



## Structured Conversations IV

Anthropocene crises, sustainability, global health and  
consensus building for multilateral policies

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Throughout 2021, the Brazilian Center for International Relations (CEBRI), in partnership with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), is developing a project on issues related to the realignment of international politics and the global economy, and its implications for Brazil and its foreign relations. The project includes events, 'Structured Conversations' (interviews) with experts, and the production of policy papers on four broad themes:

- Global realignments and foreign policy formulation: national and regional spaces and global insertion;
- Trade and transformations in the international political economy;
- Technological innovation and the digital economy;
- Anthropocene crises, sustainability, global health, and consensus building for multilateral policies.

These Structured Conversations refer to the fourth thematic axis of the project. The discussions are centered on fundamental reflections for understanding the current moment of rupture caused by Covid-19 and its relation to the climate crisis. It aimed at obtaining the contribution of experts from various regions on the impact of the pandemic crisis for the understanding of the Anthropocene and the possibilities of responses by the current multilateral system to the current environmental and social challenges. Furthermore, the specialists answered questions about the role of different non-governmental actors in climate action, and how regionalisms can become favorable arrangements for the adoption of joint policies between countries, such as Green Deals. In this sense, the axis "Anthropocene crises, sustainability, global health, and consensus-building for multilateral policies", coordinated by Professor Carlos R. S. Milani, seeks to present the interviewees' perspectives on the multilateralism possibilities in the climate era.

## Summary

<b>Question 1.</b> What are the main lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic crisis and how do they relate to the challenges posed to the multilateral climate regime? How do both crises (health and climate) help us understand the political meaning of the Anthropocene as a guiding base for national and international public policies? .....	<b>5</b>
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**Question 1.** *What are the main lessons from the Covid-19 pandemic crisis and how do they relate to the challenges posed to the multilateral climate regime? How do both crises (health and climate) help us understand the political meaning of the Anthropocene as a guiding base for national and international public policies?*

**Professor Dr. Bertrand Badie:** The pandemic crisis is a very important step in our process of discovering the new world, mainly for three reasons. The first one is that it is the first time in World History that all, or almost all people, were simultaneously impacted by the same threat. If you consider this through the history of International Relations, threats were previously impacting a part of the world population, and differently from one country to another. This change is a very important feature as it leads to a real incarnation of what I would call a “global situation”, in which a security issue is commonly targeting all the human beings in the world. The second lesson we have to draw from the pandemic is that all the global threats, as to say, health, environmental, food, and economic insecurities, are intertwined. We are in a world in which one threat is triggering other threats. We are in a systemic world in which all the threats are interplaying with each other. We are moving from a monocausal world to a systemic world. And the third, and probably the major lesson that we have to draw from this pandemic crisis, is that this new threat is not provoked by strategists nor by an enemy, or implies a zero sum game, but it is produced by the system and it is targeting the human dimension of the system. This tragic moment of our history is showing something very important: that security is not necessarily dependent on the willingness of a hostile partner, as the threat is coming from the whole system.

We have now to reconsider the concept of security from a causal perception to a systemic perception. That is very difficult for the human brain, because during many centuries, humans considered threats as necessarily depending on a cause, and strategists who were manipulating this cause. It is very difficult to imagine a security regime without an enemy. The enemy was considered as the real starting point of defense behavior against all the threats. Now we have to think about threats without considering any hostile willingness.

**Doctor Maria Cecília Oliveira** : Despite the scientific agility that quickly developed a vaccine in response to Covid-19, the pandemic brought to the core of politics the fine line between the effects of planetary inequalities and the strength of the market economy that didn't stop and much diversified. Therefore, after almost 2 years of the pandemic, we observe that for the planet's miserable and poor populations, the situation has worsened, but has not departed from the continuous pre-pandemic state of precarious work, violence, and weakened access to the health system. Many of these people were or still are those most exposed to contamination, making up the statistics of lives lost, when not hidden by their respective governments. On the other hand, to the liberal professionals and to the part of the population turned to the normalization process during the pandemic we saw the intensification of virtualized school and university programs, workdays expanded by home office, the normalized daily life by online shopping and on demand entertainment. The monitoring and codification of life linked to the digital mapping of the pandemic tends to intensify controls, or even amplify the power of social media that are also sometimes key in the dissemination of authoritarianism.

So far, little has been decided on how to assist the planetary contingent of vaccinated or unvaccinated Covid 19 survivors, especially in countries of the so-called Global South. Many of these people will only have access to vaccination in the future. This contingent of people will depend on the willingness and agility of their governments to dispute, negotiate, and finance with private companies the purchase of vaccines and other medical supplies such as oxygen, masks, and alcohol gel.

Despite the technological advances celebrated by digital health and monitoring centers, we learn that we will probably never know the true number of deaths of people ravaged by the pandemic around the globe. Hidden figures of a planetary pandemic.

I see that the administration and consequences of the pandemic are very similar to the international climate regime: global prescriptions to governments based on the science-policy nexus, expectation of national implementation, difficulty in measuring violence and damage, which in the case of the climate crisis is evidenced by the effects of land concentration, ecological disasters, or deprivation of basic needs such as access to water. In this sense, for me, the great lesson of the pandemic is the relationship, in the present, between two variables: political economy and health. This is the axis that connects the pandemic to the climate crisis, and also highlights that both - the health

crisis and the climate crisis - operate through what our society tries today to normalize as health: either of the individual as a population or of the planet Earth as mitigation of climate change. Both operate by the rationality of how to ensure health. The new health that the health and climate crises operate in is still selective, limited by nationalism, and based on social discrepancies. Despite global agendas today claiming to be planetary and engaged in the Anthropocene, our present is contradictory, and somewhat hostage to the Westphalian imaginary that still prevents us from crossing borders of political and epistemological legal programmatics.

**Professor Dr. Thomas Diez:** One of the main lessons from the Covid pandemic in terms of governance is that securitisation works if there is a credible imminent threat, that most people are willing to make significant alterations to their lifestyle, and that such changes are indeed possible, even if they come at a significant cost. This has some interesting yet also disturbing implications for global climate governance. On the one hand, it shows that people in industrialised countries can easily change some of the routines that they have become accustomed to and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. It is possible to work from home, at least a significant part of the meeting schedule can be done online, holidays may be taken closer to home. By the same token, it is possible to eat less meat, use more public transport, or buy less consumer goods. On the other hand, however, people only seem to find securitising moves credible if the threat is immediate and directly affects them. The moment pictures show bodies piling up in the streets, panic strikes, and most people seem to be willing to do anything to fend off the threat. Climate change, alas, is not of that nature. The effects of greenhouse gas emissions are long-term, complex, unevenly distributed, and not contagious. Pictures of destruction by flooding, as they appeared in Germany in summer 2021, thus did not have the same effect as the pictures from Bologna or New York in spring 2020: they have led to short-term outcry and compassion but did not instil a long-term sense of everyone being personally threatened. It is difficult to convey the message that in the Anthropocene, people are creating the risks that may later haunt them – most of us seem to think in too short time horizons. A more concerted campaign, with more pictures that affect our emotions and less politicians downplaying the risk, may help to further change the discourse, just as the slogans of Fridays for Future have done. But Covid-19 has led to emergency politics in ways that climate change has not been able to do, makes me rather

sceptical about the chances we have to get more people to change their lives. And there is a third aspect. The restrictions of the pandemic came at a huge financial cost, but they also had severe societal implications. Families, for instance, found it much more difficult to cope with the restrictions, and children were out of their schools for far too long. This reinforces the importance of justice when we deal with climate change. Among the many principles that have been suggested in terms of climate justice, the Ability to Pay Principle seems to me to be the most defensible one: those who lead luxurious lives (and I would count myself among them) must make a much stronger contribution than others – and than we do at present. The Nationally Determined Contributions set up following the Paris Agreement must come under much stricter scrutiny in the case of industrialized countries, and within those countries, an environmentally friendly infrastructure must be financed not by flat taxes but by increasing taxes for the top third of the income pyramid.

**Doctor Christopher Kurt Kiessling:** If we approach this issue with hope and optimism, we can recognize that the pandemic has collectively taught us that the broader environmental and climate agenda, as well as the health agenda, are closely interconnected, and that both are indispensable to ensuring human well-being. However, I am not sure that we have been able to internalize these lessons and turn them into action. There is empirical evidence to argue that after an economic crisis where greenhouse gas emissions are reduced, subsequent recoveries tend to be carbon intensive. This implies a scenario in which future emissions are higher compared to the previous situation without the level of production or economic activity necessarily being higher.

We are, therefore, at a crossroads with no clear end in sight between a repetition of a past scenario, where the post-pandemic recovery is accompanied by an egomaniacal desire to want more, more, more ("catching up", more stuff, more luxuries, more travel, more consumption) or a recovery that puts the economy on the road to recovery, (more consumption) or a recovery that puts human well-being and the reduction of inequalities at the center of the agenda, even at the cost of certain losses and sacrifices in the lifestyles of elites in the global North and South, as well as a reconfiguration of the aspirational model held by large swaths of the world's population as the ultimate goal of economic growth.

Finally, the short- and medium-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on international negotiations on the climate change regime deserve consideration. The holding of COP 25 in Madrid in December 2019 due to the social and political crisis in Chile, the postponement of COP 26, initially planned for 2020 and finally held in November 2021, as well as the difficulties for non-European civil society to participate in this summit, indicate a possible risk of weakening the universalist nature of the climate regime. Regardless of the outcome of the negotiations, if the epicenter of high-level climate negotiations, as well as side events, academic activities, conferences, etc., becomes the European continent, there are serious risks that the political framing of the climate agenda becomes disconnected from regional and national political agendas.

Therefore, it is vital to quickly recover a negotiation dynamic that is not geographically centered in Europe, and that from Latin America in particular, regional spaces for debate and negotiations on climate change are sustained and strengthened, involving governments as well as civil society, the academia, the business sector, unions, the media, among other relevant actors.

**Question 2.** *How does the current multilateral climate regime respond to the challenges posed by the recognition that we have entered this new Anthropocene Era? In your opinion, are there any innovations needed to make it more effective regarding mitigation and adaptation?*

**Professor Dr. Bertrand Badie:** First of all, I don't consider that there is a real multilateral climate regime. Concerning climate change, we are still at the first step – the step of the assessment – asking questions such as “What is the situation?”, “Why is it necessary to react and make decisions?”, and “What are the main targets?”. In sum, it considers a situation, a context, a project of action, and a target. However, the very concept of international regime, which was coined by Stephen Krasner, implies norms. However, concerning climate issues, we did not reach the level of norms: there are some expectations about them, but no real prescriptive standards that are shared by all the states. Beyond the expectations, we need prescriptive orientations, which are necessary for intervening and triggering a real change in human behavior and in national public policies. In some of the other global issues, few norms have been already set up, as is the case about health security and the International Health Regulations enacted by the WHO. If you take into account food insecurity, there are some norms that organize actions for providing food to the starving population. Considering climate change, the Kyoto Agreement and the COPs - especially the famous COP 21, which we were so proud of in France – are only some expectations and wishes for the future.

We are here putting the finger on the main issue that is at stake. If you want to correctly react to the climate threats, you have to pay in the short term and expect benefits in the long term. This is completely the opposite of political rationality: win in the short term and pay in the long term. It is quite impossible to explain to the voters that you have to pay now to expect benefits for their grandchildren. What we need would be then to change the essence of political rationality, which is at the total opposite of the climate regime expectation. If you consider health security, it seems easier, because when people are threatened by a disease, such as the COVID-19 right now, they demand an immediate and short time reaction, as it feels like being in a dangerous situation. For the climate is quite the opposite. We have to open our eyes and consider that until now we were only

successful by listening to the problems, making an assessment of the tragic situation, and becoming aware of the danger. Nevertheless, the consciousness of the danger is not sufficient. That is why everything is disrupted. If people are afraid of COVID-19 and health insecurity, or at least partly afraid, they are not deeply afraid of climate change. The level of fear is too low. That is because very few people in the world have felt in their hearts the risk of climate change. If you do not live in Chernobyl, in Bhopal or in Seveso, you do not know what it means and implies. Because of that, you do not consent to the government making expenditures for protecting yourself against this danger. Climate change will be really contained if global rationality becomes clearly separated from trivial political rationality. This is possible only in a situation of emergency, and I am afraid that the concept of emergency is not properly understood, perceived, and conceived when the issue of climate change is at stake. That is why reaction remains purely rhetoric. When you make the promise to change in the next twenty or thirty years it is meaningless, because the rulers will be changed in the meantime and promises will be vain and idle!

**Doctor Maria Cecília Oliveira:** For me, the climate regime and the Anthropocene concept show us the new nuances of a rationality connected to the process of institutionalization of climate science as public policy, and I am interested in seeing how these operate and produce governance responses and especially new areas of knowledge. One of the points that draws my attention as a researcher of international relations within climate change studies is how we have in recent decades, since the turn of the century, invented, used and normalized terms of climate science for governance practices of what is alive on planet Earth, resizing the global to the planetary. The creation of various fields of knowledge acting on these new nuances, such as Science, Technology & Society (STS), Earth Governance Systems or Environmental Humanities, and even Environmental History take a new place not only in academia but also in multilateral organizations. In the case of the current multilateral climate regime, it is interesting to note that the creation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, the UNFCCC in 1992, and the concept of the Anthropocene, first with ecologist Eugene Stoermer in the 1980s and later with the popularization of the term by atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen in 2000, signal the entry of Earth systems sciences into the realm of international organizations and their planetary agendas. I understand that the consolidation of the climate regime and the Anthropocene (with its advocates or critics) today underscore a politics of the atmosphere that despite recognizing the damage caused by our economic systems, has normalized in governmental processes

the scientific terms to guide and shape the implementation of climate and environmental measures. We see this in the largest planetary mitigation measure recognized by the Paris Treaty: the 1.5 Co. Putting a climate goal in degrees Celsius as the diplomatic-legal element that will drive relations between all countries and other implementing agencies marks the contemporary dynamic between science and policy. To me, this is a response to the novelty that is planet Earth as a space of politics, and the care of populations and their environments. The 1.5 Co symbol is seen internationally from T-shirts, activist camps to official recommendations. It is now a new governmental technology, based on scientific knowledge and that shows us the effects of carbon rationality in process. Thinking about technological, knowledge and governmental carbon flows is the current research focus that I coordinate at IASS when analyzing the government of what I call planetary territorialities (such as the Amazon), whether in democratic or authoritarian times, by ecopolitics (eg. Passetti, 2020).

**Professor Dr. Thomas Diez:** Of course the current regime is insufficient. Even in the most optimistic scenarios, temperatures are due to rise by more than two degrees compared to pre-industrial levels if all current policy pledges are kept. Unfortunately, all attempts to agree on a stricter regime have so far failed. We live in a world organised in sovereign states, and these states (and indeed their peoples) will always insist on the right to take decisions themselves. This is the very nature of what we call a pluralist international society. There are only two ways out of this: a more hierarchical structure, coming closer to a world government, which has its own problems, or some way to incentivise states to agree on stricter, binding targets and more cooperation. What would possibly incentivise states to do so? A collaborative effort of great powers perhaps – the US under Biden, China’s notion of ecological civilisation and the EU ambitions to play the role of a green normative power may indeed make it possible to come to such a concerted effort in the next four years. Otherwise, I am afraid we would need more devastating disasters to get governments to act, but also to get people to forgo short-term gains and push politicians to engage in more long-term policies.

**Doctor Christopher Kurt Kiessling:** Unfortunately, the current climate regime is not up to the challenges of the Anthropocene. In general, I do not believe there is recognition at the national state level of the political, social, and economic implications of the Anthropocene.

However, it is possible to recognize some elements that allow us to qualify the above judgment. In this sense, the most important innovations derive from the decentralized nature of governance stemming from the Paris Agreement, and the decentralized, multi-level networks that have been built and are not being used to their full potential.

These networks have been set up to address climate action on both mitigation and adaptation, with variable results depending on the players involved, the context in which the climate action takes place, and the resources and funding available, among others.

**Question 3.** *Regarding actors, in addition to states and international organizations, what would be the role of carbon markets and other initiatives taken by national and transnational economic operators? What would be the role of civil society organizations? And of Universities, which have made much effort to adapt in order to continue their research and remote teaching in Brazil and the world?*

**Professor Dr. Bertrand Badie:** The main difference between national security and global security is that the first is totally in the hands of the State, whereas global security cannot be exclusively in the hands of a State or a government. This is easy to explain: national security is essentially depending on military resources whereas armies are totally at the hand of governments. Global threat is, on the contrary, partly dependent on social behavior: a government is not able to contain global threats - climate change, health insecurity, etc – only by its own means. It can participate in containing, but the main draw must be done by civil society, and social initiatives for changing social behaviors.

Unfortunately, we observe in France and Brazil, as two examples, an increasing pressure coming from individual behavior and trying to differentiate individual liberty against collective liberty. Collective liberty is essential for containing global threats and adopting policies that are able to deal with them and promote global solidarity. Right now, we see in the streets of Paris, São Paulo, Brasília, people demanding the individual right to decide by themselves what to do. However, an individual cannot do anything facing this risk, because it implies social actions targeting health security, global vaccination, climate change, modifying collective behavior in using new kinds of energy.

Which kind of actor or organization is able to take charge of this transformation of social behaviors? First, let's consider NGOs, this modern way of activism, mobilizing people towards new targets. Without an active role of NGOs we cannot reach any positive results. But, as you properly mentioned, there is another mediation, which is education. The first priority would be to train the new generation for this new social behavior, which must be learned at schools, not only at universities. When I mentioned that national security was in the brain of all human beings, I referred to a very clear fact: they learned

at school every day about threats such as wars and foreign threats. Now we have to teach another kind of security: not containing an enemy, but mastering the system and adapting ourselves to new social behaviors. That is a new pedagogy that is to be invented. When those kids become the new rulers of the world, they can then promote another vision and reconsider what security implies.

**Doctor Maria Cecília Oliveira:** Since I started researching climate change and went to a Conference of the Parties for the first time, I have been impressed by the decentralization of the topic by a multitude of agents, which go from more formal spectrums such as national government delegations and international organizations to groups with specific agendas such as scientists, social movements, NGOs, and private companies. Since COP 24 in Katowice 2018, the emergence of youth movements linked to Fridays for Future, show how this agenda convenes and disseminates numerous strands but also creates new roles that manage in a shared way the transformations of the climate agenda. Therefore, I believe that today not only carbon markets but a number of other initiatives reconfigure mitigation and adaptation mechanisms, which reaffirms that the climate agenda operates by its own rationality embedded in a recurrent ode to reform the State and the economy. Despite the attempt to assert climate engagement as an alternative pathway, we often see its capture by authoritarianism that aims to undermine and dispute scientific findings on the warming of the planet, or reaffirmations befitting a neoliberal rationality, of solutions based on privatized sectors or the illusion of the disappearance of the ruler and ruled relationship. How all these new actors that share the management of climate policy will create ruptures and resistance will certainly be something that researchers, universities and activists will have to invent, not as innovation but as a refusal of the present and governmental continuities that guide nature as a new business, or market of the future. Be it green or not.

**Doctor Christopher Kurt Kiessling:** The participation of business, civil society organizations, academics, members of indigenous peoples, among others, is not necessarily a new element in climate change governance at the international level, as since the first Conference of the Parties (COP) in 1995, there have been more or less

institutionalized instances of non-state actor participation. This involvement of non-state actors has been growing, reaching a peak at COP 15 in 2009 in Copenhagen, which marked a transformation in the global governance of climate change.

Two elements converged at this COP that were decisive for understanding the expanded participation structure and the role of non-state actors today. First, the sustained growth of non-state actor participation in Copenhagen exceeded the organization's expectations and resulted in the exclusion of many civil society activists from participating in the negotiations. After this event and the inability of the main state actors to lead a process towards a new agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol, a process of social mobilization was consolidated in which civil society organizations, social movements and some academic actors began to organize counter summits, such as the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, organized in 2010 in Bolivia.

In this context, the 2015 Paris Agreement represents an institutionalization of non-state actor participation, as well as a kind of nationalization of climate policy, insofar as the negotiating logic arising from Paris is mainly bottom-up.

Thus, within the governance framework resulting from Paris, the role of non-state actors is twofold: on the one hand, they continue their traditional role of pressuring governments in negotiations (although the current pandemic has made it more difficult to exercise this role) as well as in the domestic arena to push for greater commitment to climate action. On the other hand, companies, universities, non-governmental organizations, and other non-state actors are, and are expected to be, protagonists in mitigation and adaptation measures through coordinated networked action, as noted in the answer to the previous question. Thus, a key element that characterizes the governance arising from the Paris Agreement is the necessary involvement of non-state actors to achieve the goal of avoiding a temperature increase of more than 2 degrees Celsius, ideally 1.5.

**Question 4.** *In view of the difficulties encountered in the framework of universal multilateralism (United Nations), how are the different regions responding to climate and health challenges? What contributions could regionalism and its experiences beyond the European space (in Africa, Central America, South America, the Middle East and Asia, for example) bring to the reflection on possible future scenarios (Green new deals, energy transitions, ecological and social transitions, etc.)? Would the regional option be a viable alternative for us to think about how to live in the Anthropocene in the face of the crisis of universal multilateralism?*

**Professor Dr. Bertrand Badie:** This question may be a little bit pessimistic about the UN and optimistic about regional organizations. It is right, at that point, to say that regional organizations are easier to develop than global organizations, for obvious reasons. However, if we have an assessment about the European Union (EU), which is considered an effective international organization, the result is not totally positive. Even in the EU now, the public policies concerning climate change are decided in the last step by each nation State. Of course, the EU is able to actively propose some orientations and they are considered as a major axis for the national public policies. But if a European state does not want to follow the European orientation, nothing happens. If you take, for instance, Poland or Hungary, and even Germany, they have many difficulties for facing climate change and for containing fossil energy. That is why finally nothing really positive is happening inside the EU concerning climate change. The problem is not regional or global, the real problem is the State and sovereignty mediation. That is to say, a State inside the EU or UN has the same vision and expectation: to keep its own sovereignty and preserve its national interests.

Now if we move to the UN, I will be a little bit less pessimist. I would say that, when facing this issue, there are two UNs: a “positive” and a “negative” one. If you consider the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), everything is disrupted. When climate issues are rarely discussed inside the UNSC - about once per year - all the delegates agree in considering them to be out of the competencies of the council. Maybe you have heard of this sentence pronounced by the Russian delegate in 2019, in the UNSC during a debate concerning climate change: Mr. Vasily Nebenzya said that it was “counterproductive” to

talk about climate change for human security. That is unbelievable, and it is the blocked part of the UN: the concept of security was never revisited by the UNSC since 1945!

On the other hand, we have to consider what Kofi Annan once called “social multilateralism”, which does exist and is increasingly important in the present UN system. The WHO is a very active Organization, and could eradicate smallpox in Africa and participate in the new water distribution policy. If you consider UNICEF, it played a very important role in protecting children around the world. But you are right about the special case of climate change. The UN did not set up a specialized organization about this issue, and we have to debate about this, even being a tough question: is it necessary or not to create a new institution? It is true that the UN intervention concerning climate is among all the issues concerning global security, the less well developed. And this is not a question of regional or global, but concerns what I mentioned in my last answers: change in the international order is possible only under the pressure of two factors – cost and fear. The world does not feel a sufficient fear about climate change, while the cost of change in this field is perceived higher than the cost of conservatism.

**Doctor Maria Cecília Oliveira:** The region I watch the most is the Amazon basin. I just finished a documentary about the Amazon River and the rights of nature, comparing Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, and Brazil. This project was made during the pandemic, which directly affected the aesthetics of the film and the very involvement of the activists and experts interviewed. Effects between the climate and the sanitary. The effects of the pandemic, mainly on indigenous people and social movements, and the socio-ecological impacts of extractivism are overlapped in this material. Despite the existence of organizations like COICA and a multitude of regional and international NGOs that are active in the Amazon, it is important to note that many of the struggles that resist to this day do so by asserting the defense of their local characteristics and an ethic linked to nature.

In the first week of October a group of Zapatistas arrived in Berlin who decided, despite the pandemic, to travel through Europe in protest. I found it interesting that two weeks earlier we also had a climate march in Berlin organized by European initiatives. Although the organizers called it a strike, nothing stopped that day. Comparing the two events in the German capital, little was reported about the Zapatistas and a lot about

the march. The Zapatistas are not in the Amazon, but since the anti-globalization protests at the turn of the millennium they have taken their local struggle as a tactic, a way to look at a region and encourage similar struggles. Something we saw in 20th century history in events like May 68, or in the case of the Amazon, mobilizations after the death of Chico Mendes. Therefore, seeing regionalism as a mere substitute for universal multilateralism would not be a way out. I still hope that some sparks of specific struggles, whether in Africa, Asia, or Latin America, can shift our gaze, and from there create new connections and new ways of living on the planet.

**Professor Dr. Thomas Diez:** We need regions to forge ahead because it is easier (yet difficult enough) to agree on more stringent policies on a regional than on the global level. The literature has long discussed the relevance of avantgarde clubs when it comes to climate change: groups of states that set an example and are so tightly interconnected with others that their policies “spill over” to other actors. I am therefore in favour of the EU carbon border tax. Yes, it is difficult to implement and may divert trade flows, but if we keep debating possible obstacles, we will never get any decisive policy steps done, plus I would say that the EU market is too vital for producers to simply sell their goods elsewhere. Yet regionalism is no panacea. The fate of the Kyoto Protocol demonstrates that it is not enough if some states move forward, and that such alliances may also quickly fall apart – although one would probably expect regional organizations to be more stable. And avant-garde clubs may quickly become complacent. Thus EU member states, including Germany, have done too little too late to expand their renewable energy infrastructure, enhance public transport links and phase out combustion engines.

**Doctor Christopher Kurt Kiessling:** International Relations recognize the importance of regionalism as a new scale of contemporary international politics, where regions are not only the space in which things happen, but also increasingly important actors in global politics. Therefore, the climate agenda is not an exception to this trend.

Thus, I believe that regionalism can make extremely significant contributions to building inclusive and effective governance in the face of climate change. Currently, there are regions that enjoy greater regional density than others in addressing this issue, the classic example being the European Union. In the context of the Global South, the

African Union sustains a regionalism with a strong climate agenda, mainly visible in its coalition in the international negotiations under the G77+China.

In the case of Latin America and South America, the region has not been able to address this issue from a regional platform. Two major challenges are emerging as prerequisites to consolidate regionalism on climate issues in Latin America: first, to articulate a lower common denominator in international negotiations that allows for the construction of a common negotiating identity to sustain certain regional values and interests. Second, to increase the volume of regional interactions on the subject by governments, civil society and the business sector, combining the construction of regionalism with a regional agenda-building dimension based on processes of regionalization of the climate agenda.

In this sense, the value of biodiversity protection, regional ecosystem services, cultural diversity, as well as certain common values such as democracy, legalism, and the international projection of the region as a zone of peace can be some of the bases on which to build a region in terms of climate change.

Finally, the idea of green political parties in the late 20th century of thinking globally and acting locally may need to be reconfigured to make way for multiscale governance that integrates regional space as an arena for climate action. The consolidation of regions would not only be a problem of building an international order in the Anthropocene, but a problem of justice. In the face of an extremely serious climate crisis, consolidating regional space without abandoning other scales is vital to prevent some regions of the world from prospering at the expense of the collapse of others, in a scheme that encourages new colonial dynamics.

## Answers in text format

### Ambassador Rubens Ricupero

The question has actually three questions: A) what are the lessons of the Covid-19 crisis? B) How do these lessons relate to the challenges of the climate regime? C) How do the health and climate crises help us understand the political meaning of the Anthropocene?

#### A – *What are the learnings or lessons from the pandemic?*

Most commentaries tend to emphasize the indisputable insufficiency of the multilateral response. An eloquent example is found in Professor Adam Tooze's article, What if the Coronavirus Crisis is Just a Trial Run? (New York Times, September 1, 2021, essay adapted from Shutdown: How Covid Shook the World Economy).

Early in the essay, Tooze states that the most obvious lesson of the pandemic is the most indigestible: *The world's decision makers have given us a staggering demonstration of their collective inability to grasp what it would actually mean to govern the deeply globalized and interconnected world they have created.*

In his opinion, the only area of effective coordination has been in currency and finance, thanks to the actions of the central banks and finance ministries of the G-20 countries.

This judgment seems to me to be exaggerated. Within the current limits of mandate and resources, the multilateral action, especially that of the WHO, was reasonable in the dissemination of information and in the difficult attempt to coordinate policies and search for a vaccine. It is worth remembering that, under the current order, the WHO has neither the mandate nor the resources to do more. Furthermore, I wonder which government acted decisively from the very first moment, when the virus was not even identified, nor was its extraordinary speed of contagion known? To my knowledge, only Taiwan (whose vice president is an epidemiologist) and, to a lesser extent Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, all of which were scalded for having paid a high price in lives during the SARS (2002/2003) and MERS (2015) pandemics. Therefore, it is unreasonable to require the Organization to behave impeccably from the beginning of the epidemic, given

that its mandate is limited to monitoring, i.e., tracking and disseminating disease information.

**Thus, the main lesson of the pandemic was and remains the need to advance global governance of epidemic threats by endowing that governance with what it currently lacks: a specific mandate for the WHO or a new organization (as some suggest) to detect future epidemics and suppress them early on, with independent inspection powers like those of the International Atomic Agency.** One way one can imagine to overcome the major resistance to acting independently of the will of national governments would be to create a corps of pandemic specialists to cooperate in the capitals of countries with local health authorities. This would also require a **substantial increase in non-binding donor resources**, correcting the tendency for donations to the WHO to be earmarked in advance by donors, state or non-governmental actors such as the Melinda and Bill Gates Foundation (second largest donor after the United States government). Unfortunately, the exacerbation of nationalism by the great powers has led to attempts to instrumentalize international organizations, putting them at the service of national interests through the control of funding. This is sometimes done by cutting contributions, threatening or suspending funds, as President Trump recently did as a "punishment" to the WHO.

When judging the role of multilateralism in the face of the pandemic (paralysis of the Security Council, modest action of the G-20 in debt relief, scarce cooperation in the supply of equipment and medicines), it is necessary to distinguish what is the responsibility of international organizations from what resulted from political decisions of national actors. In practice, it is well known that the bulk of the measures to combat the disease were concentrated in the strictly internal sphere, with a low level of cooperation, even within entities with supranational aspirations such as the European Union. The "nationalism of vaccines", or rather the "nationalism of respirators" or protective equipment, is not the WHO's fault.

It is the inescapable consequence of an international system still organized on the basis of sovereign states, which naturally put national interest above cooperative and global actions. It was this attitude that marked the action of almost all the great centers of power in the pandemic - USA, China, Russia - with more nuanced positions on part of the Europeans. The great ones behaved according to the Italian statesman's phrase from the time of the Great War, who defined national interest as "il sacro egoísmo". The results

were obviously far, short of what could have been, but this occurs in any field, it is not particular to the pandemic.

It is worth remembering that Covid-19 was the first truly global pandemic in a hundred years, since the Spanish Flu of 1918. The epidemics recorded in the intervening century - Chinese flu, Hong Kong flu, SARS, MERS, Ebola - have been contained to the region or continent of origin, feeding a dangerous complacency about the possibility of an epidemic wave of planetary proportions. Taking into account the general lack of experience and the limitations of the WHO, I believe that the balance is not as unfavorable as we tend to believe.

In this sense, it should not be forgotten that the performance against the pandemic left much to be desired even by national governments with incomparably greater capacity for action and resources than international organizations. The truth is that no country came out of the challenge well. As the pandemic progressed, even those that at first seemed better than others ended up making serious mistakes. On the other hand, the development of several vaccines in less than a year and the refinement of vaccination and treatment methods reflected a remarkable accelerated learning curve.

#### **B – *How are the health crisis and the climate crisis related?***

Although the Covid-19 pandemic and climate change have in common the characteristic that they are both global, that is, that they affect the planet as a whole without exception of countries, they differ in several important aspects. To use the differentiation dear to Fernand Braudel and the historiographical school of the Annales review in France, epidemics or pandemics are **events** or **happenings**, of limited duration in time, generally 18 to 24 months. In contrast, climate change or global warming represents a **structural, profound, long-term trend**.

The first difference is, therefore, in the duration, in time. In general, events, even very serious ones, can provoke important effects, but these tend to diminish with time. The Spanish Flu, for example, was terrible while it lasted; a decade or two later it was largely forgotten.

Rather, deep, structural, long-term forces (demographic, climatic, cultural, and scientific changes, among others) are responsible for major historical transformations, sometimes taking more than a century to complete. Sooner or later, Covid-19 will no longer be a

major problem. However, in the coming decades, in 2050 or 2100, the changes triggered by global warming will continue to be felt with greater intensity.

Another difference is that pandemics, like wars, produce immediate effects: death, destruction, and economic paralysis. There is no way to avoid addressing these effects, because they are sensitive and short-term. In the case of secular trends such as climate change, the damage and losses manifest only gradually, progressively, creating illusions about their gravity or inevitability.

It is easier in theory to develop public policies demanding high human and financial costs when it comes to fighting a pandemic or repelling a military invasion than to counteract rising sea levels 50 or 100 years from now. This was seen in the willingness of governments to spend whatever was necessary to confront Covid, leaving aside concerns about budgets or increasing debt. Nothing similar has so far occurred in the fight against global warming.

The Americans talk about the importance of finding, in order to solve certain problems, what they call the **moral equivalent of war**, that is, a factor capable of generating a mobilizing effort comparable to that of war. Well, the pandemic has certainly proved to have this equivalence, climate change has not.

### ***C – How do pandemic and global warming help understand the political role of the Anthropocene?***

Or rather, **why do two global phenomena, both characteristic of the Anthropocene era, provoke such different policy reactions?**

The reasons may be many, but the main one has to do, as already pointed out, with the immediate character of the loss and damage, what is sometimes described as the **clear present and immediate danger**. It is possible therefore, that governments will only decide to do what is necessary about climate change at the moment when the loss of life and destruction of human habitats reach dimensions incalculably greater than today and become in fact unbearable. Another question is whether or not, at such a time, the changes will be irreversible.

There is also an additional reason to explain why, in both pandemics and global warming, governments continue to act within a national rather than global perspective. When speaking of global phenomena of the Anthropocene, it is implied that they can only be

effectively addressed in a planetary manner. This may ultimately be true, in the sense, for example, that if vaccination is not universal, sooner or later mutations will arise that will affect even those who have completed vaccination. Or, in the case of climate change, since it depends on the planet's atmosphere, no country could solve the challenge only within its borders.

In practice, however, governments may be under the illusion that it is easier and more feasible to act nationally. In the case of Covid-19, the countries most advanced in vaccination already enjoy a drop in cases and a consequent return to normal activities that, at least for the time being, seem to allow for a satisfactory situation, even in the absence of vaccines for the poorest majority of much of humanity. Ethically, this is an indefensible position. In practice, it is what most people have been doing.

One could argue that a national approach would be more feasible in the case of health crises than in climate change, which by definition depends on the atmosphere and has no national barriers. Even in this area, however, there is no lack of countries located at high latitudes such as Canada, Russia, Sweden, and Norway, which would gain by extending the agricultural production season. Or that, because they are richer in financial and technological resources, they may feel more able to undertake adaptation works to protect them from the worst damage of warming.

In the long run, the argument may prove ineffective. It serves, however, to demonstrate that the globality of a phenomenon of the Anthropocene does not necessarily imply the abandonment of the illusion of the national, local, or regional solution, to the detriment of the global and solidary one.

**D – *How does the current global climate regime respond to the challenges of the Anthropocene?***

In a visibly insufficient way. Almost 30 years after the adoption in Rio de Janeiro of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change and on the eve of the 26th Meeting of the Parties to the Convention, no solution capable of reducing the risk of global warming to tolerable levels has yet been reached. The current climate regime will have to be substantially strengthened if environmental catastrophes are to be avoided in the coming decades.

**E – *Would there be innovations in mitigation and adaptation?***

Of course, one can imagine more effective mitigation initiatives and policies, for example, so-called nature-based solutions or adaptation. The dual mitigation/adaptation formula adopted by the IPCC and others must, however, sooner or later be broadened to take into account modalities that are still very controversial today, such as the removal of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to a much greater extent than has been done so far, and solutions based on geo-engineering.

**F – *Role of other actors: carbon markets, civil society entities, universities, companies?***

There is increasing scope for the coordinated action of non-state actors in both raising awareness regarding the problem and formulating and implementing solutions. None of these actors can, however, play the role of a substitute for state actors, on whom depends, in fact, the possibility of the existence of effective solutions. Take the example of carbon markets, or better yet, its precondition, the need for proper pricing of carbon. One needs only to look at the insurmountable difficulty of a central national actor such as the United States government in this area to understand how the definitive solutions will have to go through the states.

**G – *Possibility of regional mechanisms and institutions replacing the universal multilateralism of the United Nations in the search for a solution?***

I see here the same impossibility pointed out in the answer to the previous question. The role of regionalism may prove to be extremely important as a catalyst and driver of pioneering solutions, as an example and model to be imitated. This is the case of the European Union, undoubtedly the most advanced actor in the adoption of effective policies and formulas to combat global warming. Even so, if the other major emitters do not make comparable efforts, the EU's action alone will prove insufficient.

The multilateralism of the United Nations is like the state actor: without it, no matter how hard it seems to obtain consensus among almost 200 sovereign entities, it will not be possible to overcome the challenge. In fact, what explains the insufficiency of the mechanism is the reluctance until now of the national state actors, especially the most powerful ones, to allow the mechanism to work effectively. It is an illusion to imagine that the greatest difficulty stems from defects in the mechanism or the U.N. process. There have been numerous attempts at supposedly more effective arrangements: G7, G8, G20, BRICS, etc. None of these arrangements have achieved markedly better results

than the UN approach. **The problem is one of substance, not of process**, and stems from the difficulty inherent in the problem, the sacrifices that are indispensable in order to find forms of production and consumption different from those enshrined in the Industrial Revolution. Insisting on procedural changes is an illusion that will lead to a dead end.

## **Cristina Yumie Aoki Inoue**

I think the Covid-19 pandemic crisis has been teaching us many lessons in different dimensions and scales. From the personal challenges of losing beloved ones, social distancing, and working from home to the socioeconomic consequences of unemployment, increasing poverty, inequality, and hunger, this pandemic has been showing us that we cannot solve any problem without international and global cooperation among different actors. For instance, vaccines were produced in a record time thanks to cooperation among scientists, so if they are not available for all yet, it is to a great extent due to lack of cooperation. Global cooperative arrangements could also have prevented the spread of the virus if transparent and clear international alert and sanitary procedures were in place.

This pandemic has also evidenced that silo approaches cannot take us very far, considering that the root cause of the Covid-19 pandemic is related to the exploitation of wildlife, deforestation, and food systems, and that the vulnerability of large population groups is due to underlying health conditions related to food systems and deprived public health systems. Moreover, the combined global socioeconomic crisis is a consequence of the lack of preparedness to face this pandemic, already predicted by many specialists. Thus, if we want to avoid other pandemics, we have to think about the nexus between economics, climate change, biodiversity loss, food systems, and health.

Furthermore, Covid-19 can be seen as the first immediate global manifestation of what it means to live in the Anthropocene, and it is likely to have profound implications in the way we understand life on the planet.

The Anthropocene can be conceived of as the geological epoch when human societies are deeply affecting the Earth's systems. Thus it is not possible anymore (if it ever was) to separate nature and society, or the environmental sphere in the geo-biophysical sense from the social one. However, most societies have organized themselves apart from nature. Production and consumption modes, housing, transportation, sciences, and culture have all been operating as if the planet was an open system. Modernity has been constructed as a time of humanity's mastery over nature, and the planet either as

an infinite source of resources or as large sinks for solid, gas, and liquid waste/residues.

Since the deep acceleration of the middle of the 20th Century, humanity has been overusing the Earth's resources at a highly accelerated rate, provoking biodiversity loss and mass extinction of species, and increasingly producing residues, polluting the soil, the freshwater bodies, the ocean, and the atmosphere, altering the climate system and other geo-biophysical ones, this way, being close to affecting the planetary stability in a permanent way. All these have been happening in a world deeply unequal, where hunger, violence, and poverty are still very much part of the lives of humans and non-humans.

Humanity is changing the Earth. Yet, humanity is not homogenous, and not all groups and societies are equally responsible, or can be directly connected to the drivers of global socio-environmental change. Thus, the Anthropocene is also a time of contradictions, contestation, and combined crisis. As a whole, perhaps, everyone has been feeling the changes. However, the poor, the elderly, indigenous peoples, women, and people with disabilities may have fewer means to cope with the negative impacts of climate change, deforestation and biodiversity loss than the better off. Also, today's children and youths will experience even more the consequences of global environmental changes in the future. Policymakers, businesspersons, and consumers are making decisions today that will have consequences for generations to come. In addition, other species of animals, plants and microorganisms and ecosystems are on the verge of destruction without any say in the process. In this sense, the Anthropocene is also a time to think in terms of planetary justice, that is, to consider justice across time, space, species, ways of living, and knowing.

Politically, this new epoch should make us rethink politics and policies as it is now fully evident that the most relevant and urgent problems faced by humanity and other beings are interconnected and they span across space and time. All actors - state and inter-state organizations, markets, civil societies - should participate in finding creative solutions and building new institutional arrangements to overcome the deadlocks of multilateral and bilateral relations. In this direction, universities, educational and research organizations have a special role to foster new and innovative conceptual and theoretical thinking and to contribute to anticipating challenges, pointing the limits and possibilities of solutions ahead, and to re-imagining futures.

## Participants

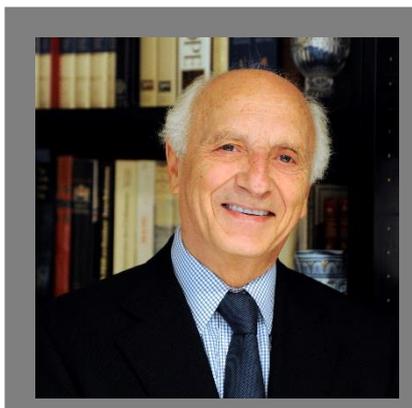
### Professor Dr. Bertrand Badie



Bertrand Badie is an Emeritus Professor of political science and international relations at Sciences Po Paris University. He is the Director of the PhD Program of International Relations of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris (IEP). He was the Director of the Center for International Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution of the Rotary Foundation - Institut d'Etudes Politiques and the Director of Publications at the Presses de Sciences Po (University Press). He was member of the Executive Committee of the French Political Science Association, member of the Executive Committee of

the International Political Science Association (IPSA), and Program Chair of the 26th World IPSA Congress. Bertrand Badie is member of the advisory board of several journals, such as the European Review of International Studies (Chairman), the International Journal of Human Rights, the Journal of International Relations and Development, the Contemporary Politics, the Brazilian Journal of Strategy and International Relations, the Etudes Internationales, and the Indian Journal of Law and International Affairs. He is author of several books, including "The Sociology of the state" (Chicago University Press, 1980) with Pierre Birnbaum, "The Imported State" (Stanford University Press, 2000), and editor of the "International Encyclopedia in Political Science" (Sage, 2011) and the "Handbook of political science" (Sage, 2020) with D. Berg-Schlosser and L. Morlino. Badie has an Advanced Graduate Degree in Twentieth Century History (IEP), a PhD in political science (IEP), a Master's Degree in Political Science (IEP), an Undergraduate Degree in Legal Studies (University of Paris 1), and a Diplôme with honors (IEP)

### Ambassador Rubens Ricupero



Born in São Paulo (March 1, 1937), he is a career diplomat and retired after heading Brazil's embassies in Geneva, Washington and Rome. He served as Minister of the Environment and of the Amazon, as well as Minister of Finance (Itamar Franco government), and in these last positions he launched Brazil's new currency, the real, in July 1994. Between 1995 and 2004, by election of the General Assembly of the United Nations, he headed the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), in Geneva, as Secretary-

General. He is currently Director of Faculdade Armando Álvares Penteado (FAAP), in São Paulo. He was professor of History of Brazilian Diplomatic Relations at the Rio Branco Institute and of Theory of International Relations at the University of Brasilia. He is the author of several books and essays on diplomatic history, as well as on international relations, economic development and world trade. His latest book is *A diplomacia na construção do Brasil* (The diplomacy in the construction of Brazil), 2017, a history of Brazil's international relations from colonial times to the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in 2016.

### **Professor Dr. Thomas Diez**

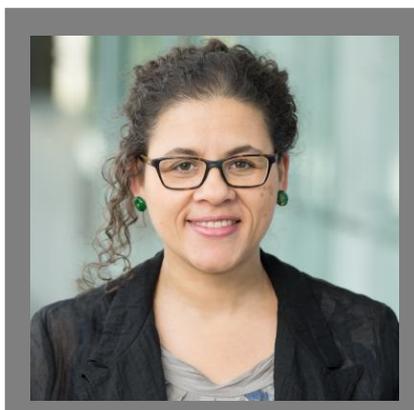


Thomas Diez is Professor of Political Science and International Relations at the University of Tübingen. He received his PhD from the University of Mannheim in 1999. From 1997 to 2000, he was Research Fellow at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute and subsequently, from 2000 to 2009, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and then Professor of International Relations and Head of Department at the University of Birmingham. He joined Tübingen in April 2009. Thomas has also taught in Copenhagen, Aarhus, Munich and Victoria (BC). Among his publications are *The Routledge Handbook on Critical European Studies* (co-editor, Routledge, 2021), *The EU and Global Climate Justice* (co-author, Routledge, 2021); *The EU, Promoting Regional Integration, and Conflict Resolution* (co-editor, Palgrave 2017), *The Securitisation of Climate Change* (co-author, Palgrave, 2016), *Key Concepts in International Relations* (co-author, Sage 2011), *An Introduction to International Relations Theory: Perspectives and Themes* (co-author, third edition Pearson 2010), *European Integration Theory* (co-editor, second edition Oxford UP 2009) and *Cyprus: A Conflict at the Crossroads* (co-editor, Manchester UP 2009). In September 2009, he received the Anna Lindh Award for his contribution to the field of European Foreign and Security Policy Studies. Thomas was President of the European International Studies Association (EISA) 2015-7.

**Professor Dr. Cristina Yumie Aoki**

Cristina Yumie Aoki Inoue is an Associate Professor in the Environmental Governance and Politics chair group of the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment (GPE), Radboud University, The Netherlands, and a volunteer senior researcher of the Center for Global Studies at the University of Brasília (UnB), Brazil. She was a Visiting Scholar to the International Human Dimensions Program on Global Environmental Change (IHDP), United Nations University (UNU), Bonn (2009), and a Visiting Fellow at the School of Global Environmental Sustainability, Colorado State University (2016-

2017). Currently, she is a member of the Scientific Steering Committee of the Earth System Governance (ESG) research network and was one of the coordinating lead authors of the ESG Science and Implementation Plan. She was the Program Chair (2017-2018) and Chair (2018-2019) of the of the International Studies Association's Active Learning in International Affairs Section (ALIAS). Cristina has a BA degree in International Relations (1991), a MA in Development Studies, Institute of Social Studies, the Netherlands (1994) and also a master's degree in international Relations, University of Brasília (1995). She holds a PhD in Sustainable Development (Environmental Policy and Management), from the University of Brasília (2003). Her research topics are related to planet politics and the Anthropocene, international development cooperation, Earth System Governance/global environmental governance in the Amazon, focusing on issues of biodiversity, epistemic justice, socioenvironmentalism and actor networks. In the beginning of her career, she worked at the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

**Doctor Maria Cecilia Oliveira**

Maria Cecilia Oliveira is project leader for the group Democratic re-configurations of sustainability transformations at the Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, Potsdam, Germany. She holds a PhD in International Relations from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, and was a Fulbright fellow at the Earth Institute, Columbia University, USA. Her thesis "Millennium Development Goals: Secure life and Planetary Governmentality" focused on the effects of the MDGs in Brazil and new connections between development and security. Her main areas of study

are climate change, critical approaches to sustainability, environmental science, social justice, international organizations, and development.

### Doctor Christopher Kurt Kiessling



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