

From Norman, Oklahoma, I'm Jacque Braun, in for Suzette Grillot, the Dean of the College of International Studies at the University of Oklahoma. Welcome to World Views at CIS. On today's show, we'll span the globe in our conversations with Maria Gorete Neto and Andrew Scobell about indigenous language revitalization in Brazil and Chinese foreign policy.

*...President Xi and President Trump: both leaders have really shaken up the political system. And political elites, in China and the United States, are quite literally tearing their hair out. Because this is not business as usual.*

First, Rebecca Cruise speaks to Maria Gorete Neto. Neto has conducted extensive research addressing indigenous language education in Brazil. She joins us today to discuss indigenous representation in Brazilian politics, ongoing efforts to promote indigenous education and rights, and the historical legacy of Brazil's colonization.

Maria Gorete Neto, thank you for joining us at World Views.

Thank you.

So you are a linguist by training. You have a PhD in Linguistics, and you focus primarily on the linguistics of indigenous tribes in Brazil. Can we maybe start with you telling us a little bit about what made you interested in this topic?

In my master's dissertation, I did the job about indigenous Portuguese with Tapirapé people in Mato Grosso, central of Brazil. And in my PhD dissertation, I did the text about indigenous Tapirapé school in the village. So my research interest is about indigenous language and the indigenous school.

Is there a significant threat to these languages? I would think that there is; that there's a need and a desire to keep them alive, if you will, and keep people speaking in these languages.

Yeah. For example, Tapirapé School. All the teachers are Tapirapé. They speak Tapirapé in the school. Only the classes of Portuguese are spoken in Portuguese and they have a really bilingual education, this school, and they have also a school that is connected with the reality of the Tapirapé people. So for example, when they go to hunt, the indigenous students -- Tapirapé students -- go with the parents, so the school considers that activities like class. So it's a way to have indigenous language, indigenous Tapirapé language, staying alive because they have some activities where indigenous languages are making sense for them.

So it's education beyond the classroom. They are out in the fields with the crops or hunting. What is, if we could briefly talk about it, the history of the various indigenous populations in Brazil and the their interactions with those from outside?

So the indigenous Brazilian history is very, very sad. Because in 1500, Portuguese invade Brazil and stole their lands and it was violence against indigenous people in Brazil. So for example, researchers state that there was about 60,000 languages spoken in Brazil, in that time. And right now in Brazil we have 274 indigenous languages, so it's really weird and sad, that we have this

kind of condition because it was a violence and the violence is not changed in these days. It's an ongoing genocide. So right now we have indigenous population who are living in the roads, they don't have land. Like Guarani-Kaiowá, for example, in Mato Grosso do Sul, it's kind of the south of Brazil. And we have a lot of indigenous communities in Brazil in this situation as well, with their lands invaded by farmers and no good conditions of health and education. So it's not really a beautiful history for my country, in Brazil.

It's probably important to remind our listeners also that Brazil is a very large country. I think we sometimes forget that it's bigger than the continental United States. And so we're talking about... you said 60,000 languages. We can imagine how many groups were involved in that. And the tragic history of colonization that took place. It's not just the languages that have disappeared in some regards it's also the people that have disappeared, the cultures that have disappeared. What is the relationship now? There's continued segregation continued discrimination. Is this codified in law or is this just practice?

After twenty years of dictatorship, we have federal constitution, in 1988, that states that the government needs to protect indigenous rights -- indigenous lands, indigenous languages, indigenous education, and health. However, we have strong attacks against indigenous rights, so we have strong support in the law, in the text, but in the practice, we have a genocide, an ongoing genocide unfortunately.

This is perhaps slightly more nuanced than simply going out and what we might traditionally think is a genocide but in your estimation, it's a genocide nonetheless, because these people eventually-- they're pushed out, they're killed, they're ostracized, all those sorts of things. And it's interesting that it is in practice something that is different than it is in law. Obviously Brazil has also faced as a country, a number of troubling issues here in the last couple of years, economically and politically. Has this also affected indigenous populations?

I'm going to refer to-- about Guarani-Kaiowá people because they are the very, very example of this ongoing attack. In the last two years, we have almost ten leaders from indigenous Guarani-Kaiowá murdered, and they are living without lands.

So there are people that are purposely going out and murdering these leaders. To what end what is are the leaders being very active, are they speaking up calling for greater attention to indigenous rights or why are they being targeted in this?

In this place, we have agribusiness, so we have soy, we have cattle, we have deforestation. The lands of the indigenous communities are very desirable so because of this, they have been shot by farmers, by politician, and it has a lot of prejudice against indigenous communities because they think they don't allow progress, progress for farmers and agribusiness and some politicians, has soy, cotton, deforestation.

So, it really in some ways is a discrimination and racism on top of a desire for land and economics. And they may be calling it progress, but standing in the way of those apparently seeking progress are-- well this in many cases, many tribes but this particular group and then they are being targeted because of that. Now, what other actions are some of the local tribes

undertaking? Is there a great deal of activism? Has there been an increase in activism since the legislation was passed in the 1980s?

Yes, they are very active about these issues. And right now, they are trying to send to the congress some indigenous representatives. So for example we have right now a candidate for Vice President, Sônia Guajajara, in for the next election. And they are trying to enter in the Congress in order to improve their rights because our Congress right now is very conservative, and we have in Portuguese, we call "bala, boi, e bíblia," which means "bullets, Bibles, and cows." So these groups are in the Congress right now in one point, they are against indigenous rights and the indigenous communities are trying to enter in this Congress in the next election, in order to modify, to change this reality.

Has there ever been much indigenous representation in local or federal government?

Right now, there's no representation. We don't have indigenous representation in congress in Brazil.

So this is a new attempt to try to get voices hear.

We had on representation in Congress, Mario Girona, in the 80s. One. Just one. And they want to go there, and they think they will change this reality, I don't know.

And a different means perhaps of being activists, to try to work within the system. Speaking of actively engaging, you also have been very active and you have been part of what-- I'm going to try to pronounce it in Portuguese, but you call the Inter-Cultural Indigenous Teachers Training College, and this is a program that you helped get together and have participated in, in which you're taking indigenous people and teaching them how to be teachers and then with the hope that they go back to their communities, and educate students there. Tell us a little bit about where this originated, what this looks like and how this is working.

This program was created in 2006, and we have a federal university of Minas Gerais, a strong connection with this indigenous people in Minas Gerais in south of Bahia. And they required us to have a teacher training course for indigenous teachers, and we have been constructing this course with indigenous communities, and it works in intensive phases in UFMG, in the university. So indigenous students, who are chosen by indigenous leaders, they go to the university for five weeks, and then they return back to the villages and the professors from the university, go to the village in order to resume the classes there. And then it's the spaces and times that we have in this course, and we have an indigenous advisor council, that help us to construct this discourse. And these leaders are with us all the time and all the time we are talking about how we can do about the program and about the syllabus in order to connect the syllabus with indigenous school, indigenous land.

So it would seem that it's very important to get what we call buy in. It's important that the indigenous population be part of the program, that they are not only picking the students but they're helping to design the syllabus. It's not just those from the outside coming in or telling

them what they need, it's relevant to their existence in their life. You said this started in 2006, so over ten years ago. What's the results? Are we seeing some positive change?

We have almost right now, almost 200 indigenous teachers, that work in the village-- in different villages, and right now we are trying to create a master program in the university, but it's a little bit difficult because universities are very strict about masters and PhD programs and the indigenous communities, they work in a collective way. So the indigenous community want to choose who are going to do PhD or who are going to do master and the universities, not work like that.

The structures are different.

And also masters degree, they need to stay in the city for a long time and the leaders have been talking with us, that it not works for them because they want to have a master's and doctor's degree, who are very, very connected with the lands and in their demands of lands. So we are trying to construct this masters and we have one test last year, but we don't have indigenous candidates because we have these kind of issues pointed by leaders. So they didn't choose anybody to go to this course. So, we try figure out how we can change this program, this masters program, in order to be more acceptable for indigenous communities.

It sounds like you're making progress, but continuing to develop the ideas, and the programs, with the needs of the community in mind. So unfortunately, we're out of time today but thank you so much for coming and sharing this information with us, and we'll continue to follow what's happening in Brazil and particularly what's happening with the indigenous communities there.

Thank you for your time.

Thank you very much for the invitation.

You have been listening to Rebecca Cruise's conversation with Maria Gorete Neto about the Tapirapé school and the growth of indigenous language education programs in Brazil. For more information about Maria Gorete Neto, or to leave a comment or question about this conversation, you can visit our website at [cisworldviews.com](http://cisworldviews.com).

Next, Rebecca Cruise speaks to Andrew Scobell. Scobell is a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation. He holds a PhD in political science from Columbia University, and also serves as an adjunct professor in Asian Studies at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. Born and raised in Hong Kong, he has authored and edited several books about China's foreign relations. He joins us on World Views to discuss Chinese power and influence in today's geopolitical climate.

Andrew Scobell, welcome to World Views.

Thank you.

Well, you're an expert on China have done a lot of research on the area and been involved in many things regarding Asia as a region but also... China specifically and it's, it's really hard not to focus on China. So that's where I'm going to start us off today. We have watched the past couple of years, maybe even the last decade as China has really started to exert its hard power. So we're seeing the islands build-up out of nothing in the region and the sea there, is they're going after area from Japan and other countries of disputes there. So an increase in hard power for sure, but have we also seen an increase in soft power is there an attempt by China to try to gain influence through culture, media, other things that we don't traditionally think about when we think about power?

Yeah, I think that's a very important point to think about power in different ways and certainly Chinese leaders are starting to think about not just about hard power, but about soft power, and I think it's interesting. The reason -- at least in my view, the reason that China is much more focused on soft power, not to the exclusion of hard power there, certainly, but they look at it in a power in, in a very holistic broad way, that's not just military, economic and diplomatic, but also, culture and values and so on. And the reason in my view that they're much more interested in this topic is because they're concerned about the soft power of other countries-- and one country in particular, the one that we're sitting in today, the United States. And from a Chinese perspective, the United States has significant reservoirs of soft power.

This is one of our great strengths for the last 50 years or so.

And whether it's in culture in terms of Hollywood or music, entertainment, or in terms of political values, and-- Those are concerning to the Chinese leaders because they see that US soft power as potentially threatening to China, and so their interest in soft power and propagating their own self-power is in part to counter perceived US soft power.

So how are they doing this? I know there's a great deal of economic investment which we wouldn't necessarily classify as hard or soft power. It could be one or the other, or both, but there's a lot of engagement in Africa, for example, in Latin America and other areas economically. Are there attempts there to exert this cultural power as well or is there a hope that that will be a by-product?

I think there's different ways to define power, and if you define soft power, there's two main approaches to this. One is to think of it in terms of the power of attraction. And so here, US movies and so on have tremendous power of attraction and influence around the world. Another way to define soft power is a more traditional hard power variant where it's the ability of someone to get someone else to do something that they otherwise wouldn't do. And so power of attraction, that's important to China in terms of status. Chinese leaders want China to be a respected, admired, country and Chinese culture and language in cuisine and so on... so that's part of it. Both definitions are worth considering. We're talking about Chinese soft power and certainly when China gives foreign aid to governments around the world that comes with strings attached. The Chinese strings come in terms of you've got to hire Chinese workers or aid has to be repaid in certain ways with natural resources and so on. But coming back to that power of attraction issue-- what's interesting is, you look at one significant initiative of Chinese soft power is Confucius Institutes. If you look at where these Confucius Institutes all across the world,

where are they primarily located? They're located in developed countries, so continents like Africa have surprisingly a few Confucius Institutes.

And their goal is to share information about China, to educate people about what's happening in China.

Right.

From a certain perspective.

But in terms of that soft power where you want to make China seem less threatening, and more attractive, the focus tends to be on the developed world.

So it's very strategic in that way.

Yeah.

So one of the other things that's come out as we've seen this exertion of both soft and hard power is many questioning whether the United States is actually helping China in this regard, as we seem to be in many ways pulling back from the international community, perhaps creating space for China, Russia, other countries to step in and perhaps fill the gap. Is that an argument that resonates with you: that China might be taking advantage of the United States' retreat?

Let me partly disagree partly one of your assumptions, I don't think the US is retreating and yet... what's happened in the Trump administration so far is more emphasis on US interest and protecting the homeland. Less about propagating US values around the world and continue to be engaged with the outside world. So to that extent at least, especially with rhetoric, when the US has retreated in that sense, then China and to some extent Russia have tried to leap in, again, at least rhetorically. So for example, when the US Trump administration has pulled out of the climate change accords, President Xi Jinping-- it's a perfect opportunity. And he took it to say, we stand for these, and to claim at least rhetorically the mantle of world leadership. And so to that extent, yes, it's possible, but I think that the proof is in the pudding, and can China actually deliver on that? No, but certainly in the court of world public opinion China scored some gains.

The perceptions. And that's one of the other things that you have written and spoken about a great deal is the many mis-perceptions that we have of China, and perhaps China has of us. What are our common perceptions of China and where are we wrong?

In any case, any situation, if there's a stereotype or perception, it has some basis in reality. So the Chinese are doing things that challenge or undermine or threaten the United States economically, militarily, and otherwise, but what exactly is China doing? What's the scope of that, what are their intentions? That's a little harder to disentangle. And my assessment is that China is not trying to take of the world. They have a hard enough time, Chinese leaders, to control their own country and deal with their own domestic problems. But what's driving them to be more engaged around the world is they've drunk the Kool-Aid of globalization. They believe that China has no alternative but to engage with the world and if for no other reason economically China is much--

is enmeshed with the rest of the world and they cannot retreat from that and the only option is to go forward. So they're not trying to take over the world, they're just trying to keep the Chinese economic dynamo going.

Okay, and what is the perception of the United States by those in China? Where might they be mis-perceiving our intentions or our actions? Well, there's a sense amongst many in China, and not just amongst leaders, but amongst people in the street, that the US is trying to contain China, or slow down China's rise, and they look-- on what basis they have for saying that. Well, some of the rhetoric that comes out of Washington doesn't help, but they look at, Where are US allies? The Cold War is over officially, so why from a Chinese perspective, America, why do you need all these allies? Why do you still need to station troops abroad in places like Japan and South Korea and Europe? Who's the enemy? And the conclusion they come to -- many of them come to -- is... Well, it must be China.

And so it becomes almost a defensive situation. Speaking of that, somewhat recently, President Xi was essentially given the green light to stay in office. Or some are saying stay office indefinitely. What is it about this particular individual that has led to this decision or these situations or circumstances that has allowed for this? Why him and why now? And what does this mean going forward?

China's current leader Xi Jinping was just officially re-elected for a second term and of course in the post-Mao era since, since the late '1970s, Chinese leaders essentially had term limits for ten years. Two five-year terms. And Xi's predecessors have abided by that. The question is, will Xi? And those terms were written into the Chinese Constitution, they've been taken out, and so the potential is there for Xi not just to do this next five-year term, a second, but to go on further.

So it's not a given.

It's not a given. Many people have said that Xi Jinping is the most powerful leader since Deng Xiaoping or Mao, and that's certainly possible but I like to phrase it a different way. He's the most ambitious leader, since Deng Xiaoping. It's un-precedented in terms of how much Xi's tried to accomplish in the last five years, and it's just remarkable the multiple initiatives both economic, military, and diplomatic. I do think that he sees himself as the savior of the People's Republic of China, and the ruling Chinese communist party, and he's doing all these things to continue China's growth and to stabilize its communist party rule. And so if you believe, if he believes that, then ten years may not be enough time to do all that he needs to do. Plus, as I said, he's un-precedented in terms of what he's done, he's also upset a lot of people, he's punished a lot of people, many for corruption and so on. In short, made a lot of enemies. So, if you retire then what? So the prospect of retirement when you wield a lot of power is not appealing to a lot of people, but in Xi's case, not only did he feel like he has a lot more to do, but I think the fear of what happens? Will I be safe in retirement?

So, from that personal perspective, you mentioned that he's angered a lot of people. He also seems to have a great deal of support amongst your average citizens or at least they are buying into the ambitions that he has set for what's to come. And you anticipate that this will continue?

I think so. There is a parallel, I think, between President Xi and President Trump. Both leaders have really shaken up the political system and political elites in China and the United States are quite literally tearing their hair out, because this is not business as usual. Both presidents are rocking the boat. And yet in both countries, you have significant numbers of ordinary citizens who were actually cheering him on.

And supportive of that boat rocking. Well, it's interesting that you mentioned the two of them together. I think that they will probably go down in history as being linked and they certainly are going to have to find ways to work together here in the next couple of years, and we will definitely continue to watch as their relationship develops and as our relationship with China continues to develop.

Thank you so much for your time today.

You're welcome. Thank you.

You have been listening to Rebecca Cruise's conversation with Andrew Scobell about Chinese influence and American perceptions of China's foreign relations.

For more information about Andrew Scobell, or to leave a comment or question about this conversation, you can visit our website at [cisworldviews.com](http://cisworldviews.com).

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