



Rene Magritte, Le mal de mer, 1948.

What Future for the Global South?

Celso Amorim

Brazil's leading diplomat on navigating global instability

The first months of 2026 have seen a dramatic escalation of imperial violence. The United States kidnapped Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, threatened to invade Greenland, laid siege to Cuba, gave the green-light to continue the genocide in Palestine, and launched —with Israel— a war against Iran, which as included bombing its major cities, destroying schools and hospitals, wrecking critical infrastructures throughout the Persian Gulf, disrupting the maritime route responsible for a fifth of traded oil in the world, and, of course, assassinating its head of state.

Celso Amorim has been a major presence in Brazilian diplomacy and international relations for more than thirty years. He served as foreign secretary under President Itamar Franco in 1993 and as Brazil's Permanent Representative to the United Nations later in the decade. He resumed the role of Minister of Foreign Affairs when Lula came to power in 2003 and held it until 2010, before being appointed Minister of Defense by Dilma Rousseff. He is now Chief Advisor to the third Lula government.

The global turbulence of today served as the context for the following interview. In a conversation with *Phenomenal World* editors Maria Fernanda Sikorski and Hugo Fanton, Amorim discusses the future of the multilateral order and the strategic dilemmas for middle powers facing both global competition and US aggression. Carried out on February 10 in Brazil and updated on March 4 to include a reflection on the attacks against Iran, this interview considers the current geopolitical ruptures and continuities through the Brazilian perspective.

An interview with Celso Amorim

Maria Sikorski: What is your assessment of the latest developments in the Middle East?

Celso Amorim: The attacks on Iran, as well as Iran's response to the US-Israeli offensive, represent a significant aggravation of regional tensions in an international context already marked by major instability. The

shrinking space for dialogue and the growing centrality of force are deeply regrettable developments. In just a short period, we have gone from signs of progress in negotiations to a large-scale military operation. At this point the consequences are difficult to measure, but it is unlikely that there will be any quick resolution or a low-cost outcome, considering the demographic, historical, and political dynamics in Iran. The damage will probably not be confined to one country or region, and a scenario in which several conflicts could become interconnected is not out of the question.

Hugo Fanton: What is the significance of assassinating a head of state?

CA: The assassination of a head of state or government is a serious violation of international law, and escalating the conflict to this point tends to increase geopolitical instability.

MS: Earlier this year you described the US military intervention in Venezuela as “tragically surreal,” and warned about the dangers of a world that is no longer governed by a predictable set of rules. The international institutions created in the post-war period have not mounted a concrete or coordinated response to Maduro’s kidnapping. Have we now entered a global state of exception, in which diplomacy has been replaced by brute force?

CA: This is the worst moment for international dialogue since I began to occupy positions of greater responsibility in public life—I am not talking about the beginning of my diplomatic career, when I did not yet follow these processes closely, but about the period when I was directly involved in formulating foreign policy. La Rochefoucauld said that “hypocrisy is the tribute vice pays to virtue.” Now not even that remains. Today certain states act simply because they have the power to act. I consider what happened in Venezuela unjustifiable. I am not defending Nicolás Maduro nor am I saying that he is right; that is another issue. But what we have witnessed here is a violation of international law in its oldest sense: the law of nations.

Countries have always waged war, but they have not always behaved in this way. The death of a monarch in combat, for example, could occur within a recognizable logic of confrontation between states. What happened in Venezuela, by contrast, is truly surreal. Its only parallel in recent international relations is what we saw in the case of Saddam Hussein.

I have learned from my political experience that it is possible to search for loopholes, to push for gradual change, to try to influence events, but that ultimately one cannot ignore reality. And this is the reality today. The question is how to deal with it, and here we do not yet have a clear answer. You rightly mentioned the absence of a stronger reaction from the multilateral system, but we must remember that the multilateral system itself was created by the victorious powers at the end of World War II, and continues to be shaped by this legacy. States act according to their own interests; none is willing, at least for the moment, to risk a direct confrontation with what is still—and will likely continue to be for some time—the world's greatest military power. This makes the current moment particularly dangerous.

At one time, when we spoke of multipolarity, we used to imagine a more flexible, more open international order. But we are now seeing the concept of multipolarity transform into something else. It has gradually become conflated with the logic of “spheres of influence.” The other great powers, Russia and China, may have rhetorically condemned the intervention in Venezuela, but they have taken no concrete action. There was not even a resolution presented to the Security Council, which, even if it was defeated, would have at least allowed other states to stake out their positions.

There's no hiding the fact that we live in a very difficult world. Whereas two decades ago I would have said that we lived in a world of opportunities, today we live in a world of difficulties—which have only intensified because of the recent turn in US foreign policy, guided by the worldview associated with Thucydides, in which strength is the only guiding principle.

HF: How can or should Brazil act in this context? Historically, the country has advocated peaceful solutions to disputes and relied on multilateralism as a central instrument of its foreign policy.

CA: There is no simple solution. Brazil must continue to work toward a better type of multipolarity. That is why, personally, I have always been cautious about the concept of the “hemisphere.” While the “western hemisphere” might exist geographically, it is curious to use it as a political category when there is no real eastern equivalent.

I do not see any determinism in this position. Brazil must maintain good relations with the US—that much is obvious and needs no further explanation. But at the same time, it cannot fail to cultivate relations with China, Russia, and other countries. Not least because, in order to weigh its options, it must maintain dialogue with all sides. When it comes to Russia, in some quarters there was no willingness to engage in dialogue after the outbreak of war in Ukraine. But now I am pleased to see that certain initiatives—such as the visit of French officials to Russia—are pointing in a different direction. It’s not as if Brazil was responsible for effecting this change, but it is nonetheless important for the world at large that there are voices in Brazil that continue to insist on the need for dialogue.

We are living through a period when global tensions often arise without mediation. The world today is increasingly raw, so to speak. We may have never experienced such a stark international situation. And although this has increased the risks of international politics, it has also exposed its real workings. This is a world without illusions.

The consequences for Brazil are profound. Sectors of society that were not previously interested in strategic or defense issues have begun to reflect on these questions. The country needs to develop a serious defense policy, not to confront major powers—we will never have the capacity to confront countries such as the United States, Russia, or China militarily—but to acquire a real deterrence capability. It is essential that external actors know that any

aggression would entail significant costs and damage. This is no simple task, as events in Venezuela show. But it is a necessary one.

At the same time, Brazil must continue to contribute to the construction of a more balanced multipolar international order, in which foreign relations can be rooted in mutual autonomy rather than automatic ideological alignments. Perhaps this is the way forward: combining deterrence with diplomatic action in favor of a more open and cooperative international system. Now, if you ask me whether there are any guarantees of success, the honest answer would be no. There are no certainties. We are dealing with a deeply uncertain historical moment.

MS: You have always been one of the leading defenders of regional cooperation in Latin America and especially in South America. Yet at this moment of realignment—when the region is once again coming under intense external pressure—Latin America seems deeply fragmented. Its governments have very different orientations. What are the implications of this, given that Brazil's international defense strategy has historically been designed alongside regional allies, as with the South American Defense Council?

CA: I have not seen such an unfavorable moment for Latin America as a whole, and for South America in particular, in a long time. Even so, we must continue this vital work. It is not impossible for governments that think differently to engage in dialogue or cooperation. For example, we had a very solid cooperative relationship with Colombian President Álvaro Uribe, who was present when the UNASUR Constitutive Treaty was signed; whereas Uruguay's Tabaré Vázquez, who was politically close to us, was the only regional head of state who did not attend. Disagreements arose later, especially regarding the creation of the South American Defense Council, because Colombia tended to mix the concepts of external defense and internal security, while we had a different view. Still, it was a solvable disagreement, and in the end it was overcome.

Once it was created, the Council helped to reduce tensions at delicate moments, such as during the crises between Colombia and Ecuador and between Colombia and Venezuela. Within the broader framework of UNASUR, we were also able to respond to internal crises, such as in Bolivia, although we only ever intervened at the request of the local authorities themselves, never without an invitation. So I would say that dialogue with leaders who have different views is not impossible, as long as there is a willingness to talk. What's more difficult is sustaining integration processes when worldviews diverge profoundly not only in terms of domestic policy, but also in terms of international alliances and strategic orientations. But even then we must not give up. Politics, as they say, is the art of the possible—and it is also about expanding the space of the possible, bringing it as close as possible to the ideal, while knowing that this ideal will never be fully realized.

HF: Is the project of Latin American or South American integration decisive for Brazil's international integration? What is the strategic role of regional integration at a geopolitical moment when regional spheres of influence seem to be regaining centrality, with the US invoking the Monroe Doctrine to threaten Venezuela and Cuba?

CA: This is something that Brazil cannot accept. I have the perception—although I may be mistaken—that the US treats Brazil with a certain degree of caution, on account of its territorial size, population, and economic and energy potential. We need to be fully aware of this position. Brazil cannot adopt a foreign policy marked, as has been said in the past, by “viralatismo”: a tendency to simply follow the US. That is not, nor will it ever be, the country's role.

I believe Brazil should always seek to maintain good relations with its neighbors. The President himself demonstrated this on his recent trip to Panama—an ability to engage in dialogue regardless of ideological affinities. Of course, there are different types of bilateral relationships; personal closeness is one thing, and respectful coexistence between states, based on cordiality and mutual recognition, is another. When the other side does not

wish to maintain cordial relations, it is not appropriate to go on insisting; each country must be allowed to pursue its own path. But in general, when this kind of distance opens up it is detrimental for everyone, since Brazil is an important market and a natural partner in the region. Here one must learn to be patient. Patience is an indispensable virtue in international politics—and only leaders with real strategic vision, such as President Lula, fully understand its importance.

You mentioned Cuba, and on this I do not want to be silent. What is happening there is deeply tragic. It is not simply a matter of pressuring or replacing the government; the sanctions imposed on Cuba do not fall just on a regime, but on an entire people. At the same time, it is not easy to know how to deal with a situation like this. Brazil has few concrete instruments to help, because the degree of interdependence in the international financial system is such that virtually any transaction ends up going through mechanisms subject to US jurisdiction and, therefore, to US sanctions. The same thing happens with oil, with Petrobras. So we are severely limited. But even so, I believe this issue should be the subject of broader international reflection, because it is not about Cuba alone. The precedent set could have serious consequences for the entire region.

Regardless of one's sympathies or disagreements, Cuba's historical trajectory is truly unique: there was a revolution, the invaders were expelled. One can discuss the errors and limitations of the political system that was consolidated thereafter, but nothing about this system will be improved by starving a people with sanctions and isolation. The G77 discussed adopting a resolution on the issue, but a decision like this depends on consensus among its members, and there were even one or two countries in South America that ended up preventing this from happening. This is a shame, because the condemnation of unilateral sanctions has historically been one of the few lasting points of convergence among the countries in the region. Seeing this unity weaken is very worrying.

HF: Would it be possible to build a regional emergency support mechanism, involving Mexico, for example, to address the situation?

CA: I can't say. Mexico itself faces significant challenges. We have great admiration for President Claudia Sheinbaum, but each country has to deal with its own internal priorities, and when its own security is at stake, it is difficult to take on initiatives of this kind.

In any case, I remember once saying to American lawmakers that, in a sense, the US has already lost the war it started against Cuba more than sixty years ago. The regime has not been overthrown. It is no longer simply a matter of replacing one government with another; it is now about destroying the people. Cuba is a highly specific historical case, in which the perceived political alternatives are extremely limited: either the continuation of the current system or a return to the situation prior to the revolution. I will not quote the various descriptions I have heard of the Batista era, when the country was a mixture between a casino and worse things.

HF: Under the previous Lula and Dilma governments, you often described Brazilian foreign policy as “proud and active.” More recently, the term “active non-alignment” has emerged. What distinguishes these two concepts, or are they just different ways of expressing the same international outlook?

CA: I don't think there are any major conceptual differences between one formulation and the other. Perhaps the latter is more precise. But I must say that the expression “proud and active” was not born out of any deep theoretical elaboration, but out of a circumstantial necessity. In 2003, when President Lula announced my appointment, there were various other ministers present and I knew I couldn't give a long speech; I had to say something in four or five minutes at most. So I tried to summarize what the new government's foreign policy orientation would be. I tried to identify the main difference with the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration.

It was not exactly a radical change, but the fundamental shift was that Brazil would not subordinate itself to externally defined agendas—the FTAA was an obvious example—and, at the same time, it would adopt a more proactive stance in its relations with other developing countries. Our foreign policy would be proud in the sense of preserving decision-making autonomy, and active in the sense of expanding international initiatives and partnerships.

I was an overseas ambassador during the Fernando Henrique administration and I have no personal complaints—on the contrary, I admire him. But often the instructions I received pointed in the opposite direction: act cautiously, avoid initiatives that could generate unnecessary friction with the US or the European Union. This was the prevailing attitude, even if it wasn't explicitly stated. The approach we took under the first Lula administration was a little more assertive in this regard. We would now pursue a foreign policy of our own choosing, without fear of taking our own initiatives, though always within the bounds of realism, because everyone knows that there are powerful asymmetries and competing international influences.

In the first year and a half of the Lula administration, we strengthened Mercosur and advanced the agreement between Mercosur and the Andean Community, which would later give rise to UNASUR; we significantly expanded Brazil's presence in Africa with numerous presidential visits; and we held the South America-Arab Countries Summit. We were not afraid to get involved in issues that were considered sensitive. There was the crisis in Venezuela marked by the attempted coup in 2002—which, to be fair, had also been condemned by Fernando Henrique—in which Brazil began to play a more direct role of mediation and support for regional stability.

The expression “active non-alignment” was coined by the former Chilean economy minister Carlos Ominami. I participated in the first meeting he organized on the subject, and I remember remarking at the time that I was very pleased with the choice of the term, because it brought together two traditions of Brazilian foreign policy: in the past, we had a policy of automatic non-alignment, and later we developed the idea of proud and active

diplomacy. The idea of active non-alignment combined these orientations, yet without calcifying into a rigid doctrine.

It is often said that Brazil is a Western country—and in some respects perhaps it is—but it is also a country of the South. Ultimately, our orientation must be guided by national interests in each specific circumstance. On some issues, we will vote alongside the US; on others, we may converge with China. This is the logic of active non-alignment.

HF: And does the current international situation still allow for this?

CA: Time will tell. Brazil continues to follow this path. In 2024, in the context of the war in Ukraine, when no one was talking about diplomacy, we coordinated with China on a joint document proposing the opening of an international space for political dialogue and the rejection of military escalation. I would even say that this initiative came mostly from Brazil, which was more often asked to play the role of interlocutor, although we found great intellectual and political receptivity in China. We contributed to the creation of a Group of Friends of Peace at the United Nations. And now, as I mentioned, we are finally starting to see European countries recognizing that any lasting solution must take into account basic geopolitical realities, such as the fact that Russia will continue to be part of Europe.

I believe there is still room for this type of multilateral activity, although of course the context has changed. This initiative took place before the return of Trump, whose administration has paid little attention to such efforts. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, the international system is beginning to feel the effects of a situation in which the US no longer has the same uncontested position of dominance. This is, without assigning any value judgment to the term, a truly revolutionary moment, in which our ultimate direction is still uncertain. Here Brazil's strategy also involves strengthening the BRICS, whose origins date back to Lula's first administration. The BRICS bank remains active, and we continue to seek mechanisms for cooperation that would expand the possibilities for action in our increasingly complex

world—a world which is very different from the one I encountered when I was first foreign minister, and which is now undergoing profound changes that are perhaps only comparable to those that occurred in the aftermath of the world wars.

MS: To what extent did the formulation of a proud and active foreign policy also represent a redefinition of how Brazil sought to position itself vis-à-vis Washington?

CA: In 2002, Brazil took the initiative to create the Group of Friends of Venezuela. This proposal from President Lula brought together, on the one hand, countries that were more sympathetic to the Venezuelan government and, on the other, major powers such as the US itself. The goal was to create a space for mediation amid the political crisis the country was experiencing. The person I talked to most about this issue was the then-US Secretary of State Colin Powell. I was very concerned about the need to maintain political dialogue with Venezuela, especially since the recall referendum was beginning to emerge as a possible institutional solution to the crisis. There was also the issue of the presence of international observers—at that time, the OAS still enjoyed a higher degree of credibility than it would later have under Luis Almagro. We wanted to ensure the international legitimacy of the democratic process, and I tried to convince President Chávez of the importance of providing such guarantees.

At the same time, I learned that Roger Noriega, a US advisor, would be making statements in the Senate that risked further aggravating the situation. Coincidentally I happened to be in New York, so I called Colin Powell directly and asked him to check the content of the speech, because Chávez was extremely sensitive to any external signal that could be interpreted as interference. At first, Powell did not fully understand the request and replied that he had no control over US senators. I explained that I was not referring to the senators, but to the representative of the government itself who would be making the statement. What happened next was quite unusual in diplomatic practice. Powell forwarded the text of the speech to us in advance so that we

could examine it. In my many years of diplomacy I have rarely seen such a gesture, especially in relations between countries of such different weight. This demonstrates the level of dialogue and cooperation that existed at that time.

I could cite several other examples. In 2007, under the Bush administration, Brazil was invited to participate in the Annapolis Conference, despite internal criticism that we maintained too much dialogue with Arab countries. (I have been to Palestine five times, but I have also visited Israel on several occasions, and President Lula was the first Brazilian head of state to make an official visit to Israel.) Alongside India and South Africa, we were the only non-predominantly Muslim developing country that attended—which reflected the growing international recognition of the balanced role that Brazil sought to play in the dialogue between different regions and actors.

During the Barack Obama administration, we maintained a normal relationship with the US, despite the revelations that the NSA was routinely engaged in espionage against Brazil. We cooperated on issues such as Haiti, albeit in a limited capacity, and above all on the Iranian question. When I look at current events, I have the impression that history may be repeating itself—although the circumstances are much more serious today. At that time, the US government asked Brazil to intercede with Iran, and so we did. The process took several months, as is natural in negotiations of this kind, but in the end we achieved exactly the terms that the US had previously said would be acceptable.

The US later reversed course and chose to bring the issue to a vote in the UN Security Council, which was a difficult moment. But even so, this did not compromise the bilateral relationship. A few months later, during the General Assembly, we still maintained normal contact; Bill and Hillary Clinton were present and invited me to meetings. Despite our differences, lines of communication remained open.

MS: You have been directly involved in formulating Brazilian foreign policy ever since Clinton was in the White House. What would you say are the main changes in the bilateral relationship between Brazil and the US over the last three decades?

CA: The biggest change I've seen since I first served as foreign minister, during the administrations of Franco in Brazil and Clinton in the US, is a commercial one. In the 1990s, the US was Brazil's largest trading partner, accounting for about 25 percent of our exports. Today, that share has fallen to about 12 percent. The US remains a very important trading partner for Brazil—still the second largest as an individual state—but there is now a significant gap between it and China, now our main trading partner, which accounts for about 35 percent of exports. This naturally produces a different perception of the bilateral relationship.

The US retains enormous cultural influence. Everyone's happy when a Brazilian film wins an award at Cannes, but there is real national commotion when we win an Oscar. American cultural hegemony remains extremely strong. On the political front, meanwhile, there has been some fluctuation. In ideological terms, the governments in which I have served have generally had a greater affinity with Democratic administrations in the US; but in practice, we had a very positive relationship with President Bush and, despite the many ongoing challenges, we seek to preserve a pragmatic relationship with President Trump.

MS: What is the role of BRICS in this context? How do you assess the group's recent performance and what are the real possibilities for cooperation among its members today, including as a bloc, to support certain international agendas?

CA: The existence of BRICS is extremely important. Like any international mechanism, the group has imperfections—there will always be debates about which countries should or should not have been included, and about the

nature and timing of its expansion. But I believe that the decision to expand BRICS was correct in principle.

There are various countries, like Indonesia among others, whose participation strengthens the group's representativeness. Of course, the greater the number of members, the greater the diversity of interests and, consequently, the more complex the decision-making process becomes. In this sense, expanding the BRICS' representativeness tends to reduce its immediate operational effectiveness. Yet I still believe that the overall balance is positive. The mere fact that the group exists, meets regularly, and maintains permanent lines of contact makes it a significant presence on the international stage. Even when there are cautious positions or occasional absences, the perception remains that this is a real political articulation, capable of acting when necessary. This assessment is not ours alone. Analysts in the US, Europe, and other regions recognize that BRICS has now established itself as a hub for coordination.

MS: Has the search for alternatives to the dollar become essential for the economic and political security of countries in the Global South? What role does BRICS play in this?

CA: The issue of de-dollarization may be related to the BRICS but it is not limited to it. I am not an economist, but from what I have seen this is indeed a process that has been gradually taking place. After all, an international currency is essentially a matter of trust. When the perception arises that this currency is being used as a political instrument—to restrict transactions between third parties, for example—countries naturally begin to seek alternatives.

This does not mean that we will see the end of the dollar's centrality overnight. I do not believe in abrupt changes of this kind. But we are already seeing China promoting the renminbi as an international reserve currency, something that is now beginning to take shape, at least to a certain extent. The euro has also been partially able to play this role and has recently regained ground. And many countries have begun to increase their gold reserves as

a form of diversification in the face of a possible erosion of confidence in traditional reference currencies.

So this is a real phenomenon, albeit an incremental one. Because any decision to suddenly de-dollarize would be extremely complex, given the density of global financial and trade relations, a gradual process of diversification is more likely. Paradoxically, the erosion of international rules is itself contributing to this movement. It is impossible to selectively weaken the norms of the international system and, at the same time, expect confidence in institutions, including monetary ones, to remain intact. The way sanctions and financial instruments are being used inevitably affects the perception of security associated with the dollar.

Something similar is occurring in other areas of international politics. In the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, for example, the debate continues over the broader origins of the crisis: was it the expansion of NATO, the 2014 coup, or the progressive deterioration of the European security environment that caused the war? This demonstrates how complex conflicts rarely have single causes and how, ultimately, it is necessary to seek a possible, albeit imperfect, peace. The logic is similar in the economic realm.

Many previously criticized Brazil's decision not to join the FTAA. At that time, the US and EU accounted for similar shares of our foreign trade, about a quarter each. If the FTAA had been implemented, Brazil's dependence on the US could be much greater today. Measures such as tariff increases or trade restrictions could have had a much greater impact. In other words, the diversification strategy, associated with the idea of multipolarity, is not just an abstract political ideal. It is a concrete element of economic resilience and strategic autonomy for Brazil.

HF: Can the BRICS be understood, in this context, as a space for diversification and strategic coordination among countries seeking a more balanced international order?

CA: The BRICS does contribute to the strengthening of a more multipolar international order. When we compare forums such as the G7 and the G20, this much becomes clear. The difference lies not only in the presence of the BRICS countries themselves, but in the broader degree of diversity that the G20 embodies. President Bush himself realized, especially in the context of the international financial crisis, that it would be necessary to expand the space for global coordination. The G20 emerged as a more representative institution, capable of bringing together developed and emerging economies around common solutions.

Of course, the G20 could still evolve. It would be desirable to expand African representation, for example. A country like Egypt should certainly be present, and the same goes for Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa. Whatever assessment one might make of their governments or levels of stability, their presence would help to make the forum more representative.

I served for many years at the UN, where I have always advocated—and continue to advocate—for the reform of the Security Council. However, I think it is more likely that this transformation will come from the outside, driven by the evolution of broader multilateral mechanisms, rather than from the will of any single actor. It is in this context that the G20 becomes particularly relevant and, within it, the BRICS countries play an important role in broadening the plurality of discussions and contributing to more balanced international governance.

HF: At the last meeting of the World Economic Forum, President Trump once again advocated a reorganization of global governance under US leadership, based on the principle of strength. Mark Carney's response, in which he argued that the old international order has come to an end and that the current moment poses new dilemmas for so-called "middle powers," resonated around the world. How do you define middle powers, and what are their strategic options today?

CA: You might say that middle powers are those that do not have atomic bombs. Brazil has established in its constitution that all nuclear activity must be exclusively for peaceful purposes. The possession of nuclear weapons is not part of our national project, nor do I believe it should be—though this does not mean renouncing our defense capabilities. Brazil needs to develop means of deterrence that would make it more difficult to repeat the scenarios we have seen in Venezuela or Cuba, whatever the origin of the threat.

International security continues to be governed by the perception of costs and risks. The idea of a unipolar world, which for a certain period seemed predominant, no longer corresponds to reality. Even the US knows this. The great risk, as I mentioned earlier, is that this new multipolarity will become confused with a logic of spheres of influence, which is something that Brazil cannot accept. A country with diversified economic relations—which trades with both China and with the US—cannot be placed in any exclusive sphere of influence. Nor can Brazil be reduced to a single geopolitical identity. We are part of the Global South, yet we are marked by multiple overlapping cultural influences: European, African, indigenous, and Arab, among others. Brazilian foreign policy needs to reflect this plurality and preserve an autonomy of judgment, avoiding the reproduction of imported views that do not align with our historical and social reality.

MS: When you were Minister of Defense, you often argued that there is a link between national defense strategy and national development strategy. At the end of last year, you advocated increasing defense investments to around 2 percent of GDP. Could you explain what this proposal would mean in military, economic, and political terms for Brazil?

CA: This is a position I had already advocated when I was Minister of Defense—even though it was not, at that time, a formal government policy, as it would depend on broader institutional decisions. Given the current international situation, it seems natural to me that Brazil should implement this kind of increase. But it is important to make clear that this should be directed primarily toward investment and the maintenance of acquired

capabilities, and not simply the expansion of current expenditures (today, a very large portion of the Brazilian defense budget is allocated to payroll and pensions). It is not my place to specify which programs should be given priority; that is the responsibility of the Minister of Defense and the military commands. What I can say is that Brazil has significant deficiencies in several technological and operational areas.

When I first mentioned the investment target of close to 2 percent of GDP, I was simply trying to establish a reasonable benchmark for international comparison. At the time, I calculated an approximate average between BRICS countries and other relevant economies. Brazil is not involved in any direct conflicts, nor does it face immediate military threats comparable to those in regions such as the Middle East or the Indo-Pacific. Thus, 2 percent seems sufficient to ensure deterrence capability. The logic is essentially defensive. The nuclear-powered submarine is a good example: its main advantage is not as an offensive weapon, but as a deterrent; it has the ability to remain submerged and undetected for long periods, hindering any attempt at military projection against the national territory or its strategic maritime areas.

What happened recently in Venezuela is still not entirely clear to me. I do not know exactly where the failures occurred, but it is evident that there were various shortcomings. At the same time, it must be recognized that certain powers now have extremely advanced capabilities in the areas of electronic and cyber warfare, and it is natural that other major international actors are developing similar instruments. The central question then becomes: how can a country like Brazil defend itself in this type of scenario?

The goal is to prevent Brazil from becoming a structurally vulnerable country. And this becomes even more relevant when we consider our strategic resources. Brazil is estimated to have the world's second-largest reserves of rare earths and critical minerals—essential inputs for advanced technologies, the energy transition, and modern defense systems. This endowment has sparked great international interest, just as strategic resources have always attracted external attention throughout history. Brazil therefore needs,

first and foremost, to develop a clear national policy for critical minerals—something that is already beginning to be discussed within the government—and it also needs to have adequate means to protect these assets.

In a possible scenario of international tension between third parties, in which access to Brazilian strategic minerals becomes relevant, the country must be able to defend its interests and sovereignty. This is just one example, but it illustrates a broader point: national defense, technological development, and economic security have become inseparable.

HF: Finally, what is your assessment of President Trump's so-called Board of Peace?

CA: I prefer to stick to the positions already expressed by the President of the Republic, who highlighted two important points. First, it does not seem appropriate to conceive of a so-called Board of Peace, with the intention of reforming or replacing UN mechanisms, through a unilateral initiative that has not been previously discussed with the international community. Any initiative of this nature should, at most, have a clearly defined scope—for example, restricted to the situation in Gaza and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—rather than striving for a broader reconfiguration of international governance. Second, even if limited to this specific context, any peace initiative would need the effective participation of legitimate political representatives of the Palestinian people. It is not enough to rely solely on experts or technicians; it is essential to ensure the Palestinians' political presence and authority in the process. This is a prerequisite for any arrangement to have legitimacy or a real chance of producing lasting results.