

The times they are a-changing: perspectives of the Brazilian Sustainable Development agenda

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The times they are a-changing: perspectives of the Brazilian Sustainable Development agenda

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International Politics **Reorientation of
Multilateralism**

This policy paper reflects discussions
of the CEBRI-KAS Project on the future
directions of multilateralism.



Introduction

The future is in reinvention mode. The previous one volatilized. The present needs deep interrogation – and action – in case current protagonists of the sustainable development agenda feel compelled to act in order to reshape it. The past became unpredictable. The world is on hold. It has been a long parenthesis despite the fact that things didn't stop happening. It's a multipolar world in which multinationalism has weakened. Effective global action became more rare, more complicated, more complex, more politically difficult and more expensive.

Things changed. In fact, things change all the time, but the pace was altered at some point in the recent past. The speed and the directionality are distinct. The rhythm became accelerated. The direction isn't only one anymore; it's multidimensional. The world is moving fast in a variety of directions. It's unsustainable and counterproductive. But there isn't a single pilot in the planet spaceship.

Globalization cannot be taken for granted anymore. Progress isn't neither inexorable nor probable – it may happen, or not. Countries derail. There isn't a unique route to the development world but the tensions between plural pathways and a convergent formula are inherent to all debates. The world moves through nested paradoxes. We are a heterogeneous tribe of people. Technology connected us all in real time. Covid-19 put the whole world in the same page. Deglobalization pushed global trade decades behind. There aren't updated roadmaps anymore.

The SDG and 2030 Agenda were impressive results of the biggest Global Conference that ever happened: Rio+20. Technological change, populism explosion and the corona virus redefined the world landscape. Extremist ideas ascended at the global agenda. Authoritarian democracies became a frequent phenomenon. Countries like China and Russia opted for having leaders for life. India and Brazil have leaders who flirt with the unthinkable – until few years ago - nationalist policies. Emerging economies – Turkey, Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Argentina, Pakistan ... - will surely have a bigger role in the next decades.

The digital revolution and the social networks transformed representative democracies. The consequences aren't predictable – and they are taking place now. There are several scenarios emerging from the erosion of the post II World War big pact. There isn't an obvious emerging trajectory for any big nation.

Governments never mattered as today but they are in their ropes. The financial needs to cope with covid-19 hit economies that didn't fully recovered from the 2007/2008 global crisis. Galvanizing narratives are in shortage and few countries aligned themselves cohesively around their leaders - New Zealand and, to a certain extent, Germany are exceptions.



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Global companies redefined their *modus operandi* – partly choice, partly compulsory. ESG is just a consequence. Their DNA has been recodified, as well their supply chains that they command. Reputational risks became lethal. Circular production, sustainable practices and higher standards are the new default – and they are spreading fast. The rules of engagement changed. Competition became subject to other angles and variables, like race, gender and health – none of them intrinsically part of their core business. The private sector is now on full reinvention mode. The digital bit makes the other part, and its horizons are infinite.



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The Climate Change imperative redefined priorities at all levels. The sense of urgency varies but it came to stay. Sustainability isn't a monopoly of the environmentalist policy community anymore – the era of “preaching for the converted” is over. Economy, energy, environment, digital transformation, social inclusion, climate action and other dimensions of social life are all mixed in an increasingly complex and fragmented world.

Multinational Institutions, International Organizations, National Governments, Regional Blocs, Global Companies, Third Sector Global NGOs operate in real time according to each one rules and context. Multi-governance challenges lie ahead in a moment of leadership shortage. Institutions are becoming obsolete fast. Institutional arrangements need urgent reinvention. This text expresses the view of the authors on these matters from a Brazilian perspective.

Multilateralism in a critical juncture

Multilateralism can be characterized by being the history of the evolution of the minimum common denominator between nations. It lost its initial push. Went through a midlife crisis. And now it is going through ups and downs at different speeds. Either it changes or faces multiple fractures and extinction. Nested driven coalitions and new political ways of clustering stakeholders may be the new amalgama required to hold it and to ensure renewed dynamism. It is not a trend, just a possibility. But it's worth give it a closer look.

Two global environmental solutions marked multilateralism at its best: the Montreal Protocol and Rio-92 – the Conference that gave the kick off on the Climate Change Challenge. The Ozone Hole and Climate Change are global problems. They aren't just cross-border issues. They need global action AND action of all parts. The Ozone Hole is closing based on well-succeed multilateral action. Climate Change is at the center of the development agenda of most important countries – but it's an ongoing dramatic task. Global problems are not comparable. Climate Change complexity is more diffuse and affects pre-existent development models, energy mixes and countries geopolitics arrangements.

November 03 of 2020 marked a break in an entropic trajectory of one of the leading nations of the modern world. Many ruptures took place in a short period of time – a presidential mandate – and they didn't limit themselves to the American frontier. Some of these changes are reversible. Others aren't. They didn't happen in a single country – Brexit is the immediate connection. They occurred in Europe, Latin America, Asia and in many other different regions of the world. Once the two leading countries of the Anglo-Saxon nations were heading towards strong nationalist views multilateral frameworks were checked.

The results of the USA elections allowed a pause. The interregnum is an opportunity for a serious evaluation about the past, the present and the future. One negationist set of ideas cannot oppose the other one. Multilateralism needs to be revisited and reviewed. It may be a painful exercise. But it's an inevitable one. The

international order that emerged after World War II served the world well for decades but it's not adherent to the current realities of the XXI century. Blocking its update contributes to its disposable, not to its renewal.

The global order needs a review if those who support multilateralism want to avoid another institutional earthquake in the future. Starting over will be harder. China and Russia have leaders for life in practice. India and Brazil may be tempted to move in a similar direction. New middle-income countries – Malasia, Colombia, Chile, Vietnam ... - are emerging in search of projection and influence. Europe spends a good part of its political energy holding itself together. It's not evident what can be drivers of a new reset. Constructive and solidary leadership is at shortage everywhere.

The United Nations lost political importance which aggravated its endless funding crisis. Europe, Japan and China are paying the bills but the difficulties go beyond money matters. Agencies such WHO have faced structural and conjunctural – respectively - insurmountable challenges. The former faces extinction risks. The latter was hit by covid-19 which exposed its flaws and deep weaknesses. Others such as ILO and UNEP haven't been up to challenges like the metamorphosis of work in face of the digital revolution and the climate change imperative.

There are ascendance forces that may induce the resumption of multilateralism although on different basis. Multilateralism needs to make room for the dynamism of new players and actors

to ensure its renewal, survival and development – a paradox as it appears. And all these new players belong to the civil society dimension of social life – they aren't prisoners of national states mindsets. Societies will push global transformations, not isolated states or leaders.

The first one is the private sector profit oriented – the market as we know it. ESG is a genetic mutation because it affects its DNA, not a disposable sector close to marketing and communications. The second one, the third sector – the non-profitable private sector – commands resources that are much bigger than the budgets of many countries. The third is the financial sector. They are the market vigilantes and partners that provide vital signals to investors and voters around the world. The fourth is formed by the information and communication technology complex – big techs, regulators, scientific community and providers. The fifth encompasses the media conglomerates and a myriad of social networks and their recurrently left behind regulators.

The beforementioned driving forces have some common features. First, they have power to influence people's minds. Second, they are barricaded in protected positions distributed around the world. Third, they are fluid and operate via pervasive asymmetric networks. Fourth, they are endogenously driven e.g. they aren't easily exposed to ordinary instability. Fifth, their dynamism comes from the DNA of their business. They are up to a point decoupled of political conflicts and short-term turbulences. Finally, they can combine themselves with different partners under a vast multiplicity of arrangements in nested coalitions.

These vectors aren't automatically aligned with multilateralism, but they all have more interests in promoting it than blocking it. How far they will engage in promoting initiatives destined to strengthen multinational principles or amalgamate synergic coalitions is another matter.

Inaction may be costly for some of them. Global markets have never been so liquid – but capital needs opportunities. Serious philanthropy needs meaningful causes. Negative interest rates aren't sustainable for a long period of time. Coming to terms with regulators may be worthy as Microsoft course of action has indicated in contrast with its relatives Facebook, Google, Amazon, Apple and Tweeter. The media conglomerates are struggling for their survival on daily basis in face of the cascade of disruptive technologies. In short, a certain sort of global coordination – and benign – order is desirable ... and feasible.

The world needs hope to generate trust and solidarity - the thrust for credibility, prosperity, inclusiveness and sustainability. A renewed multilateralism enlarged by the incorporation of new entrants is the best bet for all: the operators of the status quo and the beforementioned five leitmotifs of the new times. Citizenship won't be granted by states nations exclusively anymore but by the way people interact within the nest of relationships with multiple and non-exclusive arrangements and multiple geographies.



The global order needs a review if those who support multilateralism want to avoid another institutional earthquake in the future. Starting over will be harder.



Brazil: an inescapable environmental power in a foggy interregnum

Brazil has historically been one of the leading nations in global environment discussions, since Rio-92, one the founding moments of the sustainable development international agenda. Environment diplomacy is at least partially a Brazilian creation – the arena the country helped to create to project itself internationally. The country was at the high table of all crucial negotiations that took place in the last decades until 2018, independently of the government of the day. Rio+20 culminated a long tradition of partnership between the Environment and Foreign Affairs ministries in the multinational arena. Three years later, the Paris Agreement counted on the decisive protagonist role of Brazil. The country had worked on the negotiations of the potential terms of the final text bilaterally with key players in the previous years. The achievement was particularly significant because of the political turbulence of the country that would culminate with the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff few months later.

Five years later everything changed. Three decades of environmental policies were tore up and thrown out. A consolidated menu of policies and choices was just ignored on the grounds of a political shift. Participatory mechanisms that integrated the environmental governance framework were destroyed. A period of institutional dismantling and administrative bullying initiated. Not a signal of continuity survived two years of the new administration. International donors, global NGOs, civil society movements, multinational organizations, academic institutions and almost all members of the environment policy community were declared enemies of the government.

A synchronized move occurred in the Foreign Affairs Ministry. The internationally recognized environmental unit was extinguished and diluted. The radical adherence to the “Trumpist agenda” led Brazil to adopt unprecedented positions in multilateral institutions that isolated the country – unrecognizable given its historical record. The hostility towards the environmental historical protagonists, the denial approach regarding climate change and the mistrust directed to international donors transformed the Ministry

of Foreign Affairs in a barrier that blocked and filtered technical and financial cooperation as it had never happened before. Two years of Bolsonaro foreign and environment policies isolated Brazil from the international community.

The radicality and intensity of the two before mentioned ruptures were object of two important manifestos that were published in the national and international media. Former Ministries of Environment and Foreign Affairs of different political parties that belonged to all previous governments since the re-democratization subscribed both documents. They warned the current government about the seriousness and consequences of the “tabula rasa” policies that had been adopted since January 2019. Both documents didn’t make a dent in the government behavior but showed the international community that this is an isolated group that doesn’t speak for Brazil except in formal terms.

The international community joined the choir of discontents via public statements of international banks and investment funds. More recently the three biggest private banks of Brazil – two nationals and Santander – launched a decalogue

committing themselves with sustainable practices. They took the lead of the ESG global trend in order to redefine economic transactions within a broader framework based in integrity, social, environment and governance guidelines. Also, they will propose initiatives to avoid deforestation and to promote sustainable development in Amazon. Brazilian society is showing reaction and looking for alternative routes. The question ahead is how the government of Brazil will behave given its deliberate pariah condition after Trumps' exit.

Brazilians are sensitive to environmental appeals, but the country didn't come to terms about how to conciliate development needs – especially in Amazon – with conservation values. Impressive breakthroughs were achieved during the first half of the 10s decade when the lowest deforestation rates were achieved in the millennium. A combination of law and enforcement initiatives with international donors' support was decisive to keep wrongdoers at bay. The negotiation of a new forest code, the implementation of the rural environmental registry and a new regulatory framework to explore genetic assets suggested that a new era of environmental policies had been achieved. The proportions of the backlash that took place after 2018 were unthinkable.

There are more substantial issues behind all the conjunctural dramatic setbacks that have occurred recently. On the one hand, there's a strong support for a view that Amazon should be considered a sanctuary. This view counts on the Brazilian young generation and the international sympathies. On the other hand, there's an even stronger view that thinks that development isn't negotiable and that this a sovereign matter. Environment concerns should be subordinated to growth imperatives according to this perspective. The intermediate position – pursuing a combination of pragmatic environmentalism consistent with sustainable development priorities – prevailed between 2011-2015. But it was abandoned as a collateral consequence of the political turbulence from 2016 on.

The intermediate view is more nuanced and also a minority one. It has some contestable paradoxical premises such as “no country resigns its growth opportunities”, “biodiversity hot spots need to be preserved by all means” and “production and protection need to be dealt with simultaneously”. There are more controversial views such as the suggestion that an exclusive focus on tackling illegal deforestation may be self-defeating. The reasoning is based on the assumption that if polarization occurs the weakest side always loose. According to the intermediate perspective the narrative to be adopted should be centered on a constructive view of Amazon development without weakening the law and enforcement agenda.

Amazon is de facto by far the most important card Brazil can play at the global international discussions. Brazilian insertion in a new global order depends on an Amazon New Green Deal. That's what matters also for international donors and partners, as well as to global players that import from Brazil and export to Brazil. Even trade isn't immune to what happens in Amazon.

It isn't correct to reduce the environmental agenda in Brazil to Amazon matters. Waste management and sanitation are other important challenges as well as the biodiversity conservation and the reduction of carbon emissions in sectors such as energy and transports. But the climate change, biodiversity conservation and preservation, and forests management topics are inevitably linked to the debate about Amazon destiny. Business and civil society leaders launched recently a robust Initiative - “Concertação Amazônica” – that pretends to be a more negotiated and inclusive effort to promote Amazon's development. The distinctive feature of this move is its arch of supporters that includes also private sectors leaders. Its leverage is impressive. Its outcomes are to be seen.

Governance without Government: in search of new arrangements

Governance has always been about the relativization of Government in enabling adherent, legitimate and effective policies. The mitigation of the role of the National State has been matched by centrifugal drivers that combined produced a new set of rules of the political game. They include the decentralization of power to subnational levels of government such as provinces and local authorities, the upload of responsibilities to international bodies such as United Nations Agencies, macroregional blocs, privatization, the inclusion of civil society in policy decision making processes and the incorporation of the third sector in the provision of public services. Government became shared in the last decades, but this macro trend was disrupted last years.

The revival of nationalism combined with attacks on several dimensions of multilateralism – trade, climate change, cosmopolitanism, human rights, democracy and others – raised national barriers and split countries in the Jurassic camps of “we”, our people, against “them”, outsiders. The delicate work that was done after World War II has been severely damaged. True enough, it had been stretched beyond its limits and had been forced to handle contradictions and situations unthinkable in the twentieth century – especially on the technological front. But putting it down as an intriguing variety of populists have done, wasn't helpful. Being destructive usually pays off politically in short term horizons - the contrary on being constructive and aiming a broader horizon. The costs of the consequences come later.

The world didn't lose its moral compass. Just gave up of pursuing it. Several transnational challenges that depend on international cooperation to produce, induce and force solutions are currently out of question. Neither the Security Council, nor G-20 have been functional instances in the last years. The multilateral development banks – such as World Bank, Asia Development Bank, Africa Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, NDB and others - and global organizations such as OECD and WEF - haven't been able to

go ahead with their development agendas. The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs platform are still the best card available, but it lost its momentum. It's moving incrementally thanks to usual suspects like the European Union (especially North Europe) but it's falling short of galvanizing emerging economies and the developing world. It will need reinforcements and probably a reset in ten years.

Global resources mobilization was facing difficulties in the beginning of 2020. Then covid-19 interrupted in the global agenda. Sure: it's an extreme event. But it's also an evolving event that disclosures dramatically leadership failures of the two biggest economies as well as of multilateral institutions, scientific communities and big business. Suddenly all countries were faced to their cloudy mirrors and were forced to take responsibilities beyond their reasoning capacity. There were exceptions but the results were dismal. USA, UK, Brazil, Belgium, Mexico, Sweden and Peru were on one point of the spectrum. New Zealand, Germany, Pakistan, Vietnam, South Korea and Japan were in the other. Politicians, researchers, journalists and other experts have plenty of material to compare, analyze and formulate hypothesis about why some countries failed and others succeeded. But in the case of multilateral institutions there is a certain degree of consensus: they didn't work well – thanks in

part to sabotage, character assassination and asphyxiation by cutting the flux of resources.

The overlapping of the coronavirus crisis with the consequent financial crisis plus the climate change emergency stretched multilateralism dramatically and few nations have been able to respond up to the challenges. In the absence of credible and functional global decision-making collective mechanisms the situation Hobbesian. But societies aren't bounded by their governments of the day. They may outreach. They establish supranational alliances even if asymmetric and heterogeneous. Global networks around themes, crusades, emergencies, dramatic events, problems and causes have been in place for decades and they continue to perform within the limits of their possibilities – even if empowered by all sorts of philanthropists. They do the possible and push their limits. But they cannot scale up.

The moment is destined to a huge exercise of taking stock. The ruins of the previous order are fresh and recoverable in certain circumstances. New thinking and new doing are in demand with respect to so many subjects Take the global commons, the digital divide, the genome promises, the artificial intelligence moving frontier or any other disruptive ongoing transformation. Multilateralism hasn't been able to have a say regarding "how" handle the emergence of all these realities simultaneously despite the best efforts of very impressive people.

Multilateralism cannot be let down. This isn't in quest at all. But it needs unusual reinforcements that won't come from the troubled state members. The choreography of world nations cannot depend on a dynamic that is strongly led by illiberal democracies, authoritarian regimes, fiscal paradises, sultan states, vulgar dictatorships and similar sort of nation states. It's not credible. It's not suitable. Maybe it's inevitable. But it's not enough to the present moment – not to mention to the future in the corner. The future needs attention now to help the reconfiguration of the present. The old BAU is dead. A new BAU isn't at the horizon. The world is in between a vanishing past and a cloudy future. It's time to bold experimentation.

New governance mechanisms require distinct partners and innovative mechanisms – eventually experimental. It's time to open the cages of the human zoo. It's a universal call: politicians, celebrities, experts, indigenous people, billionaires, influencers, journalists, businessmen, civil servants, activists, scientists, artists, communities of practices ... everybody interested., Adapted protocols, transitional arrangements, tacit arrangements, expediency deals - anything able to add public value needs to be tried.

Extreme times ask for extreme measures This isn't the moment for agreed language but for transnational initiatives, insurgent behaviors and bold innovations. "Never waste a crisis" says the jargon. But the current situation is more serious. We will not overcome the current crisis without full, serious and innovative engagement of all those concerned with the future.

The floor is up for grabs, e.g. for those who dare and who disrupt on behalf of good governance. Collective action is required under new formats. The pursue of public good needs institutional platforms, manpower, fast response, technology, smart approaches and wise judgment capacity. This is the moment for public entrepreneurship and for sound communication voices.

These are the speedy 20s. Clock is ticking; in one direction or another one. We are connected. If hate speech, fake news and inhumane contents may transit through social networks a constructive approach should make it through also. It's time to focus on the "how" as well as on the "what" and "who". This is about us – the living mankind – and about those who will come in the future. It's about the current generations combined legacy.

A key multilateral challenge: develop transformational capacities

Multilateralism hasn't been successful enough in mobilizing heterogeneous and asymmetric support to invest in institutional capacity building in the last decade. The recurrence of dramatic humanitarian situations in Africa, the resilience of inequality in Latin America, the persistence of gender discrimination especially in the Arabic world, climate change indifference all over the places, the fragility of democracies in several regions and similar situations have shown that progress has been too slow to promote change – in the directions, amount and speed required by current times.

United Nation agencies promote daily miracles, but they aren't up to contemporaneous challenges. They need to change – true enough. But they need mainly help, e.g., new partners, *modus operandi*, institutional arrangements, financial support, governance mechanisms, consistent priorities and several other transformations. UN agencies haven't the monopoly of providing solutions for the world problems. Fluid coalitions, asymmetric partnerships and transitional alliances are increasingly important. New visions, new capacities and new skills are in demand.

Capacity driven approaches aren't popular in development economics literature with the sole exception of institutionalists, historians and reformer practitioners. Even those supporters recognize that frequently they aren't enough to tackle the overwhelming problems they face. They are too soft, too loose and too context-dependent. They are abundant in motives but scarce in theories. They also don't have any appeal destined to all audiences. And they haven't been able to argue successfully against the sponsorship of a minimalist view of the state that doesn't consider inequality as a problem. Therefore, these public entrepreneurs also need to reinvent themselves and their *modus operandi*.

A purpose-driven perspective needs an issue image to be pursued. There aren't so many consensus within likeminded reformers regarding several subjects. Once people specify, their views and preferences facing reality becomes harder.

Multilateralism goes beyond national interests, but it's built upon them. Supranational interests face these challenges daily. Today these aren't exclusively national diplomacy subjects anymore.

The case of Amazon is instructive. Amazon stakeholders don't have a pragmatic and realist vision of their future. Some of them have a blurred vision capable of mobilizing hearts and pockets. Others – mainly Amazonians – just want to be like the western urban developed world. Amazonians want to develop their cities and explore their nature potentialities. They vote for growth. They want jobs. They realize that access to markets and digital connectivity to the global networks are essential to their lives. They want logistic solutions capable of enabling their integration in Brazilian and Latin American economies. How to make these aspirations green and sustainable is the key question.

Transformational capacities are required to do things differently. They encompass innovation competencies, negotiation skills, futurists imagination, conflict processing, problem modelling, impact analysis, networking routines, catalyst talents, persuasion dons, entrepreneurial – public and private – vocations, outreach potential and, especially, a gift to catalyze. Some of the before-mentioned capacities can be developed via formation and training initiatives. Other people acquire these sorts of capacities via exposure and life experiences. They may be supported, promoted and nourished. But they need to be deliberately pursued and reinforced.

Institutional capacities are more complex, wicked and nuanced, especially in times of profound organizational reconfiguration given technological changes, labor relationships redefinition, office restructuring and corporate governance renewal. Crisis favor short term defensive behaviors and institutional dismantling. Acting against the tide is demanding in a variety of ways: funding, human resources, technological platforms, attention, nodality and even values. Institutional building requires continuous contributions from their own teams and stakeholders to consolidate themselves, perform their roles, generate and aggregate public value.

Individuals and institutional resilience are new requirements for contemporaneous times. It will take time to build a new global order – that will probably emerge from the rubbishes of the last years. It will also take clarity and disposition to change. The world is a much more open system today than in the past. Nations, firms and NGOs operate in a broader environment that enables them to innovative combinations and alliances. Individuals and institutions have been empowered by new technology devices. The speed of everything accelerated but there are understandings that are more time consuming.

Transformational capacities are based in at least two major premises: diagnosis and envision. The former looks almost a waste of time, but it has never been so important. We have poor and biased diagnosis regarded many crucial subjects. The latter needs refinement, e.g., empirically based scenarios, not aspirational or scary stories. The journeys along trunked trajectories constitute the present.

There is a new global order emerging fast and it isn't based on multilateral assumptions. It doesn't challenge multilateralism explicitly and in the open. But it weakens its appeal on daily basis. It's commanded by finance, technology giants, and some big conglomerates in energy, logistics, commodities and retail. States have been hollowed out. Regulatory bodies – national and international – are losing their dents and enforcement power in many places, with the solitaire disputable case of the European Union. Strategically elected representatives and appointed officials perform transitional roles in disabling national and international institutions in order to pave the way to a frictionless world – functional for the partners of the new condominium.

Traditional capacities and competencies are still important but transformational capacities need to be developed and built in to face the pretended irresistible ascendance of a new order, less democratic, less inclusive and less caring. NGOs, academia, progressive governments and firms need desperately to invest consistently and wisely in science, innovation, experimentation and priorities at critical junctures.

The world just paused. It's an opportunity. Corona virus brought in place a crisis – the second in ten years – that shouldn't be wasted. Trump is gone. But the state of affairs at the global order will take time and different capacities to be rebuild and redefined.



United Nation agencies promote daily miracles, but they aren't up to contemporaneous challenges. They need to change – true enough.



Conclusion

The future will be shaped by soft power, not hard power. The atomic era changed the nature of wars: they are regional, controlled and subject to media and democratic scrutiny. Technology is increasingly the key defining factor in global conflicts. The battleground changed to the virtual world: digital capacities, AI developments, communication potential, mining speed and other fronts. Geopolitics is changing – new countries are emerging at the global arena. The energy equation is moving from fossils – expensive, dirty and cartelized - to non-fossils sources – cheaper, cleaner and open. People, societies are much more vocal. Change will come from them, not from technocratic poorly representative governments and multilateral institutions.

Sustainability is scheduled to be the one of the driving forces of multilateralism – a renewed and enlarged one. The more UN organizational structure remains fixed in the 1940s arrangements, the more it will become detached from the 21st trends. How to unlock multilateralism impasses is the task ahead. The way we approach long term problems will affect how we handle short term challenges, not the other way round as we are used to think. In fact, we need to deal with both reasonings simultaneously. The outcome of the interaction will be shown in the way we distribute our resources, allocate our attention and put the best of our efforts. And people will be watching. Transparency is irreversible.

We live in a world of new borders. The inferior border is formed by the SDGs envelope. The Global Commons complement them even with some overlapping, but they constitute an intermediate plateau. The superior border receives now a new instance: the infant digital and technological governance structures. The way ahead will be shaped by the dynamic configuration of these borders at the same time that the old post war order still remains influential. The possibilities of the future are provided by this inverted irregular triangle. The vertex at the bottom is the current multilateral system – trapped in old mindsets, limited by its own rules and reluctant in accepting the last decades changes. The vertex at the left is formed by sustainability global agenda – hole in the ozone layer, climate emergency, social inclusion,

oceans acidification, sustainable cities, melting glaciers, neutralization of carbon emissions and others, the vertex at the right isn't completely clear yet: digital governance, privacy & security protocols, AI development framework, satellites and radars market rule, sideral colonization.

Unlock multilateralism implies expanding its scope beyond nations states formal interactions. It's an outreach imperative: asymmetric, unbalanced and experimental. Leadership is required. The uncharted waters ahead need a special type of leaders. It's tempting to describe their profiles but it's also probably useless. There are some new capacities and skills that aren't available in the current generation of world leaders. New institutions formats are also in need. The current modus operandi of multilateral institutions isn't up to the current challenges as their recent performances have shown.

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a tragic rehearsal of nations and global institutions behaviour in face of collective action challenges. There were all sorts of failures: individuals, organizations, institutions, nationals and multinationals. The politicization and weaponization of the measures required to tackle the virus showed how cooperation, science and solidarity cannot be taken for granted. The ongoing episode revealed also some clues of an inevitable agenda. It also evidenced how the third sector, entrepreneurs, big companies and some national leaders have been able to handle the challenge. But they were the exceptions, not the norm.

Inequality pervades all these debates: carbon, access, digital, income, migration, connectivity, racial, local, regional, national, international and many others. National interests and market forces won't and cannot fix them. They aren't supposed to. A new world is emerging. New generations are bringing new values, new business models and new attitudes towards climate change. New habits are emerging. New coalitions are being forged. Sustainability is the new global compass. It's broad, appealing and inclusive enough to enable power transitions in multiple domains: global, demographic, markets, academia, technological, financial etc. But the established winner will fight for the conservation of their positions and expansion of their domains. It's on the nature of power. And they are entrenched enough to block and delay an urgent future.

"Business as usual" (BAU) solutions and modus operandi won't help us at the moment. They need reinvention as well. The EU Green Deal is an impressive move although in process of redefinition because of covid-19. China's 2060 carbon neutralization target is very ambitious especially, if the degree of inclusion required is taken into account. Japan and Korea already committed themselves with the neutralization of their emissions by 2050. The USA commanded by Biden is expected to come strong regarding the Climate Change Agenda. New green deals will show up.

Brazil was an important leader of the so-called environmental diplomacy since the 1980s when it departed from the government of the day and initiated a trajectory that would achieve its climax at Rio+20 and Paris. During almost thirty years Brazil worked hard with other global partners to push the sustainability agenda in UN, UNEP, UNDP, WHO, WTO, FAO, COPs, G-77, G-20, IBAS, BASIC, BRICS and several other instances to ensure serious considerations of environmental challenges – climate change especially.

The reason is straightforward: Amazon – what makes Brazil unique in the context of any sustainability debate. Developing Amazon isn't a Brazilian problem. It doesn't need to be. It's in the world best interest the promotion of the sustainable development of the region. It's a global challenge. Tackling illegal deforestation in Amazon isn't a task of the Brazilian government. Amazon basin countries must play together in

an innovative task force to tackle environmental crimes. And the international cooperation should host it because it is a world inescapable duty. There are of course sovereignty concerns, multi-level governance challenges, heterogeneous realities etc. Sovereignty also means national responsibilities. Complexity abounds. But the clock is ticking. Irreversible ingredients put pressure on the current situation.

Amazon is key to the current and incoming debates regarding climate change. Few countries have more than fifty per cent of its territory to be explored according to new development possibilities. Brazil as well as its Amazonian neighbours have extraordinary potentials to be explored. But the room of manoeuvre is shrinking as well as the tropical forest territory.

Brazil is destined to occupy the place of a pivotal player in the climate global debate – no matter the government of the day. The reason is simple: Brazil – as well as any country – is bigger than the incumbent government. Governments come and go – even the extremists' governments. Brazilian soft power trajectory mixes with the history of the concept of sustainable development. Sustainability is one of the crucial axes of a renewed and expanded multilateralism. It's strategic and structuring of a future that needs to be unlocked.

Brazil contemporaneity lies in its capacity to handle its Amazon challenges. This is a national challenge and an extraordinary international opportunity. This is a scenario in which that multiple actors play and interact – constructively or negatively. The challenge is to channel the potential of these interactions in a positive way.

It's time to think in terms of new governance structures - expanded, asymmetric, agile, responsive – as well as in the capacities required to be put in place to make it work. It's a transparent world. Amazon is at spot. Actions – as well as inaction – have consequences and imply in responsibilities. Accountability is inescapable. The time has come to invest in Multilateral Governance Structures and instances. The challenge in quest is to articulate stakeholders in order to put institutions in place. At least, new national interests journey with global co-benefits and leadership.



About CEBRI



The Brazilian Center for International Relations (CEBRI) is an independent think tank that contributes to building an international agenda for Brazil. For over twenty years, the institution has engaged in promoting a pluralistic and proposal-oriented debate on the international landscape and Brazilian foreign policy.

In its activities, CEBRI prioritizes themes with the greatest potential to leverage the country's international insertion into the global economy, proposing pragmatic solutions for the formulation of public policies.

It is a non-profit institution, headquartered in Rio de Janeiro and internationally recognized. Today, its circa 100 associates represent diverse interests and economic sectors and mobilize a worldwide network of professionals and organizations. Moreover, CEBRI has an active Board of Trustees composed of prominent members of Brazilian society.

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