FOREWORD

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The present issue of *Cadernos de Política Exterior*, Number 18, reflects the ongoing commitment of the International Relations Research Institute (IPRI) of the Alexandre de Gusmão Foundation (FUNAG) to academic excellence and the dissemination of strategic knowledge on Brazil's international engagement. The scholarly articles comprising this volume were submitted to blind peer review, in accordance with the standards of methodological rigor and institutional credibility that guide FUNAG's publications.

Special attention is given to the works honored in the inaugural edition of the Mônica de Menezes Campos Award, established by FUNAG in tribute to the first Black woman to enter Brazil's diplomatic service. The award aims to recognize the intellectual contributions of Black Brazilian students and researchers (self-identified as *pretos* or *pardos*) residing in Brazil or abroad in the field of International Relations.

The four award-winning articles, all authored by early-career scholars, renew the debate on international issues through the application of critical lenses such as race and gender, enabling the identification of power structures, historical exclusions, and emerging forms of normative action, while also connecting domestic phenomena to international commitments and to the image that states project abroad. They further offer analytical perspectives on Brazil's diplomatic and institutional stance regarding the challenges inherent in promoting racial equality and safeguarding the human rights of people of African descent.

Maria Tereza Santos Pereira and Gabrielly Pereira Fonceca examine the impact of environmental racism on the lives of Black women in Brazil, focusing on the alleged invisibility of this issue in statements delivered by officials during the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in 2024, nine

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years after the climate commitments established by the Paris Agreement. Next, Jéser Abílio de Souza critically examines Brazil's foreign policy response to the commitments undertaken by the country in connection with the United Nations' First International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024). This initiative was intended to create a strategic platform for advancing racial justice and reviving the contributions of the 2001 Durban Conference. However, Brazil has yet to fully capitalize on this opportunity, owing to diplomatic shifts arising from domestic political tensions. Fernanda Schmöller da Silva, in turn, presents a study of racial capitalism as a mechanism for expropriating Black bodies. Drawing on the works of WEB Du Bois and Rosa Luxemburg, she argues that Brazil's agro-export system perpetuates colonial structures, land concentration, and the legitimization of violence. Finally, in the context of Central Asia, Guilherme Geremias da Conceição analyzes Kazakhstan's foreign policy in light of the competition between China and Russia for influence in the region. Drawing on Carlos Escudé's Peripheral Realism and Juan Carlos Puig's Theory of Autonomy, the article investigates whether approaches developed for Latin America could shed light on the behavior of other peripheral countries, thereby contributing to interregional theoretical dialogue.

Other texts by researchers and diplomats also examine geographic regions that are less frequently covered in Brazilian academic scholarship on International Relations, investigating processes of authoritarian adaptation and economic and diplomatic opening, as well as the crisis of secular models and the rise of political-religious systems as a response to vacuums of regional legitimacy. Bruno Quadros e Quadros examines a Central Asian country and argues that the reforms implemented in Uzbekistan under current President Shavkat Mirziyoyev do not constitute a democratic break from the authoritarian legacy of his predecessor, Islam Karimov (1991–2016), characterizing measures such as economic liberalization and the reorientation of foreign policy toward regional cooperation and global engagement as part of a new process of authoritarian adaptation.

In the Middle East, Leandro Gabriel Caporale analyzes the political, social, and identity-related dynamics that have shaped Syria's trajectory, focusing on the rise and fall of the Ba'ath regime and on political Islam as a response to demands for identity and autonomy in the postcolonial context, as well as the role played by international powers in the region's political reconfiguration. Elisa Lobo Pereira examines the role of social media in political mobilization during the Arab Spring, focusing on countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya and drawing on theoretical frameworks of networked society and

cyberdemocracy. She analyzes the extent to which digital platforms contributed to the organization of protests and the structural limits that shaped their impact on post-2011 democratization processes.

Also under analysis is the role played by new technologies on the current international stage, as catalysts for social mobilization and tools for innovation that accelerate financial processes. Jorge Alberto Orellana Aragón and Lauro Saraiva Teixeira Junior analyze the decentralized blockchain system as a tool for modernization, whose application in international trade could be expanded to reduce costs and risks, as well as to streamline data storage, focusing on its current applications (smart contracts and cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin) and its potential to profoundly alter the way we conduct transactions. Júlia R. Foggia analyzes the impact of ideological differences in the implementation of Brazilian foreign policy from 2008 to 2022, specifically regarding cooperation in Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) with other BRICS members, where Brazil's engagement reportedly fluctuated drastically, compromising long-lasting results.

Izabella Lemos, Isabela Garbin, and Joan Candeias analyze, from constructivist and neo-Gramscian perspectives, how US think tanks influenced, from the interwar period to the War on Terror, US foreign policy, contributing to the legitimization and reproduction of the liberal international order through their role as intermediary infrastructures of ideational power, by articulating knowledge production, elite networks, and decision-making processes.

This volume also includes articles offering historical and theoretical perspectives that engage with contemporary issues. Paulo Roberto de Almeida presents the context of the Brazilian economy's fragility after World War I (1914-1918) and the efforts to reverse this situation during the Paris Peace Conference (1919), through securing payment for Brazilian coffee exports in Hamburg and Trieste – which had been withheld by the Central Powers – as well as financial and material compensation regarding German ships detained in Brazilian ports. Fábio Albergaria de Queiroz analyzes the role of cognitive elements – particularly images – in the formulation and implementation of the Independent Foreign Policy (1961-1964), which he characterizes as a milestone in Brazil's strategy for international integration, guiding – and, to a certain extent, conditioning – the very construction of national interests in the context of structural transformations in the international system.

The twelve articles that comprise this edition of *Cadernos de Política Exterior* offer a panorama that connects the historical evolution of foreign policy to the contemporary pursuit of autonomy and social justice, particularly in the Global South. The thematic diversity of these reflections, enriched by critical

reinterpretations consistent with the current global landscape, reaffirms the importance of establishing an academic agenda focused on issues such as sovereignty, diversification of partnerships, and defense of human rights, while also addressing historical and theoretical gaps through perspectives rooted in the global peripheries. The selection of works presented here sought, above all, to reconcile breadth and contemporary relevance, while ensuring space for the continued dialogue between theoretical diversity and diplomatic practice in today's global arena.