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International Security
A European–South American Dialogue

**Might and
Right in
World Politics**

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Konrad Adenauer Foundation
adenauer-brasil@kas.de
www.kas.de/brasil



Brazilian Center of International Relations
cebri@cebri.org
www.cebri.org

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Delegation of the European Union to Brazil
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Might and Right in World Politics

Editor

Dr. Jan Woischnik

Project Coordination

Aline Bruno Soares

Leonardo Paz

Reinaldo J. Themoteo

Editorial Support

Diogo Winnikes

Gregory John Ryan

Karine Barcelos

Revision

Margaret Cohen

Translation

Margaret Cohen

(pages 13 to 27 and 53 to 66)

Design and Cover Design

Charles Steiman

Press

J. Sholna

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Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
Rua Guilhermina Guinle, 163
Botafogo – CEP: 22270-060
Rio de Janeiro – RJ
Tel: (0xx21) 2220-5441
Fax: (0xx21) 2220-5448
adenauer-brasil@kas.de
www.kas.de/brasil

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Introduction

Dr. Jan Woischnik

Representative of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation to Brazil

In the last decade of the 20th century, when the Cold War came to an end, there was a growing understanding that International Law was consolidated as legitimation body for state actions. It was the beginning of a new peaceful world order, the world hoped that an old problem of geopolitics could finally be fully addressed by the International Law, a problem which the Athenian General Thucydides observed already more than 2000 years ago, according to which in the realm of the international, “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must”. In this new world order right was supposed to finally come before might.

However, history played out quite differently. Almost immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union, the world witnessed the so called new wars. Old rivalries powered by new features emerged as the core of the new international security agenda. Genocides, ethnic cleansing, the involvement of transnational non-state actors, among others became the new normal for conflicts that flared up all around the world. And as the international society debated on what should be done, it became clear that the existing international legal framework was inadequate for the challenges at hand. The legal body was constantly adapted, structuring possible state actions in accordance to the new needs of the international society.

In this ongoing struggle, might once again resurged as a promising tool for an eventual return to peace and stability. Yet, the application of military power ought, in theory, to take place within legal constraints. As more sophisticated military capabilities are deployed all around the world, the issue about legality is ever more important. Issues such as cyberattacks and drones, keep challenging the current legal framework. Brazil and others argue that the application of force in world politics should be avoided and used only as a last resource - that primacy should be given to diplomacy. In Europe, however, events are pushing the EU and its partners towards a more active engagement. The question is, how does the return to “Realpolitik” (in European terms) structures the continuous development of institutions and bodies of law?

The XIII Forte de Copacabana International Security Conference invited experts and practitioners to engage in discussions around: what is thus the relation between might and right in world politics in the XXI century. The articles debate how the return of realism has been influential on policy makers rationale and cast a doubt on the current legal framework, questioning whether it is sufficient for the challenges, such as global terrorism.

In order to address the issues involving Might and Right in World Politics, this year’s publication is divided in three main chapters: The first on the balance of law and force in world politics of security; the second on the Brazilian and European views on defense and Geo-economics and the third on restoring peace to nations in conflict, presenting outlooks from Europe and Latin America.

The relation between law and force in world politics is made through a discussion on International Law framework reform - in order to address contemporary challenges in the prevention and resolution of emerging conflicts. The conversion of non-traditional or soft power factors (i.e. economy, environment, culture and religion) and the prominence of non-state actors, as well as regional powers, are presented as key to a more comprehensive analysis of global politics in terms of security issues. The relevance of international society as a normative foundation which underpins the dynamics of might and right in current world politics is also discussed.

Contemporary perspectives from Brazil and Europe in defense and geo-economics agendas are the main theme of the second chapter. Its main connections and divergences are presented here as an effort to conduct a broader debate with a view to revisit mainstream theoretical lenses informing Brazilian and European relations concerning security and defense dimensions. The new Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) is introduced in order to identify and discuss new trends in Europe's political and military approach towards its neighbors and partners globally.

The third part features elements presented in the peacemaking processes developing in South America and implemented in the Balkans region. They aim at identifying the impacts of such initiatives for conflict mediation and mitigation in the world. The debate concerning the construction of a global governance model grounded on a political stability and sustainable peace in the 21st century is marked by the cooperation between institutional organizations (such as NATO), national entities and non-state actors, as well as by the international community apparatus.

For the last 13 years, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Brazil, CEBRI and the European Union have joined efforts with its partners in Brazil, Europe and elsewhere to promote a dialogue on security, as part of its mission to reinforce democracy and peace values globally.