EDITOR’S NOTE

In the upcoming month of August, the Brazilian Centre for Strategy & International Relations (NERINT) at UFRGS, which co-edits AUSTRAL: Brazilian Journal of Strategy & International Relations, will be celebrating 20 years. When it was founded, in 1999, the main trend in international relations was the neoliberal globalisation, which the founding researchers considered a threat to the National Project that had been in place since the Vargas Era. Always highlighting, however, that the post-Cold War world system did not represent an American phase of solitary hegemony, but rather an unstable phase of transition and struggle towards a “New Order”.

Two decades later, to the shock of many pundits and analysts, globalisation is now being questioned by the Trump administration and many other governments, including Brazil. Halfway through, in 2009, the BRIC(S) grouping emerged, signalling the overwhelming rise of China and the resurgence of Russia, countries which now suffer strong economic and political-military containment, respectively. All this only confirmed our initial prediction about the fragility and uncertainty of the international relations system in the post-bipolar world.

In 1999, the second term of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso had only just started, and with that the first crisis of the new “strong and stable” Brazilian currency, the Real, which suffered a sharp downfall. Nevertheless, Brazil did not suffer the Argentinian drama of two years later, with the financial collapse of the neighbouring country. Foreign policy, on the other hand, was experiencing moments of uncertainty, since it was still attached to globalisation, contrary to a six-decade-old autonomist diplomatic tradition that predominated almost continuously from 1930 to 1990. Soon after, there were the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, with the affirmation of the anti-terrorist security agenda towards the Middle East and Central Asia. Meanwhile, in the opposite direction, Latin America experienced the “pink tide” of social-democratic or popular-autonomist governments.

An unprecedented moment of international projection for Brazil, which, however, was not sustainable. The 2008 subprime crisis, which began in the United States, soon hit the Eurozone and the world economy. At the same time, the United States sought to withdraw from the conflicts in the Middle East, leaving in place a series of not very solid local alliances. The
scene for the “Arab Spring” was set and its shock waves would spread across the Mediterranean, Africa and West Asia.

At that moment, a process of reversion of the previous trends began, with the wearing of the social democratic regimes in Latin America, a movement that culminated in the election of Donald Trump in the United States. The logic of his administration is embedded in the unilateral diplomatic tradition of the Republican Party, with a business bias. Besides representing the heart of the world system, the United States constitutes a National State with its own problems and needs, in parallel with migratory, climatic and social crises (unemployment), in addition to the usual conflicts.

During these 20 years, we have sought to understand the underlying logic of ongoing international processes, and hope to have helped and assisted all those who attempt to analyse the international relations in a realistic way, rather than ideologically or prescriptively. In this issue, AUSTRAL addresses global strategic problems such as the formation of the World Power Axes, the BRICS, the European Defense Policy and Eurasia as a geopolitical reality. Another set of articles addresses the situation in Iran and Indonesia, with the contribution of academics from these countries and a renowned Latin American author. Finally, themes related to Latin America and African conflicts are explored.

It is important to emphasise the growing contribution of academics from an increasing number of countries — from all continents —, which endorses the global and independent presence of this publication. And that NERINT, after serving as a catalyst for the institutionalisation of academic studies of International Relations in Southern Brazil, continues, after two decades, to analyse the international situation in a serious, independent and creative way.

***

This publication was made possible thanks to the Research Office at UFRGS through the Support Program for Journal Editing (PAEP). Assistant Editors Magnus Kenji Hiraiwa and Guilherme Thudium deserve special recognition, as well as the translation team composed of graduate and undergraduate researchers from NERINT, with some guest appearances. Finally, we thank Professor Cristina Soreanu Pecequilo for the hard work of revising the translations.