

THE GEOSTRATEGIC DEBATE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: THE PLACE OF EURASIA, THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE, AND MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study is to present the geostrategic debate on the power projection of the USA, from the perspective of its most relevant authors: Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, Samuel Huntington and Robert Kaplan. The argument is that such authors, although following premises of the Realistic School of International Relations, have shown different positions regarding the place of Eurasia and the Western Hemisphere, and particularly of Mexico, in the security and in the geostrategic actions of the United States of America. The study is based on books and original articles by the authors, and very marginally on interviews and secondary texts about the authors.

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INTRODUCTION

The geographic dimension has a central role in the strategic-related and foreign policy formulation of the United States of America. What would be the fundamental relations for the USA in terms of geographic axis? Would it be the North-South axis, which points to the priority of US relations with the Western Hemisphere (America)?

The main objective of this study is to present the geostrategic debate on the power projection of the USA, from the perspective of its most relevant authors: Zbigniew Brzezinski, Henry Kissinger, John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, Samuel Huntington and Robert Kaplan. The argument is that such authors, although following premises of the Realistic School of International Relations, have shown different positions regarding the place of Eurasia and the Western Hemisphere, and particularly of Mexico, in the security and in the geostrategic actions of the United States of America.

Other issues shall be marginally addressed in the article. What is the importance or limit of expenses on defense and lost lives, or especially of the budgetary limit of the issuing country of the international currency (dollar), for this discussion? What is the importance of different political and economic groups for a democratic discussion on geostrategy? What is the role of rhetoric and ethics in the US Foreign Policy? More specific issues arise from these questions, concerning, for instance: the US convenience or not to invade Iraq and intervene and maintain military presence in the Middle East, whereas China takes advantage of the access to oil in the region; the USA must maintain or not its presence in NATO, whereas Europeans would be irresponsible, in terms of security, and would concentrate their resources on their "welfare" system. Moreover, there is another important issue that will be marginally addressed here, due to our focus, on which instruments should be predominantly used in the foreign projection of the USA: geopolitical, geoeconomic, or economic.

To do so, our text is organized as follows: to situate the reader in the US geostrategic debate, in the first section, the perspective of Classic Geopolitics, which presents Eurasia as the cornerstone, will be addressed. In the following section, the perspectives of Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger will be addressed, both in the analysis of the bipolar clash of the Cold War and in the current debate, which continue pointing to Eurasia as the geostrategic priority of the USA. The third section focuses

on the perspective of John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, who argue that the USA must act through the Offshore Balancing strategy in Eurasia. The fourth section discusses the positions of Samuel Huntington and Robert Kaplan, which point to the Western Hemisphere as the key area of action of the USA, in which threats would primarily lead to Mexican immigration and/or instability and the Latinization of the USA – although they propose different solutions, as we shall further see in the text. Finally, we finish the text with a section of final considerations and conclusions. The study is based on books and original articles by the authors, and very marginally on interviews and secondary texts about the authors.

THE CLASSIC GEOPOLITICS

Authors of the Anglo-Saxon school have brought important contributions to the debate on classic geopolitics and on the geostrategic formulation of the United States of America, both to their time and currently.

Even before, one of the founding fathers of the USA, Alexander Hamilton (1787), pointed out that the union of the Thirteen Colonies would bring a large system capable of balancing power relations in the North Atlantic and dictating the terms of the relations between the Old and the New world. The Monroe Doctrine, announced by the US president to the Congress in 1823, explained the concern with the projection of foreign powers in the Western Hemisphere as the US security perimeter.

The North American Admiral Mahan (1890) studied the evolution of the British maritime domain as the source of its supremacy. He stressed the importance of the dominance of transoceanic islands, strategic passages, and continental ports for controlling strategic maritime routes. In fact, this is one of the pillars of the British foreign policy since abandoning its policy of attempting to expand across the European continent after the Hundred-Year's War (1337-1453) against France. Thus, when becoming the evangelist of the US naval power, he pointed out as indispensable, in the short term, the dominance of the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, as well as the construction of a transoceanic canal in the Isthmus of Panama under US control, in such a way that its Navy and Merchant Marine had greater mobility capacity between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, providing greater territorial security and greater productive-industrial and commercial expansion. Thus, the author justified the US imperialism

in Latin America due to security and industrial-commercial expansion purposes. Still, in the medium term, he pointed out that the USA should control the Panama-Hawaii-Alaska triangle, for its security in the Pacific, and emerge as a great power in the North Atlantic.

But it was the British geographer Mackinder (1904, 1919), when formulating his theory of the supremacy of land power, who mentioned Eurasia as the cornerstone for the balance or dispute over global power, for material reasons: landmass, population, economic and industrial resources, and military power. From his perspective, the State (or alliance) that dominated Eurasia would control the direction of world politics. In fact, considering an authentic land domination on the part of Russia in the central area of Eurasia, and still aiming at the possibility of alliance or dominance with the German imperial land power in the central area of Europe, Mackinder has highlighted one of the pillars of the British foreign policy in force since the expansion of the Habsburg Empire in the XV-XVI centuries: establishing a divided and balanced power in Eurasia, without allowing any power or alliance to reach supremacy within the continent. Or, still, the principle of the containment policy at the edges of Eurasia, in order to prevent land power from becoming amphibious.

On the other hand, Nicholas Spykman (1942), a Dutchman who was settled in the USA, synthesized his geostrategy considering his singular geographic position and the principle of the balance of power. At the same time, the author justifies the interventionism in Eurasia and the hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. He notes that there is a geographic parallelism between North America and Eurasia, presenting the same neighborhood (North Atlantic, North Pacific, and Arctic Sea). Therefore, they mutually surround each other, being near and interconnected by transoceanic islands in the Atlantic and in the Pacific – even more with the advance of air power and technologies that provide greater scope for military aggression. Thus, the USA would be a transoceanic island surrounded by the ends of Eurasia, having as a geostrategic imperative to permanently act in order to promote the balance of power in the continent, and dominate and install advanced bases on the aforementioned islands. That is why there would be no interest in forming a European Federation as a single actor with supremacy.

In America, or the Western Hemisphere, the US supremacy could not be threatened, within its broader security objective; not only in the “Mediterranean America” (Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico, including

Venezuela and Colombia), but also in the “Southern equidistant zone” in the south of Amazonas, to mention the spatial references of Spykman (1942). Since there is a considerable imbalance of power, also evidenced by geographic proximity and continuity, the US policy should be hegemonic, promoting the permanent political dependence of its states, and isolating the projection and alliances of foreign powers. Because, in his opinion, if a power (or alliance) should dominate Eurasia, the USA must form a self-governed integrated system under its hegemony in America, making all its resources available to compensate for Eurasia’s dominant power.

As for the relationship between moral values and power purposes, Spykman seems to clarify the rhetoric of the action of the US foreign policy and geostrategy:

“Statesman who conducts foreign policy can only consider the values of justice, fairness, and tolerance insofar as they contribute to the aim of power or as long as they do not interfere with it. You can use them as instruments that, from the moral point of view, justify the aspiration of power, but you must reject them at the moment their application is translated into weakness. Power is not sought to achieve moral values, but moral values are used to facilitate the acquisition of power” (Spykman, 1942, p. 26, free translation).

BRZEZINSKI AND KISSINGER – EURASIA AS THE CORNERSTONE THE COLD WAR

After the Second World War, the period characterized by bipolarity and geopolitical disputes between the USA and the Soviet Union started, and such reached a global scale. The US containment geopolitics, formulated by George Keenan in his “long telegram” and initially executed by the Truman Doctrine, followed the idea that Eurasia would be the cornerstone in the global power dispute. From a rhetorical point of view, Truman’s speech highlighted the struggle of good against evil. Within the context of security, this was accomplished in 1949 NATO’s formation involving the USA, Canada, and allies from Western Europe. At the eastern end of Eurasia, the USA established bilateral security agreements with allies

after the Communist Revolution in China (1949) and the Korean War on the peninsula (1950). Brzezinski and Kissinger formulated geostrategic visions and action guidelines for the USA in this scenario, focusing on Eurasia, according to the authors of classic geopolitics.

Brzezinski, in *Game Plan* (1986), points to Eurasia as the cornerstone in the confrontation between the USA and the USSR, for material reasons, in the same sense presented by Mackinder, and for reasons of geographic and power balance, according to Spykman. Still, the author attributed a geographic reason for the bipolar conflict and its possible developments by stating that it was a historical and imperial collision between a transoceanic maritime power, which began to include the borders of Eurasia at its perimeter of security, and a transcontinental land power, which had as geostrategic imperative the expansion to the borders of Eurasia in search of exit(s) for the hot seas. The first tried to contain the second, keeping it confined inside Eurasia, whereas the second sought to expel the first and isolate it in the American continent.

For the author, this competition for Eurasia has been developed in three strategic fronts, originated at different times, namely: at the western end of Eurasia – driven between 1947-1949 by the attempted communist ascension in Greece and Turkey and the Berlin Crisis; at the eastern end of Eurasia, or at the Southeast Asia – originated with the Communist Revolution in China in 1949 and the Korean War on the peninsula in 1950; at Southwest Asia, or Near East, driven in 1979 by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution. This would be crucial for the control of the others, because of its importance to oil supply, not only from the USA, but to the allies. Therefore, for the bargaining power and the US influence on the other strategic fronts, acting as a guarantor of access, or of the “market” operation, in addition to denying access to exposed or potential rivals. This was accomplished in the so-called Carter Doctrine formulated by Brzezinski, and synthesized by the president in his speech to the Congress.

Although the author does not develop his reflections based on geographic factors, but on terms of power balance, Kissinger, in *Diplomacy*, highlights the importance of the US strategy for Eurasia as the cornerstone for its supremacy and rivalry regarding the USSR. In this book, he points out that, from the perception of mutual fear between the USSR and China, he formulated and worked together with President Nixon on the triangular diplomacy as a geopolitical strategy of the USA against the USSR and

China, approaching the first and the last as a way to frame the main rival.

Both, Brzezinski and Kissinger, perceive the US hemispheric supremacy as a permanent factor in its geostrategy within the context of the Cold War. Therefore, Latin America is deemed as a peripheral area, but of continuous intervention on the part of the USA. It is worth mentioning the formulations of James Burnham, in *The Struggle for the World* (New York: The John D Company, 1947), in which the geopolitical perspective of containment is broadened to more peripheral regions where the penetration of communism would be characterized by the creation of subversion networks. In these regions and countries, the USA should act to support the containment of the revolutionary and insurrection warfare.

THE POST-COLD WAR – XXI CENTURY

In the US geostrategic debate in the XXI century – after the clear rise of China and the resumption of an assertive policy of Russia –, Brzezinski and Kissinger continue pointing to the centrality of East-West relations in its geostrategic analyses and recommendations. In other words, countries of the Northern Hemisphere, and more specifically the equilibrium of power in Eurasia to be promoted by the USA, continue to be fundamental. But, depending on the situation, they direct the specific focus and intensity of action of Foreign and Security Policies on different areas of Eurasia, combining tactics and strategy.

In the book *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* (2012a), as well as in the article *Balancing the East, Upgrading the West – U.S. Grand Strategy in an Age of Upheaval* (2012b), Brzezinski points to challenges and paths for the USA to maintain its primacy position. According to him, it is necessary for political leaders to understand the new geopolitical scenario and the role of the USA, outlining a long-term strategy (2012a, p. 121).

As for its recommendations to the US geostrategy, he begins by making clear that it is essential to promote a new and stable geopolitical balance in Eurasia, “by far the most important continent in the world” (2012a, p. 130, free translation), geopolitically axial for material reasons, to mention Mackinder. However, in his vision, the USA wasted the opportunity to advance in the power gap of the post-Cold War, when it emerged as the only global superpower. Europe is less united and weaker (it has become an extension of the West, without strategic vision and

militarily dependent on the USA), whereas Turkey and Russia have stayed alongside the western community, and in the East China has grown in economic, political, and military terms, creating real and potential rivalries. Hence, for him, Eurasia currently presents volatilities that place it as the central arena of global geopolitics: "Both the most immediate foreign policy threat to America's global status and the longer-range challenge to global geopolitical stability arise on the Eurasian continent" (2012a, p. 123). Immediate threats originate from the east of Suez Canal, from the west of the Chinese province of Xinjiang, and from the post-Soviet south border (Caucasus and Central Asia). The long-term challenge is the continuous shift of the focus (on the global power distribution) from the West to the East, from Europe to Asia, and possibly from the USA to China. Such imposes the need for a long-term geostrategic perspective aimed at promoting a balance of the transcontinental power in Eurasia (*idem*).

To do so, the author proposes that the USA should act as the promoter and guarantor of a renewed "Larger West", involving Turkey and Russia, gradually, through a process of democratization and eventually adhering to the norms of the "West." This long-term goal could be achieved in the second quarter of the XXI century.

The other part would be the "Complex East" in the region of Asia-Pacific, where the USA should act as promoter of the regional balance of "a new stable and cooperative East." According to him, for its economic and demographic weight in a declining Europe, this region is central to global stability. However, it has enormous potential to provoke a local conflict that can involve the USA and lead to a larger war. This is due to disputes over the post of greater regional power combined with resentments, mistrust, contentious and historical conflicts, also involving strategic allies of the USA. For Brzezinski, Chinese ambitions become increasingly clear, based on nationalist assertiveness, national modernization, and historical patience, and arouse fear and historical rivalries with Japan and India, for example. Therefore, the USA should help countries to avoid a battle for the region's dominance by mediating conflicts and promoting balance between rival powers. But he warns that the USA can no longer impose a balance of power to the region (BRZEZINSKY, 2012a).

From the perspective of Brzezinski (2012a), the USA should approach China, and not only lessen the possibilities of a USA-China conflict, but also working in such a way there is no mistakes and conflicts

between Japan and China, China and India, and China and Russia. They should seek to establish a strategic triangle of cooperation between the USA-Japan-China, involving a lasting reconciliation between China and Japan, and to act within the principle that the USA must have obligations with Japan and South Korea, but at the same time not allowing it to be dragged into a war between Asian powers. He points out that in this potential conflictive framework, their stability depends partly on how the USA will deal with two overlapping regional triangles centered in China, where they can be a key actor to change balances and results (*idem*, p. 162). First, the China-India-Pakistan triangle, which involves the primacy in Asia between the first two, in an inherently competitive and antagonistic relationship, and the third is the regional containment point. In this case, the role of the USA must be cautious and prudent, especially in the alliance with India, avoiding military involvement, in such a way not to awaken or legitimize a Chinese nationalist hostility, which would even interest Russia. The convenience of such position would no longer be clear in the second triangle, China-Japan-South Korea, at Southeast Asia, for involving the issue of China's primacy against the USA position in the Pacific. Anyway, a strengthened and active Japan would bring an important contribution to global stability.

Finally, Brzezinski (2012a, p. 181) states that if the USA succeeds in the West, forming a wide area of democratic and stable cooperation extending from North America to Europe through Eurasia (possibly involving Russia and Turkey), towards Japan and South Korea, this would raise the appeal of the central principles of the West in relation to other cultures, encouraging the emergence of a universal democratic political culture.

Kissinger, in *World Order* (2014), points out that the USA needs a strategy and diplomacy to match its goals – and keep its supremacy – and the complexity of the current international order(s). By highlighting the geopolitical and historical importance of the Atlantic partnership for the USA, of its renewal and continuity, Kissinger (2014, p. 99) states that it is essential to support the European Union and to prevent it from moving into a political gap: “Separated from Europe at the political, economic, and defense-related levels, the United States of America, in geopolitical terms, would become an island alongside Eurasia, and Europe itself could be a prolongation of the extensions of Asia and the Middle East” (*idem*, p. 374, free translation).

Kissinger mentions that the international order in Asia is historically characterized by the participation of Foreign Powers, currently marked by a “variety of multilateral groups and bilateral mechanisms” (idem, p. 210, free translation), some purely regional and some with participations including those of the USA or Russia. In the author’s opinion, the region presents a geostrategic complexity for its regional rivalries and two balances of power: one in the South and the other in the East. Although he sought not to deal with the Southern balance after the country’s withdrawal from Afghanistan, for him, the USA must act in such, since they would leave a gap of power for expansionism and rivalries that would lead to confrontation. According to him, in eastern Asia, the USA “is not as much of a promoter of balance as an integral part of the balance” (idem, p. 234, free translation). There are several balances in this area, including one between the USA, Japan, and China. For him, the US action will require moderation, strength, and legitimacy, combining power balance with the concept of partnership, in order to avoid a military confrontation or the Chinese hegemony.

On the USA-China relations, from Kissinger’s perspective, even if the USA falls, the Chinese state leaders know they will preserve much of its power. For him, no country alone has the ability to play the leading role of the United States of America. But he realizes that China poses a structural challenge in the distribution of global power. To do so, therefore, it is necessary to avoid a tragedy such as the hegemonic wars that took place in Europe in the early XX century. The relationship between USA and China must be ruled by the search for balance based on both power and legitimacy – focusing on the balance of power when seeking norms to establish legitimacy and cooperation, and vice versa (idem, p. 369).

In the post-Cold War scenario, both authors, Brzezinski and Kissinger, follow the perspective that the USA hemispheric supremacy is an irrevocable task. Brzezinski, when deepening on the subject, and looking at the Chinese expansion in the region and the rise of critical rulers to Washington’s policies, recommends that the USA should carefully act not to awaken and legitimize opposing positions within societies of the countries. On Mexico, Brzezinski (2012a, p. 104-8) states that the USA should cooperate for the development through NAFTA and for security by supporting the fight against drug cartels, which means, from our point of view, a vertical or hierarchical relationship. He stresses that a declining USA would lead to a protectionist nationalism, an anti-immigration North

America, and to revanchism and claims for lost territories on the part of Mexico. Within this context, China would play a more relevant role in the Western Hemisphere, the security perimeter, and the strategic area of interest on the part of the USA.

To sum up, Brzezinski and Kissinger attribute a fundamental importance to the USA action and permanence in Eurasia and NATO. The first one is presented as a legitimate heir to the classic geopolitics, whereas the second bases its analysis on a global power balance policy. The action in the Middle East is also important for both authors, regardless of the economic costs of such actions, which are compensated by strategic gains – whereas many analysts point out that China takes advantage of the military presence and the stability promoted and funded by the USA in the region. From the perspective of these authors (or even of KLARE, 2008), we can interpret that the gain of control in the Middle East, especially in moments of crisis and conflict, is paramount to: the influence or bargaining power over allies and to deny or control the access to exposed or potential rivals. It is worth emphasizing that in the geostrategic analyses of both Brzezinski and Kissinger, the central concerns (priorities) are in discussing and delineating geostrategic (security-related) objectives that should not be limited by economic and budgetary debates. Although Brzezinski (2012) believes that in the long term the indebtedness of the USA, faced with an increasing belief that China is a potential protester of its supremacy position, could lead to vulnerability and to questioning the US hegemony and international currency.

However, by outlining the works, interviews, and lectures of the authors, we can find differences, especially in their perspectives about the USA-China and USA-Russia relations. Kissinger (2014) highlights the triangular relations with China and Japan and with Russia and China. He criticizes the demonization of Russia. The author states that it should be approached as a great power in the US diplomatic strategy and negotiations, and the USA must adapt (and not “reset”) its relations with Russia in the face of current circumstances (KISSINGER, 2016a). Therefore, the USA cannot simply impose an “established plan,” neither consider themselves as a potential-natural member of NATO, which would automatically adhere to the rules of the “West.” It is necessary to understand the history and nature of Russian insecurity, as well as its geographic importance, focus of influence, and expansionist nature. Only the we establish relationships that seek to recognize its special characteristics, but also understand the

needs of the USA. For Kissinger, “The goal should be to find a diplomacy to integrate Russia into a world order which leaves scope for cooperation.” (KISSINGER, 2015).

Kissinger argues on the possibility of a triangular geopolitics – USA-Russia-China, with the USA approaching the weakest vertex to oppose the strongest one among competitors, in the form of the strategy practiced by him and Nixon against the USSR. Currently, the structural challenge for the USA is in China (KISSINGER, 2015). Hence, “in the emerging multipolar order, Russia should be perceived as an essential element of any new global equilibrium, not primarily as a threat to the United States” (KISSINGER, 2016b). We must consider that Kissinger does not believe that China and Russia can reapproach due to their natures. From his perspective, if Russia clearly demonstrates to want this, it is partly because the USA has left no other choice. Finally, for Kissinger, “[...] the challenge of China is a much subtler problem than that of the Soviet Union. The Soviet problem was largely strategic. This is a cultural issue: Can two civilizations that do not, at least as yet, think alike come to a coexistence formula that produces world order?” (KISSINGER, 2015).

Brzezinski, from the 2008 crisis, began to advocate the formation of an informal G2 (“group of two”) between China and the USA, based on interdependence and common interests between both, cooperating in a kind of shared hegemony, in which states recognize the Chinese economic importance – and the practice of a “Keynesianism” focused on boosting the US economy – while maintaining its political, military, and technological role/supremacy. In his work, the possibilities of a partnership and cooperation between the USA and Russia always appear as remote, due to geographic antagonisms and consequent geopolitical divergences, explained, for example, after the crisis in Ukraine.

MEARSHEIMER AND WALT: THE OFFSHORE BALANCING POLICY

In the article “The Case for Offshore Ballancing,” Mearsheimer and Walt (2016) define that this policy consists of the USA acting in support of regional allied powers in the face of the rise of another hostile regional power(s) that threaten the balance of power in a given region. The authors warn: “Offshore balancing is a realist grand strategy, and its aims are limited. Promoting peace, although desirable, is not among

them.” (Mearsheimer, Walt, 2016, p.73). Unlike isolationists, they argue that there are regions outside the Western Hemisphere in which budget resources and lives are worth investing. But they do not fail to emphasize the need to reduce such expenditures, in such a way they can invest in other areas, as well as Europeans should bear the expenses on their own security and have greater attention and responsibility when dealing with Russia. Therefore, they are concerned with budgetary constraints.

The authors divide Eurasia into three regions: Europe; Persian Gulf; and Northeast Asia. In the first two, the USA does not need to be present, whereas in the latter they should have the greatest attention concerning the rise of China: “The first two are key centers of industrial power and home to the world’s other great powers, and the third produces roughly 30 percent of the world’s oil” (idem).

Regarding the goal of maintaining hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, such seems crucial for its global supremacy objective:

By pursuing a strategy of “offshore balancing,” Washington would forgo ambitious efforts to remake other societies and concentrate on what really matters: preserving U.S. dominance in the Western Hemisphere and countering potential hegemonies in Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf. Instead of policing the world, the United States would encourage other countries to take the lead in checking rising powers, intervening itself only when necessary. This does not mean abandoning the United States’ position as the world’s sole superpower or retreating to “Fortress America.” Rather, by husbanding U.S. strength, offshore balancing would preserve U.S. primacy far into the future and safeguard liberty at home. (Mearsheimer, Walt, 2016, p.71).

For them, military interventions would deteriorate the North American moral power, with the attempt to impose values, rather than focusing on being an example that others may want to follow (idem, p. 83). However, following its continuous march for economic growth and foreign projection, they predict that in the long term China cannot

peacefully ascend (*idem*; MEARSHEIMER, 2004) and inevitably the USA should be involved in the regional balance:

[...] it is hard to foresee a serious challenge to American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, and for now, no potential hegemon lurks in Europe or the Persian Gulf. Now for the bad news: if China continues its impressive rise, it is likely to seek hegemony in Asia. The United States should undertake a major effort to prevent it from succeeding. (*idem*, 2016, p. 81)

The authors argue that the USA must terminate its participation in NATO, and the presence of military forces in the region, since there would be no threat of dominance coming from a hostile power. Germany and Russia would be the potential challengers, but they predict that both would lose relative power because of the shrinking and ageing of their populations, and they would not threaten the US interests or project themselves into the Western Hemisphere, their greatest concern in terms of security. They sum up: "Admittedly, leaving European security to the Europeans could increase the potential for trouble there. If a conflict did arise, however, it would not threaten vital U.S. interests" (2016, p.82).

On the other hand, in the Persian Gulf, according to them, no local power would be able to dominate the region, in such a way the USA could withdraw most of its forces and return to adopting an offshore balancing strategy. China will seek allies in the region, and Iran would be the main one on the list, so the USA should seek good relations with Iran and safely discourage its cooperation with China. Still, due to the potential relative weight of Iran in relation to the neighbors, in terms of population and economy, it may be in a position to dominate the region. In this case, the USA should support other Gulf States to promote the equilibrium of power against Iran, "calibrating its own efforts and military presence considering the magnitude of danger" (*idem*, p. 82-83, free translation).

For Mearsheimer and Walt, by following such steps, the USA could further concentrate its forces on the main challenge in Asia, China, and defend its indispensable hemispheric hegemony, including preventing alliances of foreign powers with States of the region. At the same time, reducing its expenditures on defense and mostly concentrating them on internal needs (*idem*, p. 83).

HUNTINGTON AND KAPLAN: FOCUS ON NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS, MEXICO, AND “LATINIZATION”

Both Robert Kaplan, in *The Revenge of Geography* (2015), and Samuel Huntington, in *Who are we? The Challenge to America's National Identity* (2004), state that the US destination is on the North-South axis and its relationship with Mexico. For Kaplan (2015, p. 339), this tends to expand with the newly opened expansion of the Panama Canal.

Both authors identify Mexico and Central America as demographic powers. Mexico has more than 110 million inhabitants, about a third of the US population, growing faster and presenting a younger mean age. In Central America there are more than 40 million inhabitants. Thus, Mexico and Central America add up to more than half of the North American population. Whereas the mean age in the USA is 37 years, in Mexico, is 25 years, and in Guatemala and Honduras, 20 years. In addition, the USA receives 85% of Mexico's exports and 50% of Central America's (KAPLAN, 2015, p. 339). But Kaplan critically warns that Mexico does not inhabit the imagination or concerns of the USA East Coast elites, such as other countries, although their relations are crucial (*idem*, p. 340-341).

From Kaplan's perspective, Mexico-USA-Canada form the most crucial of the satellites orbiting Eurasia, the Mackinder's cornerstone. At the same time, Mexico has a geographically fragmented territory, lacking in unity. Therefore, the author points out that there is an undeniable and stilled unification between Northern Mexico (separate from the rest of the country) and the Southwest of the USA. And in case Mexico fail in its military offensive, the USA shall have to live with a 3,000-km border of a fragmented narco-state, without functional control over its northern territory and its borders.

Huntington (2004, p. 69) argues that the Latin history was moving towards the North, penetrating the USA, and thus transforming the North American character. For him, describing the USA as a nation of immigrants is a half-truth. Because the country is a nation of both Anglo-Protestant and immigrant colonists, but the first have provided the philosophical and cultural matrix of the society that make the USA be what it is (unlike countries populated by French, Portuguese, or Spanish peoples). More importantly, the adoption of the Anglo-Protestant culture is a requirement for immigrants to become Americans. The USA was born Protestant, from where the classic American liberalism emerges. Protestantism ultimately

results in dissension, individualism, republicanism. But this belief may end up being subtly disassembled by the formation of a Hispanic, Catholic, and pre-Illuminist society.

Thus, Huntington identifies Mexican immigration as a threat, which seeks the demographic reconquest of areas lost for the USA in the 1830-40s. It is presented as a wave of undiversified and undispersed immigration, in which 50% of immigrants who are Hispanic compose a homogeneous crowd – a great flow with the same cultural, linguistic, religious, and nationally Mexican matrix – that goes to an established region contiguous with Mexico, the Southwest of the USA, something never lived before by the United States of America. Therefore, the assimilation is less likely to be made. They keep their language through generations and enjoy the feeling of being at home. There is still a low naturalization rate among the Mexicans. Taking this into consideration, Huntington brings the idea of “remembered community,” with a historical memory of itself. Considering the spatial-demographic dynamic, he points out that Mexican-Americans represent 12.5% of the US population (in addition to other Hispanics), and estimates that a third of the US population may be Hispanic in 2050. In the words of Huntington (cited in KAPLAN, 2015, p. 345, free translation), “In the 2000s, six of the twelve most important cities on the North American side were more than 90% Hispanic, and only two (San Diego, California, and Yuma, in Arizona) were less than 50% Hispanic in its composition.” Hence, he perceives them as a geopolitical threat: “No other group of immigrants in North American history did or was able to make a historical claim on the American territory. Mexicans and Mexican-Americans cannot only think of making this claim, but they actually make it” (HUNTINGTON, 2004, p. 232, free translation).

Huntington mentions nationalism as the strategy for tackling this issue, with the objective of preserving the culture and Anglo-Protestant values in the face of the Latinization of the USA. He feels disdain for the cosmopolitanism of the elites. Then, the powerful control over borders would play a key role, no matter what is happening on the Mexican side.

Kaplan (2015) considers the same diagnosis, but presents different predictions and strategies. For him, the solution proposed by Huntington could not survive longer than in the short term. He identifies there is an overwhelming organic connection – geographic, historical, and demographic – between Mexico and the USA. Hence, we cannot expect to maintain a degree of purity, and a certain dose of cosmopolitanism would be

inevitable. The USA must emerge in the XXI century as a mixed, Polynesian nation, of mixed-races, guided towards the North-South direction, from Canada to Mexico, in racial terms, with whiter skin. They would become the most prominent and heated free zone on the planet for commercial transactions, the preferred place of residence of the global elite. Thus, the USA will continue to benefit from immigrants through immigration laws (including brain drain), and mostly Mexicans. For Kaplan, nationalism will necessarily be somewhat diluted, but not to the point of depriving its own identity or weakening the Armed Forces. But he highlights that this requires Mexico to succeed, to not be bankrupt, especially in combating drug cartels, combined with the alleged benefits of NAFTA. For the author, a stable and prosperous Mexico, harmonically working, would be a greater victory for the USA than any other in the Middle East, and would form an unbeatable geopolitical combination. Otherwise, the dreaded frame proposed by Huntington would be established. Kaplan states: "A post-cartels Mexico, associated with a stabilized and pro-American Colombia (today, almost a fact), would unite the first, third, and fourth largest countries in the Western Hemisphere in terms of population, facilitating the continuity of the US influence in Latin America and the Caribbean" (idem, p. 347, free translation).

From Kaplan's perspective, in the long term, a nationalist USA with closed borders could not coexist with a dysfunctional and semi-chaotic Mexico. Mexico and the USA walk towards a conjunction, but "in what terms" depends on their policies. Thus, the author proposes that the solution for the USA would be to integrate and develop Mexico, generating the appropriate environment for creating a "nation in the temperate zone of North America." Hispanic immigrants come in search of work "and, therefore, are willing to work hard in exchange for material benefits. Thus, they are transformed by the Anglo-Protestant work ethics, at the same time they transform the Anglo-Protestant North American culture" (idem, p. 351, free translation). For Kaplan (2015, p. 352), the USA capacity to form a cohesive and bilingual "supra-state" with Mexico and Canada will affect its power in all spheres (moral, cultural, political, and even military) and will determine its interaction with Eurasia. Mexico, linked to the USA, as such and Canada are, would be an intimate and reliable ally, including in international forums. Lastly, he analyzes that Huntington's concerns are justified, but "the solution is partially wrong."

When stating that "a unified and organic Eurasia will demand, as

a counterweight, a unified and organic North America, from the Canadian Arctic to the Central American forests” (idem, free translation), he adds that not caring for Mexico and Central America means dealing with them with a hostile behavior and leaving Eurasia closer. Therefore, he proposes that it is necessary to involve the Caribbean in a free trade and migration zone under the US domain, with the youngest and growing populations of Mexico and Central America providing workforce for the demographically aged USA. Mentioning Mackinder and Spykman, Kaplan states that it is necessary to maintain a balanced power in Eurasia, but stresses that the great focus of US geostrategy must be on the unification of North America: “Ensuring that no isolated power in the Eastern Hemisphere become unduly dominant, so as to pose a threat to the United States of America in its own hemisphere, will be a much easier task if, first of all, we achieve unity in the Western Hemisphere” (KAPLAN, 2015, p. 353, free translation). And, from his perspective, the reason for the equilibrium goes beyond the protection of the USA, because the stability of Eurasia would enable the liberal cause to be introduced in a global scale. From our point of view, Kaplan’s argument seeks to include an ethical dimension in the rhetoric of the US geostrategic action proposed by him.

On the US military presence in the Middle East, and on the debate on the invasion of Iraq in 2003, to which he was opposed, Kaplan (2015, p. 332, free translation) points out that China will be the greatest beneficiary of the stabilization of Afghanistan and Pakistan, “building roads and energy pipelines in the region, in search of energy, minerals, and strategic metals.”

However, on a hasty and abrupt withdrawal of the troops, he states that “by the mere fact that we have invaded these places and remained there for so long, we are profoundly affected by the unfoldment of events there” (idem, p. 333, free translation). The analyses concerned with rapid withdrawal focus on the economic costs already incurred. Whereas Kaplan’s concern would be whether there is salvation for US hegemony, how to preserve the balance of power in Eurasia, with selective use of troops, without being flooded over the decades by Mexicans fleeing from a bankrupt state. For him, geographic isolation is a blessing that should not be wasted by an expansionist strategy, but the USA has not made any crucial mistakes yet. The country only needs to avoid costly interventions (idem, p. 238-239; p. 334).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SOME CONCLUSIONS

Kissinger and Brzezinski follow the classic geopolitics in the sense of pointing to Eurasia as the cornerstone for the equilibrium and the direction of global power policy; and considering the strategic objectives as the utmost aspects in any discussion on economic costs. For Brzezinski and Kissinger, the military presence in NATO, in the Middle East, and in Southeast Asia is irrevocable.

The discussion on budgetary limits and choices is present in authors such as Mearsheimer & Walt and Kaplan. However, Kissinger and Brzezinski do not discuss this issue because they deem defense expenses as a strategic priority. In fact, such discussion would lose relevance if such authors could observe that the USA issues the international currency without ballast, not facing limits on its expenses and indebtedness (MEDEIROS & SERRANO, 2001).

Although hemispheric hegemony appears as a consensus for all the authors here addressed, Brzezinski and Kissinger point out that the fundamental relations for the US geostrategy are on the East-West axis, among the countries of the northern hemisphere. Mearsheimer and Walt relativize the US participation in Eurasia, in addition to recommending its withdrawal from NATO. According to them, such participation should be selective and consider limits and choices regarding budgetary and life expenditures, although they observe the need for an incisive action in East Asia before the Chinese projection. The authors propose the USA should concentrate on maintaining its hemispheric hegemony in order to maintain its prominence and global projection, acting in the Eurasian regions through the offshore balancing policy, delegating the allied powers to the role of promoting the balance of power. On the other hand, Huntington and Kaplan have identified North-South relations as paramount, observing Mexico and the Latinization of the USA as the major geopolitical threat, based on the migratory dynamics and the identity of the US society. However, they do not propose the same solution. The first proposes nationalism as a solution, whereas Kaplan proposes the integration of North America as fundamental to strengthen the USA in its relationship before Eurasia. Kaplan is extremely critical to the US participation in NATO and its military presence in the Middle East, proposing a careful exit.

It is worth highlighting a critical point in Kaplan's analysis. He

trusts the development of Mexico to the alleged opportunities generated by NAFTA, which in fact did not lead to activities of higher added value and technological intensity to the country, but only US companies in search of maquila activities, taking advantage of cheap and disqualified workforce, paying low wages. Thus, both the importing and the exporting matters of the country denote an increase in the participation of industrial goods of high technological intensity, but generating little income and wealth in the country (UNCTAD, 2003).

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