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# Reflections on the values of the International System of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and Brazil

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## Democracy, Authoritarianism and Disorder

There are three major types of value systems – and consequent subsystems – present in the international arena of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These are: the democratic order, the authoritarian order, and disorder. Obviously this is a heuristic classification of ideal types, whereas concrete reality in fact consists of a wide range of differentiated and heterogeneous situations.

In the democratic order, the predominant values are: political pluralism, market economy, free enterprise, the division of powers, institutions with defined and differentiated missions, full freedom of expression, and political party organisation. At the core of the democratic order is Western civilisation, consisting of the United States, Canada, the European Union, Australia and New Zealand. In this article, the West (as it is today) is understood to be a type of civilisation that combines the following components:

1. a market economy system with state regulation that partially incorporates the dimension of environmental sustainability and transition to a low carbon economy;
2. a society based on the principle of the rule of law, equality of all individuals before the law;

3. a society with substantive equality of opportunity, by way of universal and free access to quality education, but also comprising an understanding of individual in which specific qualities and different interests can be taken into account in harmony with those of the community;
4. a political regime based on representative democracy and accountability; a low level of corruption, violence and crime;
5. a culture that values science and humanism as central tenets;
6. and a foreign policy geared towards global governance in matters of economy, security, human rights, climate change and the environment.

The Nordic countries, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Canada, Australia and New Zealand form the main core of Western civilisation, because in these countries the positive characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century West are better developed. It is important to emphasise that this definition of main core of Western civilisation is based on values not on economic/political and military capacity, for which the main core would be the United States. Canada and Australia, while forming part of the core here considered, lag behind in relation to the value which impels a transition to a low carbon economy.

In a secondary position within the core of Western civilisation are the rest of Europe and United States. Western values in both the South and East of the European Union are less developed due to the more recent consolidation of democratic regimes, market economies, and an increase in corruption. The United States already has limitations in various spheres: an increasingly dysfunctional democracy; a radicalised view of individualism which conflicts with collective interests; along with a significant part of its society valuing religion over science and denying scientific evidence regarding both evolution and climate change. In addition, its foreign policy is not directed towards building global governance, particularly when it comes to the Republican Party.

Outside the Western core, democratic order is made up of countries that have made a slower, partial and/or recent transition to democratic rule: e.g. Japan, India, Latin American and Caribbean nations (excepting Cuba and Venezuela), Turkey, Israel, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, Singapore, South Africa, and Nigeria.

The authoritarian order is very heterogeneous, going from the extreme of totalitarian regimes on the one hand (North Korea, Saudi Arabia), passing by authoritarian regimes in the strict sense (China, Russia, Vietnam, United Arab Emirates), to hybrid regimes (Venezuela, Egypt) on the other. In this article authoritarian societies are understood to have the following features:

1. there are no elections, or there are elections with significant limitations on political party organisation and competitiveness;
2. the justice system is not independent from the executive branch;
3. individual guarantees are viewed by the state as limited or non-existent;

4. there is strong state intervention in the economy, and a strong overlap of interests between many businesses and government officials;
5. religion or ideological dogmas are important in the organisation of society;
6. and, the levels of corruption tend to be high due to a lack of accountability.

The authoritarian order has two main power centres – China and Russia – which partially share their state of conflict with the democratic order, and compete in part for influence over the rest of the authoritarian countries. A strong difference between the two is that China is an economic and demographic superpower that is emerging in a rapid and extraordinary manner, whereas Russia is a nuclear superpower in gradual decline.

The subsystem of disorder consists of countries where the state does not hold a monopoly on violence: they can be countries in generalised civil war (Syria, Congo, Yemen, Somalia); or countries with failed and fragmented states due to ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic divisions (Libya, Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan). Subsystems of disorder also exist in regions of countries where there are democratic or authoritarian regimes: e.g. Sinai in Egypt, Eastern Ukraine, autonomous regions of Pakistan, areas controlled by the FARC in Colombia, regions controlled by radical Islam in Nigeria and Iraq, municipalities controlled by drug trafficking in Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico.

## **Democratic Values in Brazil and the World**

Brazil has been part of the democratic order since 1985. Since the 1990s the notion of democratic values in Brazil has been deepening: the market economy prevailed over state interventionist policies, the concept of environmental sustainability gained strength among the elites and the population, democracy consolidated itself as a political regime, albeit of low quality and with high levels of corruption; the principle of equality before the law advanced partially – although slowly, due to judicial procedures that allow infinite appeals to higher courts for those who can pay good lawyers; and even the prestige of science advanced in society.

- › In other aspects, however, the country is stagnant. There is no real equality of opportunity, due to the precariousness of the preschool, primary, and secondary level public education system. As a result, a majority of the population remains effectively illiterate or poorly educated. Crime has increased extraordinarily in many Brazilian cities (except São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, where the level of crime remains high, although stable).
- › Foreign policy remains ambiguous as regards furthering global governance: Brazil retains a strong rhetoric of sovereignty; it upholds the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, even in many situations of extreme violation of human rights. Brazil also argues that it be treated as one of the big players on the international stage, viewing itself a form of representative and/or leader of developing countries.
- › During the period ranging from 1994-2006 there was continuous and cumulative progress of the market economy in Brazil: a toppling of inflation; reestablishment

of the national currency; setting of inflation targets; an autonomous central bank; fiscal discipline; a floating currency; and the creation of regulatory agencies. The Brazilian economy suffered a setback since 2007: subsidised loans from the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) were made available to large businessmen, who were the financiers of the political class; subsidies to fossil fuels were reinstated and changes were made to the oil exploration policy. These setbacks deepened during the first government of Dilma Rousseff with the erosion in credibility of the inflation targets system, the partial loss of central bank independence, and the manipulation of public accounts in order to mask the deterioration of the fiscal situation.

In 2003 a corruption system began, based on three pillars, involving three key players:

1. High Executives of State-owned businesses (particularly Petrobras, Eletrobras and Banco do Brasil);
2. A cartel formed by major contractors in the country;
3. Political parties of the governing coalition (particularly Workers Party PT, Party of the Brazilian Democratic Movement PMDB and Popular Party PP).

This system (now popularly known as ‘Mensalão’, meaning Big Bribes to Parliamentarians; ‘Petrolão’, referring to the Petrobras Corruption Scandal; and ‘Eletrolão’, regarding Eletrobras’ Corruption Scandal,) resulted in significant losses for Petrobras and Eletrobras, Brazil’s oil and electricity giants, respectively, with extraordinary gains for large contractors and massive funding garnered by political parties of the governing coalition.

In 2012 the Supreme Court held the “Mensalão” trial, with strong sentences dealt to some entrepreneurs and public administrators, but light sentences given to politicians. In August 2013, following a wave of political street demonstrations in June, the government and congress quickly passed a new anti-corruption law that strengthened the public powers’ ability to crackdown on corruption, including provisions especially related to reduced jail sentences for whistle blowers. The new law greatly empowered the judiciary, which in 2014, opened investigations into corruption at Petrobras. The investigations were successful; businessmen and powerful politicians detained, but who revealed what they knew, received reduced jail sentences. By mid-2015 the transformation of values in Brazilian society as a result of the investigations and convictions on charges of corruption appeared to have been profound. The cost to corrupt and be corrupted increased greatly, and the possibility of an act of corruption going by unpunished dramatically decreased. Finally the law was equal for all, including the very powerful. If this transformation of values regarding intolerance to corruption consolidates itself, it will have a strong influence on the quality of democracy in Brazil, which will then increasingly approach that of the Western core.

When one turns to examine Brazil’s relations with the West as a political bloc, however, – the centre of which is the American / European alliance – the situation becomes

far more complex. Brazilian society's perceptions and attitudes to the West as a political bloc – counting both the views of the elites and society in general – can be classified into four groups: the first two, globalists and the last two, non-globalists. These are: Pro-Western Radicals, Pro-Western Moderates, Independent Sovereignists and Anti-Western Sovereignists.

Pro-Western Radicals advocate that Brazil should pursue a foreign policy based upon a strong alignment with the United States and Western Europe, admiring, in general, the American capitalist model. In the event of disagreements among allies, they tend to defend American positions. They form a small minority of the elites and of Brazilian society at large, although with greater representation in some sectors of the economy, such as finance. At a party political level they are represented partially in sectors of the Party of the Brazilian Social-democracy PSDB and Democratic Party DEM, and since March 2015 they have also acquired significant importance in non-partisan movements in favour of the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff.

Pro-Western Moderates consider Brazil to be an integral part of Western civilisation due to its history, culture, the principles of its Constitution and legal system. Most prefer the model of European capitalism and its welfare state structure over the more individualistic American model. Pro-Western Moderates defend a foreign policy which includes the promotion of human rights and a pattern of (flexible) alignment with democracies. They are critical of US unilateral foreign policies, preferring any intervention in the internal affairs of other countries to be done via the UN Security Council; however, they recognise that sometimes this can be impossible due to the positions of China and Russia. They consider that Brazil should have a role in promoting democracy within the Americas, in cooperation with Mexico, Colombia, Chile, Uruguay, the US and Canada. They value the Organisation of American States' (OAS) mission and are critical of Cuban communism and Chavez's Bolivarian style regime.

In 2015, Pro-Western Moderates represented more than half of Brazilian society, forming a majority of the economic, political, cultural, administrative and military elites. The foreign policy of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's government (1995-2002) corresponded in general to this vision. Pro-Western Moderates have gained some importance in the second government of Dilma Rousseff (2015-). Their achievements include: the rapid negotiation by finance minister Joaquim Levy of an agreement with the OECD to facilitate the entry of Brazil into the organisation (May 2015); the agreements signed during the visit of President Rousseff to the US (June 2015); the favourable signs given by Minister Levy to Brazil's entering into (independent of Mercosur) a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union; the signs given by Minister Levy to the opening of negotiations for various other bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements, equally independent of Mercosur; and a certain distancing from the Maduro regime in Venezuela. At the party political level, the Pro-Western Moderates are represented by majority sectors in the PSDB, DEM, PMDB, Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB), Popular Socialist Party (PPS), Green Party (PV) and the Sustainability Network (Rede).

Independent Sovereignists are favourable to an economic model with strong participation of the state and consider that Brazil's foreign policy should be distanced from the West, in particular the US. They see Brazil as part of a Global South and consider it necessary to limit the excessive power that the West has in the world. To this end, they seek to promote increased interdependence of Brazil with other major societies of the Global South (particularly China, India, Turkey, Indonesia and South Africa) and Russia, and are in favour of loose alliances – such as the BRICS, G77 and BASIC – to counter Western power. The Independents view is that Brazil should lead South America, and limit US power and Mexican influence. The Independents are strongly Sovereignists, they are against the international promotion of human rights and democracy, and support Bolivarian style regimes and Cuban communism.

In 2015, Independent Sovereignists represented approximately one third of society, comprising an important part of the diplomatic and political elites and a minority of the economic elites. The foreign policy of the governments of Lula (2003-2010) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2014) was influenced by the Independents, whose major actions were: opposition, since 2003, to the signing of the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement (FTAA), culminating in the collapse of negotiations in 2005; leadership in forming a coalition of developing countries (the trade G20) against developed countries in the WTO Doha Round negotiations, even though Brazil's interests were very different from those of China and India on account of having one of the most competitive agribusinesses in the world; support for the Ahmadinejad regime in Iran when he won the June 2009 elections, which were considered fraudulent by the rest of the democratic world; negotiations (with Turkey) which resulted in strong concessions in favour of Iran's nuclear agreement in May 2010, that were immediately rejected by the UN Security Council; continued support for the Chaves regime in Venezuela and the Castro regime in Cuba; refusal to sign the Additional Protocol to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; leadership in the suspension of Paraguay from Mercosur in June 2012 and the subsequent entry of Venezuela; and tolerant attitudes towards extreme human rights violations by Gadhafi in Libya (2011) and Assad in Syria (2011 to the present day). At a party political level, the Independent Sovereignists are represented by majority sectors of the PT and Democratic Labour Party PDT, and minority sectors of the PSB, PV and the Sustainability Network.

The Anti-Western Sovereignists are favourable to state capitalism and to imposing limitations on press freedom; they consider that Brazilian media are contrary to the interests of the nation and subservient to the West. This group believes that Brazil's interests are in strong opposition to the interest of the West, and advocate a Brazilian foreign policy of alliance with Anti-Western powers, particularly with Venezuela, Cuba, China and Russia. The Anti-Western view is that Brazil should lead South America in opposition to the US and Europe. They strongly support Cuban communism and Bolivarian style regimes. The Anti-Western Sovereignists form a small minority among the elites and within society, although they managed to exert some small influence on foreign policy during the period of 2003-2010. At a party political level, the Anti-Western Sovereignists are represented by the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B), Party of Socialism and Freedom (PSOL), Socialist Party of Unified Workers (PSTU), and by minority sectors of the PT party.

Brazil's progress towards a developed society depends on the growth in power and legitimacy of the Pro-Western Moderates; this group must reach a level enabling them to play a decisive role in the definition of both internal and foreign policy. Should such a situation manifest itself, Brazil would become a country that could make a very valuable contribution to global governance in all aspects. This could happen in the near future due to extremely poor governance under the Workers' Party (PT) since 2011, which has led, in 2015, to dramatically low approval ratings for the President and her party. Should such a shift occur, it would entail a significant change of the coalition in power and of foreign policy. However, a deep change in the government coalition only could happen following the next general elections of 2018 (for President and Congress). For this reason the next three years will likely be a continuity of the deep economic and political crisis started at the end of 2014.