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2007: globalisation comes up against geopolitics
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Having an idea may be an event, but ideas are a little different from events. Ideas are often the consequence of events, though they can also be the cause that sets them in motion. Communist regimes, for example, were – partly, at least – the product of Marx's idea that history would end with the victory of socialism. Meanwhile, Francis Fukuyama's idea that history would end with the triumph of democracy and capitalism was a consequence of the event that brought the 20th century to a close: the failure of communism.

History shows us that an idea can also construct a country. The 1789 revolution built France, the ideals of the American Revolution constructed the United States, while Zionism led to the creation of the State of Israel. Sometimes, however, an idea can destroy a country; this has been the case with Iraq, a nation that was not constructed by an idea, but by history. On 20 March 2003 – in spite of the fact that no connection at all existed between Baghdad and the September 11 attacks – the neoconservatives went to war with an idea: the democratisation of Iraq, which, once achieved, would turn the entire Middle East into a peaceful, prosperous garden of democracy.

The neoconservatives' idea has failed. Firstly, because it has destroyed Iraq, which has now become the scenario of a civil war in which different conflicts overlap, a war that broke out after an attack was carried out on the Shi'ite mosque in Samarra in January 2006. Secondly, because the neocons' attempt to impose an ideological vision of international relations has failed, given that the concept of a "global war on terrorism" has not succeeded in reorganising the world. And thirdly, because of the strategic fiasco, given that the consequences of the Iraq invasion are the very opposite to what

the US had intended: Iran's regime has grown stronger, tensions have multiplied in the Middle East, terrorism has continued to produce violence and the elections held among the Arab peoples have resulted in advances for Islamist parties.

In 2007, the "war on terrorism" pushed all the other regions into the background: Latin America, where populism continues in spite of the setback suffered by Hugo Chávez in the referendum by which he had tried to perpetuate his hold on power; Africa, still blighted by poverty, tribal rivalries, the Darfur tragedy and disease; Asia, where the emerging superpowers China and India are rewriting the map of the world, and the Russian Federation, which is using its energy resources to reaffirm itself after the Cold War. But the world moved in 2007.

The Middle East: a new era

The West dates the birth of the modern Middle East to the late 18th century. Some historians cite 1774, the year when the treaty was signed that brought an end to the war between the Russian and Ottoman empires, though most historians prefer 1798, the year that Napoleon arrived in Egypt. Since then, the region has gone through four different ages, the most recent one having been marked by the predominance of the USA. George Bush's tour of the Middle East in late 2007 took place when the Iraq war – in the opinion of Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations – had marked the beginning of the end of the US era.¹

The first era of the modern Middle East ended in 1918 with the fall of the Ottoman Empire, which had ruled the region for four centuries, after which the map was divided up between France and Great Britain. The second era ended with French and British humiliation over Suez in 1956, after they had conspired with the Israelis to win back the canal nationalised by Gamal Abdel Naser, and which provoked the condemnation of the Eisenhower Administration, an event that finally twisted Britain's arm. The third era was the Cold War, during which two events changed the map: Israel's victory in the Six-Day War in 1967, which brought an end to pan-Arabism, and the Iranian theocratic revolution. The fourth era, meanwhile, marked by the absence of the Soviet Union and the outbreak of the Gulf War (1990-91), has been characterised by the unprecedented influence of Washington.

Richard Haass maintains that this American era has reached its end because of different factors, some of which are structural and others deriving from blatant mistakes made by the Bush Administration, ranging from the Iraq War to the government's refusal – over a period of seven years – to make any attempt to restart the peace process between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Bush declared that the Middle East would become democratised following the democratisation of Iraq, but according to Paul Salem, Director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Middle East has changed for the worse. The Egyptian and Saudi Arabian autocracies, for example, have become harsher (which does not mean stronger); Iraq is in utter chaos; Iran has become a regional power; new, non-state actors such as Al Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas and Mahdi's army have become consolidated, while the peace that Bush declared would be established between the Palestinians and the Israelis by the end of 2008 continues to provoke general scepticism.

Iraq has become the first Arab country in 800 years to be governed by Shi'ite leaders, but it is in a state of chaos. The invasion of Iraq has transformed it into a combination of different conflicts; the country now has a weak government (the six Sunni ministers left the Cabinet in August 2007) and it has become the site for a number of overlapping conflicts. US and British troops have to deal with insurgency and Al Qaeda terrorism; Shi'ites and Sunnis have been locked in a civil war since the bombing of the Shi'ite mosque in Samarra in January 2006; the Shi'ites heading the Baghdad government are in confrontation with Mahdi's army, a Shi'ite militia headed by the cleric Moqtada al Sadr, who withdrew his five ministers from the government in 2007, while the situation in Kurdistan – the sanctuary of the Kurds, who are attempting to secede from Turkish Kurdistan – has brought about interventions by Turkey.

The violence diminished in 2007, but this improved situation was not the result of any great military victory, nor exclusively of the deployment of an extra 21,500 US soldiers (called "the surge"). The scenario changed because after their defeat in the battle for Baghdad in late 2006 and early 2007, the Sunnis became attracted by dollar diplomacy, at the same time as they were terrified of Al Qaeda. Thus in 2007, the Sunni sheikhs (or most

of them, at least) stopped shooting at the Marines and became the allies of the occupying force. Consequently, the US received the support of 125 Sunni militias, totaling 80,000 troops, to fight against Al Qaeda under the banner of Concerned Local Citizens, an army with a paradox at its heart: it is funded by Washington, but is hostile to the government in Baghdad, which is supported by Washington. Another decisive factor was the unilateral ceasefire by the Al Sadr militia (60,000 members). Even so, 901 American soldiers died in 2007, the highest figure since 2004.

Iraq is no longer an anti-Iranian bastion, and the monarchies of the Gulf and of Jordan find themselves up against an alliance, headed by Tehran, which is spreading through Iraq, Gaza (Hamas), Syria and Lebanon (Hezbollah). Meanwhile, the north of Iraq, where Kurdistan has been virtually independent since the Gulf War (1990-91), is a source of constant friction with Turkey. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is attempting to bring about the secession of Turkish Kurdistan, has its sanctuary there, from where it fights a conflict that has taken more than 30,000 lives since 1984.

One of the components of Turkish political culture is the Sèvres complex, which refers to the 1920 treaty through which the victors of the First World War divided up Anatolia. Constantinople and the Dardanelles came under British control, part of Eastern Anatolia was handed over to Greece, while the rest was divided up between an independent Armenia, an autonomous Kurdistan and different spheres of influence for the French and the Italians. The Turks, who also lost the Arab provinces of their empire, were only left with central Anatolia. But Mustapha Kemal, who founded the secular republic in 1923, organised a revolt and the foreigners were expelled. Sèvres was then replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, which recognized the borders of modern Turkey, including the Kurdistan that the PKK is now attempting to separate. This was the historical context behind Turkey's harassment of Iraqi Kurdistan in 2007. Turkey did not want another Kosovo in the area, as that could become contagious, and limited itself to carrying out attacks on the PKK, despite the fact that these attacks presented a shocking image – Turkey, the ally of Washington, was carrying out armed interventions in the territory of one of Washington's great allies in Iraq.

One of the consequences of the Iraq War is that the centre of gravity has shifted from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. This is, at least, the opinion of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which fears Iran's influence in a region in which the country is expected to increase its power, given China and India's great need for energy. The alliance with the United States is still functioning, despite the concern with which the Arab monarchies contemplated a paradoxical element of Bush's foreign policy in 2007 – while on one hand the US was supporting the Shi'ite-dominated Baghdad government, on the other, it was calling on the Sunnis to form a common front against Shi'ite Iran.

The mostly-Sunni Arab monarchies distrusted Iran's power, which had grown following the disappearance of two of its bitterest enemies: Saddam Hussein and the Talibans. But the Arabs also feared war, as a result of which they were considering other alternatives, especially after US intelligence informed them in late 2007 that Iran had suspended its military nuclear programme in 2003, a statement that was later called into doubt by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

After seven years of doing nothing about peace in Palestine, Bush seemed to be following in his father's and Bill Clinton's footsteps when he organised a conference in Annapolis, where Israelis and Palestinians committed themselves to the task of achieving peace within a year. However, Annapolis was not Madrid by a long chalk, where the peace conference had arisen from the victory over Saddam Hussein; Annapolis followed on from the failure of a rash strategy, and this generated scepticism. Peace had never been so close to hand as it was at Camp David in summer 2000, but the negotiations collapsed, partly because of the issue of Palestinian refugees, which Israel refused to discuss. Clinton's mistake here was to try and solve everything in three days, and without an Arab consensus. Bush, meanwhile, set a period of 12 months, and succeeded in bringing together almost all the Arabs at Annapolis. But if a peace agreement does come out of this process, it will not differ much from the parameters established by Clinton.

Just like 100 years ago, when Jewish immigration began to increase, Palestine is being contested by two peoples. At this point in history, we have finally buried the legend that Palestine was a land without a people

(the Palestinians) for a people (the Jews) without land. This legend evaporated when Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (the PLO – internationally recognized as the legitimate representative of the Palestinians) mutually accepted each other with the 1993 peace process. But the events of 2007, with Hamas' taking of Gaza by in June, indicate that the equation has once again changed: now there is one land (Palestine), two peoples (the Jews and the Palestinians) and three states, either established or due to be established (Israel, Gaza and the West Bank).

Tired of Al Fatah's corruption and the failure of the 1993 peace process, the Palestinian people gave victory to Hamas in an election in January 2006 that was internationally deemed to be free and fair. But Israel and the United States, who had encouraged the Palestinians to embrace democracy, did not like the result of the election, and they responded by boycotting the Islamist party, which promptly strengthened its links with Iran. Al Fatah was then encouraged by the United States and Israel to ignore the electoral results, and this declaration led to the division of the occupied territories into two de facto states. Álvaro de Soto, the Peruvian diplomat who stood down as United Nations envoy to the Middle East in 2007, criticised the US for boycotting the late government of Palestinian national unity; he criticised Israel for setting "unacceptable conditions" and Hamas for the violence it had wreaked. The diplomat claimed that Bush had put pressure on Hamas and Al Fatah to bring them into a situation of confrontation. Tony Blair, Special Envoy of the Quartet (the United States, the EU, Russia and the UN) for the Middle East, has acknowledged that what is needed is "a new strategy in Gaza", because the strategy of isolation in retaliation for Hamas having come to power is not working.

The Mediterranean: France will not be the centre

Latin America and the Mediterranean are regions that are distant but not so different: both of them have experienced the "Hard Power" of the Americans and the Europeans, but they have also been, or are currently laboratories for the "Soft Power" of the old colonial powers. Since 1995, Europe has been attempting to change the Mediterranean through the Barcelona Process with its "soft power". The South – the land of emigrants

and gas – wants to escape from poverty, the breeding ground of extremism.

The aim of the Barcelona Process is to turn the Mediterranean into a geopolitical reality, and to bring to an end the invisible North-South border. However, the region is off balance, and the site conflicts such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and that of Western Sahara which represent obstacles to association. It was at this crossroads that, in 2007, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy, inspired by his adviser Henri Guaino, launched the project of a Mediterranean Union, which would be comprised of all the countries bordering the Mediterranean.

The project aroused distrust among EU member countries and in Ankara, where they suspected that the objective of the French president – who is opposed to Turkey's entry into the European Union – is to prevent Turkey's joining the EU in exchange for another type of integration. Meanwhile, Europeans distrusted the project for three reasons: firstly, because the proposal would lead to a division of labour between the North (which would be looking eastwards) and the South (which would look towards the Mediterranean); secondly, because the proposal would overlap with the efforts of the Barcelona Process, and thirdly, because France was attempting to make the rest of Europe pay the bill. The result (on Germany's request) was a compromise which alters the nature of Sarkozy's original idea. The Mediterranean Union will simply be a medium of the Barcelona Process that will operate within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy. However, the problem will not simply disappear: the European Union's "Soft Power" works well when it is attempting to integrate, as we have seen with the cases of Spain and Hungary. But the problem for the EU members is when the objective is not integration, but cooperation.

Afghanistan: a challenge for NATO

In the case of Afghanistan, Europe has another problem. In order to find an example of an Afghan leader – either a monarch or a president – who has met with a happy political end, we have to go back to 1901, when King Abdur Rahman died peacefully in his sleep. And NATO, with its credibility put to the test, has just as difficult a task as President Hamid Karzai. The

United States, Great Britain and Canada bear the greatest burden in the war that began in 2001, and they have complained about their European partners' refusal to contribute more troops as well as to agree to operate in the most conflictive areas.

The Western debate on Afghanistan sets optimists (who insist that it is possible to rebuild Afghanistan as a stable, prosperous democracy) against realists (who know that modern Afghanistan has always been ungovernable). Karzai, whose presidency does not extend much further than the region of Kabul, needs internal allies. The Taliban have come back to life and Karzai has offered to help them; on 29 September 2007, the president spoke with the Taliban to offer them peace and something a little more tangible. Westerners soon started wondering whether a political solution would be possible. The British Defence Minister Des Browne admitted that "at some point, the Taliban will have to be involved in the peace process, since they're not going to go away". However, the official version from London at that time was that negotiations would only be carried out with moderate Taliban, a political species that is considered to be extinct, but whom Karzai claims to know. Karzai is a Pashtun, the ethnic group which, divided between Afghanistan and Pakistan, represents the heartland of the Taliban.

The war map has brought protests from Americans, British and Canadians, who are fighting in the provinces of Kandahar and Helmand, where Taliban are most active. They complain that the European leaders, with the exception of Nicolas Sarkozy, are reluctant to send more troops. Lord Inge, head of the British Armed Forces in the 1990s, defined the situation thus: "There is great resentment towards troops who do not place their lives at risk, and this undermines NATO's credibility".²

The absence of a clear western strategy in Afghanistan derives from a misunderstanding. European nations claim that they have sent the troops to take part in a peace mission – or rather, to rebuild the country. And that is what was decided by the most important international organisation. But what is happening in Afghanistan, following the resurrection of the Taliban, is a war, and the United States is now emphasising the fight against insurgents. Thus what is needed is for the leaders of the Atlantic Alliance to

come to an agreement over a strategy. Both parties should consider the situation; the Europeans, because with their reluctance, they seem not to realise that failure by the West would not only be a disaster for the Afghans, but also for NATO, the organisation that has guaranteed peace in Europe. Washington should also consider the situation, because it has still not come out and clearly stated that much of the Afghan problem lies in Pakistan, where Al Qaeda and the Talibans have their sanctuary, and also because the majority of US troops have been diverted to Iraq.

Pakistan: the American contradiction

India usually garners good press in the West; but with Pakistan, the very opposite is true. India is praised as an emerging superpower; that is, it is considered a success. Pakistan, meanwhile, is seen as a source of Islamist radicalism and the place where Osama bin Laden may have taken refuge; or rather, it is viewed as a failed state. Pakistan is one of today's enigmas: it is a customer of the United States, but at the same time it hates the US. It supports Washington in the "global war on terrorism", but it is a factory for terrorists. Furthermore, though it is a country in which science cannot be said to be widespread, it has an atomic bomb.

Pakistan's main problem is the absence of democracy, even though elections are held there. The Pakistan military has carried out four coups since independence in 1947, and the country has often fought wars with third parties involved, both in Kashmir (the region between Pakistan and India) and in Afghanistan after it was invaded by the Soviet Union in 1979. Two decades after the Soviet defeat, however, the result is a disaster. Pakistan, which gave succour to the Talibans in order to bury Afghan territorial claims once and for all, now has a nuclear arsenal, but it also has thousands of armed Mujahideen. The genie has escaped from the bottle.

The second problem is the lack of spending on education in a society in which over 50% of the population is illiterate. Out of a total of 162 million Pakistanis, 83 million people over 15 are illiterate. Families have to send their children to Madrassas, religious schools funded by Saudi Wahabis which replace the failed state school system. Within 20 years, Pakistan will have twice as many inhabitants as the Russian Federation (250 million against 124 million).

The third problem is the absence of middle classes in the circles of power. After independence, India was led by a middle-class which opted for a secular, socialising democracy. In Pakistan, the pact between the military and landowners pushed the middle classes out of the frame, and as a result, elections are resolved feudally. This was the case in January 2008, when the Bush Administration opted for a pact between Musharraf, the coup leader and ally of Washington in the war on terrorism, and Benazir Bhutto. The objective was to give the regime a layer of democratic varnish, but Bhutto's assassination in December 2007 represented a setback for US strategy. Pakistan is a paradigmatic example of the contradictions of US policy, trapped as it is between the rhetoric of democratisation and the imperatives of the "war on terrorism". The formation of a government in Islamabad headed by a member of Benazir Bhutto's party will put to the test Bush's alliance with the country that created the Talibans and later on abandoned them to their fate.

The European Union: the challenge of a globalised world

Historically speaking, there have been two different kinds of attempts to unite the Europeans: by force or through reason. Examples of the former include the imperialism of Louis XIV, Napoleon's expansionism and Hitler and Stalin's terrible obsessions. Meanwhile, over the past 200 years there have been two periods of peaceful, rational integration: the cosmopolitanism of the 18th century and the European Union, a Democratic club which, following the inclusion of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, now has 27 member countries.

The European Union regained its momentum in 2007, as Chancellor Angela Merkel, EU president for the first semester, succeeded in turning the page on a crisis that had gripped EU countries during the previous two years, when the French and Dutch voted "no" to the European Constitution. In Brussels they gave up on the idea drafting a Constitution that would abolish existing treaties and, in its place, on 13 December the EU members drafted the Lisbon Treaty, which replaced the failed Constitution and reformed the treaties of the European Community and the European Union. Thus disaster was avoided, but the United States of Europe that the organisation's

founding fathers dreamed of had to be put back onto the pile of pending EU issues.

The Brussels Treaty was hailed by Durao Barroso, president of the European Commission, as "an important step forward to deal with a globalised world", but the agreement did not get rid of all the existing doubts. Since the French and Dutch "no" votes, EU states have done no more than advance at Brussels' expense. And the agreement reached over the system of voting for decision-making, as well as the concessions made to London with respect to justice and domestic affairs highlighted the victory of the Europe of states.

The Russian Federation: autocracy and energy

Since the 19th century, the Russian Federation has fought two Cold Wars: the first in Central Asia, against Great Britain (and which became called the Grand Game), and the second against the United States, which in 1945 took over from Britain as the main global power. Now there is no Soviet Union, and the world is different, but Vladimir Putin is well used to the cold.

After the end of the second Cold War, the Russian Federation began to shrink while NATO, having spread through the old Warsaw Pact, took up residence at Russia's gates. Jacques Attali has compared the treatment that the Russian Federation was given with the Treaty of Versailles, which humiliated Germany. Some may see this as an exaggerated view, but the decisive fact is not what Westerners think, but what Putin is brewing. Boris Yeltsin was a president who was popular in the West, as they were grateful for his demolition operation. Putin, however, with the energy supplied by expensive hydrocarbons, is popular at home for having helped Russians to regain their confidence, something that the West does not applaud.

On the current Euro-Asiatic chessboard there are two separate unions – the European Union, with 27 members, and the Community of Independent States, comprised of 12 countries and led by the Russian Federation. The European Union and the Russian Federation are linked by a formidable network of oil and gas pipelines on which the EU depends for its energy needs. But the Europeans and the Russians are now separated, as if the old Iron Curtain had moved eastwards. Moscow has come to distrust NATO because it considers that its expansion and the planned installation of an

anti-missile shield in Poland and the Czech Republic represent a threat to its sphere of influence, from Belarus to Georgia, in addition to the Ukraine and Kosovo, whose independence has broken Serbia, its ally in the Balkans. As a result, Putin decided to withdraw from the treaty on the reduction of conventional weapons in Europe, which Westerners see as a guarantee for security on the continent.

Europeans accuse Putin of being autocratic, of not having broken with the past, of not acknowledging the new reality of the old East Europe, of continuing to behave like an imperial power and of using Soviet instruments of domination against its neighbours, as has occurred in the case of oil and gas. But the French and the Germans do not share Bush's enthusiasm for welcoming Georgia and Ukraine into NATO. The Germans consider that Washington is not acting pragmatically but ideologically, and that the initiative represents a provocation to the Russian Federation, which they depend on for their energy.

De Gaulle spoke of a Europe that should stretch from the Atlantic to the Urals, while Mitterrand and Gorbachov referred to Europe as a common home. These two ideas, however, did not come to fruition because at the end of the Cold War, the European Union was being constructed while the Soviet Union was falling apart. However, now that the Russian Federation is being rebuilt, these ideas are even more unthinkable. Putin accused the Americans and Europeans of striving to delegitimise Russia's legislative elections in December 2007, as well as showing his strong conviction that the Russian Federation is not part of Europe. In 2008, Putin left the presidency in the hands of his protégé Vladímir Medvédev, though everything leads one to suspect that he will continue to wield power as prime minister. It was Churchill who referred to the Russian Federation as "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma".

China: the autocratic superpower

In the 15th century, a eunuch originally from Central Asia called Zheng He persuaded an emperor from the Ming dynasty to finance an extraordinary maritime expedition. Between 1405 and 1433, Zheng reached the coast of India, and he was the first to round the Cape of Good Hope. But his expeditions ended when China embarked upon a long period of isolation, at

the same time as the Europeans began their voyages of discovery. In 2005, Beijing commemorated the 600th anniversary of Zheng's first voyage with events and celebrations that some Western observers interpreted not only as a reminder of a time when the Indian and Pacific were China's lakes, but as a warning that they would become so again.

China entered the 20th century in 1911, following the fall of the Qing dynasty, putting an end to 2,000 years of despotic monarchy; since then the country has survived fleeting republics, leaders, guerrillas, foreign occupations, civil wars and the Maoist revolution. 100 years later, the autocratic China of the successors of Deng Xiaoping – the Communist who opened the gates to capitalism – is rivalling the United States in the race for the 21st century.

China divides the Americans. Some see the Asian giant as an inexhaustible market of 1,300 million consumers, while others, from union officials to business people, see China as an enormous factory of unfair competitors and recalcitrant violators of intellectual property. In the United States, some believe that the success of Germany and Japan can be repeated with China – that the country will go from being an enemy to a champion of the developed, democratic world. However, others propose applying measures of containment to the giant, just like the ones that were used against the Soviet Union.

For 2000 years, China was the dominant power in East Asia, but after 1850 it became subordinate to the West and Japan. This humiliation was the work of four countries: Great Britain, owing to the two Opium Wars; Japan, for having invaded China; Russia, which pillaged China's territory, and the United States, for having been the arbitrator in Asia since 1945, and supporting Japan. However, China has already settled a few accounts. The United Kingdom had to pay by returning Hong Kong to China in 1997. Meanwhile, the country has resolved its territorial disputes with the Russian Federation within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, which was set up in 2001 and also includes among its members Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. That leaves Japan and United States, the great protector of Taiwan, which the leaders of Beijing view as a rebel Chinese province.

History tells us that when a country becomes rapidly industrialised, it becomes more aggressive and expansionist. This was the case with Great Britain and Germany, so is China condemned to follow this same route? Not necessarily. Everything will depend on the way in which the country evolves, but also on the way that other countries treat China. The United States and China are at the same time trade rivals and interdependent nations. China's economic growth depends on the US economy, which absorbs 20% of its exports. However, in a parallel manner, energy-hungry China is strongly influenced by the geostrategic control exerted by Washington. The International Energy Agency has calculated that by 2030, Chinese imports will represent 80% of the country's energy consumption. Currently, the Middle East supplies two thirds of the oil used by the Chinese, but the United States controls the Ormuz Straits; this is a decisive factor and has led China to begin building alternative channels, starting in Pakistan.

The factory that is China is well integrated into the Asian production system, given that the country imports components from Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, all of which are allies of the United States. Nevertheless, even if China were unable to import components from these countries, the United States would also suffer, given that its economy is aided by Chinese investment. China's coffers not only contain \$1.2 billion in monetary reserves, Beijing has also invested \$600,000 million in US Treasury bonds. Furthermore, Beijing is determined to outdo Zheng He's achievements, with its trade expeditions to Asia, Africa and Latin America, which supply China with oil.

Latin America: inequality and populism

The Latin American guerrilla has become a museum piece – if we except the case of Colombia, where drug trafficking has replaced ideology. Ever since the obscurantist years of the 1970s, Latin America's military forces have gone back to their barracks, and democracy has become consolidated. But Latin America has distanced itself from the United States. The region has become divided into two blocks which, in the words of Jorge Castañeda, ex-Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, are engaged in "ideological, political and economic hand-to-hand combat".

The US has created all kinds of doctrines to protect its economic, political and military interests in Latin America; sometimes they have opted for the stick approach (as in the case of Theodore Roosevelt and Richard Nixon), and at other times they have offered a carrot, as in the case of Franklin Roosevelt, who proclaimed the "Good Neighbour Policy", and of John Kennedy, who proposed the Alliance for Progress, a doctrine which (and coinciding with Bush's Latin American tour in 2007) *The New York Times* called "one of the happiest periods in inter-American relations". The result of all these experiments is that the Castro revolution (which now no longer has Fidel Castro as Cuba's president) has been succeeded by the populist Chávez.

Historically speaking, Latin America has opted more for State than for market, but this situation became inverted after 1980. Nevertheless, Bush has experienced the same frustration here as in the Middle East: elections do not guarantee victory for his allies. And the explanation is easy: Latin America is the region with the greatest inequality in the world, with a predatory elite and 222 million poor people, of whom 100 million exist on two dollars a day. Latin Americans are divided into two blocks: on one hand, there is a heterogeneous group of centre-left and centre-right governments (Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Uruguay and Guatemala) who have their gaze turned to Washington, while on the other, there are the populists (Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Argentina), who are inclined towards Chávez, fuelled by Venezuelan oil.

Conclusion: after Bush, what?

Generally speaking, major events tend to cook over a low heat. The Soviet Union began its collapse under Leonid Brezhnev, who put so much effort into Afghanistan, the Soviet Vietnam, that the cost of the guns did not leave enough to pay for the butter. The second victim of the end of the Cold War was politics. Since then, it has been the market that has governed the world, pushing politics into the background. The past three decades have been measured by economic indexes.

At the end of 2007, fear of recession in the United States announced a new economic cycle. But the question is, will financial turbulence result from the

advent of a political cycle in which attempt are made to take increasingly sophisticated and uncontrolled financial systems in hand? Many people, safely installed in their western comforts, would rather see politics as if it were something rather archaic and peripheral to their existences.

The world of principles of the 21st century is undergoing tectonic changes, and not only geopolitical ones. Throughout history there have always been pirates, forgers and traffickers, but now they have global power. The report "State of the future", published by the World Federation of United Nations Associations in 2007, noted that the planet's 15 greatest challenges included climate change, water shortages and terrorism. But the report also highlighted the threat of organised crime, which turns over a total of \$2 billion every year, and with profits that surpass all the money spent on defence throughout the world.

What will happen after Bush steps down as president? Some analysts, such as Thierry de Montbrial, claimed that the unipolar world will not last much longer. "Multipolarity is beginning to be a reality", De Montbrial writes. Others, such as Roger Cohen, believe that there will be a change towards a bipolar world, the centres of which will be Washington and Beijing. And several others, such as Jonathan Steele, have warned of the formation of a world divided into two blocks: the Liberal Democrats on one hand, and China and the Russian Federation – with its autocratic capitalism and systematic human rights violations (e.g. Tibet, Chechenia) – on the other.

In 2007, China and the Russian Federation often agreed on the same issues, from Burma to the tragedy in Darfur, as well as with Iran, as if the triangle that Nixon and Kissinger constructed in the 1970s of Washington, Beijing and Moscow were functioning the opposite way round. At that time, the White House used to manipulate for its own benefit relations between the two separated Communist brothers. But now, the post-communist Russian Federation is in agreement with post-Maoist China, though at the same time it supports Washington in the war on terrorism and is seeking US support to join the World Trade Organisation. Chinese and Russian interests will not always coincide, but their increasing closeness (while Washington is inviting India to become a counterweight to China) also underlines the disagreement between the US and Europe over the idea of how the world should function. Russia's and China's economies are different. The Russian

Federation depends on its energy exports, China on its manufacturing exports. Or rather, they can exist as each other's customers, and economic integration is often inseparable from the geopolitics.

The continuity of US hegemony in an increasingly multipolar world will depend, at least partly, on the perception that the world has of the United States – whether it is considered benign or arrogant. Bush's unilateralism without the multilateralist complement – which signifies international legitimacy – is an invitation to strategic counterweights. And so, what will change after the US presidential election on 4 November 2008? What will survive of the Bush Doctrine? John Mearsheimer, a professor at the University of Chicago and a realist critic of the Iraq War, claims that "the next president will be more multilateralist; if you want to govern the world, you have to be multilateralist".

The global war on terrorism will continue to be the priority of US foreign policy after Bush, but globalisation, initially dominated by the US, has accelerated (as Laurent Cohen-Tanugi notes) the rise of new centres of power and has manufactured its own antidotes.³ Globalisation continues to dominate the scene, but now it is coming up against the return of classic geopolitics.

Notes

1. HAASS, Richard "The New Middle East" *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85 November-December 2006, pp. 2-11.

2. HARDING, Thomas "Do your fair share in Afghanistan, NATO told", *Daily Telegraph*, 10 March 2007.

3. COHEN-TANUGI, Laurent. *Guerre ou paix*. Grasset, 2007.