

DEMOCRACY OR NON-INTERVENTION?

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The policy of pressing other countries to be democratic is not always legitimate. It may configure imperialism. In the case of Honduras, however, it is justified

If the Organization of American States reaches an agreement ensuring the return of Manuel Zelaya to the presidency of Honduras and, subsequently, the holding of elections, we will have after all achieved a good outcome for democracy in Latin America however, it will not be an advance towards the national autonomy of Latin American countries. We have here a conflict between the ideal of democracy and the ideal of non-intervention. Individuals must be free and nations must be sovereign. What to do in this dilemma? To ignore an anti-democratic coup and thus disrespect the principle of non-intervention or to reaffirm this principle? To have a guarantee against domestic authoritarianism or against the imperialism that is inherent to the most powerful nations?

In a time when democracy became an universal value, it may seem evident that its guarantee takes precedence over the principle of national sovereignty. However, I am not sure about this theory. That should also be the case with the president of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, who now demands the restoration of democracy. In 2002 he suffered a coup in which the United States took part on the grounds that his government was not a democratic one.

The policy of international demand for democracy arose from a change in the United States power strategy in the beginning of the 1980s (Reagan administration), when this country ceased to be associated with military dictatorships in Latin America and began to increasingly intervene in the domestic politics of countries all over the world, so that they become democratic and preserve democracy. I have no sympathy for authoritarian governments, but

only in countries where economic and social development already reached a reasonable level is it possible to affirm that democracy must be defended as an ultimate, non-negotiable value. Before that, each case must be considered on its own.

For the United States, the policy of demanding democracy became a way of ensuring that other countries governments will be favorable to them from an economic and strategic standpoint: that they will receive US investments and guarantee their intellectual property rights without restrictions, and that they will support their international policy in the international game against other major nationalist countries regarded by the United States as opponents. Given the fact that in developing countries the elected governments tend to represent economic and political elites associated with the United States, this "democratic policy" became an instrument of their domination. This, however, did not prevented them from continuing to support authoritarian governments such as those of Egypt, Jordan, and Singapore.

Democracy only becomes the best of political regimes once a country has achieved its capitalist revolution and when the appropriation of the economic surplus is no longer made through the States direct control, but through profits made in the competitive market. Before this happens, democracy will be unfeasible or very unstable, because the oligarchy knows that if it loses power in elections, it may lose everything. Probably because of that, all presently developed countries only achieved their transition to democracy after they have completed their capitalist revolution. Honduras has definitely not completed it. But the coup in this country does not lead to economic development or to capitalist revolution only to greater dependency. In this case, the policy of demanding democracy is the right one.