynamics of campaigns compared to what we do in Europe also became more evident. For example, the issue of advertising and private funding, which is basically unlimited in the United States, is very important.

Despite everything, political polarisation is less noticeable in everyday life less than I expected, partly for geographical reasons. Political polarisation is increasingly geographical. People increasingly live in politically homogeneous neighbourhoods where they feel comfortable. For example, the city of Washington DC votes around 80% for the Democratic Party. Since 1961, when the capital gained the right to

vote in presidential elections, no Republican president has managed to win in the city. This trend is also evident in other large cities. So, in reality, the country is very divided politically, but also geographically, and in everyday life people tend to interact mainly with those who share similar ideas.

That said, we have worrying indicators of growing political violence in the last year, such as the attack on the Pennsylvania Governor's residence or the deadly attack on Minnesota lawmakers.

Donald Trump, whom we hear so much about in the news, won the 2024 presidential election, ushering in a new phase of American foreign policy. What is your assessment of the current administration in terms of foreign policy?

It has confirmed my worst expectations, has a more maximalist agenda than in 2016, and is much more effective in its implementation. In 2016, Trump did not seem to be counting on winning. He was certainly not prepared to govern and was far from fully controlling the Republican Party. There had even been pressure from some Republicans a few months before the election for Trump to step aside. Therefore, what we had was a first Trump administration still heavily influenced by moderate Republicans, committed to some of the traditional priorities of American foreign policy, such as the importance of alliances and, in particular, the Atlantic Alliance, NATO. Or even many still seeing Russia, quite rightly, as a hostile power.

All of this greatly influenced Donald Trump. This time, Trump was prepared, with young staff committed to Trumpist ideas. He even had a kind of government programme prepared by the Heritage Foundation, Project 2025.

Therefore, first and foremost, we are seeing a much more Trump-like foreign policy in this second term. How does it differ from the past? It is true that we can always find some precedent if we look far enough back. Perhaps President Andrew Jackson is the figure who most closely resembles Donald Trump; he was a populist advocate of a muscular nationalist foreign policy. But we are talking about someone who left the US Presidency in March 1837, almost 200 years ago. Trump is breaking with the priorities and practices we have become accustomed to in American foreign policy for many years and many decades, at least since the Second World War, and in some cases since the First World War or even earlier.

Secondly, it must be understood that Donald Trump is not exactly a conventional realist, that is, there is no long-term vision here, no cold, rational defence of national interests. We have improvised and impulsive decisions that often seem to have very little to do with the long-term interests of the United States.

A third key aspect is that Donald Trump is an avowed anti-globalist who wants to close borders to people and goods, immigrants and imports. This very strong economic nationalism is

also associated with a logic of extraction, of negotiating on the basis of American power to extract unilateral benefits. This is evident in the negotiation of these new asymmetric trade agreements.

Fourthly, for Donald Trump, everything is short term. The preference is always for short-term gains. Therefore, any agreement can be revised if Trump thinks he can gain additional advantages.

One last fundamental aspect is that Donald Trump is the first US President who is not committed to defending constitutional democracy either internally or externally. Trump said just a few days ago: "I am the President, I can do whatever I want". He also said something like, "I don't know whether I am obliged to comply with the Constitution or not, I will have to consult my lawyers". He does not categorically say that dictatorship is a bad thing and should be avoided. I am not saying that the United States did not promote its interests before, of course it did, as all states do. Nor am I saying that previous presidents always gave priority to promoting constitutional democracies. But previous American leaders often considered it in the US's interest to promote constitutional democracy. Yes, we know that during the Cold War and beyond, for example, there were regions where certain US presidents believed that democracy would necessarily lead to communism, or to regimes hostile to their interests, and therefore pragmatically allied themselves with dictatorial states. But,

at least in public, the official position was to prefer democracies. And in many cases – Portugal in 1974-76 is a good example – where there was an opportunity to support a transition to democracy, the United States did so. With President Trump, this question does not even arise. He is very clear in saying so, for example during his visit to Saudi Arabia, which was significantly his first official visit in both his first and second terms. Donald Trump seems to prefer an international order in which the great powers and the leaders of the great powers, such as himself, basically could impose their interests as they saw fit without legal, internal or external constraints. All of this really represents a very important shift in American foreign policy. Ultimately, it is an increasingly personalised foreign policy, extremely focused on Trump's protagonism and personal interests.

Trump's selfishness is often seen as an attack on democracy, but can the courts or any other mechanism serve as a brake?

The American political system is known for the importance of checks and balances. The American constitution was designed to prevent exactly what Donald Trump says is natural, to prevent any president from having all the power to do whatever he wants without effective institutional opposition. The problem is that, unlike in his first term, Trump now controls the Republican Party. Through it, he controls Congress. And in the Supreme Court, he has a majority of six conservative judges, including three he appointed, out of a total of nine. Therefore, the problem is that a

number of institutions that are supposed to counterbalance the President's power are very unlikely to actually function as effective checks on his power. The Trump administration has often challenged the decisions of lower courts in practice, betting on going all the way to the Supreme Court, with the idea that it will give him winning the case. I don't know if this will always be the case. What I do know is that Donald Trump has shown a willingness to systematically test and, if possible, exceed all traditional limits on presidential power in the United States.

I am not saying that American constitutional democracy is dead. But increasingly we are seeing hybrid regimes around the world, less so in Europe, which retain some constitutional and democratic elements, but with an excessive strengthening of executive power, a very aggressive stance against the opposition, elections that raise more and more doubts as to whether they are fully free and fair, and, in short, a general abuse of state power. And it seems clear that this political model, embodied by leaders such as Orbán, Erdoğan and Modi, appeals to Donald Trump and his supporters. I heard Steve Bannon, one of the main nationalist-populist ideologues of Trumpism, say at a conference, and I am paraphrasing from memory, that we will win in the Supreme Court and in Congress, but if we do not win, the President must govern with emergency powers, because we are in an unprecedented crisis and because Trump is an exceptional President.

Next year, in 2026, we have the midterms in the US. What should we expect? Will Trump and the Republican Party be punished?

They will be a very important test, to the point that recently California's Democratic governor, Gavin Newsom, will have to decide whether Trump will allow the elections to take place or use some pretext to postpone them. However, in November 2025, we should have elections in Virginia, New York and New Jersey. That will be the first test. But the real test, which could alter the balance of power in Congress, is potentially the midterm elections in November 2026. Elections are held in the United States for the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate every two years. This is deliberate, it has to do with the model of checks and balances, that is, to make it difficult for a President to have a stable majority of the same colour in Congress. And, in fact, it often happens that the party in the presidency loses its majority in Congress. It is true that Trump's popularity is falling, but he also has a very loyal and highly mobilised electorate. The Democrats also have very low popularity ratings. In other words, for things to change, it is not enough for Donald Trump to lose popularity; the Democrats need to win votes and have more competitive candidates. However, the Democrats are very divided on what to do – move further to the left, move further to the centre – to respond effectively to Trump. History would point to a defeat for Trump, but we must be cautious. There are many factors to take into account, including, in recent weeks, we have seen the efforts of Trump

supporters to win more votes at the ballot box by changing electoral districts, particularly in Texas. In short, there is still more than a year to go, and in American politics that is an eternity. What seems clear to me is that even if Trumpism loses the midterms, that will not be the end of the matter. If we look at other countries with leaders of the same type, this kind of electoral defeat has sometimes led to a reinforcement of the tendency to cross red lines and challenge the limits of constitutional democracy. It is deeply rooted in the US, but nothing is eternal.

And then there are still two years left until the end of his term. A lot can happen between now and then.

Exactly. There are even supporters of Donald Trump, despite the fact that he is far from young and at that age health can deteriorate very quickly, as we have seen with Biden, who argue that he should run for another term, which would be clearly unconstitutional, violating the 22nd amendment to the constitution. That would really be the end of the American constitutional order as we know it. But, for example, Steve Bannon once again advocates this possibility.

Moving on to another geographical reality, now to Europe, the conflict in Ukraine has brought to the fore efforts to rearm Europe, but what are the challenges facing European countries in this regard?

Essentially, the challenge we face is to turn words into actions. Transforming intentions into investments, into

acquisitions of military capabilities with sufficient speed. This also implies that this increase in the level of defence investment must be politically and economically sustainable. Furthermore, it must be much better coordinated between European countries than it has been in the past. European countries as a whole already spend almost as much on defence as China, but they do so in a fragmented manner. In my view, this requires a reform of the arms procurement system. There are too many stages, too many red lines. This has to be resolved; in other words, it cannot simply continue to function as it does in peacetime. Obviously, I am not saying here that there should be no controls to prevent waste and corruption, but it has to be possible to simplify the process. And also to reform the entire licensing system. Recently, in Great Britain, the possibility of increasing, for example, the manufacture of explosive material needed for ammunition was discussed. It was realised that following the entire normal licensing process would take two or three years. Therefore, we need to quickly not only increase funding, but also greatly improve the investment and production mechanisms of the European defence industry. Not only so that we have our own capabilities to face a possible attack from an increasingly aggressive Russia, not only to help Ukraine, but so that we quickly have much more robust capabilities to effectively deter a future attack.

Why is the United States able to spend much more on defence than European countries? Because it is basically



Bruno Cardoso Reis (source: Observador)

investing in its own industry. It is creating well-paid jobs, setting up new companies and investing in innovation in its own country. We should follow this model.

There is a dependence on the United States when it comes to, for example, the purchase of weapons, although there is now also increasing production of European weapons, for example in Sweden and France, so there is also an attempt to break free from dependence on the United States.

Yes, that's a complex question, but important. On the one hand, in practical terms, it is not possible for the European defence industry to immediately meet all needs, and there are systems that have already been

purchased from the Americans and need to be modernised or maintained. Therefore, some level of dependence would continue to exist. And this is also something that Europe can and should use as a bargaining chip with the United States, promising to buy more or threatening to buy less. It now seems clear to me that Europe, and this was told to me by an American colleague who has worked in these areas, must be much more autonomous in this area, because, in Donald Trump's own words, it will not be able to continue to rely on the United States in the same way. Trumpism seems set to last; we do not know whether it will moderate or radicalise, but for Trump's supporters, Europe does not seem to be a priority. Moreover, any relationship of interdependence with the United States can and should be used as a weapon to extract concessions from Trumpism. Logically, Europe must reduce this dependence. Many in the United States, including Donald Trump himself, consider it excessive. Even other American leaders have long been saying, in a more diplomatic way, that Europeans should be more autonomous and invest more in their defence. However, they do not want Europeans to develop and spend on their own defence industry, which is an indispensable condition for this strategic autonomy. They prefer us to spend on the US defence industry. And they also want to continue to have a major influence in Europe. So there is an old and obvious contradiction there. On the European side, and I wrote this, for example, in the essay I wrote for the Francisco Manuel dos Santos

Foundation in 2019, and I have insisted on it ever since, there is an understandable attachment to the US security guarantee, in the sense that it is the world's greatest military power and, therefore, it is normal for Europeans to seek to maintain that guarantee. But Europeans really have to seriously consider the possibility that this guarantee is no longer what it used to be. It may even cease to function.

An essential pillar of the security architecture of Europe and the United States is NATO. We are now experiencing more tense times, so to speak, with Donald Trump. What future do you see for NATO? Will it be strengthened in the future or will it be weakened?

I would say that the logical thing would be for it to be strengthened because, ultimately, much of its original *raison d'être*, which is well summarised by its first Secretary-General, Lord Ismay, in that phrase that NATO serves to keep the Americans in Europe, the Russians out of free Europe, and Germany under control, a guarantee that there would not be another aggressively revisionist Germany, is once again very strong. I would say that this last question has lost relevance. We had the Polish Foreign Minister Sikorsky saying something like: 'I am probably the first Pole to say that I am more afraid of a weak Germany than of a strong Germany.'

But the two initial issues that justified the creation of NATO have gained much more weight than they had ten or twenty years ago, with a much more

aggressive Russia, openly revisionist, openly determined to end the existing regional and global order. And this strengthening would also be in the interest of the United States. Not only because of Russia, but because of China itself, whose containment is the Trump administration's declared top priority. Now, in China, for the first time, unlike with Japan or Nazi Germany, the United States has an adversary, a major rival power, which has structural power factors superior to those of the United States, particularly in terms of population and, therefore, also in terms of the size of its economy. It also has natural resources and industrial production capacity that are comparable or superior to those of the United States. Therefore, the United States would have every advantage in bringing together even more allies than in the past to create critical mass to confront this powerful rival, which is actively trying to create its own authoritarian and revisionist bloc with initiatives such as BRICS Plus or the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. But logic does not always prevail in politics, mainly because of internal political dynamics. We know what Donald Trump has said about NATO being obsolete. However, Trump seems to have reconciled himself with NATO, notably through massive doses of flattery, and may have realised that it would be possible to transform NATO into a vehicle for his personal influence. But with Trump, there is always the risk that he will change his mind again.

Objectively speaking, NATO and its famous Article 5 are now a weaker security guarantee than they were in the past. Article 5 is not a magic formula that, by the force of its words, solves the security problem of the Euro-Atlantic area. What makes Article 5 the most valuable and robust security guarantee in the world is, on the one hand, the fact that the United States, the world's most powerful military power, is part of the Alliance, and that it is an article of mutual defence that translates into a joint military organisation that makes it credible. In other words, all states have an interest in ensuring that this article is interpreted as robustly as possible, because they may all need it at some point. The problem is that, with Donald Trump, the United States seems to think it does not need allies. Trump has repeatedly questioned whether Article 5 is applicable, depending on the advantages he believes he can extract from his allies.

NATO may not formally disappear, but it may effectively become a kind of zombie. We will face a concrete test if the United States begins to withdraw large numbers of troops from Europe, particularly from frontline countries bordering Russia. If the Americans abandon the European countries bordering the Russian threat, no one will believe that they will send those troops back if there is actually an attack on a European country. If that happens, it will effectively be the end of NATO, even if it formally remains in place. And that possibility must be viewed not as inevitable but as possible.

Moving on now to our country, Portugal, what is Portugal's contribution to Euro-Atlantic defence structures? Since we are both in the European Union and NATO, what are our roles as members of these two organisations, and where can we improve?

This is a crucial question: what does all this have to do with us and what can we do? This new post-Trump world is more dangerous for small powers like Portugal. That said, and in relation to the most serious and direct threat to a free Europe, which is Putin's Russia, Portugal is in a relatively advantageous position in that we are very far away. If we think about the Azores, Portugal is much closer to the United States than to Russia. But of course, Europe, the European economy, is much more interconnected than it was in the past. And Russia does not only attack directly. Its attacks on NATO countries, so far, have been hybrid, indirect, in the grey area: cyberattacks, sabotage or assassinations. And in this type of attack, the weakest link can often be the most desirable target. Portugal must be very careful and strengthen its capacity to deal with this type of threat. It must immediately increase investment in new mechanisms and technologies for protecting critical infrastructure and cyber defence. It must also strengthen strategic intelligence and other means of combating terrorism, including state terrorism. In short, Portugal cannot ignore its location and geography. It is important to show solidarity with allies, but with a clear understanding of our own interests. For centuries, Portugal

has needed strong alliances to ensure its survival and security. If we do not contribute as allies to the best of our ability, others are less likely to be willing to do so if we need them. We know that at the moment, for example, this is one of the arguments used in the United States to criticise European allies in NATO. Therefore, we have to do our part, that is, to strengthen investment in defence in a sustainable way and to make that investment adapted to our geography, which is that of a Euro-Atlantic country, an archipelagic country.

Portugal's greatest contribution lies in the broad area of maritime security, i.e. helping to ensure the security of a very important part of the Atlantic. This applies not only to critical infrastructure, but also to everything related to the surveillance and control of this vital maritime area linking Europe, the Americas and Africa. This implies, for example, surveillance and control capabilities, submarine and anti-submarine capabilities, coastal defence, air defence and anti-aircraft capabilities, especially mobile and airborne systems, but where the land dimension also plays an important role. When I talk about maritime security, I am not just talking about the navy and the air force; we also need deployable land forces. Ukraine has clearly shown that mobility and investment in new technologies such as drones is, from the outset, a huge advantage in terms of military effectiveness. This also means that these resources can be used with relative ease in different parts of the national territory, including the

archipelagos, or possibly deployed to help allies to the south or east.

What political and strategic measures, so to speak, could Portugal adopt? In your essay Can Portugal Have a Strategy, you mention an interesting measure, which is the creation of a National Security Council, similar to that of the United States, for example, and even Germany recently announced the creation of its own council.

In an increasingly enlarged European Union, regional groups are very important, and the Portuguese state should focus on so-called minilateralism, smaller and more cohesive groups, whether in a group of countries further south that already exists, the MED 9, or in a group of more Atlantic countries, or a group of Friends of Maritime Safety. Portugal has also rightly argued that Europe should quickly sign the trade agreement with Mercosur and strengthen this type of partnership not only in the economic area, but also in other areas, including security and defence with other regions and major democracies, such as Canada, Australia, Japan or Brazil, for example, provided that the other party is interested, of course. Both minilateralism and these partnerships serve to respond to the growing trend towards increased regionalisation and fragmentation of the global order. It basically corresponds to the idea of trying to create and defend islands of peace, freedom and shared prosperity wherever possible, especially in areas closer to Portugal. We must continue to focus on Portugal as a bridge

between the countries of the South, both in Africa and Latin America, although I believe we need to invest more in turning this potential into reality.

With regard to the issue of the National Security Council, Portugal is actually one of the few countries that does not currently have anything like a National Security Council. There is a reason why this model has expanded greatly in recent decades: countries realised that they needed to coordinate the various instruments of foreign policy and have a permanent crisis office in a more dangerous world where threats and challenges do not target specific ministries but are cross-cutting.

We can no longer conduct diplomacy as usual in a rapidly changing world. It was really essential to have a body of this kind, which would also have another advantage: a planning and forecasting function, but working closely with decision-makers. In Portugal, we are very good at producing strategic documents and conducting prospective studies for the future, but then these documents are filed away or have very little impact on the decision-making process.

With so many conflicts ravaging the world and involving various powers, what can small countries like Portugal do to contribute to peace?

Firstly, we must be realistic about what can be done. In other words, I understand people who mobilise to demand peace in Ukraine or Gaza, and even more so in other conflicts that receive less visibility, such as Sudan or

Burma. But we also have to be consistent. Nowadays, there is a very fashionable idea that Europe and European colonialism are responsible for all the evils in the world, and in some cases this may be true. However, this is a very simplistic view, a way of looking at history that greatly exaggerates Europe's role and deprives actors from other continents of agency and autonomy. Furthermore, Europe is losing relative weight. The international system is increasingly multipolar, and history tells us that when there are transitions of power like this, there will be more armed conflicts. Europe has limited capacity to stop these conflicts. This does not mean, of course, that nothing can be done. But it is arrogant and ignorant to think that Europe can and should impose peace on the world. It is primarily local actors who must commit to peace. External actors can help to contain the damage caused by these conflicts, alleviate the suffering of civilians and mediate the conflict if the belligerents want peace in good faith.

Portugal has a very cautious diplomatic policy, and I understand that. We must

be pragmatic; there is no point in taking the lead if it leads nowhere or could be counterproductive. But the example of countries such as Norway, Switzerland and Singapore shows that small countries can be very effective in their external actions, provided they have clear priorities and focus on certain roles or areas. The fact that Portugal is not a major power means that it is unlikely to be seen as a threat by others, and this can be an asset. Skillful diplomacy can even turn weakness into an advantage. But with caution. We have recently seen violent conflicts in Mozambique as a result of internal political differences. It seems clear to me that Portugal was right to act with caution. We should not entertain the idea that, because it was the former colonial power, Portugal somehow believes it has some kind of special authority in Mozambique. We could signal that we were willing to help the parties if they so wished, but it would have to be the Mozambicans who took the initiative to involve us, and, as a rule, always in collaboration with regional organisations and other local actors. But yes, on occasion, discreetly and prudently, we can do more in certain peace processes.



Bruno Cardoso Reis

American Tariffs on India

By João Confraria

On the 6th of August, Wednesday, the U.S. administration issued an unexpected statement announcing an additional 25% tariff on Indian exports, raising the total tariff to 50%—the highest, along with Brazil, among U.S. trading partners. According to Washington, this decision was due to the Indian government's purchase of Russian oil, which reached a record \$52 billion last year. According to Donald Trump, President of the United States, "India does not care about the number of people killed in Ukraine by the Russian war machine." He further stated that India has profited considerably from the re-export of Russian oil, contributing to the evasion of sanctions imposed on Moscow.

In response to these accusations, the Indian government criticized the tariffs, pointing out that other countries also import Russian oil. The Minister of Foreign Affairs added that India "will always protect its national interest" and that the purchase of oil is due to factors in the energy market, namely the reorientation of global energy supplies to the European market after the break with Russia, and the need to ensure energy for 1.4 billion people.

In this context, Trump's favorite weapon could have a massive impact on the Indian economy, given that the United States is India's largest export market. Sakshi Gupta, an economist at HDFC Bank, predicts that the tariffs

These tariffs arise in a broader context. After months of negotiations, the two countries reached a deadlock in the trade agreement, largely due to India's reluctance to grant greater access for U.S. dairy and agricultural products, as well as its refusal to end Russian oil imports. The tariffs also come ahead of Prime Minister Modi's imminent visit to China, following several visits by Indian officials to Beijing in recent months.

According to several analysts, this rapprochement signals a possible Indian strategic realignment in the face of growing tensions with the United States. Despite border conflicts and regional power rivalry between the two giants, New Delhi needs, on the one hand, to replace U.S. markets with Chinese ones, and on the other, to safeguard its non-alignment policy against a more transactional U.S. foreign policy that is no longer willing to unconditionally support India to maintain the balance of power in Asia. Another conclusion drawn by analysts from India's growing ties with both China and Russia is that, faced with a more aggressive U.S. administration, the BRICS project could gain new momentum, deepening a political and economic initiative that challenges the Western liberal order anchored in the dollar.

Despite all these speculative assessments, Donald Trump stated that the tariffs would take effect 21



*Indian Prime-Minister Narendra Modi (left) shaking
U.S. President Donald Trump (right)*

days after the 7th of August, signaling that he is open to negotiations. On the table are the diversification of trade between the two countries and the reduction of Russian oil imports. However, according to Reuters, so far, Modi has no plans to visit Washington and is instead preparing a support package for exporting companies, including non-repayable loans.

It remains to be seen whether these extraordinary tariffs will also apply to China, since Beijing has been a major market for Russian oil. Despite Trump's threats, imposing higher tariffs on China would pose a major risk to the U.S. domestic market and to Washington's exports, with retaliation from Beijing anticipated.

80 Years Since the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: A Call to End Nuclear Weapons

By Beatriz Inocência

On the 6th of August, commemorations began for the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which took place on August 6 and 9, 1945, respectively. The events were marked by worldwide ceremonies and initiatives aimed at remembering the victims and raising awareness of the dangers of nuclear weapons.

Events of August 1945

The events of August 6 and 9, 1945, are regarded as a turning point in history. These attacks, which caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, marked the beginning of the end of the Second World War. They remain the only instances in history in which nuclear weapons were used in wartime.

On August 6, at 8:15 a.m. (Lisbon time), the United States dropped the atomic bomb Little Boy on the city of Hiroshima. Three days later, on August 9, the second attack took place. At 11:02 a.m., the atomic bomb nicknamed Fat Man, weighing approximately 21,000 tons, was dropped on the city of Nagasaki. The events of the summer of 1945 had consequences that are still felt today. They unleashed a wave of destruction and suffering, not only for the estimated 214,000 victims who lost their lives, but also through lasting

dangers caused by radiation, discrimination, prejudice, and the deep psychological scars borne by survivors.

Memory and Tribute in Hiroshima

On August 6 this year, the city of Hiroshima marked eight decades since the atomic bombing that killed more than 140,000 people.

The ceremony began with the tolling of the Peace Bell at 8:15 a.m., the exact moment of the 1945 attack, followed by a minute of silence. White doves were released, flowers laid at the cenotaph, messages of peace echoed through the Memorial Park, and speeches were delivered by officials.

Mayor Kazumi Matsui recalled the horrors endured by the *hibakusha* and urged world leaders to abandon reliance on and development of nuclear weapons, stating that "These developments blatantly ignore the lessons that the international community should have learned from the tragedies of history."

The organization Nihon Hidankyo, which represents survivors and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2024, emphasized the urgency of preserving the memories and testimonies of a generation now with an average age of over 86.

Nagasaki Remembers and Warns of the Present

Three days later, on August 9, it was Nagasaki's turn to remember the attack that killed 74,000 people in 1945.

The ceremony marking the 80th anniversary was very similar to Hiroshima's. It took place in Peace Park, with the ringing of the "twin bells" of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception at the exact moment of the explosion, 11:02 a.m., followed by a minute of collective silence. Diplomats and officials from around 100 countries attended in a solemn atmosphere imbued with hope for a peaceful future.

Mayor Shiro Suzuki warned of the growing danger of nuclear war in a world once again marked by international conflicts and called for global nuclear disarmament, declaring: "Eighty years have passed, and who could have imagined that the world would come to this point? Stop armed conflicts immediately."



Commemoration ceremonies of the 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Copyright: AP Photo, Euro News)

International Context and Global Initiatives

The ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki were accompanied by various international initiatives.

Between August 2 and 9, the CGTP-IN took part in Japan in the "World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs," organized by *Gensuiko*, which discussed the role of trade unions in the struggle for peace. Meanwhile, the United Nations, through the United Nations University, opened the exhibition "80 Years Since the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Atomic Bombings", from July 11 to August 17, featuring photographs, virtual reality, and debates on disarmament and global solidarity.

In London, at St. Martin's Church, the "Paper Lantern for Peace" event was held on August 9, a gathering of light, meditation, and prayer for peace, in which paper lanterns illuminated the sky in memory of the victims.



Paper Lantern for Peace (Source: Japanese Embassy in the UK)

A Global Call for Peace

The 80th anniversary of the atomic bombings became a powerful occasion of remembrance, where Hiroshima and Nagasaki, though frozen in time, speak to the global present. The cry for peace echoed with renewed strength through local ceremonies, international debates, and cultural expressions,

reminding all that the memory of the *hibakusha* remains a critical beacon in an era marked by instability and the lingering shadow of nuclear weapons.

These are not merely commemorations of memory, but also a collective and urgent appeal for nuclear disarmament.

New treaty ends decades of conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh

By Magda Gonçalves



Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev (left), US President Donald Trump (centre) and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan (right) sign the treaty at the White House (Source: Eyepress via Reuters Connect)

After decades of hostilities surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh, a historic peace agreement was signed on August 8th at the White House in Washington D.C. between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The treaty formally ended a conflict that, since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, had provoked two open wars, thousands of deaths, and mass displacement, making it one of the most unstable points in the Caucasus. Thus, in addition to marking the end of a territorial dispute, the agreement paves the way for a new geopolitical architecture in the region, marked by the creation of a strategic transit and energy corridor with the potential to reshape connections between Europe and Asia.

This conflict has deep roots in the dispute over the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory with a majority Armenian inserted into the Azeri borders during the Soviet period. With the disintegration of the USSR, tensions quickly escalated into open war in the 1990s, resulting in tens of thousands of deaths and control of the region by Armenian-backed forces. A fragile ceasefire held until 2020, when a new war shifted the military balance in Baku's favor, allowing Azerbaijan to reclaim much of the lost territory. In 2023, a lightning offensive forced the surrender of local authorities and the near-total exodus of the armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh. This dramatic outcome opened the way,

albeit amid tensions and mistrust, for the negotiation of a comprehensive peace treaty.



Negotiations for this peace treaty thus intensified, involving multiple international mediators. Moscow attempted to preserve its role as an arbiter, but the war in Ukraine reduced its influence in the Caucasus, paving the way for a greater role for the European Union and, above all, the United States. In March 2025, after months of technical discussions on borders, transit, and security, Yerevan and Baku announced consensus on all articles of the future agreement. The decisive moment came on August 8, when Prime Ministers Nikol Pashinyan and Ilham Aliyev formalized the peace treaty at the White House in a ceremony mediated by US President Donald Trump. The act consecrated an unprecedented political commitment and translated into a clear reconfiguration of regional alliances.

Among the central elements of the agreement, the creation of the "Trump Route for International Peace and Prosperity" (TRIPP), a strategic corridor of about 43 kilometers that runs through southern Armenia and connects mainland Azerbaijan with the exclave of Nakhchivan. Although it

remains under Armenian sovereignty and subject to its laws, the territory will be leased for 99 years to the United States, which will be responsible for its development. The project includes the construction of a highway, railway, oil and gas pipeline, power lines, and fiber optic cables, transforming the route into a hub of Eurasian connectivity. It is estimated that the corridor could attract tens of billions of dollars in investment and reposition the Caucasus as a trade and energy hub between Europe and Asia.

The announcement of the treaty generated immediate reactions in the local and international community. The European Union welcomed the agreement as a decisive step toward regional stabilization, highlighting the corridor's potential to strengthen connectivity. Russia, a traditional mediator, recognized the importance of the pact, although her influence in Yerevan appears visibly diminished. Türkiye, a close ally of Baku, celebrated the creation of TRIPP as a vital link between Europe and Central Asia. In contrast, Iran expressed reservations, fearful of the direct presence of the United States along its borders.

However, within Armenia, the reception of this agreement was ambivalent: if, on the one hand, it is viewed as a historic opportunity for peace, on the other hand, it raises concerns about sovereignty and the internal political impact of the territorial concession. Its future will therefore depend on its practical implementation. The definitive delimitation of borders, the

operational management of the TRIPP, and the guarantee of security for displaced populations are immediate challenges. From a regional perspective, this peace agreement could reduce Russian influence and bring Armenia and Azerbaijan closer to Western structures. However, considerable risks remain: internal protests in Yerevan, Iranian skepticism, and the volatility of the international context, which could weaken the implementation of commitments. The durability of peace will therefore depend on the ability to translate diplomatic gains into tangible benefits for the populations and the maintenance of a stable balance between external powers.

Ultimately, the treaty between Armenia and Azerbaijan, in addition to ending one of the longest-running conflicts in the post-Soviet space, is also a diplomatic milestone with the potential to redefine the balance of power in the Caucasus. The creation of the TRIPP corridor symbolizes a commitment to regional integration through connectivity and economic development, but it also signals the entry of new strategic actors into the region, replacing old influences. While the agreement holds the promise of reconciliation and prosperity, it remains dependent on its careful implementation and the political will to sustain peace in the long term.

International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples celebrated across the globe with historic events

By Raquel Bravo

From Brasília to Gimpo, Indigenous communities highlight their resistance and crucial role in environmental preservation

On the 9th of August, Indigenous communities over the world celebrated the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, with events held across continents—from marches in Brasília to cultural celebrations in India and South Korea.

Celebrations around the world

In Brazil, this day was marked by the unprecedented event of the 1st National Conference of Indigenous Women, held in Brasília, under the theme: *"Women Guardians of the Planet For Earth's Healing"*. The conference began on the 4th of August and, over the course of three days, numerous debates were held which focused on topics such as: land rights and management, the climate emergency, public policies and gender-based violence, health and education. At the end of the event, the proposals of the participating women were delivered to the Federal Government.

The Conference preceded the 4th Indigenous Women's March, held on Thursday, the 7th of August. This movement brought music, dances, and demands of about 5,000 Indigenous women to the streets of the Brazilian

capital. The March, held every two years, gathers women from all biomes of the country to debate issues such as the demarcation of their territories, violence against Indigenous women, health, education, and well-being.



Indigenous Women's March, in Brasília (Source: Greenpeace)

Turning to the Asian continent, and more specifically to India, the importance of the 9th of August was also recognized, with celebrations held in various regions of the country, including Nilgiris, Meghalaya, Manipur Ranchi, Hyderabad, and Karnataka. These featured cultural events, rituals, political statements, and the distribution of assistance. One example of this last initiative took place in Ooty, where local authorities, in order to recognize the role of tribal communities in forest conservation, distributed financial aid and support measures, to reinforce these peoples' connection to the sustainable management of natural resources.



Cultural rituals marked the celebrations in India (Source: The Wire India)

Finally, in South Korea, the celebration of the 9th of August occurred for the second time in the country. The event was held in the city of Gimpo and was organized by the Jumma Peoples Network-Korea, a cultural organization founded by the Jumma, Indigenous people of Bangladesh, in collaboration with the Dream of Nations Myanmar Community, which brings together Indigenous people from Myanmar. Even in the diaspora, these communities underline their ancestral connection to the land and forests, carrying with them practices and values of respect for nature. During the celebrations, they emphasized the importance of preserving the tropical rainforests from which they originate, with the aim of raising awareness among Korean society about the connection between Indigenous identity and environmental balance.



Indigenous communities celebrated in Gimpo (Source: Pressenza)

Origin, significance of the celebration, and importance of Indigenous people

The 9th of August, proclaimed by the United Nations, in 1994, in recognition of the first meeting of the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations, held in 1982 in Geneva, was created to increase awareness of the situation and experiences of Indigenous people around the globe, particularly their struggles, obstacles, and daily challenges. Its goal is the recognition, appreciation, and, consequently, the protection of these groups and the fight against marginalization, extreme poverty, and other human rights violations.

The date highlights the historical resistance of Indigenous people worldwide, who are not only heirs of millennia-old languages, cultures, and traditions, but also play a crucial role in maintaining and preserving the planet's largest ecosystems. This is true because demarcated Indigenous lands serve as protective barriers, acting as essential elements, for example, against deforestation. Thus, more than a celebration, the 9th of August is a reminder of the continuous struggle of Indigenous peoples for their dignity and future.

Elections in Bolivia – A shift to the Right

By João Confraria

On the 17th of August, historic elections were held in Bolivia, becoming a true melting pot of surprises and the beginning of structural changes in the country. At stake were the election of the president, the vice president, 36 senators, and 130 deputies. The result contradicted all expectations inside and outside the country, which anticipated the outright victory—and therefore just one round of voting—of businessman Samuel Doria Medina. Instead, the two candidates who will face each other in the second round on October 19 are Rodrigo Paz, senator and member of the Christian Democratic Party, who received more than 1,561,000 votes (32.08%), and Jorge Quiroga, who presided over the country after the fall of the U.S.-backed Bolivian dictator Hugo Banzer, who governed during the 1970s and again in the late 1990s. Quiroga won 1,311,000 votes (26.94%).

In third place came businessman Samuel Doria Medina with 19.93% of the votes, and in fourth place—representing a historic defeat—was the main left-wing candidate, Andrónico Rodríguez, with 8.15%. The left-wing MAS party, which has governed Bolivia since 2005, suffered a crushing defeat with only 3.14% of the vote.

Beyond the numerical results, these elections were marked by several factors that ended up determining a radical shift to the right.

First, the elections took place amid the worst economic crisis in 40 years. With inflation around 25%, Bolivia is now facing a significant shortage of U.S. dollars, which has led to a scarcity of oil and rising prices in the domestic market and, at the same time, the devaluation of the boliviano, further worsening the balance of payments and the deficit. In addition, part of La



*Senator Rodrigo Paz (left) and former president Jorge Quiroga (right)
(Source: BBC)*

Paz's debt obligations must be paid in U.S. dollars, increasing international market pressure on the country's credit rating and short- and long-term interest rates.

The economic difficulties described above arise, above all, from the decline in exports of the country's greatest wealth: natural gas. With the growing scarcity of this energy source within Bolivia and declining imports from Argentina and Brazil, the country has lost the foundation of its economic growth of the last 20 years. Gas exports fell from \$6.6 billion in 2014 to \$2 billion in 2023, causing a severe shortage of dollars.

Second, these elections took place at the end of a historical cycle in Bolivia. After a turbulent 20th century characterized by military authoritarianism and glaring economic inequalities, Bolivia became one of the Latin American countries at the forefront of the leftward shift at the beginning of the 21st century, along with Lula da Silva in Brazil, Tabaré Vázquez in Uruguay, Hugo Chávez in Venezuela, Michelle Bachelet in Chile, Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, and finally, Evo Morales in Bolivia.

It was in this context that Morales, elected in 2005, came to be regarded as one of the nation's founding fathers, profoundly transforming the country mainly through the full nationalization of gas and mineral exploitation, which in turn guaranteed a long period of economic growth, the creation of an extensive network of public services and social programs, inflation

stabilization, and major infrastructure development projects. With strong popular support, Morales remained in power until 2019, when he once again sought a constitutional revision to secure another term but faced a revolt by the armed forces.

In this scenario, he was succeeded by Finance Minister Luis Arce, who, according to researcher Moira Zuazo, inherited the growing decline in gas exports and the absence of an economic plan to reduce dependence on gas. Faced with Arce's unpopularity and the exhaustion of nearly 20 years of MAS rule, these elections were driven by the Bolivian people's desire to change course and bet on a center-right political alternative that they hope will solve the country's economic problems. According to Bolivian historian Fernando Molina, "whenever a political strongman leaves power, a climate of fragmentation and uncertainty is created."



Evo Morales (Source: Wikipédia)

Finally, the elections were marked by left-wing division and the intervention of Evo Morales. This fragmentation arose from Morales's call for a null vote after being barred from running by the Constitutional Court, from Castillo's candidacy with MAS under President Luis Arce, and, finally, from Andrónico Rodríguez, president of the Senate, seeking to give a new face to the Bolivian left. According to Molina, the first split occurred within MAS when Evo Morales announced his candidacy for the 2025 elections, breaking with Luis Arce, mainly over disagreements regarding lithium exploitation (one of the largest reserves in the world). Morales wanted this exploitation to be carried out exclusively by the state, preventing Russian and Chinese companies from participating. Although banned from running, Morales's call for a boycott led to a null vote rate of 19%. The best result on the left came from Andrónico Rodríguez, with 8.15% of the vote. Thus, left-wing fragmentation contributed to a decisive shift to the right in the country.

In this context, the elections will be decided between two candidates outside the left-wing spectrum: Paz and Quiroga. Rodrigo Paz, the great surprise of the election night, is a 54-year-old senator, son of former president Jaime Zambra, who built his political career as a member of Congress and governor of Tarija. He positions himself at the center-right and has presented himself as an innovative figure in the Bolivian political landscape, representing a renewal of the political class. In

addition to seeking to reduce the role of the state in the economy, his main proposal was decentralization with a mixed economic model, in which 50% of the budget would be managed by the central state and the other 50% by regional governments.

Jorge Quiroga, 65 years old and a former president, represents the more radical right in Bolivia, having opposed MAS's governance over the past 20 years, which he has called the "lost years." Quiroga's growing popularity aligns with the broader rightward shift in Latin America, with the Bolivian candidate echoing parts of the rhetoric of far-right leaders such as Bolsonaro and Milei. In particular, amid Bolivia's growing inflation, Quiroga has pointed to Milei's success in curbing inflation in Argentina, the need to cut social programs to confront the crisis, and the ambition to privatize state-run economic sectors and mineral exploitation in the country. Molina highlights agribusiness sectors in the Santa Cruz de la Sierra region near the Brazilian border as Quiroga's electoral stronghold, partly due to the influence of the Brazilian right. However, as Molina notes, Quiroga and candidates of the Free Alliance Party are not as radical as the Brazilian right, with its strong Evangelical Church influence, or the Argentine radicalism that rests on Milei's extravagance and anarcho-capitalist tendencies.

Due to Evo Morales's legacy, Bolivian researcher Moira Zuazo believes that there cannot be a reversal of social rights or such a significant rupture, at least in the current context.

Furthermore, Molina points out that the Bolivian elite is not strongly linked to international trade and depends on the state for the development of its projects, and therefore is not anti-statist nor does it advocate full market liberalization. Largely for these two reasons, we can expect a more moderate shift to the right in Bolivia compared to Brazil or Argentina. In foreign policy, Quiroga promises to distance Bolivia from governments such as Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba in favor of closer ties with Argentina and the United States.

Also in this context, Reuters reports that international markets have welcomed this rightward shift, mainly due to the potential privatization of lithium exploitation and the introduction of an IMF program cutting public spending and imposing privatizations in various sectors of the economy. In this regard, investors have seen La Paz's debt obligations as more attractive, and especially Russian, Chinese, and American companies will seek to secure lithium exploitation contracts with the new government.

All these changes in Bolivia's political context will become clearer starting on the 19th of October, the date of the second round of the elections. As for the future, Molina notes that this change of cycle may not be definitive and that Evo Morales still has the conditions to return to the center of the political scene. Molina explains that the economic crisis will be very difficult to resolve, mainly due to declining gas reserves and high inflation, which will lead to reduced social programs and cuts in social rights. This will be extremely unpopular given Morales's legacy of social progress and the eradication of extreme poverty. The Bolivian historian believes that Morales will be a major opponent of the future government and could return to the Palacio Quemado, thanks to his strong social support and the fact that the crisis has been attributed to Luis Arce's government.

We will have to wait and see whether Bolivia will resist the Latin American trend of shifting to the right or whether, on the other hand, Evo Morales's progressive legacy will continue to shape 21st-century Bolivia.

Mass recall vote against Taiwan's Lawmakers

By Jorge Paixão

Between July and August, on the island of Formosa. An electoral campaign unfolded, under the form of a mass mobilization effort, between the two main dominant political forces in Taiwan and their respective supporters, the Pan-Green Coalition, led by the government of Lai Ching-te and the Pan-Blue Coalition, formed by the opposition parties. This phenomenon, also known as the "Great Recall" was the breaking point of a continuous ideological drift inside Taiwanese society, driven by political deadlock following the 2024 legislative elections.

Context

Since January last year, with the election of Lai Ching-te to the position of president and the inauguration of the 11th Legislative Yuan. A gradual but notable polarization between not only elected officials of different parties, including physical confrontations within the members of the Legislative Yuan as means of preventing the implementation of legislation, but also in Taiwanese society itself with the rise of interest groups such as the "Blue Bird Movement".

This shift can be attributed to two main causes, the first of which is the main intergenerational divide of the Taiwanese electorate, specifically the

notion of a cultural identity separate from mainland China and the implications that this notion has for Taiwan's status as a de facto sovereign state. There is a clear division between the generations that lived during the regime of Chiang Kai-shek, or "Dang Guo" and those who were born during or after the Taiwanese process of democratization, with the emergence of a socially progressive movement in the last decade, consolidated around the Democratic Progressive Party, (DPP), led by President Lai Ching-te, which is mostly supported by a younger/urban electorate. On the issue of cultural identity, the DPP, rejects the "One China Policy", preserving the status quo of de facto sovereignty, without directly promoting de jure international recognition, to avoid conflict between the two chinese republics.

On the other hand, the generations that experienced the effects of the Chinese Civil War tend to support the nationalist conservatism of the Kuomintang, (KMT), a party that proclaims itself as the direct heir of the Republic of China, (ROC), and subsequently maintains a greater connection to mainland China. The party also seeks greater cooperation with the People's Republic of China, (PRC) on issues such as the economy and its diplomatic ties.

The incompatibility between these two visions, combined with the sensitivity of the issue of sovereignty and its connection to the idea of cultural identity, allows for a greater polarization of society between these two ideological camps, even on unrelated issues.

In addition to this main cause, there is also a second cause responsible for this division, namely the tripartition of the Taiwanese political system, through the emergence of a new political pole separate from both Pan-Green/Pan-Blue Coalitions, the Taiwan People's Party, (TPP), which by presenting itself as a viable alternative to the bipartisanship between the DPP and the KMT, managed to capture moderates from both political camps, which consequently hindered the chances of both the KMT and the DPP achieving governing majorities in the 2024 election, with the second presidential election in the history of Taiwanese democracy where the elected candidate did not win, percentage-wise, a majority, only a plurality of votes. Crucially for the TPP, the legislative election was also the second in the history of the republic in which neither of the two main coalitions obtained a majority in the Legislative Yuan, which granted the TPP the status of kingmaker during the process of negotiations between representatives, in the passing of legislation by both the government and the opposition.

The Referendums

With a politically fragmented Legislative Yuan, Lai Ching-Te's

These reforms, especially the last two, have led to great discontent among the most progressive groups in Taiwanese society, mainly because they are considered unconstitutional. Consequently this frustration led to the establishment of the "Blue Bird Movement", with a sole purpose, to re-establish the majority of the Pan-Green Coalition in the Legislative Yuan, through the recalling of the maximum number possible of KMT representatives.

Traditionally, the use of this constitutional mechanism in Taiwan was reserved for cases such as corruption scandals, however, with the growing political polarization of the last decade, the recurrence of this type of referendum has been increasingly normalized in society, as a viable option for removing representatives, as is the case of Han Kuo-yu, an elected representative of the KMT, who on June 6, 2020 lost a recall election and was removed from office.

In this context, the "Blue Bird Movement" began mobilizing its base of supporters on May 17, 2024, with the main purpose of demonstrating the public outrage against the opposition's legislation, this was achieved through numerous protests in various large cities across the nation throughout the year, similar to the "Sunflower Student Movement". By early 2025 after the movement had collected enough signatures and sufficient funding to announce its intention to initiate recall referendums as soon as legally permitted, having a mandatory one year time interval

between the last election held and a possible vote. While Lai's government avoided supporting directly the movement, to prevent the referendums from becoming a show of trust in the current government, some DPP members continued to back the

one against Chen Yu-ling of the DPP, organized by the opposition, and another against Ann Kao, recently expelled from the TPP for being involved in a corruption scandal, both referendums were accepted.



*Representatives of the main opposition party Kuomintang (KMT) vote while the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) stages a protest
(Source: Reuters Connect)*

movement. Meanwhile, the KMT and TPP organized a countermovement against the mass recall elections, framing them as a DPP power grab.

Result

In total, the "Blue Bird Movement", with the eventual support of the Lai government, during the last weeks of the election campaign, managed to bring to referendum 31 of the 39 elected representatives of the KMT in the Legislative Yuan. In contrast, the countermovement of the KMT and the TPP failed to target a single representative of the DPP, despite having originally aimed at 38 of them. There were also two attempts to bring local representatives to a referendum,

In addition to the mass recall campaign, the opposition also tried to pass 4 national referendums, 3 of which did not meet the deadline set to be able to go to a vote in August, with only one, the restoration of the second reactor of the Maanshan Nuclear Plant in Pingtung proposed by the TPP, being accepted to go to a national referendum in August. The referendums took place on three separate dates, on July 13 against Chen Yu-ling, on July 26 for 24 KMT representatives and Ann Kao, and on August 23 for the remaining 7 KMT representatives in conjunction with the TPP national referendum.

None of the referendums passed the

margin needed to unseat elected representatives, with a notable decrease in turnout between the July and August referendums. The TPP's national referendum on the restoration of the Maanshan Nuclear Power Plant also did not go through, due to not passing the threshold of a vote necessary with a turnout of only 29.5% of the total electorate, having had the support of 74.2% of the participating electorate.

The result was a major victory for Lai's opposition, namely the KMT, which after almost a decade finally managed to take away the governing majority of the DPP, thus being able to dominate Taiwan's main legislative body, together with the rest of the Pan-Blue Coalition, through the indirect support of the TPP, in the hope of retaking the presidency in 2028.

For Lai the result was quite different, without control of the Legislative Yuan, his government will have to collaborate with both the KMT and the TPP. Moreover, if he fails to pass the legislation he promised during his presidential campaign in 2024, coupled with growing discontent against the DPP from his more moderate electorate, the President could risk losing even more votes to the TPP and jeopardizing his prospects of a second term. The "Blue Bird Movement", also suffered a major defeat, as they failed to restore the legislative majority of the Pan-Green Coalition, having missed their best opportunity to fight the agenda of the opposition parties, namely on issues such as judicial reforms, constitutional mechanisms

and other changes to Taiwan's political system.

The TPP, for its part, has managed to preserve its importance as a third political force, even if its neutral status has been called into question, mainly by its collaboration with the Pan-Blue Coalition.

Taking into account the return to the former status quo, it can be said that this election campaign, contrary to the wishes of the DPP and the "Blue Bird Movement", has resolved neither Taiwan's social polarization nor the political impasse established a year ago. With now the only possible solution to this problem being the collaboration between the government and its opposition.

International impact

The international impact of this campaign was mostly characterized by China's reaction, which harshly criticized the Taiwanese government, considering the campaign as an undemocratic attempt by Lai Ching-te to stay in power. China has also criticized the legitimacy of the referendums, accusing them of being highly manipulated and against the wishes of the Taiwanese people. Beijing claimed that the results showed the complete rejection, by the electorate of Taiwan, of the DPP's growing authoritarianism. This reaction also fits with the geopolitical ambitions of the PRC, which increasingly seeks to defend the "One China Policy" beyond its borders.

On the other hand, the silence of the

United States of America regarding the campaign and subsequently, China's comments, does not necessarily mean a growing distancing between the US and the ROC, this behavior has to be understood in the context of the new US foreign policy, "America First", as a type of isolationism that prioritizes the use of economic/diplomatic pressure to obtain concessions, given the current ongoing developments regarding the trade war between the US and the PRC, it is understandable that the White House does not want to jeopardize the ongoing negotiations between both sides, just to say they diplomatically support Taiwan, in an attempt to achieve as many trade concessions as possible.

Regarding Portugal, we cannot say that there was any impact directly linked to the occurrence of this electoral campaign in Taiwan, especially because it does not involve the recognition of the ROC, nor a potential blockade of trade routes that could affect both Portugal and Europe more generally. However, in the long term, Taiwan's political instability may have more direct consequences for Portugal at an economic level.

The conflict in Gaza and the changing positions of Europe

By Alexandre Batista

Reignited on October 7, 2023, the centuries-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict — whose origins date back to the late 19th century — has become the main headline of several newspapers, television channels, and one of the most prominent topics in political campaigns and debates. Its derivatives, such as the discussion about the international recognition of the Palestinian Territory as a State, have received significant attention and prominence in the international media.

Historical Context

At the end of the 19th century, at the origin of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Zionist movement (in Hebrew: *ציונות* *Tsiyonut*) was born—a political-philosophical movement initially led and created by Theodor Herzl, whose purpose is to defend the right of self-determination of the Jewish people and, as a consequence, the creation of a Jewish national State.

After the creation of this movement, the First World War (1914–1918) took place. In this context, France and Great Britain needed Arab support to defeat the Ottomans, which controlled a significant portion of the Middle East, so they exploited their desire for independence to this end. However, despite the promises made to the Arabs they carried out a dual partition whose influence would operate

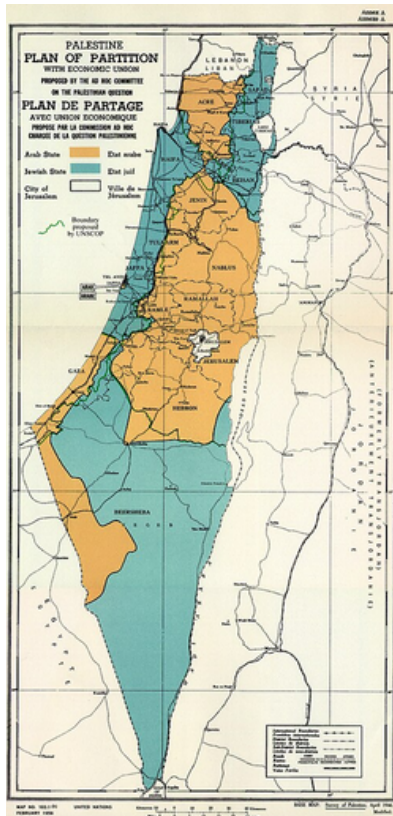
through “mandates.” “Greater Syria” would be divided as follows: France with Syria and Lebanon, and Great Britain with Transjordan (present-day Jordan), Iraq, and Palestine.

As supporters of the influential and already mentioned Zionist movement, the British formally committed, through the Balfour Declaration (1917), to establish the official “Jewish State” in Palestine, despite fierce opposition from the current Palestinian inhabitants.

Later, the the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was created in May 1947 by the UN, at the request of the United Kingdom, to regulate and oversee the division of the Palestinian territory, aiming at the practical implementation of the Balfour Declaration. A few months later, on May 29, 1947, it was decided by this organization that the division of the Palestinian territory should be formalized, and through United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, this was officially established.

Coinciding with the end of the British Mandate, the State of Israel was created on May 14, 1948, in the territory reserved for the Jewish people by the aforementioned resolution. The reasons for the significant international support for the Zionist movement

include the impact of the Holocaust on the Jews, the inability of European countries to guarantee their protection, and the support of the cause by global powers (the USA and the USSR), among others.



Partition of the Palestinian Territory by Resolution 181 (Source: United Nations)

The First Conflicts Between Israel and the Territory of Palestine

Shortly after the unilateral creation of the State of Israel on May 15, 1948, as an outcome of what had been the Civil War in Mandatory Palestine, the Arab-Israeli War began immediately following the declaration of independence by the State of Israel. This war was started by the Arab States, who rejected the UN Resolution 181.

This conflict became known as the Nakba (in Arabic: "catastrophe"), and during this period, more than 750,000 Palestinians who were living in the territory that would become the State of Israel were expelled or fled, becoming refugees.

This war was followed by a series of other conflicts between Israelis and Palestinians and their Arab allies, as well as several peace initiatives, most notably the 1993 Oslo Accords, which established a framework for the relations between Israel and the PLO, involving creation of the Palestinian National Authority, recognized as the representative of the Palestinian people, and involved mutual recognition between the two states.

However, these accords did not end the conflict. Tensions and hostilities continued, worsening after the rise of Hamas, which emerged as an alternative to PLO leadership and took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007.

October 7, 2023 and the Israeli response

The October 7 attacks, carried out by Hamas, were a series of coordinated assaults by members of the Palestinian Islamic militant group known to Israelis as the Black Sabbath attacks.

In the early hours of Saturday, October 7, 2023, a holy day of Shabbat for Jews, at least 2,200 missiles were launched from Palestinian territory, killing at least 200 Israelis, including civilians, with up to 3 Portuguese tourist

casualties and at least 5 missing. The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Tor Wennesland, acknowledged Israel's right to self-defense. Additionally, a series of ground attacks took place, including at the NOVA music festival, where about 3,000 people were gathered, resulted in at least 370 deaths.

After only 3 days of conflict, the Israeli army declared it had recovered all areas captured by Hamas during these attacks.



Hamas' Attack on the NOVA Festival (Source: The Independent)

In the following days, the Israeli army launched a large-scale military campaign against the Gaza Strip, with intense bombings hitting Hamas facilities but also civilian areas, causing thousands of casualties and a severe humanitarian crisis. Gaza lost about 7% of its population due to deaths and displacements, while

access to essential resources was limited. Despite international calls for a ceasefire, the fighting continued, worsening the conflict.

By August 2025, more than 54,000 Palestinians had died and about 130,000 were injured. Israel recorded at least 1,200 deaths, including victims of the initial Hamas attack and subsequent fighting, as well as over 250 hostages abducted. The conflict spread regionally, with deaths in the West Bank and southern Lebanon, further increasing instability in the Middle East.

The international consequences and reactions to this conflict

The conflict between Israel and Hamas had profound international consequences, dividing global reactions between support for Israel and condemnation of Hamas' actions, and enormous awareness of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, resulting in Israel being held responsible for the damage to civilians. Diplomatically and politically, it led to the formal recognition of Palestine by some European countries, investigations by the International Criminal Court for war crimes, intensified regional tensions involving groups such as Hezbollah and the Houthis, and several emergency UN meetings. Despite temporary agreements, the conflict keeps the region in a state of high tension and international instability.

The diplomatic world's zigzags on the Israel-Gaza Conflict

Since the onset of the Gaza conflict, most European countries (notably

Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, among others) and the US—each with its own historical and political sensitivities—initially expressed support for Israel's right to defend itself against Hamas. However, as the humanitarian crisis worsened and Palestinian civilian casualties mounted, positions began to shift: France took the lead in recognizing the State of Palestine and joined other European nations in demanding an immediate, unconditional ceasefire. Germany, though reluctant, adopted a more critical stance toward Israel's military actions and increased its humanitarian aid.

In the United States, while military and political support for Israel remained consistent, differences between the Trump and Biden administrations became apparent: Trump reinforced the alliance, whereas Biden, while maintaining support for this key Middle Eastern ally, pursued a more open

diplomatic approach and recognized Palestinian rights. This divergence was reflected in the US response to attacks on Iran and in ceasefire negotiations. Over two years, the stance evolved from automatic alignment with Israel to a broader international push for an end to the war and for recognition of Palestine by some states, albeit with varying degrees of commitment.

Portugal, for its part, maintained a balanced stance throughout the conflict, consistently advocating for a two-state solution—Israel and Palestine—as the path to peace. Although Portugal is one of the 15 EU countries that has yet to formally recognize the Palestinian state, its government has pursued a mediating role, emphasizing the need for dialogue with all parties. Portugal has joined international statements calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, demonstrating a preference for a diplomatic—not military—resolution.

A tribute to Edward Snowden: mass surveillance of populations

By Johan Schäfer

In June 2013, a previously unknown analyst at the National Security Agency (NSA), the American secret service specialising in the collection, processing and use of all types of electronic data, named Edward Snowden, decided to become a whistleblower. He did so by sharing hundreds of internal agency documents, which prove in detail why and how the surveillance of all actions that (in)directly pass through the internet and beyond worked. From the moment any of us connect to the internet via our device, we inevitably produce data with everything we do. Every website visited, every advertisement that appears, even every mouse click and keystroke is recorded and stored.

This happens to everyone on earth, forming a virtual file that characterises all our online behaviour, extending to offline reality. The file is extremely detailed, as it contains everything we have done online in recent years; the internet forgets nothing. This file, in addition to monitoring the past and consequently the evolution of each human being's personality, can also be used to make predictions about any future actions in the short, medium and possibly even long term.

Every website visited, every advertisement that pops up, even every mouse click and keystroke is

and stored on the servers of the NSA and its big tech partners, namely Google, Microsoft, Amazon, Apple, Meta, Adobe, etc. This happens to everyone on earth, all the time, and the data is stored forever. The situation becomes even more worrying when all this data is aggregated to our person, forming a virtual file that characterises all our online behaviour, extending to offline reality. The file is extremely detailed, as it contains everything we have done online in recent years; the internet forgets nothing. Hence the accurate and worrying statement that big tech and the secret services know us better than we know ourselves, as evidenced by Snowden.

Without going into too much technical detail, these were some of the most important facts that Snowden revealed to the general public.

Connection with world politics and consequences

In the 1990s, and especially after 9/11 in 2001, the United States of America increased its surveillance of societies. This topic is both one of the most important and one of the least mentioned in the debate on world politics, where those who practise surveillance do everything they can to avoid being monitored themselves, or if this happens, they try to divert attention. Snowden, who is still wanted in the US on an arrest warrant for

having, according to the American authorities, jeopardised national security by disclosing confidential documents, is portrayed by his supporters as a victim of these efforts. After revealing the documents from Hong Kong, he embarked on an odyssey that took him to Moscow. In 2025, 12 years after the scandal, the whistleblower remains stranded in Russia, having obtained citizenship in 2022.

The media attention given to the case, as well as the political reactions in the months and years that followed, were varied, but by 2014 the overwhelming majority of citizens, politicians and journalists had forgotten about the revelations.

Relevance today

In his autobiography *Permanent Record*, published in 2019, Snowden describes the causes and consequences of his decision. He regrets the lack of attention the revelations received, which was one of the reasons he wrote the book.

However, in 2025, this issue is more important than ever: big tech companies have increasingly more power, with many of them enjoying monopolies in their areas (Google, Meta, Microsoft, Amazon). Their programmes suffer from serious transparency flaws; no one knows how and why they work the way they do. Almost no one knows who Edward Snowden was, nor the importance he had in world politics. With the emergence of artificial intelligence models and the daily evolution of the



Edward Snowden (foto: Right Livelihood)

internet, surveillance capabilities have become even more sophisticated, powerful and efficient. Despite this, there are alternatives to all the programmes, apps and websites we use from big tech. Many of them are programmed in open source code and created by volunteer communities.

Implications for Portugal

In Portugal, the Edward Snowden case received little coverage, apart from certain reactions from politicians and journalists who sought to inform the population. The most dedicated work has been done by NGOs, which, however, remain largely confined to the IT bubble. The lack of digital literacy cuts across all ages, genders and socio-economic classes of the population, making in-depth and comprehensive education on all these issues imperative and necessary as soon as possible.

Conflict Clarified: Nagorno-Karabakh Wars

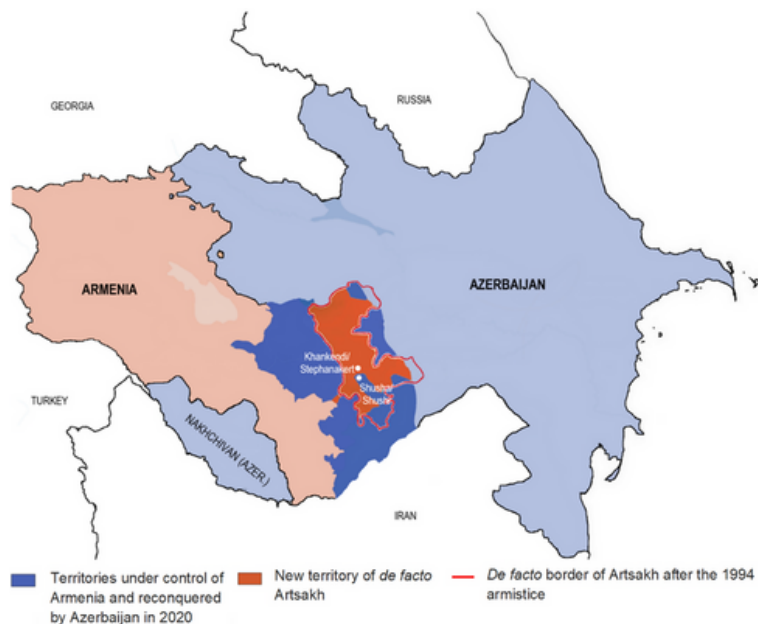
By Dario Vargas

What conflict is this?

Beginning in 1988, during the end and dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Nagorno-Karabakh Wars were a series of conflicts that shaped the post-independence relations between Armenia (and the Republic of Artsakh, a non-recognized Armenian state) and Azerbaijan, having soured over a territorial dispute concerning the Nagorno-Karabakh region. These conflicts saw Azerbaijan, who had legal sovereignty over the region but not *de-facto* control, dispute the territory against Artsakh and its ally Armenia.

How did it begin?

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict began during the Soviet period. The USSR, which in 1920 conquered both Armenia and Azerbaijan after a failed attempt by these states to obtain sovereignty during the Russian Civil War, established Nagorno-Karabakh as an autonomous region within the Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, seeking to put an end to a war between the two countries, now a part of the USSR but with long-lasting ethnic tensions, which began in 1918. In this region inhabited both Armenians, who



Map of Armenia (orange) and Azerbaijan (gray), with the region of Nagorno-Karabakh (orange and red borders) and territories previously under Armenian control (blue) after the Second War of Nagorno-Karabakh (Source: DIVA-GIS)

comprised a majority of around 90% of the total population in 1926 (a percentage that would fall to about 77% in 1989) and Azeris, who were the majority in Azerbaijan but a minority in that area, representing around 5,6% of the population in 1926. Later, there were several attempts at unifying Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenian, although all of these were refused by Soviet authorities, with the region remaining a part of Azerbaijan.

The 1980s saw the rise of Mikhail Gorbachev as the leader of the USSR and the implementation of the glasnost policy which sought to open the discussion of political issues within the nation to the Soviet citizenry. As a collateral effect from these measures, however, a series of issues concerning national identity reappeared, with one of these being the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. These changes led to the adoption, in 1988, by the authorities of the autonomous region, of a law that sought to unify the territory with Armenia. These actions were, however, not accepted by Azeri authorities, leading the two Soviet republics towards an armed conflict that the Soviet central government was unable to stop due to the rapid erosion of its authority.

The First Nagorno-Karabakh War, which lasted from 1988 to 1994, saw an Armenian victory and the forced displacement of about one million individuals in both countries, including the majority of the Azeri population in Karabakh. In its aftermath the Republic of Artsakh, which succeeded the regional government of the territory

after its declaration of independence from Azerbaijan, was established, controlling not only Nagorno-Karabakh but also several adjacent territories captured during the conflict. This new state was, however, not recognized internationally, given that the international community upheld the borders as established by the USSR, thereby giving Azerbaijan the legal sovereignty over the region.

In 2020, after 26 years where the dispute became a frozen conflict without major escalations beyond a series of sporadic accidents between the Armenian and Azeri armed forces, Azerbaijan, allegedly supported by Turkey (who, despite refuting the accusations, had previously aligned itself in favor of the Azeri position and had strong cultural ties with the country), began a military offensive against Artsakh and the Armenian forces within the region, breaking its defensive lines and reconquering the majority of the lost territory in the previous conflict.

Six weeks after the beginning of the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, Russia, military ally of Armenia through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), an organization analogous to NATO that includes several post-Soviet states, and considered one of the preeminent powers in the Caucasus region, negotiated a cease-fire between the two countries and assumed responsibilities over peacekeeping efforts.

Between 2020 and 2023, a series of cease-fire violations by both states occurred, with Azerbaijan occupying several strategic positions in Armenian territory, leading Armenia to activate Article 4 of CSTO's governing treaty, which contained a mutual defense clause, receiving however only a border monitoring mission, a response below Armenian expectations.

The clashes between the two countries culminated in a series of protests by Azeri activists, which sought to block the passage of goods between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, leading to a shortage of goods within the territory due to the inability of Russian forces, whose resources were diverted to fight the Russo-Ukrainian War, in reopening the supply routes. In 2023, mere months after these events, Azerbaijan began a series of attacks over the territory, initiating an offensive that quickly led to the capitulation of Artsakh and the fleeing of the vast majority of its Armenian population.

After the dissolution of Artsakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan began a series of peace negotiations which sought to put an end to the conflict. However, a series of disputes concerning the details of this peace led to negotiations stalling and the launch of several judicial proceedings by both states against the other. However, in 2025, under mediation by the United States, the countries signed a peace treaty where Armenia would recognize the sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh, putting an end to 37 years of conflict. Despite this, several issues remained

to be solved, namely the removal of Nagorno-Karabakh from the Armenian Constitution, a key demand by Azerbaijan, and details concerning the creation of a land route that would connect Azerbaijan with its enclave in Nakhchivan, passing through Armenian territory.

The conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh had significant effects over the balance of power in the South Caucasus. In response to the limited reactions of CSTO and Russia in particular, Armenia froze its participation in the military alliance and began the process of withdrawal from the same, thereby reducing Russian influence over the region. In contrast, the country has sought to deepen its ties with the European Union, initiating plans to join the organization, and with the United States, that would take the role of the main mediator in the conflict.

Azerbaijan was able to accomplish the majority of its objectives, reestablishing its control over Nagorno-Karabakh and obtaining a land route that connected Nakhchivan with the rest of the country. Additionally, this route would allow the country, as well as its ally Turkey, to strengthen their positions in the global trade network by making them vital portions of a route between Central Asia, rich in several key resources for modern industries, and Europe that would serve as an alternative to routes that pass through Russia and Iran.

How is it relevant to Portugal?

Portugal does not keep a permanent diplomatic representation to neither

country, with its diplomatic relations with Armenia being managed by the Portuguese embassy in Moscow and its relations with Azerbaijan being under the responsibility of the Portuguese embassy in Ankara.

The Portuguese state followed the European position relative to the conflict, recognizing Azerbaijan's sovereignty over the territory but condemning its military offensives, defending a diplomatic solution instead of a military one. More recently, the country praised the peace treaty between both countries, stating it to be an "important step towards peace and stability in the South Caucasus".

The conflict between the two states did not have a direct impact towards Portugal, despite its high dependence over Azerbaijan's fossil fuels. Despite this reliance, the regional nature of this conflict, mainly fought in Nagorno-Karabakh itself, did not lead to a substantial rise of fuel prices in the country.

In response to the Azeri offensive, several small protests against the conflict appeared in Lisbon, the Portuguese capital.

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