

## **KISSINGER'S REALISTIC VIEW OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE**

The analysis carried out at the Davos Forum by Henry Kissinger on the war in Ukraine was welcomed with surprise in an environment in which the so-called "globalized elites" have a fervent adherence to Zelensky. At the age of 98, the former US Secretary of State of the Republican governments of Nixon and Ford, was encouraged to say the "politically incorrect". He did it as an expression of the American "realist" theory in the vision and interpretation of international politics. He takes history as one of the main tools to understand what is happening in the world and its probable evolution. Against it, the "idealistic" theory that has prevailed in Democratic administrations emphasizes that values take precedence over interests. This has led to a paradoxical situation. The United States in the 20th century has always gone to war with democratic governments: World War I, World War II, the decision to use the nuclear bomb in Japan, the Korean War, Vietnam and the intervention in Kosovo. This seems to have a change in the 21st century, with the interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan by Bush Jr. In this case, the "idealistic" theory had come to influence advisers to the Republican President, who faced the consequences of 9/11, with the idea that democracy could be exported to the Muslim world as a strategy to successfully combat fundamentalist terrorism.

Kissinger's first statement that goes against the tides is that Russia is Europe and that it is a mistake to take it away from it so that it turns to Asia. This has been the case since, at the beginning of the 18th century, Czar Peter I made the decision to give priority to his expansion to the west, developing naval capacity and the European educational, cultural and military model, and defeating Sweden, which was its most important adversary in the west. Since then, although Russia is a geographically Eurasian power, the center of gravity of its expansion has been to the west, with few exceptions, such as the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1906). The Napoleonic wars and the two world wars of the 20th century showed Russia rejecting its European enemies (France first and Germany later) and playing a relevant role in defining the conflict. In Kissinger's view, this situation has not changed and it would be a mistake to isolate Russia from Europe, thereby turning it towards Asia. This implies accepting that for the Russian geopolitical vision, former Soviet republics such as Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania (Baltic republics) and Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova, are an area of strategic interest that plays a relevant role between

Russia and Central and Western Europe. Finding forms of coexistence on the European continent becomes, in this vision, the key to intra-Western security. From this perspective, NATO's goal is to prevent war, not make it. On the contrary, the current intention of both Washington and Brussels is explicit in ending the power of Russia, taking away its military capacity. It is the kind of situation that current Russian security doctrine considers a "risk to the existence of the Russian state."

Kissinger also argued for the need to avoid pushing Russia into an alliance with China. President Biden's recent trip to Japan and South Korea - two key allies of Washington in the Indo Pacific - exemplified this risk with concrete facts. Military aircraft from Russia and China jointly patrolled around Taiwan, in a clear response to the significance of Biden's visit, who advanced more than the traditional position of his country, in terms of military support for Taiwan in the event of an attack. (The formal position of the United States is to recognize that there is "one China"). The more the economic sanctions of Washington and Brussels against Russia, the more the economy of this country is interrelated with those of China and India. Putin is a "pariah", but only in the West, not in the rest of the world. It is worth remembering that when he visited Beijing for the Olympics - a month and a half before the invasion - the Heads of State of China and Russia publicly agreed to "prevent the expansion of NATO". In May, the APEC Summit was held, which brings together the 21 Asia-Pacific countries, made up of the United States, China and Russia. The Biden Administration first sounded out a project to exclude Moscow, and without support proposed a diplomatic gesture: withdraw when the Russian representative spoke. Only 6 countries supported the US proposal in this regard. In addition to Washington, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Canada did. The other 15 chose not to condemn Russia. China is promoting a security initiative in Asia that would complement the Shanghai Group.

The former Secretary of State also argued that Ukraine will have to make territorial concessions to reach the peace. He also "softened" this statement by talking about "redrawing" borders. Selensky's response was harsh and forceful, accusing Kissinger of being in the spirit of Munich in 1938, that is, the moment when Great Britain opted for "appeasement" to stop Hitler. Some 82% of Ukrainians today are opposed to ceding any part of their current territory by 2014. The "realistic" position put forward by the renowned American expert

was not supported by the listening public. But the situation seems to be changing. Russian military dominance in Donbass - Putin's initial argument for the invasion - is what he has announced will be achieved by July 1<sup>st</sup>. The Ukrainian government is beginning to show anxiety about the military course of the conflict and accuses NATO of delaying the delivery of lethal weapons, as a result of the military situation. At the same time, differences are perceived in the European Union regarding the economic sanctions that are being imposed on the Putin regime. The incorporation of Sweden and Finland to NATO has been stopped by the veto of Turkey (the incorporation of new members requires the unanimity of the members). But the objective of Washington and Brussels until now remains unchanged in not making any concession of Ukrainian territory to Russia and in persisting in the military path -always through the war in Ukraine- until ending Russian military power, so that it can carry out a new invasion. The prolongation of the conflict may play more in favor of Russia than of the Western coalition. But for now Kissinger's suggestion is off the agenda.

In conclusion: at the Davos Forum, Kissinger exposed the "realistic" vision in the analysis of international relations regarding the war in Ukraine; he argued that Russia should not be expelled from Europe, because this will generate more instability and conflict. He also said that it was dangerous to push Russia into China's orbit, thus creating a worse adversary for the West. Finally, he added that in order to solve the conflict, Ukraine was going to have to make territorial concessions, which caused Selensky's strong rejection and disapproval from the Forum participants.