

Siglo XXI, reconfiguración geopolítica: ¡Obras son amores y no buenas razones!

Resumen:

En un planeta en plena reconfiguración geopolítica, no solo las potencias –las viejas y las nuevas- luchan por establecer un nuevo orden de poder global, sino que también las sociedades de las naciones del planeta se ven sujetas a dinámicas complejas.

Los profundos cambios –como los tecnológicos-, las dudas sobre el futuro y las incertidumbres crecientes generan un panorama de desazón y desesperanza que alienta la falta de fe en la democracia y el “modelo occidental”, no solo en la mayor parte del planeta sino, incluso, en el propio occidente. Polarización, desunión, falta de fe en las instituciones y gobiernos y búsqueda de “hombres fuertes” comienzan ser unas constantes también en sociedades hasta el momento estables y aparentemente casi modélicas.

Ante esa situación, la narrativa antioccidental crece en gran parte del planeta, alentada ciertamente por potencias revisionistas, Y naciones de todo el mundo, especialmente en África y en el Sahel, reniegan de manera creciente tanto de las razones como de las obras de occidente... incluso sin un claro modelo alternativo.

Unas líneas finales propuestas a modo de reflexión sobre esta cuestión cierran el presente Documento.

Palabras clave:

Geopolítica, democracia, occidente, Sahel, necesidades, valores, doble moral.

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Introduction: The 21st century. A geopolitical reconfiguration?

In a decades-long process that has been gradually building up over the course of this 21st century, a series of events -from the Al-Qaeda attacks on the US on 9/11 to the global financial crisis of 2008, the Arab Spring (and the global *indignados* movements) of 2011, not to mention the COVID pandemic of 2020 and its devastating effects in multiple spheres, and with a clear and key turning point with the war in Ukraine in 2022- neither the world order nor the planet's societies, at either macro or micro levels, have been spared the effects of these changes, actions, and new realities.

These global dynamics include a full geopolitical reconfiguration¹, with China vying for global supremacy, a reborn Russia clamouring for a multipolar world, and a United States that has shown in Syria or Afghanistan that it is incapable of fully governing the planet, thus leading to questions regarding Washington's role as a global leader. Is the world order, often interpreted as the "Western order", therefore still valid or is it nearing its end, although as Amin Maalouf masterfully points out², there is as yet no real alternative model.

This panorama paints a environment which, for humanity as a whole, means entering an era of multiple uncertainties; not only geopolitical ones related to the struggle between the powers, old and new -will it be a unipolar, bipolar, multipolar world?- but also in numerous vital aspects and questions -what values, level of wealth, possibilities are on the horizon?³- of responses to questions related not only to the highest human issues and needs, but also to the most basic ones. From the classic *primun vivere deinde philosophari* (first live, then philosophise) to Maslow's pyramid of needs⁴, it seemed that the sequence of human needs, the order and priority for meeting them, and also highest needs, are only met after a journey that entails satisfying, to a certain degree at least, the previous ones. It seems clear... or does it?

¹ SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro. The new power struggle: World War 3.0 or Cold War 2.0?, Analysis Document 28/2023, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 19 April 2023. Available at https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2023/DIEEEA28_2023_PEDSAN_Potencias.pdf

NOTE: All internet links in this Document are active as of 28 August 2024.

² MAALOUF, Amin. El laberinto de los extraviados: Occidente y sus adversarios, Alianza Editorial, Madrid, 2024.

³ SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro. Era of COVID: A new security paradigm?, Analysis Document 36/2020, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 18 November 2020. Available at https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2020/DIEEEA36_2020PEDSAN_eraCovid.pdf

⁴ See ECONOMIPEDIA, Maslow's Pyramid, 6 February 2024. Available at <https://economipedia.com/definiciones/piramide-de-maslow.html>

There have always been areas in the planet and societies where life has been extremely hard and complex, and others where it was possible to look to the future with a certain optimism, with the certainty of living in a developed world with reasonable socio-economic prospects. This friendlier and more hopeful reality was linked to a particular socio-political model, to a democratic system and societies based on rights and freedoms, where elected leaders worked for the common good and to uphold the system, both at the micro and macro levels; as the so-called "international order" with its rules and institutions sought to spread this model which -apparently or actually- had proved to be so suitable, even on a global scale. In a broad sense, the "reasons" for this model -democracy, freedoms, respect for the law, etc.- generated these "works" -quality of life, wealth, well-being, peace, etc.-.

And while there had always been differences, disagreements, and differential biases with regard to this model commonly and increasingly labelled pejoratively as "Western", certainly the nations and societies that believed in and followed this model, especially those where it was born, in this somewhat complicatedly defined West⁵, were its custodians and defenders, since these nations had the highest standards of global power and their societies enjoyed the highest standards of living. And, so it remains, for the time being. But, for how long?

In this turbulent century, it appears that not only the global geopolitical situation but also this reality is splintering somewhat, and even in the very nations where this model emerged. Are people starting to lose faith in it?

... but only geopolitics? Are (our?) good reasons still valid?

A recent global IPSOS survey⁶ showed, among other things, a growing sense that citizens perceive their countries to be in decline and their societies to be broken, even in rich countries. Moreover, citizens expressed a deep rejection of elites -whom they accuse of essentially being self-serving and self-interested- and a deep frustration with governments for failing to curb inequality and corruption, and a common and growing

⁵ See MERINO, Álvaro. ¿Qué es occidente?, 30 August 2022. Available at <https://elordenmundial.com/mapas-y-graficos/que-es-occidente/>

⁶ 28 countries IPSOS survey, Populism in 2024, Populism, anti-elitism and nativism, February 2024. Available at <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2024-02/ipsos%20Populism%20Final%20February%202024.pdf>

desire for a strong leader to bring wealth and power to each country. The majority opinion therefore does not appear to be in favour of the model, or the reasons behind it.

From certain points of view -such as that of Moisés Naím- it is true that the current problems are enormous, that great changes are underway -such as those related to artificial intelligence or climate change- and the awareness of these changes in people's lives generates a powerful anxiety that leads to what analysts call "the three p's" (populism, polarisation and post-truth). To this existing reality must be added the loss of prestige of the "experts" -given that they have been wrong on numerous occasions- and the fact that almost anyone, thanks to new technologies, can become an influencer, i.e., a mass informer with the capacity to be heard and believed by a growing multitude of people, especially given the disbelief in official media and channels which, logically, has an impact on the increase of "the three p's". Faced with this undoubtedly complex situation, much as the world today is highly complex, Naim states that "we have big problems with very limited leaders"⁷, which leads a large section of the population, especially young people, to think and say, "don't talk to me about democracy if democracy is what you're showing me", because it does not meet their expectations.

So much so that it is claimed⁸ that the pillars on which democracy rests are tottering, as a large number of citizens believe that not only does the system not work, but that leaders and political parties do not really care or concern themselves with the average citizen. This is in addition to the widespread perception that the system is rigged. All of this generates a powerful "anti-system" movement (anti-democracy in short) highlighting the increase in corruption, contempt for institutions, for the rules of conduct and for the law. Consequently, the populations of these increasingly fragile democracies view with certain dismay how issues such as artificial intelligence and technological advances - especially in certain sectors- can threaten their jobs⁹ and their way of life, a vital threat in a nutshell, and how only a strong leader is apparently capable of changing this situation.

⁷ POLÍTICA EXTERIOR. El desprestigio de los expertos y el auge de los charlatanes, 6 August 2024. <https://www.politicaexterior.com/el-desprestigio-de-los-expertos-y-el-auge-de-los-charlatanes/>

⁸ YOUNG, CLIFFORD. La IA y el populismo agitan un frágil orden internacional, Política Exterior, 26 June 2024. Available at <https://www.politicaexterior.com/la-ia-y-el-populismo-agitan-un-fragil-orden-internacional/>

⁹ See SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro. Industrial Revolution 4.0!: A new century of revolts in the Mediterranean?, Analysis Document 01/2022, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 12 January 2022. Available at

https://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2022/DIEEEA01_2022_PEDSAN_Revolucion.pdf

All of this has meant that on both sides of the Atlantic, trust in institutions is at an all-time low -especially amongst the poorest sectors of society- and that growing disaffection with the system is translating into growing support for increasingly extremist tendencies and candidates, within a context of serious social polarisation and distrust towards the future¹⁰. The system is in crisis from within, and it appears that the reasons given do not generate the desired or expected works.

That same West where the concept of citizenship as a subject of egalitarian rights reached its full meaning, is observing and suffering a process of growing "tribalisation"¹¹, of fragmentation, disunity, decohesion and radicalisation of its people and groups, and of social agglomeration on the basis of ideas, "differential facts" or more or less argued elements, "reasons" that generate a narrative of "the Ones" and "the Others", with the disappearance of the "we", the common good, the idea -and reality- that together we are stronger and that there is much more that unites than that which separates. And when societies or individuals lose the ability to recognise the other -by ignoring or being deprived of it- we speak of apparent or actual "de-civilisation"¹², of a system radically opposed to the one created for centuries, with the "reasons" argued as the basis for it and which has made it possible to generate these "works" at all levels, from individual security to global governance bodies.

In the United States, for example, there is a unprecedented degree of polarisation today; moreover, it is a polarisation where it is difficult to find anyone or anything in between the two opposing extremes, and which therefore has a powerful component of complexity, as the processes of social change with multiple variables make it difficult to provide an explanation¹³, let alone a simple answer. But that polarisation is a fact; Trump -President of the United States from 2017 to 2021 and currently campaigning for another term in office- in one of his key speeches stated: "The discord and division in

¹⁰ RODRÍGUEZ, Pedro. Seis claves: de la bifurcación a la convergencia, Política Exterior, 6 June 2024. Available at <https://www.politicaexterior.com/articulo/seis-claves-de-la-bifurcacion-a-la-convergencia/>

¹¹ SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro. 21st century: the return of tribalism?, Analysis Document 01/2023, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 11 January 2023. Available at https://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2023/DIEEEA01_2023_PEDSAN_Tribalismo.pdf

¹² JAHANBEGLOO, Ramin. La descivilización, Ahora No. 50, 9 September 2024. Available at <https://www.ahorasemanal.es/la-descivilizacion>. For a more detailed discussion, see JAHANBEGLOO, Ramin. The Decline of civilization, Aleph Book Company, New Delhi, 2017.

¹³ VALLESPÍN, Fernando. Polarización y el discurso de la megaidentidad, Política Exterior No. 219, 6 June 2024. Available at <https://www.politicaexterior.com/articulo/polarizacion-y-el-discurso-de-la-megaidentidad/>

our society must be healed. (...) We rise together. Or we fall apart."¹⁴. Beyond the opinions and the electoral and electioneering effects of this statement, the fact of the polarisation and radicalisation of US society is clear and worrying.

But it is not just the US where this model is creaking. The riots in Britain in August 2024, which though officially labelled in a certain way, undoubtedly contain a powerful degree of disillusionment in a large part of the population and reflect a growing gap between the people and "the elites", of an actual economy -the shopping basket and housing- that is increasingly difficult, the fact that public infrastructures and institutions work less and less efficiently¹⁵. Even the fact that there is no room in Britain's prisons¹⁶ appears to indicate that the system itself is perhaps flawed and that its benefits are no longer as beneficial.

Germany is witnessing growing disaffection towards the system, with certain parties with a growing number of supporters encouraging closer relations with Russia and disaffection with the hegemony of other Western powers, including a longing for authoritarian leadership. It is even stated that "(...) there are those who hope that (Russia) can be the champion of a world of free and sovereign states without hegemonic influence"¹⁷. It seems, to a large extent, a desire to return to a very different past.

It is necessary to remember that the loss of hope, the feeling of emptiness, the sense that "there is no future" or of not knowing where the world and one's life are heading can generate a sense of hopelessness that is always devastating for societies¹⁸. From there it is but a short step to the search for strong leaders, to listen to -and follow- siren songs, and to embrace extreme projects that seemingly provide security. A very, very short step.

¹⁴ Donald Trump's speech on 18 July 2024, at Le Grand Continent. Trump: el largo discurso y el punto de inflexión de una campaña, 25 July 2024. Available at <https://legrandcontinent.eu/es/2024/07/25/trump-el-largo-discurso-y-el-punto-de-inflexion-de-una-campana/>

¹⁵ BLOODWORTH, James. A far-right elite stirred Britain's race riots, Foreign Policy, 6 August 2024. Available at https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/08/06/far-right-elite-stirred-britain-race-riots/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Editors%27%20Picks%20-%2008062024&utm_term=editors_picks

¹⁶ LA RAZÓN. Reino Unido se queda sin celdas donde encerrar a los criminales, 20 August 2024. Available at https://www.larazon.es/internacional/reino-unido-queda-celdas-donde-encerrar-criminales_2024082066c3826bddf36800016f1532.html

¹⁷ DW. Los partidos alemanes AFD y BSW y su relación con Rusia, 24 August 2024. Available at <https://www.dw.com/es/los-partidos-alemanes-afd-y-bsw-y-su-relacion-con-rusia/a-70036808>

¹⁸ SÁNCHEZ HERRAÉZ, Pedro. The 21st century, geopolitical reconfiguration: what about the geopolitics of hope?. Analysis Document 02/2024, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 10 January 2024. Available at https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2024/DIEEEA02_2024_PEDSAN_Esperanza.pdf

Within a frustrated population, it is common for any candidate to emerge as a leader, as a ruler who, with radical slogans of reform, ends up wreaking havoc on the system; and this fact, albeit well known and repeated in history, keeps repeating itself¹⁹, without the necessary reflection and reforms -in different areas- being undertaken to prevent this from happening.

It seems that democracy as a sociopolitical system (the "good reasons") is being questioned, even "where was it invented", and it seems that those "reasons" have been somewhat weakened... and the rest of the planet?

I don't care about your reasons! I want action!

If things are complex in wealthy nations largely (or until recently) convinced of the goodness of such "reasons", in the rest of the world, the narrative focuses on two aspects: the West always has a "double standard", because the reasons, or the system it sells to another nation is based on it doing what the former says it wants it to do, but which is not what the former does; and, on the other hand, they are "their reasons" - which are not and never have been the latter's- and the latter perceives it as being imposed in yet another display of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism.

This perception and narrative extends throughout much of the world and in all areas, and there is no shortage, apparently or actually, of works and deeds seeking to justify it.

Your reasons vs. your deeds?

This double standard of which the West as a whole is accused -some nations more than others but ultimately the Western model as a whole, especially in this global reconfiguration- although already recurrent, has two major references today with regard to actions and statements -deeds and reasons- made in relation to the conflict in Ukraine and in Gaza, because while they may be interpreted from very different polemological and argumentative causes, a host of similarities can also be established

¹⁹ CASS, Oren. This is what elite failure looks like, The New York Times, 6 July 2024. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/06/opinion/populism-power-elites-politics.html?campaign_id=39&emc=edit_ty_20240710&instance_id=128366&nl=opinion-today®i_id=227510022&segment_id=171755&te=1&user_id=89d6be8e645c46802d3f62814b835549

at both micro and macro levels²⁰. And so, there is reasoning - discussion - regarding invaders and the invaded, right of defence or simple attack, unnecessary suffering of the civilian population, etc. which finally translates into some countries supporting Ukraine with the arguments, with the "reasons" almost opposed to those used to also support Israel; and this is the case of many Western countries, led in both cases by the United States. It has even been pointed out²¹ that Ukraine itself also has a double standard, as Kiev supports Israel.

For this reason -and for more issues, obviously- the so-called Global South²² - essentially, the Southern Hemisphere and non-Western countries- accuses the US of double standards on Ukraine and Gaza, the term they use being indeed, "hypocrisy"²³. And all of this, logically, undermines the real or assumed leadership in the championing of human rights and democracy, within the narrative of striving towards a better world, when much of the world -indeed, most of it- is imbued with "the perception of double standards and frustration that other issues do not receive the same sense of urgency and massive resources that have been mobilised for Ukraine"²⁴. The everlasting Western double standard is constantly pointed out: "bad deeds" versus "good reasons".

Thus, given the eagerness of several nations to join the European Union (EU) for years now, it is argued that Ukraine applied for EU membership on 28 February 2022 -only 4 days after the invasion by Russian troops- and was granted candidate status in June 2022, in spite of the enormous costs entailed by the inclusion of this nation,²⁵ and without forgetting that it has also been claimed that "Ukraine is still too corrupt to join the West"²⁶. In contrast to this apparent rush, Turkey is 'tired' of the eternal EU

²⁰ See, for example, RAINE, John. Ukraine vs. Gaza, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 9 February 2024. Available at <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/survival-online/2024/02/ukraine-vs-gaza/>

²¹ ALJAZEERA, Palestinians in Ukraine decry "double standard" as Kyiv supports Israel, 19 January 2024. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/1/19/palestinians-in-ukraine-decry-double-standard-as-kyiv-supports-israel>

²² NYE, Joseph S. What is the Global South, Project Syndicate, 1 November 2023. Available at <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/global-south-is-a-misleading-term-by-joseph-s-nye-2023-11/spanish>

²³ STUENKEL Oliver. Why the Global South is accusing America of hypocrisy, Foreign Policy, 2 November 2023. Available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/02/israel-palestine-hamas-gaza-war-russia-ukraine-occupation-west-hypocrisy/>

²⁴ ISLAM, Shada. El Sur Global es una realidad geopolítica, Política Exterior, 21 August 2023. Available at <https://www.politicaexterior.com/el-sur-global-es-una-realidad-geopolitica/>

²⁵ Euronews, Ukraine's accession could cost €136 billion to the EU budget, new report estimates, 7 March 2024. Available at <https://es.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/03/07/la-adhesion-de-ucrania-podria-costar-136000-millones-de-euros-a-la-ue-segun-informe>

²⁶ VOHRA, Anchal. Ukraine Is Still Too Corrupt to Join the West, Foreign Policy, 29 July 2024. Available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/07/29/ukraine-is-still-too-corrupt-to-join-the->

accession process, having waited decades²⁷, as although Ankara obtained candidate status at the end of 1999, issues such as fundamental rights, rule of law and democracy led to an impasse in negotiations in June 2018²⁸; or the Caucasus nation of Georgia where a substantial part of the population, especially older sections, are disappointed with the West²⁹ and with the "eternal" EU or NATO accession processes, disappointed about "unfulfilled promises", and once again, sensing double standards.

Certainly, the application of this "double standard" that has occasionally been practised, amongst other nations, by the United States -it is enough to once again highlight the difference in actions and reasons carried out and put forward in the cases of Ukraine and Gaza- also has the collateral effect of denigrating and disqualifying the sincere efforts made for decades, and provides arguments to attack US and Western "soft power" as a whole and to promote the loss of support and allies in Africa and other parts of the planet. These spaces that are then quickly seized upon by China and Russia -amongst others- with a completely different approach to supporting the governments of nations that request it, than that of the West and which support and encourage this 'anti-Western narrative'.

Its effects are palpable and evident; even in so-called peace missions, when sending forces under the national flag, the flag of the European Union, or even the flag of the United Nations, the leadership of the West is constantly questioned³⁰, as the usual forms of support, mediation and stabilisation of societies in crisis are being modified and replaced by other types of actions, by "deeds versus reasons", where human rights, individual freedoms and democracy are the main focus, largely with human rights, individual freedoms and democracy at their core; they are being modified and exchanged for other kinds of actions, for "deeds versus reasons" where issues of national sovereignty and non-interference in the "internal affairs" of host states take precedence, and where the legislative and global corpus of good practices in human

[west/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Editors%27%20Picks%20-%2007292024&utm_term=editors_picks](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/1/5/erdogan-turkey-tired-of-eu-membership-process)

²⁷ ALJAZEERA, Erdogan: Turkey "tired" of EU membership process, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/1/5/erdogan-turkey-tired-of-eu-membership-process>

²⁸ EUROPEAN COUNCIL, European Union Enlargement Policy, Turkey. Available at <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/es/policies/enlargement/turkey/>

²⁹ NOVA NEWS, Caucasus, the opposite paths of Armenia and Georgia: Yerevan approaches the West, Tbilisi towards Russia, 2 August 2024. Available at <https://www.agenzianova.com/es/news/caucaso-lestrade-opposte-di-armenia-e-georgia-erevan-si-avvicina-alloccidente-tbilisi-alla-russia/>

³⁰ CROCKER, Chester. Democracies aren't the peacemakers anymore, Foreign Policy, 24 May 2024. Available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/05/24/authoritarian-democracy-diplomacy-peacemakers-russia-china-libya-syria-ethiopia/>

rights and governance take a back seat, which has significant consequences for the global peace agenda.

And new powers are taking advantage of this³¹, with anti-imperialist narratives, without placing apparent or direct conditions on the requests made, and also apparently displaying no desire to interfere in the internal affairs -or what is sometimes interpreted as such- of these nations. And so they are displacing the West, or simply being called upon as an alternative by these nations, in many areas. One of these, of crucial importance as it constitutes the southern border of Europe³², is the Sahel, the wide strip of land south of the Sahara and a key area of continental mobility.

And besides, these aren't my reasons!

Especialmente en el oeste del Sahel y centrándonos en Mali, Burkina Faso y Níger, el Oeste ha sido largamente expulsado de estas tres naciones, que han creado una confederación que busca expandirse como un elemento de "pan-Africano resurgencia" en la cara de - real or alleged - imposiciones y normas occidentales. Como hecho, el General Tchiani, el líder de Níger, declaró en la ocasión de la creación de la Confederación de la Alianza de Estados del Sahel, que "Es una solemne y histórica ocasión (...) nuestra férrea voluntad común para reconquistar nuestra soberanía y rehabilitar nuestra legendaria dignidad"³³.

En el Sahel, donde la mayoría de la población tiene necesidades básicas que son esenciales para la supervivencia, la búsqueda de un liderazgo fuerte, para un *caudillismo*³⁴ que proporciona, al menos, seguridad, es una encarnación de esta tendencia global. Y estas tres naciones, cuyos gobiernos son en gran medida el resultado de *coups d'état*, siguiendo los intentos de otras naciones en la región y el Oeste de imponer sanciones, no solo cuestionan el derecho del Oeste a imponer sanciones o a buscar cambiar el curso de estos países, sino - como en el

³¹ By way of example, and for the case of Africa: SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro. África: la pugna de viejas y nuevas potencias por su dominio, in "África: la ambición de las potencias mundiales sobre el continente", Cuaderno de Estrategia No. 220, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defence, Madrid, 2023, pp.13-59.

³² SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro. Sahel: ¡Tormenta perfecta de amplitud e intensidad creciente!, in "Panorama Geopolítico de los conflictos 2021", Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defence, Madrid, 2021, pp.229-252.

³³ EUROPA PRESS, Burkina Faso, Níger y Malí consolidan su unidad con la creación de la Confederación de la Alianza de Estados del Sahel, 7 July 2024. Available at <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-burkina-faso-niger-mali-consolidan-unidad-creacion-confederacion-alianza-estados-sahel-20240707084825.html>

³⁴ SÁNCHEZ HERRÁEZ, Pedro. The Sahel in flames! Back to militarism?, Analysis Document 61/2022, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, 05 October 2022. Available at https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_analisis/2022/DIEEEA61_2022_PEDSAN_Sahel.pdf

case of Burkina Faso - even cite the need for a "regional battle"³⁵, a battle in the "economic, political, communicational, cultural and diplomatic" spheres, in the quest for real independence from the West.

These governments have adopted a sovereigntist, anti-French and anti-Western discourse that aligns perfectly with Putin's ideology - with Putin's reasons - and democracy is accused of being "an externally imposed system, unsuited to African traditions or ineffective"³⁶. Similar to Mali, at the end of 2023, Burkina Faso decreed the end of French as the country's official language³⁷, becoming a "working language", in a further sign of its growing detachment from Paris and the West. And the request to the Barkane (French), Takuba (European) EUTM-Mali (European Union) and MINUSMA (United Nations) military operations to leave their territories - an action that has already been completed - is a further step in this trend.

Thus, expressions such as "coming out of subordination"³⁸, moving away from the West and "marching towards sovereignty"³⁹ are a constant; and it is even pointed out that human rights should not be instrumentalised or politicised, and that "countries that practised slavery or colonisation are now lecturing others on human rights"⁴⁰. Along these lines, the president of Burkina Faso has declared⁴¹ that he rejects loans from the International Monetary Fund, a growing action in Africa, citing "financial sovereignty" as a new aspect to be recovered with respect to Western institutions, enhancing economic independence from external pressures and aid, and thus avoiding a sort of eternal debt

³⁵ PRENSA LATINA, Burkina Faso habla de lucha por independencia en reunión regional, 6 July 2024. Available at <https://www.prensa-latina.cu/2024/07/06/burkina-faso-habla-de-lucha-por-independencia-en-reunion-regional/>

³⁶ RESUMEN LATINOAMERICANO, Africa. Sahel: solo estamos cambiando de amo, 18 July 2024. Available at <https://www.resumenlatinoamericano.org/2024/07/18/afrika-sahel-solo-estamos-cambiando-de-amo/>

³⁷ AGENZIA NOVA, Burkina Faso: junta will remove French as official language, 6 December 2023. Available at <https://www.agenzianova.com/es/news/burkina-faso-la-giunta-rimuovera-il-francese-come-lingua-ufficiale/>

³⁸ PRASHAD, Vijay. Atención: el Sahel se levanta, Insurgencia Magistral, 18 July 2024. Available at <https://insurgenciamagisterial.com/atencion-el-sahel-se-levanta/>

³⁹ INFOBAE, El jefe de la Junta Militar de Níger destaca la "marcha hacia la soberanía" en el primer aniversario del golpe, 26 July 2024. Available at <https://www.infobae.com/america/agencias/2024/07/26/el-jefe-de-la-junta-militar-de-niger-destaca-la-marcha-hacia-la-soberania-en-el-primer-aniversario-del-golpe/>

⁴⁰ RESUMEN LATINOAMERICANO, Abdoulaye Diop: "países que practicaron la esclavitud o la colonización hoy dan lecciones a otros de derechos humanos", 13 June 2023. Available at <https://www.resumenlatinoamericano.org/2023/06/12/mali-abdoulaye-diop-paises-que-practicaron-la-esclavitud-o-la-colonizacion-hoy-dan-lecciones-a-otros-de-derechos-humanos/>

⁴¹ LOVEWORLDSAT, Burkina Faso President, Ibrahim Traore, rejects IMF financial help, 21 August 2024. Available at <https://loveworldsat.org/burkina-faso-president-ibrahim-traore-rejects-imf-financial-help/>

trap. Even the term "financial slaves"⁴² comes up in social media posts by Burkina Faso government officials, the disaffection with the West, and "their reasons" are growing.

The request for arms, as well as other types of support, but above all arms to combat terrorism, had been a constant request from the Sahel states, a request that had been systematically denied by the EU and other Western countries⁴³, to the anger and disenchantment of the African authorities, who, given the reasons put forward by the West for not providing them with arms that could help them fight terrorism, pointed out that there were not so many safeguards for granting them to Ukraine. In fact, the Spanish Chief of Defence Staff (JEMAD) himself recently pointed out that "the countries of the Sahel not only need training, but also weapons"⁴⁴, and that this is perhaps the most important reason why, feeling threatened and not receiving a timely response (from the West), they have turned to Russia.

However, Turkey, China and other nations but above all Russia, have had no problem supplying weapons, nor have they claimed issues of human rights and freedom - and have even sent their private security companies, such as Wagner, to take direct action against terrorists.⁴⁵ And the fact is that -although these Sahel nations remain the epicentre of regional and global terrorism- Burkina Faso, for example, has regained 29% of its territory from the jihadists: while in 2022, the terrorists controlled 61% of the country, today it is "only" 31%. In addition to the tactics and strategies employed by the ruling military junta, as well as the growing support of the Sahel Alliance countries, arms purchases and support from Russia seem to have been key in reinforcing the capabilities of Burkina Faso, a nation that also raises the question of how territory is now being recovered and how this was not possible during the decade-long deployment of thousands of French army troops on counter-terrorism missions.

It seems, therefore, that attachment to the West's "reasons" either does not exist or is fast disappearing... and to its "deeds"?

⁴² VENEZUELA NEWS. Burkina Faso rechaza préstamos del FMI: "no seremos esclavos financieros", 18 August 2024. Available at <https://venezuela-news.com/burkina-faso-rechaza-prestamos-del-fmi-no-seremos-esclavos-financieros/>

⁴³ El Sahel: epicentro yihadista en África occidental, in "Terrorismo internacional: mutación y adaptación de un fenómeno global", Cuaderno de Estrategia No. 214, Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies, Ministry of Defense, pp. 79-127 Madrid, 2022.

⁴⁴ LA RAZÓN. El JEMAD "Los países del Sahel no solo necesitan adiestramiento, también armamento", 12 August 2024. Available at https://www.larazon.es/espana/defensa/jemad-paises-sahel-solo-necesitan-adiestramiento-tambien-armamento_2024081266b8ee0fb33dfc0001f11d66.html

⁴⁵ LA RAZÓN, Burkina Faso recupera desde 2022 un 29% de su territorio de manos yihadistas, 10 August 2024. Available at https://www.larazon.es/internacional/burkina-faso-recupera-2022-29-territorio-manos-yihadistas_2024081066b7662a76ed0d000131f368.html

Neither your reasons nor your deeds!

In a combat action in northern Mali in late July 2024, Tuareg rebels and jihadist terrorists inflicted heavy punishment on a column of the Russian contractor Wagner's personnel and Malian army soldiers, killing an estimated 100 contractors and nearly half a hundred soldiers. The Ukrainian authorities claimed to have supported this action, which dealt a heavy blow to Mali - and to Russia/Wagner -⁴⁶, although the various communiqués issued by different authorities and on different channels were later denied. The perception in Sahel states is that, in this global reconfiguration, the war unleashed on Europe's eastern border apparently creates a new front of open fighting on the southern border, and the West - through Ukraine, which is struggling to be part of it - has supported the death of Malian soldiers.

The reactions were swift and forceful, given the capacities of these Sahel states, some of the poorest nations on this Earth: Mali broke off relations with Ukraine, as did Niger⁴⁷. And even ECOWAS (the Economic Confederation of West African States) itself, which Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso all resigned from and have accused of being a tool of the West, has "expressed its firm disapproval and strong condemnation of any foreign interference in the region that may constitute a threat to peace and security in West Africa, as well as any attempt to provoke violence in the region in the current geopolitical confrontations"⁴⁸.

Faced with this breakdown of relations on the part of Niger, Ukraine -a nation which logically and repeatedly points to Russian invasion and interference in its territory as a cause of death of its citizens and soldiers- issued a communiqué in which it deplored the decision of the Sahel nation, stating that it had been taken without any investigation or evidence, and in which it emphasised that "Ukraine is sincerely determined to continue developing mutually beneficial relations with all African states on the basis of equality, non-interference in the internal affairs, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states within internationally recognized borders, strict compliance

⁴⁶ WATSON, Kiev affirme avoir piégé les mercenaires de Wagner au Mali, 31 July 2024. Available at <https://www.watson.ch/fr/international/querre-contre-l-ukraine/223344905-kiev-affirme-avoir-piege-les-mercenaires-de-wagner-au-mali>

⁴⁷ SWI. Níger rompe relaciones con Ucrania siguiendo los pasos de su aliado Malí, 6 August 2024. Available at <https://www.swissinfo.ch/spa/n%C3%ADger-rompe-relaciones-con-ucrania-siguiendo-los-pasos-de-su-aliado-mali/86254959>

⁴⁸ INFOBAE, La CEDEAO condena el ataque contra el ejército de Malí y desaprueba cualquier injerencia extranjera, 6 August 2024. Available at <https://www.infobae.com/america/agencias/2024/08/06/la-cedeao-condena-el-ataque-contr-a-el-ejercito-de-mali-y-desaprueba-cualquier-injerencia-extranjera/>

with international law, the Goals and Principles of the UN Charter.”⁴⁹. Once again this mantra, these "Western reasons" that no longer seem to work, while claims of the opening of a second front between Russia and Ukraine in Africa, this "Western deed", are populating media all over the planet. Neither your reasons, nor your deeds.

Finally, the governments of the Sahel Alliance sent a letter⁵⁰ to the United Nations Security Council on 19 August 2024, in which they denounced and condemned the Ukrainian government's open support for international terrorism, particularly in the Sahel, and called for appropriate measures to be taken against these actions that strengthen subversive groups, urging the Security Council to assume its responsibilities. Will the world order and global governance, especially in these times of reconfiguration - not only geopolitical - be able to respond to such a request?

To conclude, the growing narrative in much of the world - and not only in the Sahel - is that the West preaches values and economic prosperity while profiting from a colonised world, so that not only Western hegemony, but even appreciation of the West, however mythologised, must end. And for this reason, this unequivocal statement is heard in certain quarters: "The future is post-Western. This current chapter of Western-run human history must be flung shut"⁵¹.

Will this be the case?

On reflection

Whether it becomes so or not is certainly a matter for all. For all.

The real absence of an alternative model prevents the existence of a real dilemma, although the global dynamic has sown powerful uncertainties in people and nations, in human groups and countries, and even casts doubt on issues, on reasons -rights, freedoms, etc.- that were taken for granted as human heritage, as global heritage.

⁴⁹ MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF UKRAINE, Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine on the decision of the authorities of the Republic of the Niger to break off diplomatic relations with Ukraine, 8 August 2024. Available at <https://mfa.gov.ua/en/news/zayava-mzs-ukrayini-shchod-rishennya-vladi-respubliki-niger-rozirvati-diplomaticzni-vidnosini-z-ukrayinoyu>

⁵⁰ RBC-Ukraine, West African juntas complain to UN about Ukraine's support for rebels, 21 August 2024. Available at <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/news/west-african-juntas-complain-to-un-about-1724237086.html>

⁵¹ MARSHALL, Yannick Giovanni. The future is post-western, Aljazeera, 20 March 2024. Available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/5/20/the-future-is-post-western>

Perhaps what is happening is that, as Ortega y Gasset once stated, we do not know what is happening to us, and that once we reach the top of the pyramid of needs, Byzantine arguments and questions that are increasingly removed from reality, from the true reality, the day-to-day reality, and the reality that provides answers to basic needs, take up most of our time and energies and generate, as at other times in history, an erosion and implosion of the model and, consequently, its disappearance or the disappearance of the way of life of the societies where it was born. And this is nothing new, although we must not forget that if civilisations destroy themselves with but a slight push from the outside, it is because nothing sustains them from inside.

Where was the model born, where was it achieved -with much effort and sweat- suitably "good reasons and good deeds", when these are questioned, perhaps what is needed is a profound reflection rather than beating our chests and empty lamentations centred, on several occasions, on a sort of "gloating" over the inefficiencies and errors of the system itself or of the century-old process followed by it. Perhaps, and only then, can its strength and vigour be restored.

In the face of uncertainties and challenges, in the face of the unknown, it is not necessary to look for a leader who makes decisions on behalf of and removed from the citizens; what we need are leaders who bring together a people convinced that disunity only leads to the abyss, and that to recover deeds and reasons it is necessary to assume the costs, face existing difficulties and problems, and not merely accept claims regarding the end of the cycle as inevitable -the end of civilisation? or merely seek to survive by "bailing out the water" in order to stay afloat as long as possible, yet holding the deepest conviction that the ship will inevitably sink. Are there neither ideas nor the will to revive it or to restore it to its former glory?

And if, moreover, we are aware that the planet moves at different speeds and rhythms, that there are different needs at different stages and meeting them and providing aid in order to meet them requires care and consensus; all the while being absolutely clear that a centuries-long journey cannot be covered in a few years or decades, there is certainly hope that good reasons and good deeds will spread once again and increasingly, across the planet, and that the model will be accepted with the necessary nuances on a global scale.

Perhaps it is necessary to remember and recover the need to "act", and to do it all together, rather than to "philosophise" and leave to each their own. It is certainly not easy, it is not cheap, and it is not without effort and sacrifice. But by believing and working, it is undoubtedly possible. It has been done before.

Could this be one of the great actions of the 21st century?

The alternative is unthinkable.

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