

Brazilian Lula considers Zelensky as guilty of the war as Putin

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Some editor of Time magazine must have regretted this week dedicating the cover of the legendary American magazine to former Brazilian President Lula da Silva. In a series of explosive responses, Lula shattered the rhetoric of good guys and bad guys that had monopolized coverage of the war in Ukraine, Europe, and the United States.

"Look, Putin shouldn't have invaded Ukraine, but he's not the only one to blame," said the former Brazilian president and October presidential election favorite in an interview published Wednesday in a magazine most closely identified with "the American peace movement." "in. XX. "USA and the EU is also to blame. In wars, there is never a single culprit," Lula insists.

As if that weren't enough, Lula questions the integrity of Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian president who just a week ago was portrayed as a war hero on the very cover of Time. For Lula, Zelensky "has the same responsibility for this war as Putin (...) he wanted war (...) he is a good comedian, but we are not going to make a war so that he appears on television", he ironically .

Lula regrets that the possibilities for dialogue with Moscow have not been exhausted. "Biden could fly to Moscow to talk to Putin. This is what is expected of a leader," he says in an interview. "They could sit at the negotiating table for 10, 15, 20 days or a month looking for a solution."

The comments "would damage Lula's reputation among Western politicians," Oliver Stuenkel, political analyst at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation, tweeted. But in the rest of the world, in the southern hemisphere, Lula defines a position of non-alignment with the West, which many countries would agree with.

"Lula's proposal does not go against the West, but instead is active non-alignment, maintaining an equal distance between the US, the EU and China," Pedro Silva Barros, a former director of Unasur, said in a telephone interview.

"Lula does not go against the West, his position is active non-alignment, equidistance"

Known in his eight years as president (2003-2011) for his pragmatism and spirit of dialogue, Lula, who brokered the 2010 deal with Iran that was sabotaged by the Obama administration, is once again positioning himself as the leader of a geopolitical alternative to the dangerous division of the world between two opposing and increasingly militarizing blocs.

The former president sees NATO expansion after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 as a key factor in understanding the war in Ukraine. "What was the reason for the invasion of Ukraine? NATO? Well, the US and Europe should have said: "Ukraine will not join NATO." That would solve the problem."

The former president may be overly optimistic. Various European leaders tried to reassure the Russian president that there were no plans for Ukraine to join NATO.

Behind Lula's comments in Time is a concern that Washington's strategy of dragging out the war to weaken Putin is a dangerous path. Celso Amorim, foreign policy architect of the Lula governments (2003-2011), explained yesterday in a comment to La Vanguardia that a diplomatic alternative to Washington's current strategy of prolonging the war must be urgently adopted in order to "wear Russia out." This strategy "is associated with the risk of escalation, although it is difficult to measure how far," warns Amorim.

The US strategy to prolong the war is causing even more plagues in the global south due to the growing hunger crisis caused by skyrocketing food and fuel prices. "We already have a stagflation crisis; the war in Ukraine, by raising the price of wheat, corn and gas, will further worsen the situation," says Marcelo Neri of the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in Rio de Janeiro.

While only 31 countries have refused to condemn Ukraine's UN invasion, they represent more than half of the world's population. Many others, such as Brazil, Mexico or South Africa, having condemned the invasion, refused to join the sanctions. Distrust is widespread from Latin America to Asia. "Can anyone say with any degree of objectivity that the US and Europe have taken action to end the conflict?" asks Reinaldo Azevedo, an influential Folha de São Paulo columnist who defends Lula.

"The comments will damage the politician's reputation among Western politicians"

This shows how wrong Time magazine itself was at the end of February when it said: "How Putin has united the world against him." The truth is that in a multipolar world in which China sets geopolitical landmarks no less than Washington, many countries do not want to choose between

the West and Russia. "Putin understood something correctly; that the non-Western world will not impose sanctions against Russia," says Angela Stant of the Brookings Institution in Washington. Moreover, in the case of Lula and Brazil, the rejection of the "free world" discourse comes from a Western country, the world's fourth largest democracy, and in the midst of an election campaign.

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