

Research programme

Climate Change and International Relations: security, development and comparative foreign policy

Carlos R. S. Milani

The Covid-19 pandemic and the climate emergency have together produced intense public debates on the “Green New Deal”, the economic-environmental recovery plans, the social and environmental rule of law, the ecological and social transition scenarios, the necessary overcoming the fossil combustion energy model, new consumption patterns and lifestyles, relationships (including solidarity) between human and non-human forms of life, among many other themes. Often, such debates are based on the premise that we will have to reinvent ourselves as a society and civilization, that we will have to rethink economic and political models that allow us to overcome these crises in the short and medium term, but that also ensure the viability of the human species in the future.

The main argument that I seek to develop in this research program is the following: transnational threats to the security of States, the security of populations and individuals, as well as the security of the biosphere cannot be faced as long as the modern utopia based on rigid borders between nations is maintained, preventing at least greater coordination (not to mention collective action) and effective commitments from being possible at the global level. In addition, for these threats to be faced, political leaders and economic elites will have to give up neoliberal development models supported by the quasi-exclusive role of finance, the banking system and the fossil fuel complex in the international economy. Such models ultimately function as an economic, moral and political rationale to sustain the legitimacy of anti-democratic policies in the United States, Europe, Latin America, not to mention the emblematic Brazilian case, under Jair Bolsonaro, whose administration has dismantled public policies on

gender, diversity, human rights, environmental protection, science development, vaccination, among many other public agendas.¹

Secondarily, I defend the hypothesis that the Covid-19 pandemic has broadened and deepened the perception and objective dimensions of transnational threats, thus bringing more legitimacy, both theoretically and politically, to global human security (or planetary security) as a concept in International Relations. Not only because of the number of deaths caused, but because of the effects that Covid-19 has produced, made visible or, in some cases, intensified. In fact, around the world, between 300,000 to 500,000 people die from the flu virus every year. The SARS-CoV-2 virus has killed more than 600,000 people so far in Brazil alone. The 1957 flu pandemic killed between 1 and 2 million people worldwide and the 1968 flu pandemic killed between 2 and 4 million people. There are about 1.3 million deaths from tuberculosis each year, 770,000 deaths from HIV infections each year and 435,000 deaths from malaria/year. In other words, the immaterial and material impact of the pandemic does not only concern a quantitative list of individuals killed by the disease or cases of contamination by the virus. The confluence between the pandemic, hegemonic disputes and the power transition involving the US and China, the crises of capitalism and the emergence of the Anthropocene, a controversial term popularized by Nobel Prize in Chemistry Paul Crutzen, produces something new that leads to consider the global human security both as a concept and as a public policy from local to global levels.²

¹ Pierre Charbonnier. *Abondance et liberté, une histoire environnementale des idées politiques*. Paris, Editions La Découverte, 2020. Thiago Rodrigues, *Segurança planetária, entre o climático e o humano*. *Ecopolítica*, n. 3, pp. 5-41, 2012. Wendy Brown. *Nas ruínas do neoliberalismo: a ascensão da política antidemocrática no Ocidente*. São Paulo: Editora Politeia, 2020

² Carolyn Merchant, *The Anthropocene and the Humanities. From Climate Change to a New Age of Sustainability*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2020. Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The climate of history: Four theses", *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 35, pp. 197-222, 2009. Donna J. Haraway, *Antropoceno, Capitaloceno, Plantationoceno, Chthuluceno: fazendo parentes*. *ClimaCom Cultura Científica - pesquisa, jornalismo e arte*, v. 3, n. 5, 2016. José Mauricio Domingues, *Mudança climática e sociologia, subjetividade coletiva e tendências de desenvolvimento*. Rio de Janeiro: Cadernos do OIMC, 2021 (disponível em <http://obsinterclima.eco.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Cadernos-OIMC-02-2021.pdf>). James W. Moore, *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. Londres/Nova York, Verso, 2014. Paul J.

To support these two arguments, I develop this research program around the following key questions: how does the concept of threat in the field of international security expand? What changes are needed in the field of development and how are they expressed in the different contexts of the countries of the South? How do States (in particular South Africa, Brazil, China, India, Mexico and Turkey) react in their foreign policy agendas in order to deal with the challenges posed by climate change in terms of security and development? How and why do climate denial and politics of obstruction impact foreign policy agendas? With these questions in mind, research projects (PhD theses, Master dissertations, publications) will be developed over the next few years, starting this program in 2022.