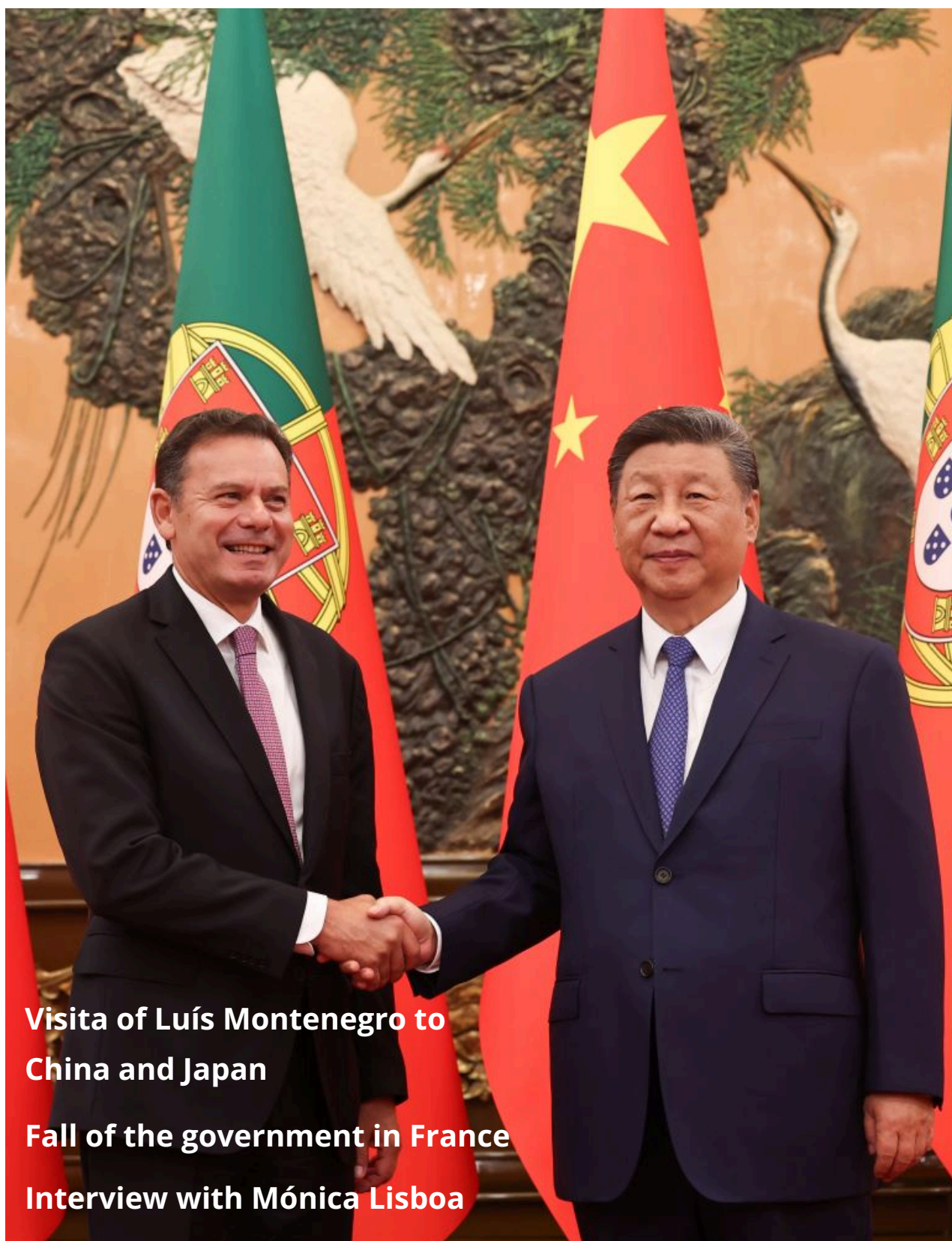


# PORTUGAL DIPLOMÁTICO



**Visita of Luís Montenegro to  
China and Japan**

**Fall of the government in France**

**Interview with Mónica Lisboa**

**XIV Edltion**

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# Month of the MFA

By Bruno Oliveira

The month of the Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Paulo Rangel, was marked by three main events. First, his trip to China and Japan, accompanying Prime Minister Luís Montenegro. Second, the signing of the double taxation agreement with the United Kingdom. And finally, the Minister's participation in the High-Level Week of the United Nations General Assembly, where he accompanied the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa.

## **Visit to China and Japan**

Between 9 and 12 September, Paulo Rangel accompanied the Prime Minister on his official visit to two of the main Asian countries: China and Japan.

In both countries, the Minister met with his counterparts, Wang Yi on the Chinese side and Iwaya Takeshi in Japan. His meeting with the Japanese Minister also resulted in the launch of a strategic partnership on cooperation between the two States on a wide range of issues, from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and Expo 2025.

The Prime Minister's agenda, the impact of his visit and the historical overview of Portugal's relations with these two Asian nations are explored in greater detail in the following article.



*Paulo Rangel and his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi (source: MNE)*



*Paulo Rangel and his Japanese counterpart, Iwaya Takeshi (source: MNE)*

## Signing of Agreement with the United Kingdom

Precisely halfway through the month, on the 15th, the Minister signed two bilateral agreements with the United Kingdom concerning double taxation and the exchange of information.



*Paulo Rangel and Yvette Cooper show the signed agreements (source: MNE)*

Rangel was the first Foreign Secretary to be received after his British counterpart, Yvette Cooper, took office very recently, thus demonstrating the continuity of what is the world's longest-lasting alliance. These agreements were the result of a year of negotiations, the need for which arose with Brexit. The Foreign Secretary said that "it is a major step forward, an improvement in the situation of British citizens in Portugal, of Portuguese in the United Kingdom and of companies too", adding that "this is important for foreign investment".

## High-Level Week of the United Nations General Assembly

The United Nations celebrated its 80th anniversary and the Minister for Foreign Affairs accompanied the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, with Portugal recognising the State of Palestine on this occasion.

The high-level week began with a session commemorating the UN's anniversary, followed by a joint press conference by the Member States of the European Union on Russia's invasion of Estonian airspace. In the afternoon, the EU Foreign Affairs Council and the Conference for the Two-State Solution were held, at which the President of the Republic presented Portugal's position: the recognition of the State of Palestine, which was also announced later at Portugal's Permanent Representation to the UN.



*Portuguese Delegation (source: MNE)*

On the second day, the General Assembly session began, during which various heads of state, such as the Brazilian, American and Portuguese presidents, gave speeches.

On the third day, there was a meeting between the European states and those of Latin America and the Caribbean, followed by a meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the CPLP countries. In addition, Portugal's participation in the open session of the Security Council and in the first biennial meeting on the financing of developing countries is noteworthy.



*Discurso de Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa no CSNU sobre Inteligência Artificial (fonte: MNE)*

The fourth day began with a meeting of the Ibero-American Conference on next year's Madrid summit, followed by two speeches at UNRWA and the G20. The day ended with a meeting at FIFA's permanent representation in New York between Paulo Rangel and the Prime Ministers of Spain and Morocco to discuss and coordinate preparations for the 2030 World Cup.



*Paulo Rangel plays a game of table football at FIFA's office in New York (source: MNE)*

The last day featured an interview with CNN International on the conflict in Ukraine and Israel.

During this week, as expected, the Minister held several bilateral meetings, which were a highlight of this high-level UN week. At European level, some of the countries with which Paulo Rangel met were the United Kingdom, Ukraine and North Macedonia. From Asia, Singapore and Brunei, and from Africa, Morocco, Rwanda, Kenya and Ethiopia, among many others. Several meetings were also held with nations from the Caribbean region and Brazil. Finally, it is also important to highlight the meeting with the Gulf Cooperation Council.



*General Assembly of the United Nations (source: MNE)*

# Visit of the Prime-Minister to China and Japan

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By Maria Neves

**Luís Montenegro, Prime Minister of Portugal, was on an official state visit to the People's Republic of China and Japan from 9 to 12 September 2025.**

## **Political and Diplomatic Context**

This official visit, which took place at the beginning of September, aimed to cultivate the bilateral ties of friendship established between Portugal and both countries.

## **Bilateral Relations with China**

Relations between the People's Republic of China and Portugal were strengthened in 1999 with the handover of Macau, administered by Portugal, to China. Since then, this city has been a symbol of friendship between the countries, which celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Portugal-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during this visit.

This relationship of mutual trust and friendship presents a geopolitical challenge for Portugal, as it may be conditioned by the fundamental European axis of Portuguese foreign policy.

## **Bilateral relations with Japan**

Meanwhile, relations between Portugal and Japan were established in 1543 with the arrival of the first Europeans (Portuguese) in Japan. Today, these relations are characterised by political trust and democratic convergence, which have been cemented by a long historical affinity that will take on new contours in 2025.

During Montenegro's visit to China, five guiding principles of Portuguese foreign policy objectives for this relationship can be highlighted. Firstly, the strengthening of bilateral political relations, in which mutual trust, political dialogue and diplomatic cooperation have been consolidated. Secondly, Montenegro's request to Xi Jinping to use his close relationship with Russia to intercede and facilitate peace with Ukraine. Thirdly, several agreements and memoranda were signed in strategic areas, such as the agri-food sector. Fourthly, economic cooperation and Chinese investment in strategic sectors, such as energy and technology, were promoted. Finally, the importance of the historical and cultural ties that unite both countries, particularly through Macau, was emphasised.

In Japan, a new phase in this relationship was announced: the transition to a strategic partnership. This led to intensified political and economic cooperation with Japan. At the political level, diplomatic ties were deepened following Portugal's commitment to enhance the Japanese partnership within the EU and Indo-Pacific frameworks. At the economic level, the meeting with Keindaren (Japan Business Federation) was decisive in attracting investment and exploring new potential areas of cooperation.

### **Description of the visit**

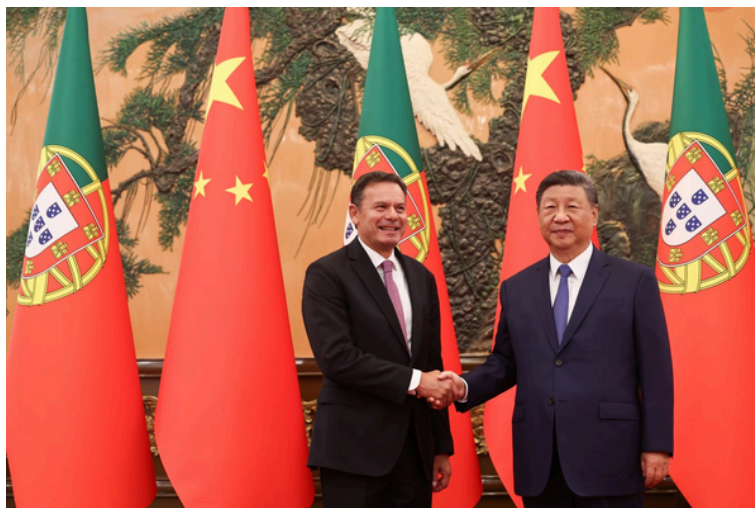
The agenda for this visit was marked by several significant events. In Beijing, a tribute was paid at the Monument to the People's Heroes, followed by several institutional meetings (with President Xi Jinping, Chairman of the National People's Congress Zhao Leji and Prime Minister Li Qiang). During these meetings, bilateral legal instruments were signed.

In Macao, a special administrative region of China, there was a meeting with Chief Executive Sam Hou-fai and a visit to the Portuguese School of Macao, as well as a reception for the Portuguese community at the Residence of the Consulate-General of Portugal.

In Tokyo, Japan, a meeting was held with Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba and a joint press conference was held at Keidanren (Japan Business Federation), which acted as an interface between the private sector and the government. In addition, there was also a meeting with Portuguese athletes at the World Athletics Championships in Osaka, during a visit to the Portugal Pavilion at Expo 2025, where the theme 'Ocean: Blue Dialogue' was discussed.

### **Impact and Reactions**

This visit reinforced Portugal's image as a relevant, participatory and assertive interlocutor between Asia and Europe, and is also expected to bring an increase in foreign investment. According to Luís Montenegro, 'We have reason to be optimistic about the future today.'



*Prime-Minister Luís Montenegro (left) meets President Xi Jinping (right) (source: Governo de Portugal/António Cotrim)*

# Portugal Recognizes Palestine and Reinforces Commitment to Peace in the Middle East

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By Magda Gonçalves

"The Portuguese State formally recognizes the State of Palestine," declared Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of Portugal, during the High-Level Conference for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, aligning the country with allies such as the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, which also formalized their recognition on the same occasion, September 22.

The decision resulted from a deliberation by the Council of Ministers, with the support of the President and the parties with seats in parliament, reflecting a consistent and consensual line of Portuguese foreign policy. Thus, the gesture reflects the country's commitment to the two-state solution as the only path to a just and lasting peace in the



Intervention by Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa (Source: UN)

Middle East. Paulo Rangel, Portuguese Minister of Foreign Affairs, emphasized that the recognition reinforces the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and reaffirms Portugal's commitment to multilateral diplomacy and respect for international law. "Portugal advocates the two-state solution as the only path to a just and lasting peace... a ceasefire is urgent," the minister reiterated, adding that Hamas cannot exercise any form of control in or outside of Gaza, demanding the release of all hostages.

Despite its symbolic and diplomatic nature, "this decision does not erase the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip," explains Paulo Rangel, referring to the suffering of civilians, displaced people, and the situation of hostages still held. The minister also emphasized that the recognition was not an act against Israel: "(This strategy) is never made against Israel. It is made in favor of peace and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination." Finally, the minister made an appeal to the international community: "We urge, from the bottom of our hearts, that all hostilities cease... that a ray of light be opened for peace."

The Palestinian reaction was celebratory. Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas stated that "recognition of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, freedom, and independence paves the way for the implementation of the two-state solution, allowing the State of Palestine to coexist with the State of Israel in security, peace, and good-neighborliness." Consequently, Ramallah interpreted the decision as reinforcing the international legitimacy of the Palestinian cause and called for more countries to follow that.

On the other hand, the Israeli response was critical. The Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that "Israel categorically rejects the unilateral declaration of recognition of the State of Palestine made by the United Kingdom and other countries. This declaration does not promote peace; on the contrary, it further destabilizes the region and undermines the chances of reaching a peaceful solution in the future." Furthermore, Israeli authorities reiterated that such recognitions do not favor direct negotiations and could harden radical positions, ruling out the possibility of a bilateral compromise.

In Portugal, the measure met with widespread acceptance. The government, the president, and parties with seats in parliament converged on the decision, which was seen as an act of international responsibility and continuity of national foreign policy. On the left, the gesture was celebrated as historic; on the other hand, more conservative sectors, such as the CDS-PP, argued that recognition should have occurred under more stable circumstances. Despite reservations, consensus prevailed regarding the diplomatic relevance of the step taken.

At the European level, Portugal became the 13th European Union member state to officially recognize Palestine, joining Sweden, Ireland, Slovenia, and others. Outside the continent, traditional allies such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia also announced recognition, reinforcing a broader trend of support for Palestine's international status. Thus, experts considered that, although the immediate impact was primarily political, the combination of multiple recognitions increased international pressure on Israelis and Palestinians to resume negotiations.

Meanwhile, on the ground, challenges remain. In Gaza, the population faces a humanitarian crisis, with shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while sporadic attacks and blockades hamper reconstruction and assistance to those affected. These factors highlight that, although Portuguese recognition constitutes a diplomatic milestone, peace and stability in the region depend on concrete actions and a continued international commitment to protect civilians and promote dialogue between the parties.

Finally, recognition of the State of Palestine could also strengthen Portugal's role in international diplomacy. By taking a clear and historic position in favor of the two-state solution, the country projects itself as an actor committed to multilateralism, international law, and the promotion of peace. This stance increases Portugal's credibility in international forums and could open up opportunities for the country to play a more active role in mediating future conflicts, not only in the Middle East but also in other global crises, reinforcing its reputation as a reliable and balanced interlocutor in the diplomatic arena. At the same time, it made it clear that recognition alone does not resolve conflicts on the ground, and that the real challenge remains the concrete implementation of peace, requiring continued efforts from the international community to promote stability, security, and peaceful coexistence in the region.

# The Strategic Role of the Portuguese Sea in 21st Century Foreign Policy

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By Alexandre Batista

“Small, but strong.” The truth is that this small Iberian country, regardless of its reduced territorial size, still holds two achievements over most other European countries. Founded in 1143 by the Treaty of Zamora, we can take pride in being the European country that has gone the longest without suffering invasions, with our borders consolidated in 1297, through the Treaty of Alcanizes; we can also take pride in possessing the 3rd largest Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the European Union, only behind France and Denmark.

## Historical Context

Since the Age of Discoveries (1415–1543), the sea has always been widely explored and dominated by the Portuguese, who were pioneers in the art of navigation. Not only did they design vessels such as the caravels, but also various nautical instruments such as the nonius and the nautical astrolabe.



*The ‘D. João II’, part of the Portuguese Navy, on patrol (Source: RTP Madeira)*

When it comes to geographical discoveries, there is also great reason for pride among the Portuguese: the numerous territories reached and mapped by Portuguese navigators, from the African coast to the Indian Ocean, and the crossing of the Atlantic that culminated in the arrival in Brazil in 1500. These achievements were not limited to territorial expansion, but also allowed the flourishing of commercial networks that linked Europe, Asia, Africa, and America — inaugurating what many historians call the first form of globalization.

In addition, the Portuguese left behind a scientific and cultural legacy of enormous significance: they improved cartographic techniques, introduced new food products and agricultural crops to Europe, and universalized the contact between different peoples, languages, and traditions. The sea, in this sense, consolidated itself as the true “highway” of discoveries, a living expression of national identity and the external projection of Portugal.

### **And in current economic terms?**

With a powerful maritime potential in terms of area available for exploration, Portugal compares quite well to other countries: according to INE data, the “Economy of the Sea” represents 5.1% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), amounting to approximately 15.74 billion euros in the Portuguese economy in 2024. Meanwhile, in other countries such as Denmark, despite a similar percentage in relation to GDP (5%–7%), this activity earned approximately 20 to 30 billion euros in 2024. Taking into account the enormous difference in the EEZ areas of these countries, one can quickly see that Portugal has not lagged behind other European nations in maritime exploitation.

However, there is always room for improvement, especially in one of Portugal’s central challenges across many sectors: the modernization of technological equipment. Despite attempts at updating — such as the “Expo Fish Portugal Innovation Award” or Portugal’s participation in European projects developing digital technologies for fisheries, including intelligent systems for catch registration and AI-powered scanners to identify species and weights onboard — Portugal still has a lot of ground to cover. Challenges remain in the pace of modernization, the scalability of innovation, adoption among professionals, and the reliability of digital equipment, which sometimes still requires support from traditional inspection methods.

### **And in military terms?**

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the Portuguese Navy was fundamental to expand military and commercial power beyond Europe, helping to build an overseas empire and securing strategic routes around Africa, India, and South America. This naval strategy not only facilitated the exploration and protection of those territories but also enabled the establishment of trade monopolies and defense against pirates and rival powers.

By the 17th century, naval forces such as the Terço da Armada da Coroa de Portugal, created in 1621, ensured the quick movement of troops and defense of coastal cities. These forces played crucial roles in decisive battles during the War of Restoration (1640–1668), such as the battles of Montijo, the Lines of Elvas, and Ameixial.

Portugal entered World War I in 1916, when the government seized German ships docked in Portuguese ports, prompting a German declaration of war. Maritime space was quickly militarized: the Navy protected coasts, ports, and islands, escorted troop transports to France and colonies, and patrolled the Atlantic for submarines and mines. It also took part in high-risk routes, such as the Salonika Route, facing direct submarine attacks and suffering significant losses.

During World War II, Portugal maintained formal neutrality, but its strategic location in the Atlantic once again proved to be vital. Ports and islands such as the Azores and Madeira became essential hubs for sheltering foreign vessels and aiding thousands of shipwreck survivors from the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Naval patrols increased, monitoring port access and indirectly collaborating with the Allies — particularly by allowing bases in the Azores for Allied aviation, which was crucial for logistical efforts in the Atlantic.

During the Cold War (1947–1991), Portugal's maritime position was vital for the control of the Atlantic Ocean and for logistics supporting Europe's military reinforcement, integrating into NATO naval forces such as STANAVFORLANT. Throughout the late 20th century and early 21st century, the Navy remained engaged in international missions, reinforcing the country's geostrategic role and using the sea as a key tool for projecting its diplomacy and military presence.

Currently, Portugal participates in several important missions. In 2025, the NRP *Sines* integrated the "Open Sea Initiative 2025," visiting twelve African and Atlantic countries for cooperation activities, naval diplomacy, and support to national defense and foreign policy. The Marine Corps has also been active in missions in Lithuania, focusing on naval and land operations, including specialized capabilities such as combat diving and training with dogs, all contributing to NATO's collective security.

### **And in terms of heritage?**

As for heritage, the Portuguese sea leaves behind a legacy that shaped the identity, way of life, and culture of the Portuguese people, becoming a structuring element of the nation's history. This relationship is still reflected in traditions such as the "Festas do Mar" in coastal towns, literature such as *Os Lusíadas* by Luís Vaz de Camões and *Mensagem* by Fernando Pessoa, and also in art, as seen in the opening of Expo '98 — "Oceans: A Heritage for the Future."

# Interview with Mónica Lisboa

*This month we interviewed the Consul General of Portugal in Paris. Ms Mónica Lisboa. A career diplomat, she has held positions at the Portuguese Embassies in India, Switzerland, Indonesia and Germany, and at the Permanent Representation of Portugal to the EU. She has also been an advisor on international relations to the Presidency of the Republic, Head of Division of the Sub-Saharan Africa Services Directorate, Director of State Ceremonial and Protocol Services, and Chief of Staff at the Secretariat of State for European Affairs. Interview conducted by Bruno Oliveira.*



*The Consul General, Mónica Lisboa*

**First of all, I would like to thank you for accepting our invitation to this interview. My first question is that, before taking up your current position here at the Consulate General in Paris, you were posted to a wide variety of countries, from India to Switzerland, Indonesia and Germany. What lessons or experiences did you gain during this 'journey around the world'?**

The expression "journey around the world" is not only very beautiful, but also very expressive,

because diplomacy offers us a unique opportunity to get to know the world not only as observers, but as participants. As a result, this diplomatic journey around the world takes place, in a way, in a different dimension.

Throughout my career spanning more than 30 years, I have had more than just luck; I have had the privilege of experiencing very different realities. Starting in Southeast Asia and with my first post in India, which stands out as my first destination and had a profound impact on me – also because I was still quite young, with only a few years of career experience, and found myself in a country so far from Portugal. On the other hand, it is a country with many historical and very ancient links to Portugal, with its own idiosyncrasies, requiring a rapid ability to adapt to a different culture and social and religious context. A country that today has the largest population in the world. I remember well, in this regard, in 2000, my last year in post, watching in New Delhi, on a giant screen placed in the city centre, India's population "surpass" one billion. On that screen, every second, the growth of the Indian population was counted. To have experienced that demographic milestone live and in colour, on a global scale, surrounded by thousands of people who were on the streets to celebrate the moment, was an experience I will never forget.

I was also struck by the unexpected proximity of some territories to Portugal, even though they are very far from our country. Both in India and Indonesia, I visited places where there are very old communities that still speak our language. I found a community in Jakarta, living near the port of Tanjung Priok, in the so-called 'Portuguese Village of Tugu', which still uses Portuguese words and expressions that come from Christian Papiá, which came from Malacca – a



*Mónica Lisboa in Indonesia*

Creole language that is a mixture of Portuguese and Malay – and where people sing and dance to the sound of stringed instruments ('keroncong') that remind us of the mornas of Cape Verde or the music of the Azores and Goa.

At the Permanent Representation of Portugal to the European Institutions (REPER), where I coordinated technical sectoral areas as a Mertens Adviser within COREPER I – Committee of Permanent Representatives of the governments of the Member States, where our Deputy Permanent Representative sits – before and during the last Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, during the pandemic, the experience gave me in-depth knowledge of European decision-making mechanisms, the legislative process and the behind-the-scenes negotiations. In particular, I gained a very concrete understanding of the importance of defending the interests of the State, at various levels and in various decision-making areas, with regard to the consequences for the daily lives of our citizens, our businesses and society in general. In Brussels, in close cooperation with the Portuguese administration, REPER conveys and defends national positions in order to ensure the most appropriate responses to our country's interests and the needs of our citizens.

Despite the diversity of my career path, one lesson that is common to all my destinations is the importance of active listening, cultural empathy, the ability to adapt to different geographical contexts, political, economic and social realities, and specific multilateral frameworks. And the importance of resilience too, which is a word that we use a lot nowadays in various contexts, but which, looking back, I see as a thread running through my career.

**You already mentioned this in your previous answer, but what social, cultural or political differences did you feel in more distant countries such as Indonesia or India?**

I have already given some examples, but there are other aspects where we feel this difference. And, naturally, the differences can also be felt as shocks.

In social, cultural and political terms, it is no small matter that Indonesia is the largest Muslim democracy in the world, with its insularity and more than 17,000 islands. In addition to the fact that concepts of the passage of time in Southeast Asia are different from those felt in Europe or the Western world. Then there is the challenge of intercultural communication. In India, there are more than 400 local languages, and in Indonesia, it is estimated that there are more than 700 dialects. How can we be bridges if we do not speak the same language? How can we build bonds of trust if we do not necessarily come from the same world? How can we understand and respect cultural otherness?

I believe that the answers to this diversity lie in a deep respect for difference, in preparing for the post and role we are going to take on, and in knowing the country. Before going to any destination, whether it is more or less distant, or apparently more distinct or with greater contrasts, we must demand good preparation from ourselves as diplomats. Good preparation at a technical level, at a political level, in terms of prior reading and analysis; in short, homework that we take with us to a post and that then helps us to better perform our mission.

In my case, I would say that the two large countries where I was posted in Asia appealed to my enormous human sensitivity. And that is where I feel the richness of my career lies, in the way we look at others, in knowing how to respect others and their differences.

**Before coming to Paris, your last position was as an international relations advisor to the Presidency of the Republic. What does that mean and what were your duties?**

It is a great honour and privilege to be able to serve the Presidency of the Republic and a President of the Republic, namely President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. And it was truly a privilege and a unique opportunity to be part of an extraordinary diplomatic advisory team whose role is essentially to prepare and monitor the international dimension of the presidential activity and the highest figure of the Portuguese State. Specifically, this means that we prepare and monitor all aspects of the President of the Republic's state, official and working visits, as well as the audiences he grants to foreign heads of state and foreign delegations. We also play an advisory role in foreign policy matters, gathering information, monitoring and analysing the international situation. Through this responsibility assigned to us as part of the international relations advisory team, we have the extraordinary opportunity to be part of great historical moments. I recall with particular gratitude the privilege of having been able to analyse the international situation. Through this responsibility assigned to us as part of the international relations advisory team, we have the extraordinary opportunity to be part of great historical moments. I remember with particular gratitude the privilege of accompanying the President of the Republic at the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of Guinea-Bissau's independence, at the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the



*The Consul General with the President of the Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa*

Tarrafal Concentration Camp in Cape Verde, the 50th anniversary of 25 April with the Heads of State of the PALOP countries and Timor-Leste at the Belém Cultural Centre, and also on state visits to countries I had never travelled to before, among many other exceptional occasions. Feeling part of this history is, in fact, a unique feeling.

**Throughout your career, you have worked in countries with a strong Portuguese community presence, such as Switzerland, Germany, and now France. Given that Paris is one of the cities with one of the largest and most active Portuguese communities in the world, how do you feel knowing that you have the opportunity to help Portuguese emigrants on a daily basis?**

First of all, I feel a huge responsibility. And, at the same time, naturally, a great honour to have been appointed to this position. It is, as you say, one of the most dynamic and largest Portuguese communities in the world, with remarkable life stories, for which I have enormous admiration. And knowing that, through the work of the Consulate General, we can help and contribute to solving concrete problems, support this community in difficult times, and also help to strengthen its ties with Portugal, is very gratifying.

It is also a challenge to look at this community, to look at the history of our Portuguese presence here in France, and, in my current role as Consul General, particularly in the vast jurisdiction of the Consulate General in Paris, to look at these life stories and think about how we can live up to the courage and ability to face a new world that our community had. And to look, too, at those who are today the fruit of that earlier immigration, to look at those of Portuguese descent and at young people on the move, to look at Portuguese origins, to look at traditions, to look at digitalisation and modernisation, and to see how all these dimensions can best fit together with the aim of providing the best public service, which is the Consulate's main mission.

And, returning to how I feel, it is, first and foremost, a sense of service. Service, responsibility and gratification, which is what I feel every day in this position. Serving Portugal with a sense of mission, being close to the community in the broadest sense, and nurturing this policy of proximity, which is what we here at the Consulate in Paris have been seeking to develop in a very concrete way, including in terms of communication and the use of our social media.

**Portugal Day was recently celebrated here in Paris, which leads me to ask how the Consulate supports the Portuguese community culturally?**

The promotion of Portuguese culture and language is a priority for all institutions representing the Portuguese State in France. In this sense, it is a task and a priority that the Consulate General of Portugal in Paris carries out, in coordination and complementarity with the Embassy of Portugal in France, naturally, and with the other Consulates General of Portugal in French territory. The Consulate General of Portugal in Paris has the possibility of hosting cultural and associative events on its premises, such as book presentations, films, concerts, seminars, conferences, debates, public speaking competitions, and many other initiatives proposed to us by external actors, such as writers and painters from the community, or organised by the Consulate itself. It is in this context that we contribute to cultural promotion and to raising the profile of the community in general. We are fortunate to have premises that belong to the Portuguese State and offer beautiful spaces that represent us in a very dignified manner.

**Recently, the Consulate and Embassy attended the official opening ceremony of another Manteigaria Nacional shop in Paris, in a joint effort with Delta Cafés. How does the Consulate and Embassy cooperate?**

Business initiatives to promote Portugal abroad are always supported by the Embassies and Consulates on the ground, and more specifically by the delegations of AICEP - Portuguese Trade and Investment Agency, which monitor and support these internationalisation projects in a more competent and direct manner. My presence, together with that of the Portuguese Ambassador in Paris, at the inauguration of the first Delta Coffee House Experience outside Portugal, and the fifth that the Nabeiro-Delta Cafés Group has opened, had the main objective of demonstrating our unity of action, our shared commitment to Portugal's growth, and our support for the internationalization of leading national brands such as Delta, Grupo Nabeiro, and Manteigaria. It is essential and a natural part of our consular and diplomatic activity to work in conjunction with all institutions representing the Portuguese State to support these brands of quality and national tradition.

This new Portuguese space in the Parisian capital is located in an emblematic and upscale area of the city, highly prestigious within Parisian society, and boasts incredible design, aesthetics, and ambiance. The building's façade itself was rehabilitated by a Portuguese company—their stories intertwine in a fortunate way—and this is also a source of great pride for us. This institutional association with Portuguese projects and brands is therefore a natural fit, representing a benefit for Portugal, for the interests of our country, for the interests of the Portuguese people, for the important Portuguese expression here, and, of course, for the institutions that represent Portugal in France.

**In this sense, how would you characterize the bilateral relations between Portugal and France, which already have a very long history?**

We already have some elements in the other questions you asked me. The relations are very strong, sustained by a shared history and by very close political, economic, social, cultural, and human ties. Naturally, the Portuguese community in France is a vital link in this relationship, and it is on this focus that the Consulate's work is centered. The bilateral State-to-State relationship is handled, cared for, and monitored, primarily by the Portuguese Embassy in Paris. Naturally, today, more than ever, due to the international context and their membership in the European Union, the two countries, France and Portugal, work together on major European and global challenges, and with a strong convergence of values and objectives.

**Moving on to another topic, you were the first female Consul General of Portugal in Paris. What should be done to encourage gender equality in the diplomatic career?**

In my view, it is essential that we move from well-founded reflection to action. That is, it is not enough to simply acknowledge the underrepresentation of women, as this is evident in the data we know; it is necessary to implement concrete measures. These concrete measures include gender-sensitive human resources policies, adapting careers to today's family realities, and establishing support mechanisms that foster balance and reconciliation between work and family life.

I would add that, alongside the issue of gender equality, we must also consider the diversity of backgrounds, which, in my opinion, is still insufficiently reflected in our diplomatic careers.

Naturally, I fully understand that these balances affect both men and women, but it also seems undeniable to me that the burden of family life still weighs more heavily on women than on men, and that this can be a hindrance when it comes to choosing a career that takes us to distant countries and more complex geographies, where issues such as children's education, the lack of a family support network, or even the very creation of a family or even the terms of its composition arise.

Raising awareness of these issues involves initiatives like MUD@R, which I've been a

part of since its beginnings. These initiatives have been essential in raising awareness of these issues and the contribution of women to this career, while also seeking to explore solutions to the various challenges.

I must acknowledge that serious work has been done to analyze the potential obstacles to women's access to diplomatic careers, the reasons why fewer women than men seek to pursue this career, and the prospects for advancement and promotion that lie ahead. It was with great satisfaction that I saw the Assembly of the Republic unanimously approve the new Diplomatic Career Statute, which came into effect last March and already addresses some of these issues and provides some positive incentives. It is in this evolution that I would like to continue to believe.

**According to a study published in Foreign Affairs Magazine, female diplomats have held extremely important posts, such as the Permanent Representation to the United Nations and UNESCO, but never the "major posts" like Washington, Madrid, or Brasília. What could be the reason behind this phenomenon?**

The question shouldn't be directed at me, as you'll understand. It's certainly not due to a lack of competence, and it's also true that it's no longer a legal, constitutional, or legal issue, as it was 50 years ago. However, some barriers, perhaps structural, persist, which have been analyzed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the Foreign Ministers themselves, who have been paying particular attention to this issue of gender equality and access to the diplomatic career, in all its dimensions. I want to continue to believe, as I said, that progress is moving in a positive direction and that answers to the question you posed will be found soon.

**Finally, what advice would you give to young people who aspire to be diplomats in the future?**

In my opinion, and based on how I've approached my own career, I believe that a diplomatic career is a lifelong endeavor. It's a career of service, dedication, and perseverance. Precisely because it's a special career within the State, it must be understood by young people who aspire to be diplomats as a career of enormous rigor, integrity, and demand. And this demand involves study, reading, developing analytical skills, the power of synthesis, oratory skills, but also a profound curiosity about the world. We can't distinguish worlds within the world. A diplomat must be open and flexible to one day being placed in a destination to which they've never had a special connection, nor the desire to work in that country or post, nor even a particular personal empathy, and be able to accept that they are representing the Portuguese State and the Portuguese people.

For me, there is no greater honor or responsibility than this: public service. And, above all, believing that we can make a difference, in any internal service or foreign destination we are assigned to, in any geography.

Portuguese diplomacy needs diplomats with diverse experiences, distinct backgrounds, and diverse origins, and we are all called to do one thing: to be a bridge. A bridge between countries, between people, between cultures, between histories.

And so we return a little to the beginning of our conversation, which emphasized the human dimension of the diplomatic career, for me the most rewarding and fulfilling. I strongly encourage young people who feel they have this calling to pursue it and consider it with great seriousness, because the choices will not always be easy, and the path will not always be the most obvious. But the brilliance and magic of this professional and personal life project, which in some cases includes our nuclear family and which takes us to sometimes distant and different places, is what, for me, makes this career the best in the world.

# “Gen Z” Against Corruption: Protests in Nepal Topple Government and Trigger Political Transition

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By Beatriz Inocência

Since early September 2025, large-scale anti-corruption protests have flooded the streets of Nepal. The country plunged into an unprecedented political crisis after the government decreed a social media blackout, which escalated into a popular uprising led mainly by the so-called Generation Z. This movement forced the resignation of Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli and brought down the government.

## Pre-Protest Context

Since the approval of the 2015 Constitution, Nepal has been plagued by unstable governments, as no administration has been able to complete its full five-year term. Leadership alternated among the same political figures, marked by ongoing disputes. Dissatisfaction became increasingly visible, especially among the youth, as they were becoming active members of society while watching their rights fade away. From high unemployment to frustration with unaccountable political elites, as well as unmet expectations regarding education and economic mobility, the climate in Nepal grew increasingly tense.

## The Social Media Blackout and “Gen Z”

On September 4, 2025, the Nepalese government imposed a social media blackout affecting 26 platforms, claiming non-compliance with new digital registration rules.

Generation Z, more widely known as “Gen Z” or “digital natives,” was the segment of the population most outraged by the September events. Having lived surrounded by technology, they learned to communicate and interact through it. Known for social activism and striving to balance personal and professional life, they felt particularly wronged by this growing deprivation of rights. The September 4 measure was seen as both a provocation and an attempt to curtail freedom of expression.



*Gen Z protests (Source: Wikimedia Commons, Peoples Dispatch)*

Initially, protests in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital and largest city, were peaceful, demanding the restoration of networks, action against corruption, and political accountability.

However, the situation escalated when deaths and injuries occurred due to excessive use of force by security forces. Tear gas, disproportionate force, and rubber bullets further inflamed Gen Z's sense of injustice, and less than a week after the protests began, the situation had worsened dramatically.

The climate turned explosive, with invasions and fires across the capital, including government buildings such as the parliament headquarters. By September 14, the death toll had risen to 72, with hundreds injured.

Amid the turmoil, the escape of more than 13,500 inmates from Nepalese prisons—taking advantage of the chaos—further aggravated the crisis.

### **Protest Repercussions**

On September 9, Nepalese Prime Minister K. P. Sharma Oli resigned in direct response to public pressure and the eruption of protests. Initially attempting to maintain authority, he ultimately stepped down after the Parliament was set ablaze. The legislature was formally dissolved, the social media blackout was lifted, and elections were scheduled for March 5, 2026.



*Parliament is set ablaze (Source: Narendra Shrestha/ EPA, Renascença journal)*

On September 12, an interim government was appointed to lead the country for six months until elections. To select a leader, a group of young activists organized a virtual convention on Discord. They proposed former Chief Justice Sushila Karki, a figure known for her fight against corruption. She was chosen to head the transitional government, becoming the first Nepalese woman to lead the Executive.

### **Current Situation**

Calm gradually returned to the streets with curfews and restrictions lifted in Kathmandu and other major regions. Essential services—such as markets, transportation, and commerce—were also restored.

Nonetheless, institutional tensions persist. Investigations into police brutality that resulted in dozens of deaths are underway, alongside criticism of whether the dissolution of Parliament was constitutional.

Beyond the political crisis, there are fears of an economic crisis, as one fuels the other. The country now seeks to recover from institutional shocks, violence, human losses, and severe material and moral damage. Yet the greatest challenge remains restoring public trust in institutions.

The political crisis in Nepal, triggered by the September 2025 protests, has gone beyond national borders. The country's geostrategic position, nestled between India and China, gives this instability major regional significance, both for border security and ongoing investments.

For the international community, the priority will be ensuring free and credible elections, as well as implementing reforms to restore institutional trust.

This political crisis was a major turning point for Generation Z on the global stage, they not only proved resilient in defending their core values but also refused to be wronged and oppressed, showcasing the defining traits of tomorrow's world leaders.

# Resignation of the Prime Minister of Japan

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By Jorge Paixão

Earlier this month, specifically on September 7, the Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba revealed at a press conference in his office in Tokyo, that he intended to resign from his position as President of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), consequentially also leading to his resignation as prime minister. This event followed a pattern of failures by the Ishiba government, in its attempt to reinvigorate the LDP's popular support among the Japanese electorate, the LDP which traditionally is considered as the dominant political force in Japan, has been the target of several internal scandals since the end of 2023, including a case of party corruption relating to a slush fund and the revelation of various connections between important members of the party to the Unification Church, the same reason that lead Ishiba's predecessor, Fumio Kishida, to also step down on October 1, 2024.



*Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba leaves a press conference at his office in Tokyo, on September 7, 2025 (Source: The Dallas Morning News)*

## Context

Shigeru Ishiba, a member of the LDP's more centrist wing, on September 27, 2024, after his fifth attempt, managed to get elected to the position of party president, winning in the 2nd round against a more conservative candidate, Sanae Takaichi, by 5.14% of the votes. To many, the result of this election was unexpected, not only because of Ishiba's previous failed attempts at the presidency, but also because Takaichi won the 1st round with a margin of 3.68% of the votes. At the same time, the victory of the more moderate candidate exposed a growing division between the

more conservative members of the party and Ishiba's ideological pragmatism, this internal opposition proved to be a permanent obstacle for Shigeru until the end of his government.

A month after his election to the post of prime minister, on October 27, 2024, Ishiba dissolved the House of Representatives, the Lower House of the National Diet, in an attempt to regain the confidence of the electorate after the resignation of his predecessor, however once the results were counted, the LDP together with its governing coalition partner, Komeito, lost a total of 76 seats combined, this presented a new challenge to the prime minister, who was consequently forced to govern without having a majority in the lower chamber, thus having to rely on opposition parties such as the Japan Innovation Party and the Democratic People's Party to pass legislation.

The negative legacy of Shinzo Abe and Fumio Kishida, forced the prime minister to reform a set of laws related to the transparency of political campaigns, a process started by his predecessor, including the exclusion of Abe's faction from his cabinet, the punishment of LDP members involved in the slush fund scandal and in December 2024, a secondary revision of the Political Funds Law, with its main intention being the control of corruption inside political parties, this was achieved through various restrictions such as limiting the financing of party activities through public donations and a more hands on approach, related to the monitorization of each parties monthly finances, including a requirement forcing the publishing of sources of income and expenditures. However, without a majority in the lower house, and no cross-party consensus, the LDP's reforms remain under discussion, with several different proposals put forward by various opposition members. Regarding the economy, Ishiba and his cabinet sought to alleviate the effects of rising inflation through fiscal stimulus, with great emphasis on the case of rice, which increased by about 90% between July 2024 and 2025, these measures were approved by the government with the support of the Democratic People's Party.

However, even with all these efforts by the executive, in the face of the discontent by the electorate and the inability of the government to pass meaningful legislation, the LDP remained unable to change its public perception. Facing two elections, one local in Tokyo on June 22, 2025, and the other at the national level in the upper house, just a month later, the LDP and Komeito lost their majority. Faced with this result, the prime minister, on the 23rd, took responsibility for the inability to restore the confidence of the electorate in the government, while also reinforcing his intention to remain in office until the end of his term, a rumor that had begun to spread around by the national media, but as we know now, Ishiba would later change his position in September, there can be two main reasons for such a change in a short period of time, the first being the trade negotiations that were taking place at the time between the United States of America and Japan, with a deadline set for August 1st, something that might have forced Ishiba to remain as prime minister until its conclu-

sion, with the signing of the "*Memorandum of Understanding on Investments*", an agreement between both nations that allowed the reduction of American tariffs in exchange for Japanese investments in the United States of America. The second reason for this change was internal pressure from members of the Liberal Democratic Party, with a possible internal challenge to Shigeru Ishiba's leadership, resulting from the growing discontent of members of both conservative and moderate factions, not only for the unsatisfactory results of both elections, but also for what many considered to be a lack of fiscal restraint. namely the introduction of various stimulus packages. The LDP leadership even arranged a national meeting on September 8 regarding Shigeru's ability to lead the party forward, however just the day before this meeting was set to take place, Ishiba resigned, forcing an early election for the party's presidency.

### **Shigeru Ishiba's successor**

The resignation of Shigeru Ishiba continued the trend of early resignation from office, such being the case for the three last prime ministers of Japan, either through their inability to deliver promises like Ishiba, or cases of involvement in corruption scandals like Shinzo Abe, the continuous growing of discontent and distrust in the political establishment by the public, is also a trend that has gradually become common over the last five years, among liberal democracies. At the same time, Ishiba's legacy presents a challenge for the Liberal Democratic Party, who will now take his place? In this race there are two main candidates, Shinjirō Koizumi, Minister of Agriculture, Former Minister of Environment and son of former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, considered as the most moderate candidate, similar to Ishiba's pragmatism, with his greatest emphasis being the fight against inflation, as he considers that Japan faces the beginning of a new economic cycle and that greater emphasis should be placed on fighting inflation as opposed to deflation, also advocating for lowering petrol prices together with increasing wages, both of which are intended to boost consumer confidence.

And Sanae Takaichi, former Minister of Economic Security and Interior, the candidate of the conservative faction who lost her second campaign for the position of party president in the 2024 election against Shigeru, economically her proposals are considered as more fiscally liberal, especially compared to other members of the LDP, with for example, the intention to double the Japanese economy in a decade, through increases in government public spending, the reactivation of nuclear power plants, and the financing of investments in domestic semiconductor and artificial intelligence industries. Sanae is also considered a more nationalist candidate for not denying the possibility of visiting the Yasukuni Shrine, a tradition set by former prime ministers, which has been abandoned in recent decades, due to the fact that the temple is considered a controversial religious symbol for its connection to Japanese soldiers of World War II, a clear departure from his predecessor, Ishiba, who showed for the first time ever regret over Japan's actions during the conflict. In addition to supporting a strengthening of the military forces with some emphasis on national

defense. If elected, she would be the first woman to hold the position in the history of Japan.

There is a clear continuation of the ideological division of the LDP between these two candidates, with two possible paths for the future of the party, the continuation of a governance focused on pragmatic centrism, with greater emphasis on the impact of inflation and rising prices on consumers, with the attempt to re-establish some confidence of the electorate in the national political system, or a turn to a more conservative right with greater concern in the areas of national security, the birth crisis and better integration of immigrant populations, in an attempt to captivate the electorate of both Sanseito and the Japanese Conservative Party.

### **International Impact**

Internationally, Ishiba's resignation as prime minister poses no immediate threat to Japan's international partners, as the LDP remains the country's largest political force, with a high probability that its next president will be elected as prime minister, but similar to other countries such as France and the recent resignation of François Bayrou, The resignation of a third prime minister in less than five years, coupled with the ideological fragmentation of the Japanese political system through the rise of new populist ideological movements as an alternative to the traditional opposition parties, demonstrates a major challenge for any government seeking to pass meaningful legislation.

This means that the resignation of the prime minister had its greatest effect, not in the diplomatic realm of Japan, but on its place inside the international market, with an increase in the value of the Japanese 30-year government bonds, a worrying trend that has continued in the last few years with a sudden rise after the prime-minister announced his resignation, a clear sign of distrust by investors in the Japanese government with a large scale of sell offs by the JGB. There's also the possibility, that if Sanae Takaichi wins the election, that Japan might put a greater emphasis on its national security with investments in defensive forces, this being a topic of great discussion in the context of Japanese society post-WW2, Sanae could also represent the path to a more nationalistic government, something that might force a reconfiguration of relations between Japan and China.

# Eleições na Noruega

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By João Confraria

In early September, Norwegian elections were held after the last Labour minority government fell due to divisions within the coalition that had supported it until then. In an election with a turnout of 78%, victory ultimately smiled on Labour with the re-election of Prime Minister Jonas Støre, who won 28.2% of the vote and 53 parliamentary seats. In this context, Jonas Støre needs the support of four left-wing parties which, forming a coalition, have a majority of 87 seats in the Norwegian parliament. Thus, in order to govern, Støre will need to negotiate with the radical left on the budget, fiscal policy aimed at the wealthy, the allocation of investments from the Norwegian sovereign wealth fund, and the reduction of oil exploration, all of which are fundamental issues for socialists, greens, and Marxists, and on which they differ significantly from Støre's executive.

According to analysts, a key factor in the incumbent government's victory was what the opposition called the Stoltenberg effect, referring to the return of the former NATO Secretary-General as finance minister in the Labour government. Secondly, one of the main milestones of these elections was the doubling of votes for Progress, the far-right party led by Sylvi Listhaug, which obtained almost 24% of the votes and 48 parliamentary seats and established itself as the second political force and main opposition to the government, a phenomenon evident in several countries. This rapid growth of the far right is due, first and foremost, to the decline in popularity of the Christian Democrats led by former Prime Minister Erna Solberg, who saw votes flee to Listhaug's party. Secondly, this growth was based on the youth vote, mainly from men, which has become significantly more radical in the last four years, as they do not identify with the traditional parties that built the Norwegian social model.

The biggest blow on election night was to Erna Solberg's Conservative Party, which won only 24 parliamentary seats, losing its position as the main opposition party and thus ending a political cycle of rotation between the centre-right and centre-left, something we have been seeing in several European countries.

In this context, these elections were marked above all by external issues, given that Norway shares part of its border with Russia, as well as internal issues. In terms of domestic policy, the focus was on taxation, particularly that affecting the wealthiest Norwegians. The issue arises in relation to the 1% tax applied to all Norwegians with capital equivalent to or greater than 1,760,000 million Norwegian kroner, equivalent to 175,000 thousand dollars. This measure has demonstrated the inability of governments to tax the wealthiest at a time of financial globalisation, as it led to an exodus of capital from Norway to Switzerland, a jurisdiction with lower capital taxes. Listhaug's far-right party made it clear that it wanted to abolish this tax, while the Conservative Party, currently the third largest political force, did not go so far but

pointed to the end of the tax on financial capital, namely that levied on shares. The Labour Party rejected both options, with Stoltenberg saying he feared a tax system where the rich would end up paying little tax. Given the new strength of Labour's partners on the left and their key role in maintaining government stability, everything points to the tax being maintained or even increased, as some radical left-wing parties have argued.

Other domestic issues that, in this case, caused the more radical left to grow were the rising cost of living and growing inequality in Norway. With its historic social and redistributive model in crisis, the growing accumulation of wealth at the top of the distribution table has alarmed the middle class and, above all, the still-solid Norwegian trade unions. Finally, still in the domestic context, an issue that marked the electoral debate and a source of division between Labour and its partners on the left was the exploitation of natural resources in the country, with the socialist and Marxist left wanting to reduce it significantly, while Labour wants to maintain current levels of exploitation or even increase them. In this context, it is important to mention that since the destruction of Nord Stream, Norway has overtaken Gazprom as the main gas supplier to its European partners. On this issue, it seems that voters will be closer to Støre and his government, as the Norwegian social model is largely based on revenues from natural resources and euro currency reserves, which are fundamental to trade with the EU.

The Norwegian sovereign wealth fund, worth two trillion dollars, has holdings in Israeli companies, some of which have been actively involved in the Israeli occupation and attacks on the Gaza Strip. In July, the government began withdrawing some of its investments in more than 20 Israeli companies, but partners on the left want to end all investments in Netanyahu's country, pointing to the Norwegian government's possible breach of international law. This pressure from the left was welcomed by voters, who rewarded it at the polls, being very concerned about the humanitarian crimes in the Gaza Strip. In addition, on the foreign front, Russian imperialism is also viewed with great concern, having marked part of the electoral debates. On this point, Labour managed to convince voters since, as mentioned above, they brought the former NATO Secretary-General into the government panel, creating a sense of security in the public perception, according to Reuters.

It is also important to highlight Norway's exception in the Nordic context in terms of the infiltration of the far right into governing coalitions. In Sweden, Ulf Kristersson's centre-right government is supported by the far right, as there has been a rapid rapprochement between the two political blocs in recent years, a phenomenon that we have been seeing in several countries, notably Portugal. In Finland, the picture is similar, with the government of Conservative leader Petteri Orpo integrating the far right, even granting it several ministries at the time of the election, including Finance and the Interior. In both cases, the growth of the far right was due firstly to anti-immigration rhetoric, secondly to the radicalisation of young people, mostly men,



*Jonas Gahr, leader of the Norwegian Labour Party, celebrates victory and heads for a second term as prime minister (Source: BBC)*

and finally to the loss by the Social Democrats of the trade union strongholds that had supported the centre-left electorally for much of the post-war period. With this storyline, it is easy to point to what appears to be an electoral phenomenon that includes the mandatory emptying of a centre-left or centre-right party to make way for the far right. However, this pendulum seems to depend on mostly circumstantial situations, i.e., on the one hand, where centre-right parties move closer to the far right and where the left has governed in recent years, it is the latter that ends up being emptied in favour of coalitions. This is due to political fatigue and a shift to the right across the entire political spectrum, particularly among centrist voters. In countries where the centre-left is seen as competent, has not dominated governance for the last 10 years and part of the electorate rejects any integration of the far right, the centre-right ends up being emptied, as happened in Norway and, to some extent, in Spain in recent years.

If anything general can be gleaned from this phenomenon, it is that in most cases it has been the centre-left that has been emptied, mainly because it is easier for centre-right parties to incorporate some far-right policies and narratives while at the same time appearing moderate and drawing some red lines, for example on the rule of law. This is because the centre electorate has been shifting increasingly to the right as the anti-immigration narrative becomes entrenched in the public sphere, thus leaving the centre-left, historically humanist, in a difficult situation in terms of elections and the political agenda.

Even so, it does not seem that this pendulum will hold much longer in the face of the crisis in the liberal party system and the high probability that the far right will govern and win elections in the coming years across Europe. Beyond this broader picture, Norway in particular has enjoyed growing gas exports to the EU, which has contributed significantly to GDP growth of 2.1%, above the European average. This climate of economic stability, coupled with the growing profits of the Sovereign Wealth Fund, has strengthened the Labour Party and, despite the growth of the far

right, has given the Prime Minister confidence. Støre himself, triumphant, said that 'these elections are a signal to other countries that social democrats can win even with the growth of the far right'. Even in this scenario, contingency reigns above all, as we cannot rule out a scenario in which the far right continues to grow, especially when it is currently the main opposition force in Norway.



*Far-right party Progress' leader Sylvi Listhaug votes (source: Eunews)*

# Fall of (yet another) French government after no-confidence vote

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By Raquel Bravo

On 9 September, a new political crisis shook France. At issue was the rejection of a motion of confidence in the government of François Bayrou, the third French Prime Minister to lose his position in the space of a year.



*Former French Prime Minister François Bayrou (Source: RTP News)*

## How did it start?

France is currently facing significant economic challenges, largely related to its high level of public spending, which is among the highest in the world as a percentage of GDP. Given this economic situation, Bayrou's executive presented the proposed budget for 2026, which included cuts of 44 billion euros

in public spending and increase productivity. Among the concrete measures were the abolition of two national holidays and a one-year freeze on pensions. These ideas were rejected by the opposition, leading Bayrou to call a vote of confidence, a move described by the opposition as 'political suicide', culminating in his resignation as Prime Minister.

On the one hand, according to Boris Vallaud, president of the Socialist Party parliamentary group, the lack of support for debt reduction proposals in the National Assembly was 'quite sad'. On the other hand, Mathilde Panot of France Insoumise (radical left) welcomed the outcome of the vote.

## What is the solution?

The French head of state could therefore choose one of two options: appoint a new Prime Minister or call early elections. From the outset, Emmanuel Macron was critical of the idea of taking the country to the polls, an opinion not shared by far-right parties such as the National Rally, nor by the far left, which wanted not only early elections but also Macron's resignation.

However, the President ultimately announced the appointment of Sébastien Lecornu as Prime Minister, a position that will not be an easy task given that he will have to face the same budgetary problems that brought down Bayrou and, consequently, work in an unstable and fragile environment.

Thus, since beginning his second term as President, Emmanuel Macron has already had five Prime Ministers.



*French Prime-Minister Sébastien Lecornu (source: Euronews)*

### **Beyond the parliamentary crisis**

Beyond the political crisis within parliament and the economic crisis that caused it, France faced a grim September marked by strong social unrest. 'Block everything' was the slogan that marked 10 September, when demonstrations, roadblocks and transport disruptions began. On 18 September, tens of thousands of people took to the streets in several

French cities to express their dissatisfaction with the government's economic and social policies.

Seven years after the protests of the Gilets Jaunes or Yellow Vests, a new citizens' movement, which similarly grew on social media, has gained momentum. However, it is still difficult to draw comparisons with the events of 2018, as this time the movement's base is younger and comes from a broader social spectrum. But it is mainly because of this latter fact that its agenda is broader, aiming to change the country's political model, which they consider neoliberal and corrupt.



*Protests in Paris at Place de la République*

## **Consequences**

The fall of the government causes not only great instability in France but also in the EU, given that the country is the Union's second largest economy. If France faces political deadlock, this will have economic consequences for the EU, due, for example, to a lack of investment and reduced productivity, leading to a lack of a clear position within the organisation on agricultural, trade and industrial policy issues.

In conclusion, France faces not only a budgetary crisis, but also a crisis of confidence between citizens and their leaders. The constant succession of prime ministers shows the difficulty of governing with a fragmented parliament. Without a firm political agreement, France risks remaining politically unstable, weakening the country's role in the European Union and its ability to face global challenges.

# Blackrock and company: the unknown role of asset holders in international politics

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By Johan Schäfer

A group of actors that is extremely influential in foreign policy decisions and implementation are asset managers. Companies such as Blackrock, Vanguard, State Street, and many others act as intermediaries between investors/clients and their targets, which are often multinational corporations. What happens within these organisations remains unclear, which is why this article aims to shed some light on the subject. From this point onwards, Blackrock will be used as the main actor and company in this sector, without forgetting the others, many of which are based in the United States of America.

## **The business model**

To better understand how Blackrock works, here is a theoretical example. Imagine an extremely wealthy individual who chooses to remain anonymous and shielded from media scrutiny. This is where Blackrock comes into play: through discreet contacts with lawyers and managers to find ways to invest these funds. They receive advice from the best experts in the field, as well as from the most powerful computer programmes in the world, all so that Blackrock, and the investor, can maximise profits. These are diverted to tax havens such as Ireland, Luxembourg, the Cayman Islands or the US state of Delaware, where Blackrock is headquartered. This works through complex webs of sub-companies with owners who do not even exist, allowing them to successfully evade the tax authorities and leaving the money at the investor's disposal, as author Werner Rügemer points out.

## **The influence of asset holders**

In addition to individual clients, Blackrock has billions (millions of millions) of dollars from private and state pension funds, as well as insurance companies. This company alone manages at least £12 billion in assets, with shares in 18,000 companies in all Western countries. The companies come from every possible sector: energy (Exxon and Shell), banking (JPMorgan Chase, Citibank), pharmaceuticals (Bayer, Johnson & Johnson), agribusiness (Nestlé, Cargill), media (from the liberal New York Times to the conservative Fox News), big tech (Amazon, Apple, Google, Microsoft, Meta, Nvidia), cars (Mercedes, BMW), armaments (Rheinmetall, Boeing) and so on. It can be said that Blackrock, together with other asset holders such as Vanguard and State Street, owns an average of 25% of all giant companies in the Western world. They sometimes hide behind unusual names such as 'Trident Merger LLC' or 'Luxemburg Holdco Sarl'. And all this with only a few thousand employees, whereas traditional banks manage fewer funds with around 50 times more workers.

Sarl". E, tudo isto, com, apenas, alguns milhares de empregados, sendo que os bancos tradicionais gerem menos fundos com cerca de 50 vezes mais trabalhadores.

Linking this to politics, the power of such sums of money automatically translates into influence with decision-makers. Most of this happens through closed-door lobbying meetings to decide, for example, the content of legislation, as well as if and when it should be implemented. However, there are exceptions where power becomes visible to everyone. The current German Chancellor, Friedrich Merz, worked as a lobbyist for Blackrock from 2016 onwards. In the United States and France, too, there are direct links between the government and the company. And although Blackrock is the largest shareholder in 39 of the 40 largest German companies, it only has a small and modest branch in Munich. Discretion is imperative in the business world.

### **Larry Fink and Aladdin, two key players**

Blackrock CEO Larry Fink is a regular guest at gatherings with world policy makers. He attends the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos every year and is a regular at Bilderberg Group meetings, etc.

Another of the organisation's trophies is its extraordinary investment risk assessment programme: Aladdin. With the immeasurable amount of data it has access to, it can perfectly construct models of current and future developments in the financial markets, as well as the political events associated with them. In recent years, it has generated at least \$22 trillion in assets. Not only from Blackrock, but also from other companies and individuals. This means that a single computer system controls more than 10% of all assets worldwide.

### **The danger of concentration of power for democracies**

After this article about Blackrock and other companies, The problem arises of the enormous influence of a few entities and individuals in our societies. Asset holders, on the one hand, have immense possibilities to manage billions of dollars, while on the other hand, few people know about them. Among others, journalism has a duty to inform the population about this type of practice. This asymmetry of power contrasts with transparency, a value of modern democracy.

The asymmetry must therefore be removed as much as possible and as little as necessary, above all through independent and persistent scrutiny by state entities, NGOs and journalists.



*Blackrock's HQ in Munich (source: Mux.de)*

# Conflict Clarified: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

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By Dario Vargas

## What conflict is this?

The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict is a military and political conflict between Israel, diplomatically supported by the United States, and Palestine, divided between the Palestinian National Authority, internationally recognized as the representative of the Palestinian people with partial control over the Palestinian Territories in the West Bank, and Hamas, an Islamist organization, supported by Iran, who controls the Gaza Strip.

## How did it start?

Although the First Arab-Israeli War only began in 1948, the origins of the conflict date back a century earlier, with the creation of the Zionist movement. This movement, founded in the late 19th century in response to the repression of the Jewish people in Europe and, in particular, within the Russian Empire, sought, after some deliberation in various locations, to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, considered by Jews to be their ancestral homeland. These developments, as well as a series of waves of violence against the Jewish people within Russia that encouraged many to leave the country, marked the beginning of the process of Jewish immigration to Palestine, then under the control of the Ottoman Empire, a Turkish state that controlled a significant part of the Middle East. These migratory movements would be supported in the political sphere by pressure groups seeking to promote the interests of the Zionist movement internationally, culminating in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, in which the British government committed itself to the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine.

At the same time that the Zionist movement was developing, the Arab people then, mostly under Ottoman rule, began to develop their national consciousness. Exposed to Enlightenment ideals during a period of political openness within the Ottoman Empire and driven by the expansion of the press in the Middle East, this movement would challenge Turkish control over predominantly Arab regions, with Arab urban elites promoting the creation of a common national identity in opposition to the Ottoman government's attempts to incite loyalty among the peoples within the empi-



*Map of Israel (blue) and Palestine (internationally recognised borders outlined in red, territories under Palestinian control in green) (Source: Al Jazeera)*

re, drawing inspiration in part from the nationalist movements in the Balkans that had gained independence for their nations from the Ottomans. This movement would culminate in the Arab Revolt of 1916, during the First World War, which saw the Arab people, with the support of the United Kingdom and France, launch an armed revolt against the Ottoman authorities.

In Palestine, tensions between Zionism and Arab nationalism would come to the fore after the end of the First World War and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. In the aftermath of the war, the United Kingdom, which had initially promised to cede the Arab-majority Ottoman territories for the creation of an independent Arab state in exchange for its support, established the Mandate of Palestine, a colonial government recognised by the League of Nations, predecessor of the United Nations, which lasted from 1919 to 1948. This transfer of sovereignty without the consent of the Arab population led to tensions between them and the British authorities, while growing Jewish immigration, supported by the British government, came to be seen as a threat to the goals of the Arab national movement. The beginning of the Mandate was followed by a gradual radicalisation among Jews and Arabs, who came into conflict with each other and with British forces. An Arab popular uprising between 1936 and 1939 led the British government to seek to limit Jewish immigration to the region, while also committing to creating an independent Palestinian state within a period of ten years.

The beginning of the Second World War and of the Holocaust by Nazi Germany would lead to the escape of millions of Jews from occupied Europe. However, several states, including the United Kingdom, had a reluctant response to this wave of refugees, creating several obstacles against their immigration. The newfound urgency in the search for a safe space for the Jewish people and the rejection by several governments to accept a higher number of refugees led to a wave of illegal immigration, organized by Zionist groups against the restrictions determined by colonial authorities, to Mandatory Palestine, a factor that contributed to the rise of ratio of the Jewish population in Palestine, who went from 11% in 1922 to about 32% in 1948. During this conflict, several radicalized Jewish paramilitary groups conducted a series of assassinations and terrorist acts against the Mandatory government. They were, however, opposed by the leading organizations of the Zionist movement in Palestine.

The Arab population in Palestine's reaction to the war was mixed. On the one hand, 12.000 Palestinian Arabs volunteered to fight among the British armed forces with the support of several prominent individuals and organizations within their community, and even fought within mixed battalions with Jewish volunteers. On the other hand, several Palestinian figures, including Amin al-Husseini, one of the leaders of the Arab movement in Palestine during the 1936 revolt, appealed, without success, for the Arab population to revolt against the British authorities and the Zionist movement, garnering the support of Nazi Germany.

With the end of the Second World War, tensions between the Arab and Jewish communities emerged once more, with the situation rapidly evolving into open war between the Jewish National Council and its allies, who represented the Jewish people, the Arab Higher Committee, representatives of the Arab people, and the Mandatory British authorities, who saw their authority rapidly disintegrate. At the core of this deterioration into civil war in Mandatory Palestine was Resolution 181 of the United Nations. This resolution sought to divide the region into two states, granting 56% of the territory to a Jewish nation and 42% of it to an Arab nation. This resolution was accepted by the representatives of the Jewish community but rejected by the Arab Higher Committee, who justified their decision with their apprehension towards being given less than half of the territory despite representing a majority in the region.

In 1948, in a state of open civil war, the British authorities withdrew from Palestine, unable to put an end to the violence. Immediately after the end of the British mandate, Jewish representatives declared the independence of Israel, with this declaration being followed by a military intervention by the Arab League, an organization that encompassed several Arab states, thus beginning the First Israeli-Arab War. This conflict ended with an Israeli victory, who then formed the State of Israel in all the territories allocated to their community by Resolution 181 as well as a significant portion of the Arab territories, with thousands of Palestinians abandoning or being expelled from these territories, an event named by Palestinians as the Nakba. Furthermore, Jordan and Egypt, both participants in the conflict, occupied, respectively, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, two territories originally granted to the Palestinian state, whilst thousands of Jews, many suffering from discrimination in their countries of origin after the end of the Israeli-Arab war, emigrated to Israel.

During the decades after the end of the war, tensions between Israel and the Arab states led to periodic hostilities, in particular a conflict in 1956 that would be known as the Suez Crisis. However, in 1967, Israel, perceiving the risk of a joint Syrian-Egyptian invasion, launched an attack against these states, leading to a response by Jordan and Iraq, initiating the Six-day War. This conflict ended with an Israeli victory, who would proceed to occupy the remaining Palestinian territories, as well as the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights, the latter areas previously under the control of Egypt and Syria, respectively. Later, Israel would, in a peace treaty with Egypt, return their territories, remaining, however, in control over the Golan Heights in the absence of a similar agreement with Syria.

After the end of the Six-Day War the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), created by the Arab League in 1964 to represent the Palestinian population, began a series of guerrilla campaigns against Israel, first from Jordan, which would expel the organization from its territory in 1971 due to tensions between the government and the group, in part fuelled by confrontations between it and Israel

in Jordanian soil, then from Lebanon, where its presence would see it getting itself involved in the religious disputes in the country, thereby contributing to the tensions that would culminate in the Lebanese Civil War of 1975 and intervening directly in the conflict until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, aimed at stopping cross-border attacks by Palestinian militias, forced it to relocate to Tunisia.

In 1987, the Palestinian population in Israel, alleging that the Israeli state had increased its repression against them and opposed to the creation of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, revolted against the government, beginning the First Intifada, which would only end in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords. These treaties sought to create a basis for relations between Israel, who



*Six Days' War (source: G1-Globo)*

recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and accepted the creation of the Palestinian National Authority, a PLO-led institution that would govern the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, and Palestine, with the PLO recognizing the State of Israel and leading the Palestinian Authority.



*Signing of the Oslo Accords between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin (left), Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat (right) and US President Bill Clinton (centre) (source: Wikipedia)*

However, violent opposition by Israeli and Palestinian extremists against the Accords, including the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli prime-minister, by an Israeli ultranationalist and several terrorist attacks by the Islamist group Hamas, who defended an armed struggle against Israel, aimed at Israeli targets, as well as a wider opposition by several sections of the societies of both countries would lead to a stagnation in the peace negotiations. Israel did not completely withdraw its territorial control of Palestinian territory and would continue to found new settlements, arguing that existing risks to Israeli security in Palestinian territory justified such measures, whilst several Palestinian armed groups, namely Hamas and its allies, would begin to import military equipment and consolidate their strength.

The non-observance of the Oslo Accords and continuous tensions between Israel and Palestine would lead to the Second Intifada, a Palestinian popular revolt that occurred between 2000 and 2005 and was noticeably more violent than the previous Intifada. This conflict, which saw thousands of Palestinians and Israelis dead, mainly civilians, was followed by Israel's removal of all settlements in the Gaza Strip and the imposition of controls over Palestinian goods and people, supported by the construction of a barrier separating the West Bank from Israeli territory and several settlements within the region.

In 2006, the Gaza Strip would gain even more prominence when Hamas won the Palestinian legislative elections conducted that year, which occurred among a loss of confidence towards Fatah, the dominant group within the PLO, after a corruption scandal. The group was, however, unable to form a government due to the inability for it to conciliate its positions with those of the remaining Palestinian parties, leading to a civil war in Gaza. This conflict led to the expulsion of Fatah and its allies from the Gaza Strip and the division of Palestinian territories between the two forces. Hamas' victory in Gaza, who would launch a series of attacks against Israel, particularly by launching missiles towards Israeli targets, as well as the continuous occupation and the presence of Israeli settlements in the West Bank would lead to a series of inconclusive military conflicts in Gaza in 2008, 2012, 2014 and 2021.

The most recent conflict in the territory began on the 7th of October, 2023. It began after Hamas and its allies conducted a series of attacks in the south of Israel, the largest since the country's independence. Hamas alleged the attacks were in response to continuous Israeli activity in the Palestinian Territories. In response to the attack, Israel began, on the 27th of October, an invasion of the Gaza Strip, justifying such movements as a means to eliminate the security threat that Hamas represented to Israel as well as rescue the hostages that were captured by the Islamist group during its attacks. Both actors have been accused of committing war crimes against civilians, claims that both reject.

This conflict led directly to confrontations between Israel and Hezbollah, a Lebanese military and political group, the Houthis, a Yemeni military group, as well as Iran, with these three being allied to Hamas.

### **How is it relevant to Portugal?**

Portugal maintains official diplomatic ties with Israel, having an embassy in Tel Aviv, as well as with the Palestinian Authority, having a representative's office in Ramallah.

The Portuguese state's official position regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been consistently following that of its allies, with an emphasis on the defense of the two-state solution, which proposes the creation of a Palestinian state that would coexist peacefully with an Israeli state. However, until 2025 the Portuguese state only recognized the State of Israel, arguing that the recognition of Palestine should only occur alongside other European countries, neither recognizing Israeli control over parts of the West Bank or the settlements within the territory, considering them to be a violation of international law. However, in the context of several European states recognizing the State of Palestine, Portugal recognized the country on the 21st of September, 2025.

The economic impact of the most recent conflict in Gaza emerges mainly due to the disruption of the commercial routes in the Red Sea, which covers around 15% of global trade, as well as potential disruptions on the Persian Gulf routes, where around 30% of all maritime transportation of oil occurs, as a consequence of the conflicts between Israel and Iran, alongside with those with the Houthis. These disruptions have as a direct effect the rise of energy and fuel prices, which consequently also raise the costs of diverse economic activities in the country, namely the energy industry dependent on these imports, with negative effects on the economic growth of Portugal.

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