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CHARLES PENNAFORTE

Antisystemic Movements and International Relations

A theoretical perspective for the
understanding of the World-System

With Foreword by Amine Ait-Chaalal





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Translated by

JUAN MARTIN GONZALEZ CABAÑAS



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**To Samanta and Sophie, my everlasting darlings;
To the Latin Americans fighting against the colonial legacy.**

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Foreword

Understanding contemporary international developments through different lenses.

Karl Marx in the first lines of his striking essay *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (*Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*), published in 1852, writes: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce”. A few lines further on he writes: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances already existing, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language”.

Historical and political dynamics lend themselves to a series of interpretations. They are sometimes convergent, sometimes divergent, sometimes com-

plementary. One of these frameworks is constituted by the writings and analyses of neo-Marxist authors. Professor Charles Pennaforte in the present book draws largely on those authors, for instance Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, Beverly Silver, Antonio Gramsci, Luciano Gruppi, Antonio Negri, Michael Hart. Immanuel Wallerstein’s contributions to the analysis of contemporary societies through the concepts of the World-Economy and World-Systems Analysis are well known. Professor Charles Pennaforte provides a clear, dense and solid synthesis of this important scientific contribution, recalling that its origins lies in François Braudel’s *Ecole des Annales*, Marxism and the Dependency theory. The process of economic globalization is studied in a precise, clear and detailed way by Professor Charles Pennaforte through the neo-Marxist perspective.

The chapter on the decline of North American primacy, i.e. of the United States,

offers a subtle and detailed analysis of the weakening of the United States in recent decades, regardless of the presidency in power in Washington. The analysis underlines the fact that the first stages of this decline took place during the Cold War. The disappearance of the Eastern bloc in Europe and then of the Soviet Union are, according to this vision, only a momentary respite or a temporary pause in the phenomenon of decline. On the scale of History, just a brief moment... The post-Cold War phase marks a deepening of this phenomenon of decline, including in the sphere of soft power. The Presidencies of George W. Bush and Donald Trump have largely contributed to this process of dereliction.

George W. Bush presidency dragged the United States into long, harsh and costly wars with devastating consequences in terms of credibility and reputation, particularly in light of the violations of human rights, with the atrocities committed in the prisons of Guatnamo Bay, Bagram and Abu Ghraib, among many others. Donald Trump presidency has been characterized by excesses, amateurism, fool-

ishness and extreme (or even extremist, according to some analysts) tones. It was up to President Barack Obama to try to repair the many mistakes of his predecessor and to President Joe Biden to do the same with his predecessor's heavy legacy. But it is difficult to erase the discredit, the discontent, the loss of reputation and, above all, the damages and the disasters on the ground.

Professor Charles Pennaforte analysis underlines how this decline is also economic, which contributes to redistribute the cards on a global scale. In this context, the mention of the alter-globalization movement is particularly useful and fruitful. The analysis rightly reminds us that one of the starting points of the process took place, very symbolically, in the United States and, moreover, during an event highly linked to globalization, i.e. a meeting of the World Trade Organization that took place in Seattle in 1999. This movement, which had perhaps slipped under the radar of certain observers, became, at that time, very visible, very determined and was able to embody another vision of the world.

Professor Charles Pennaforte approach then leads him to study U.S. foreign policy in Latin America in its various dimensions, in particular the support, more or less official or discreet, to coups d'Etat in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The analysis also offers an interpretation of Venezuela under the presidency of Hugo Chavez. Like any analysis of Hugo Chavez, it may induce either approval or disapproval, as well as all the intermediate nuances. Each

reader will be able to form his or her own opinion, based on the elements and analyses provided by Professor Charles Pennaforte.

The last chapter offers a stimulating and original analysis of the BRICS as an anti-system dynamic. Consequently, the reading of Professor Charles Pennaforte's book is particularly invigorating because it opens several fields of reflection, analysis and questioning. The book mobilizes a very dense bibliographic corpus and it is part of a school of thought of international relations that has produced high-level works. Professor Charles

Pennaforte's book allows us to (re)discover authors whose analyses are somewhat less classical and traditional than those usually used in the study of international relations in the 21st century. In this regard, his book constitutes a solid, strong and stimulating basis for debate, for discussion, for reflection. After reading it, it is up to each reader to extend and prolong these debates, discussions and reflections...

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Introduction

This present essay is a return by this author to the analysis of antisystemic movements proposed back in 2013 in the field of international relations when the performance of Venezuela by Hugo Chávez in Latin America and his oil diplomacy was reviewed (PENNAFORTE, 2013). Therefore, this work is an update (and a translation into English from its Portuguese Edition in 2020¹), and simultaneously a presentation of other conclusions that this author has elaborated on until 2022, with the aim to understand the current world scenario from the antisystemic action of international actors against the other centers of power of capitalism.

Before, however, I must point out two colleagues who have been essential for the realization of this current re-reading of the antisystemic movements: professors Dr. Ricardo Luigi and Elói Martins Senhores. Prof. Luigi was largely responsible for my theoretical encounter with World-Systems Analysis (WSA) more than a decade ago and encouraged the current version of the text. It was up to Professor Senhoras the critical reading and suggestions made. To both my gratitude. I would also like to point out that the book is directed both to the general public interested in the subject, as well as to undergraduate students in International Relations, Social Sciences, Economics, Geography, and other related areas.

But what is the purpose of this book? To understand the current geopolitical, economic, social, and international relations dynamics from a critical dimension.

To understand the “background” of the current capitalist systemic transformations we adopt the theoretical point of view WSA (World-System Analysis) of Immanuel Wallerstein and the

Systemic Cycles of Accumulation of Giovanni Arrighi, as well as the approaches of Antonio Gramsci.

The WSA emerged as an important analytical tool for understanding what has been occurring within the capitalist system since the end of World War II. The historical macro-sociological perspective (Historical and Comparative Sociology and the Political Economy of World-Systems), although criticized for taking into account only the “economicist” aspects has a broad spectrum that we consider relevant.

The Marxist tradition of seeking the comprehension of totality is put into evidence in the WSA by approaching capitalist logic as a historical system that underlies the civilizational process². Thus, in our opinion is a fundamental tool to understand contemporary phenomenon in economics, politics, and international relations by analyzing them from the understanding of capitalism as a social and historical system. That is, encompassing not only economic aspects for the understanding of the current momentum but also the internal dynamics of each country and the relations between states.

At this point, we believe that the WSA sheds important light on understanding the relative weakening of the US in global terms, both ideological and geopolitical as well as economic. Such a process would explain, in our opinion, the emergence of antisystemic movements in the interstate system, of which Venezuela was an example. And today, we can glimpse similar roles of Beijing and Moscow.

The 2008 crisis highlighted the structural problems of the current capitalist crisis: the permanent absence of minimal control over capital flows, despite the numerous systemic crises over time derived from this factor. We should mention that such a problem was already addressed by Immanuel Wallerstein and Giovanni Arrighi for at least a decade.

We would like to clarify that we did not make a linear transposition of the theoretical scopes of Gramsci, Wallerstein, or Arrighi. As in a dialectical process, we identified compatible aspects and improvements of the approaches used by the authors to create a differentiated reading of the theme we proposed.

Thus, our book will address the US economic and ideological decline perspective (Wallerstein/Arrighi), passive revolution, and “Piedmontese function” (Gramsci) for the study of Venezuela as key concepts in this book, which will be *a priori* exposed in Chapter 1: “*Understanding the current world scenario: a theoretical perspective*”.

In the next chapter we will proceed with the analysis of the decline and crisis of the North - American “hegemony” in Chapter 2: “*The Decline of the North - American Primacy*”. The “eagle landing” advocated by Wallerstein, despite having been pointed out as “without concrete economic data” in the early 1990s, today seems perfectly plausible³.

Our goal in this chapter is to approach the North-American relative decay process from important facts in capitalist dynamics, such as: the Fordist crisis of the 1970s, the emergence of post-Fordism as a response to this crisis; the consolidation of Asia as a major systemic competitor from the 1980s; the factors that led to the loss of primacy by the US and, finally, the economic crisis of 2008, which had as epicenter Wall Street and continues with its structural effects to this day. Economic and ideological weakening would facilitate the emergence of “challenging” countries to the traditional status quo preached by Washington.

In Chapter 3: “*Antisystemic Movements in the World-System*”, we draw a historical retrospective of the emergence of antisystemic movements from the emergence of the term created by Immanuel Wallerstein to classify political and social movements in Europe, and its idiosyncrasies that originated in the nineteenth century and reached the period of confrontation of the bipolar world. With the collapse of bipolarity in the early 1990s, such movements have undergone constitutive changes since 1999 within the dynamics of antiglobalization according to Wallerstein.

The understanding of Chavist Venezuela as a country that fits within an interstate antisystemic movement was the result of the failure of the neoliberal model in that country. The search for new alternatives to this model is what allowed the arrival of Hugo Chávez to power at the end of the 20th century.

Concluding the book in Chapter 4 “*The BRICS: antisystemic action*”, in which we will analyse of the antisystemic role of China and Russia in the face of Washington’s attempts to re-dictate its interests in the capitalist international scenario along the lines of the Cold War and the two countries refuse to accept such a perspective.

Understanding the present world scenario: a theoretical perspective

I still believe that the World-System analysis, is in the first place a protest against the forms in which social science is presented today, and including here the scope of its way of theorizing.

— Immanuel Wallerstein (apud Rojas, 2007, p. 14)

The capitalist reality can be analyzed under the most diverse theoretical-ideological perspectives. And it has been over time. Our proposal here is to maintain a tradition linked to Marxism without, however, falling into the orthodox perspective. Thus, capitalism and its contradictions will be evaluated in the light of the perspective of the World-System (World Economy) proposed by I. Wallerstein. Regarding specifically the capitalist economy, the theoretical basis presented by Arrighi based on the Systemic Cycles of Accumulation will be used. From the authorship of Gramsci, the concepts of Hegemony and Passive Revolution will be used.

The Crisis of “Hegemony”⁴ of the USA will be of great importance for understanding our research, because we will try to make an articulation of this crisis and the rise of new anti-hegemonic/antisystemic groups in Latin America.

1.1 State, Hegemony and Passive Revolution

The understanding of capitalist development must be realized through an analysis of the role of the State as a *sine qua non* condition for the development of capitalism and consequent reproduction of capital. Thus, State and Hegemony under the Gramscian perspective are inseparable. Arrighi for example stated that in international relations the concept of “World Hegemony” [...] “refers to the power that a State has to exercise governmental functions over a system of sovereign States”⁵.

Arrighi and Silver deepen the aspects of Hegemony demonstrating the complexity of its construction. This process would involve several aspects pointed out by the authors:

[...] Hegemony is therefore something more and also different than pure and simple domination; is the additional power that accumulates to a dominant group by virtue of its ability to lead society in a direction that not only serves the interests of the dominant group, but is also perceived by subordinate groups as serving a more general interest, is the inverse of the notion of “Power Deflation” used by Talcott Parsons to designate situations in which government control cannot be exercised except by widespread use or threat of force. If subordinate groups trust their rulers, systems of domination can be governed without resorting to force. But if that confidence diminishes, they can’t. By analogy, it can be said that Gramsci’s notion of hegemony consists of the “power inflation” resulting from the ability of the dominant groups to credibly present their rule, serving not only their interests, but also subordinate groups. When such credibility is lacking, we will speak of “dominance without hegemony” [...] when we talk about leadership in an international context, the term is used to designate two very different phenomena. On the other hand, the term is used to designate the fact that, by virtue of its conquests, a dominant state becomes the “model” for other states to imitate and thereby attracts them to their path of development (ARRIGHI; SILVER, 1999, p. 26-27).

North-American primacy within the international system must be visualized through the logic of transforming its (capitalist) interests as “universal values”. It is therefore something more elaborate than “pure and simple domination”, as Arrighi (2007, p. 228) states. An important expert on the Gramscian work, Luciano Gruppi directs his analysis to the same point of understanding the concept of Hegemony:

[...] the concept of Hegemony is presented by Gramsci in all its amplitude, that is, as something that operates not only on the economic structure and on the political organization of society, but also about the way of thinking, about ideological orientations and even about the way of knowing (GRUPPI, 2000, p. 3).

In this frame, the role of the historical bloc is of fundamental importance to maintain the cohesion of power both internally and internationally⁶ (GRAMSCI, 1971, p. 180-195 apud COX, 2007, p. 112). The supremacy and acceptance of a nation as “hegemonic” is associated with its ability to influence other nations “positively” in the international concept.

According to Arrighi, using the reflections of Antonio Gramsci:

[...] The concept of “world hegemony” adopted here, however, refers specifically to the ability of a state to exercise leadership and government functions over a system of sovereign nations. In principle, that power may involve only the ordinary management of that system, as established at a given time. Historically, however, the government of a system of sovereign states has always implied some kind of transformative action that fundamentally changed the way the system works (ARRIGHI, 1996, p. 27).

The US as such has that characteristic aspect, an aspect that facilitates the implementation of their interests and desires, placing them as a “collective interest”.

Robert Cox in his approach to the creation of this “collective interest” and the relationship between historical bloc and hegemony points out that:

[...] a historical bloc cannot exist without a hegemonic social class. In a country or in a social formation in which the hegemonic class is the ruling class, the state (in Gramsci’s expanded concept) maintains cohesion and identity within the bloc by propagating a common class (COX, 2007, p. 111).

The “solution” to create real alternatives to capitalism at the national level, that is, the control of the State as a way to beat capitalist logic, should not be understood as a simple “assault on power”, in a “Blanquist” perspective. Taking control of the State within the capitalist dynamics and using it as a stage within the process of overcoming the capitalist model assumes extremely important characteristics.

On the dilemmas for the construction of states under a non-bourgeois leadership, Cox points out such problems and difficulties:

[...] To build the foundations of an alternative state and society under the leadership of the working class means to create alternative institutions and intellectual resources from an existing one and build bridges between the workers and the other subordinate classes. It actively means a counter-hegemony within an established hegemony, while at the same time increasing resistance against pressures and temptations to fall back on the pursuit of incremental gains for subordinate groups within the structures of bourgeois hegemony. This is the line that separates the *position war* as a long-term revolutionary strategy and social democracy as a policy for obtaining gains within the established order (COX, 2007, p. 107).

1.2 World-System analysis

The theoretical proposal developed by Wallerstein in the last 30 years is of great importance for the understanding of capitalism today, whose great contribution is the World-Systems Analysis (WSA). The construction of the WSA has three important influences on its constitution: the Annales School, Marxism, and Dependency Theory⁸.

In his explanation of the current World System, Wallerstein notes its origins in the crisis of the feudal system and the Western European census of supremacy between 1450 and 1670.

On the contemporary World-System, Wallerstein explains that:

[...] A world-system is not the system of the world, but a system that is a world and that can be and has often been located in an area smaller than the entire globe. An analysis of world systems states that the units of social reality within which we operate, whose rules restrict us, are mostly such systems-worlds (VOIGT, 2007, p. 110).

The theorist also pointed to the existence of two types of World Systems: world empires and world-economies. The differentiation between the two types of world systems would occur because the world empires would be a large bureaucratic structure with political centralization and a central division of labor, coexisting multiple cultures.

The World-Economy, on the contrary, would be characterized by a large central division of labor, and numerous political centers maintaining the coexistence of multiple cultures. Wallerstein's analysis of capitalist expansion since the 16th century states that:

[...] in the world in which we are now inserted, the modern World-System had its origins in the sixteenth century. This World-System was then located in only one part of the globe, mainly in regions of Europe and the Americas. It has expanded over the years and reached the entire globe. It is, and

always has been, a world economy. It is and always has been a capitalist world economy (VOIGT, 2007, p. 111).

Thus, Capitalism is understood as a modern social system, a world-economy, which has numerous political institutions (states), which dispute the hegemony of the system. In the WSA the definition of hegemony would be coupled with the systemic cycles of accumulation, which we will address later.

At this point, it would be of great importance to observe the discussion made by Antonio Negri and Michel Hardt in 2000 with their joint work “Empire” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2006). Undoubtedly the authors sought to shed new light on the current configuration of power within the capitalist system. Specifically, Negri and Hardt states that:

[...] this change makes it perfectly clear and possible the current capitalist project of uniting economic power with political power, to materialize, in other words, a conveniently capitalist order. In constitutional terms, globalization processes are no longer just a fact, but also a source of legal definitions that tends to project a single, supranational configuration of political power (HARDT; NEGRI, 2006, p. 26-27).

This work disagrees with the idea of theorists who defend Globalization as something relatively new (HARDT; NEGRI, 2006, p. 26). The process of Globalization is intrinsic to the development of capitalism, a sine qua non condition for its reproduction. Marx already affirmed in the nineteenth century on the necessity of the bourgeoisie to achieve new markets and conditions that would facilitate the reproduction of capital⁹.

According to Hardt and Negri:

[...] the new paradigm is defined by the definitive decline of sovereign nation-states, the deregulation of international corporations, the end of the antagonistic conflict between independent entities, and so on (HARDT; NEGRI, 2006, p. 31).

Both Arrighi and Silver, in their book *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System* (ARRIGHI; SILVER, 2006, p. 8), states that:

[...] The thesis that globalization weakens states has also been challenged by critics who focus on the long-term concerns of the phenomenon and see a lot of déjà vu in the alleged novelties of recent changes in capital-state relations. Wallerstein went so far as to argue that the basic relationship between states and capital has remained the same throughout capitalist history, with “transnational corporations maintaining today the same structural position concerning states as all their global predecessors, from the Fuggers to the Dutch East India Company to 19th century Manchester manufacturers” (Wallerstein, 1995c, 24-25). More common is the statement that the transformations that are under the heading of “globalization” originate in the nineteenth century. “If globalization theorists emphasize that we have an economy in which every part of the world is linked by markets that share real-time information,” argues Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson, “then it began not in the 1970s, but in the 1870s” (1996, 9-10).

What we argue is that the analysis must be systemic and not based on the existence, *a priori*, of the nation-state; or on its decline, *a posteriori*. We do not agree either with the view that we are moving from a “post-imperialist” period to an “Imperial” period, as the authors argue¹⁰. The major phase change we are going through would be the transition to a new systemic cycle of accumulation, as we will see below.

1.3 The systemic cycles of accumulation

With his book *The Long Twentieth Century*¹¹, Giovanni Arrighi provided important insights for the WSA. His contribution occurred in the analysis of hegemony under Gramscian inspiration and the cycles of capitalist accumulation. Arrighi was adept, like

Wallerstein of the Kondratieff waves, theoretical elaboration of the Russian economist Nikolai Kondratieff in the 1920s. The economist's thesis for capitalism was that its development was based on cycles¹².

Under the inspiration of the Kondratieff Cycles, the capitalist system for Arrighi would have gone through four systemic cycles of integration and expansion: 1) Genoese, 2) Dutch, 3) British and 4) North-American.

The systemic cycles of capital accumulation constitute a partially overlapping chain of stages, through which the European capitalist economy transformed the world economy into an intense system of exchange. The superposition of these cycles occurs in the passage from one to the other, that is, while a cycle is approaching its end, at the same time another systemic cycle of accumulation begins to shape. This phase of superposition occurs during the so-called financial turmoil of the cycle that is coming to an end¹³.

By this way, the great material and financial expansions would occur when a dominant bloc had enough accumulation to dominate the world system that, when it reaches its end, would provoke the hegemonic change in power. When this occurs, a new systemic cycle of accumulation begins.

Arrighi corroborates that the most important and perennial contribution to the development of capitalism as a world system finds in the realm of high finance, during the Italian Renaissance of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, which is the period of its emergence.

The first systemic cycle, the Genoese, according to Arrighi, is explained from Fernand Braudel. In that period "the maturity of all the major developments of the world capitalist economy is heralded by a peculiar shift from commodity trading to currency trading (ARRIGHI, 1996, p. 111).

Genoese financial capitalism developed in the second half of the 16th century. According to Arrighi:

[...] As competitive pressures intensified and there was an escalation in the power struggle, the surplus capital, which no longer found profitable investments in trade, was kept in a state of liquidity and used to finance the growing public debt of the city-state, whose future wealth and revenue were thus more complacently alienated than ever to their respective capitalist classes (ARRIGHI, 1996, p. 112).

Advancing on the approach of the Genoese accumulation cycle, Arrighi pointed out that this period was the maximum point of capitalist expansion:

[...] a major material expansion of the European world economy, through the establishment of new trade routes and the incorporation of new areas of commercial exploitation was accompanied by a financial expansion that accentuated capital control over an enlarged world economy. Moreover, a clearly identifiable capitalist class (the Genoese) encouraged, supervised, and was responsible for the two expansions, by virtue of a capital accumulation structure that, for the most part, had already come into existence when material expansion began (ARRIGHI, 1996, p. 129-130).

For Arrighi, this pattern would be the “systemic cycle of accumulation”. The Genoese capitalists would be the precursors in the sixteenth century of this pattern, a fact that would occur three more times¹⁴. After the Genoese cycle came, subsequently, the Dutch cycle, the British cycle, and the American cycle, of interest in the elaboration of this work, After the Genoese cycle came, subsequently, the Dutch cycle, the British cycle and the North-American cycle, are of interest in the elaboration of this work because they would be the expansion of the modern world system that occurred during almost the entire twentieth century and would go into crisis in the 1970s.

We would be therefore living the crisis of the systemic cycle of accumulation, a fact that would favor the emergence of new an-

tisystemic perspectives for overcoming the current phase. From such perspectives of transformation of the current accumulation cycle, Wallerstein argues out that:

[...] We are going through a transition in our current World-System, the capitalist world economy will be shifting into another system - or other - world-System. We do not know whether this change will be for the better or worse. And we won't know until we get there, a process that can take about 50 years from the moment we are. We know, however, that the transition period will be a difficult period for all who experience it (WALLERSTEIN, 2003, p. 49).

1.4 The capitalist world-economy

The current capitalist world economy (world system) with origins according to Wallerstein, in the crisis of the feudal system and the rise of Western Europe to global supremacy between 1450 and 1670, as we have already analyzed above. The previous hegemony, the British one, was characterized by a continuous process of expansion, restructuring, and financial reorganization of the capitalist world economy. Periods of financial expansion were times when competitive pressures on both governments and businesses and trade increased. These dynamics favored the English industrial expansion, which retained its global economic supremacy until the beginning of the twentieth century.

After the British hegemonic collapse, the US emerged as the main economic power and, after World War II, achieved technological and military supremacy during the Cold War, and became a *hyper-power* after the collapse of the socialist bloc in 1989 and with the end of the USSR in 1991.

The capitalist World-Economy expresses an unequal and hierarchical relationship between nations, a fact that provides a subdivision within its own system. For its better understanding, we believe that the so-called Dependency Theory¹⁵ is the most

elucidative having as background a systemic analysis. According to Wallerstein:

The world economies are then divided into central states and peripheral areas [...] there are also semi-peripheral areas that are between the core and the periphery in several dimensions, such as the complexity of economic activities, the strength of machines, cultural integrity, etc, some of these areas had been core areas of previous versions of a given world economy. Some were peripheral areas that were later promoted, if I may say so, as a result of the geopolitical shift of an expanding world economy.

The semi-periphery, however, is not a statistical device of statistical cuts, nor is it a residual category. The semi-periphery is a structural element of a world economy. These areas play a parallel role, *mutatis mutandis*, by intermediate groups in an empire [...] (WALLERSTEIN, 2011, p. 349).

According to the Dependency Theory, capitalism would be based on an interdependent structure: the Core, the Semiperiphery, and the Periphery. The systemic position of each nation would be determined to a large extent by the development capacity of its social and economic forces.

The Center of the system is configured by a high concentration of wealth and high technological development in all economic sectors. National and international trade is of great scope and an important source of resources for the financial maintenance of the Center. This area of the system would correspond to the former European metropolises, USA and Japan.

The periphery of the system has opposite conditions: low technological and social development. Its economic dynamics are based on the production of agricultural products and mineral extraction, that is, low-value-added products. In general, this area would be composed of the former colonies.

Since the 1970s competition between the central countries and the semi-periphery has intensified with comparative advan-

tages for the second group of countries. Such advantages were specific to semi-peripheral countries, notably the Asian Tigers and China.

With this configuration, the capitalist world economy under North - American rule has reached the 21st century in yet another systemic cyclical crisis, which began in the 1970s and has come to the present time.

1.5 The crisis of the Fordist production system

In the previous item, we mentioned that the current US-led Systemic Accumulation Cycle is going through a period of crisis. This process reflects the inherent characteristic of the capitalist system, that is, economic crises are part of the systemic dynamics.

The crisis of the Fordist production system began in the late 1960s. The purchasing power of the workers grew at a higher rate and, consequently, the rates of profits fell. International competition intensified, with the inclusion of Latin America and the countries of Southeast Asia, causing the fall of the dollar, the world reserve currency, and, consequently, increasing the North-American fiscal problem. One of the solutions found was the dismissal of workers. However, the rigidity of the employment contract overloaded the collection of the Welfare State¹⁶.

The First Oil Shock (1973) further contributed to the decline of Fordism. The extraction of income from oil accelerated this first consequence: the crisis of labor organization – investment crisis – the crisis of the Welfare state (LEBORGNE; LIPIETZ, 1990, p. 22).

Fordism and Keynesian economic regulation, in the period of eight years (1965 to 1973), failed to solve these problems, therefore persisting the intrinsic problem of capitalism¹⁷. With these contradictions began the transition from Fordism to Post-Fordism¹⁸.

1.6 The Post-Fordism

The crisis process of the Fordist system of production triggered a series of experiments aimed at giving a “new lease of life” to the capitalist system. What marks Post-Fordism is the opposition to the Fordist paradigm; that is, its rigidity and the consequent lack of credibility and “flexibility”.

The Fordist production process was flexible, dismantling everything that existed until then. The reality revealed a technological revolution whose main goal was to reverse the picture of the Fordist crisis: the fall of productivity and profitability. Tavares explains that:

[...] Contrary to the rigidity that characterized Taylorism - Fordism, new technologies seek to obtain maximum flexibility concerning production processes, designs, and products, as well as the occupation of the workforce (TAVARES, 1993, p. 41).

Flexible accumulation has met the rigidity of Fordist by introducing new labour markets and making labour processes more flexible, but specifically [...] by the emergence of entirely new production sectors, new levels of financial services provision, new markets, and, above all, highly intensified rates of commercial, technological and organizational innovation (HARVEY, 1992, p. 140).

Leborgne and Lipietz pointed out, however, some problems with the use of these technological innovations. System failures, obsolete machines, and maintenance costs must be taken into account. But even so, they point out that:

The main feature of the current technological revolution is the invasion of the microprocessor and electronic interfaces not only in new products, but also in the working process itself: microelectronics redefines the very meaning of automation (LEBORGNE; LIPIETZ, 1990, p. 25).

In the midst of this new capitalist dynamic, Post-Fordism was body-to-body, provoking a great re-articulation at all social and economic levels. Labor relations and industrial structure followed the new rhythm. Flexibility is characterized by the organization of work, technology, and new institutional structures that have emerged. The patterns of consecration were fragmented and privatized; the vertical disintegration took the momentum and the small and medium specialized producers.

The new foundations of capitalist competitive dynamics have changed, that is, the axis of this competition has migrated from price to new models of products adapted to the market. The markets have become unpredictable and volatile, causing a differentiated production and adequate to the new reality. Production sought to occupy these lucrative niches (BODY, 1990, p. 46).

Post-Fordism aimed to live with the current saturation of the economy based on Fordist practices and selectivity; *hence the variety of types and sizes offered* (TAVARES, 1993). Thus, there is an increase in the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises, favoring exchange, subcontracting, and other interdependent relationships.

With the reduction of profit margins, the contractors sought “flexibility” in the labor relations, aiming to recompose the profitability optimum. As we have already pointed out, the Fordist rigidity contributed to the decline of this accumulation model, and “the way out” among others, was to attack the employment contract.

The rigid relationship underwent a major change, where the mode of re-regulation (the Welfare State) was gradually dismantled. The former stability of the employment contract has been undermined by the weakening of trade union power and surplus labour due to the crisis (HARVEY, 1992, p. 143).

The former regular type of work was occupied by temporary, partial, and even subcontracted work. If in Fordism the worker did not participate in the manufacturing process, in Post-Fordism the opposite occurred: it regroups what Taylorism had dichotomized, that is, the manual and intellectual aspects of labor (LEBORGNE; LIPIETZ, 1990, p. 26).

1.7 Asia as a competitive opponent

The Fordist crisis caused, as we mentioned earlier, the need to seek competitive and locational advantages that would overcome the drop in profits. The high cost of labor and strict environmental legislation, for example, were important components of the fall in profitability. The reality found by the employer class to overcome this problem was extremely difficult to solve within Western central capitalist societies.

The high level of politicization and trade union organization had made the labor movement extremely strong and cohesive in defending Keynesian guarantees, especially in Europe. If the solution to the fall in profitability was to reduce costs, it was necessary to find a way to implement this measure. If Post-Fordism was one of the “exits”, however, it failed to reach all European countries, becoming strong in England under Margaret Thatcher and across the Atlantic, in the USA under Ronald Reagan.

Asia emerged as an important alternative to the problem of Western capitalism. Taking Japan¹⁹ as an example, the country was in the process of economic recovery with the adoption of technology in the production process and union conditions more favorable to capital than in relation to the West. Without a trade union organization comparable to the Europeans, it was possible to achieve greater profitability.

On the socialist side, transformations were verified through the development of the Cultural Revolution²⁰ in China, which would have important impacts on the world capitalist economy in the following decades. The end of the Cultural Revolution emerged as a possibility for Western countries to solve their problem (fall in profitability) from the 1980s by virtue of the social and economic transformations that would occur in China.

After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, China entered a process of social and economic transformation, consolidated in 1978 under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping. The withdrawal of China from the Soviet orbit, in the 1960s, precipitated the ap-

proach of the red giant with the West still under the leadership of Mao Zedong²¹.

In the late 1970s, the new communist leadership launched the Program of the Four Modernizations (agriculture, industry, technology, and national defense) to promote the economic and social development of the country, facing a new geopolitical reality faced: their autonomous position within the socialist bloc opposing the USSR.

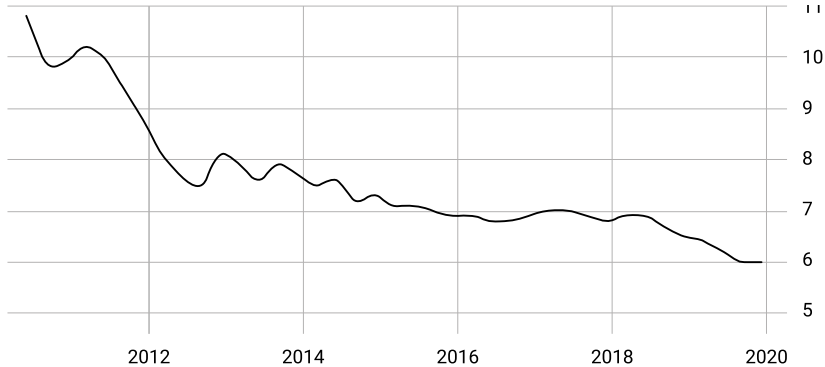
The leaders of the post-Mao era had as imperative to promote the industrial development of the country and for this were necessary investments and technology. On the western side, China presented itself as an important area of opportunity. Western investments would be important for the creation of an industrial park and for the technological transfer that would transform China in the following decades.

With the approach to the West from 1978 China became an important supplier of labor for the elaboration of North-American and European products that sought solutions for the increase of production costs generated by Fordism and the inflation of the 1970s. The creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZ) to host foreign industries and facilitate the export of production was one of the great achievements of Chinese leaders in the Deng Xiaoping era.

However, Chinese growth and dynamism exceeded the best expectations of analysts and researchers around the world. The Chinese have managed over the decades to create their own domestic market, create their own companies and export their own products, becoming a country of great importance within the capitalist World-System. This dynamism came to rival the central capitalist countries. Between 1980 and 2004, real Chinese GDP growth averaged 9.5%, making the country the sixth economy in the world, and in 1980 its share was 1% (ECON SOUTH, 2011, online).

Between 2005 and 2015 China increased its global share from 9.31% to 18% (CNI, 2018, online). Between 1990 and 2000 the av-

erage growth was about 10% (CORREIO BRAZILIENSE, 2017, online). In recent years the Chinese economy has been losing its former strength as we can see in the chart below:



Source: Trading Economics, 2020, online. **Adaptation by** Franciane Medeiros.

A more detailed study of the Asian Ascension is available in the books “Adam Smith in Beijing” (ARRIGHI, 2008) and “Workers of the World at Century’s End” (in its chapter “The Rise of East Asia: A Miracle or Many?”) by Giovanni Arrighi.

Still in the 1980s, the Japanese economy with its great growth favored the economic expansion of Asia by inserting countries in the process of industrialization. “The Spillover” of its economy, that is, the need for manpower and space, caused new countries to benefit from capitalist logic.

The Japanese moved some of their factories to countries such as South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, to obtain cheaper labor and land costs, and less strict labor and environmental legislation. As with the Chinese in the late 1990s, countries like South Korea have become global competitors by producing and developing their brands in the world market. As we can see, the Asian force is an example of the challenges faced by the US to maintain its leadership in the economic field.

The decline of the North-American primacy

Historically, the primacy²² of the United States began with the world recession of 1873, when its economy grew sharply while the British economy entered an inflection. In the period between 1873 and 1914, for example, the US and Germany became the main producers of steel and chemicals, demonstrating the industrial strength of the North- American economy. The quest for primacy, whether economic and/or military, has become a natural process. Arrighi notes that:

A dominant state exerts a hegemonic function when it leads the system of states in the desired direction and is thus perceived as seeking a general interest. It is this kind of leadership that makes a dominant state hegemonic (ARRIGHI, 1996, p. 29).

Washington's foreign policy in the second half of the 19th century sought to establish its domination over its immediate periphery, namely Central America and the Caribbean, and subsequently to increase its influence over South America.

In addition to preventing the influence of Europeans through the Monroe Doctrine, the United States guaranteed its economic and political influence on the American continent.

World War II provided an opportunity for the US to decisively influence the international system. The position after the conflict was privileged for the Americans, as they had not directly suffered the catastrophic effects of the war, its territory suffered no damage unlike Europe and Asia. The North-American economy

can keep its production pace practically intact during the war and at the same time became a major supplier of industrial goods and credits to Europe.

With the defeat of Nazism, communism became the main obstacle to the primacy of the US on the international stage. The conversion of China to communism in 1949, North Korea in 1950, and Vietnam in 1975 were big blows to the capitalist World-Economy in Asia. Not to mention Eastern Europe under Soviet rule since 1945

However, its role in the reconstruction of Japan and Western Europe, for example, allowed the North-Americans to find important loopholes to keep communism away from their main allies. The containment of communism mainly in Asia was successful, but the consequences of the success of this process would be disastrous over time, especially in the economic aspect.

According to Wallerstein, America's post-war success as a prominent power has caused its own decay:

The success of the USA as a hegemonic power in the post-war period created the conditions for its own hegemony to be undermined. This process can be captured in four symbols: the war in Vietnam, the revolutions of 1968, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the terrorist attacks of September 2001. Each symbol adds to the previous one, culminating in the situation in which the US finds itself today: a lone superpower that lacks real power, a world leader that no one follows and few respects, and a dangerously adrift nation, immersed in global chaos that can't be controlled (WALLERSTEIN, 2004, p. 25).

Wallerstein provides a perspective of primacy in the current World-System based on the perspective of expansion of competition as a factor creating "rivalries" that would cause the "Cycles of Hegemony". The four events pointed out by Wallerstein would represent every moment of what would be the decline of American power, the "eagle landing".

Washington's failure in Indochina signaled an inflection in the country's military dimension. As a major rival of the USSR and with considerable nuclear capacity, the country failed to combat the Vietnamese national liberation movement. On the contrary, it succumbed to the guerrilla tactics of an army created under peasant bases and with low-sophistication military capabilities and asymmetrical warfare tactics led by the legendary General Vo Nguyen Giap (1911-2013). The military defeat in Vietnam had a high cost of lives and the demonstration that the world's greatest power was not invincible.

The student rebellions of May 1968 (or according to Wallerstein "Revolutions of 1968") caused the emergence of counterculture movements in a capitalist society that repudiated the militaristic and ideological logic of Capitalism-Socialism dispute advocated by Washington. In the late 1960s, the ideological blocs showed signs of saturation by not presenting concrete proposals for overcoming economic, social, and political inequality.

Within the capitalist Bloc, countless countries around the world would be living or would be living under dictatorial right-wing regimes supported by the US. On this side, the goal was to prevent communist advancement or social and economic transformations in archaic structures.

On the side led by the USSR, the promise of "liberation from capitalist oppression" generated regimes of force that did not differ much from the right-wing capitalist regimes around the world. The "People's Republics", based on work and its alienation, whose added value was appropriated by the socialist state, kept the workers tied to the irrational logic of their accumulation.

According to Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein, the first aspect would be the realization that oppression as a form of effective control of antisystemic movements was losing its effectiveness in the political process of the capitalist world system in the late 19th century and the beginning of the XX century.

The repression of the 1956 Hungarian Revolt²³ and the suffocation of the Prague Spring itself in 1968²⁴ are reflections of

the failure of the Soviet model of social and economic organization. It would not make much sense to use the dichotomy Capitalism - Socialism on the part of the USA or the USSR to maintain and justify its control over its ideological bloc by all lawful and illicit means.

Another sign of the decline pointed out by Wallerstein of Washington was the end of the socialist bloc in 1989 and in 1991 of the USSR itself, which dismantled the logic of the Cold War that had generated a “comfort zone” for Washington’s foreign policy in which all means were allowed to maintain its primacy.

Without the Cold War, the ideological control of the US lost meaning and the countries could “free themselves” and draw up their foreign policies without relying on the ideological character of the communist enemy.

The fourth indicative of the decline of the primacy of the United States would be the attacks of september 2001, which demonstrated that the most likely nation in the world was not sure against the effects of its belligerent international geopolitical action, for example, unrestricted support for Israel against the Palestinians in the Middle East.

We could point out a fifth symbol of the weakening of primacy: the George W. Bush administration. The performance of George W. Bush (2001-2009) after the September 11 attacks represented the international decline of US acceptance as a nation defending “universal values” (ideological dimension) such as democracy and human rights.

For us, what would have contributed to this situation was the elaboration of a warmongering speech against the “enemies” of the US through the document of the United States National Security Strategy (2002), known as the “Bush Doctrine”, which “justified” the US to disrespect international law and make “preventive wars”. Thus the Bush Era totally eroded North American geoculture²⁵ from the ideological point of view (Soft Power). Of former “Defenders of the Free World”, the US has come to be associated with oppression and torture, a “World Villain”.

Barack Obama (2009-2017) tried to regain the North-American image during his terms, however an interregnum for the rise of Donald Trump (2017) and his populist, racist and belligerent policy. In practice, the US image maintains the decline of its Soft Power.

Donald Trump's (2017-2022) action against Latino immigrants, separating parents and children after prison at the borders, and the accusations of North- American human rights organizations for the existence of concentration camps with illegal immigrants in 2018, provoked internal and international protests. Another stain on the country's democratic discourse.

Two aspects of the decline of the USA can be summarized by the binomial military spending (despite the end of the Cold War) and the ideological weakening of the capitalist system as a "free society", which together express this image. The fact is that without the old clash of the Cold War the US was alone on the global stage, and to exercise its power, now widely questioned, had to use *Hard Power* more incisively.

Of course, we cannot defend the idea of an "End of Capitalism" in the manner advocated by orthodox Marxists in the first half of the twentieth century. The process is complex and has numerous variables. However, it is occurring under the bases so far demonstrated.

An important variable is the economic field, where North-American decline has been further exacerbated since 2008. The crisis occurred in the same year, which began with the total deregulation of the financial sector of the country contaminated the global economy and caused the bankruptcy of numerous North-American banks, and ruined the lives of millions of workers not only in the US but also in Europe. According to statistics, the US has more than half a million homeless despite the economic recovery and low unemployment in the Donald Trump administration until the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 (DUFFIN, 2021, online).

The fact is that through a more detailed analysis of the factors that caused the global financial crisis, its beginning was due to defaults on mortgage payments in the United States. Low-interest

rates and over-lending in the US market were an invitation to increased consumption in the US.

The stimulus to finance the purchase of own houses created a real estate boom, especially among the low-income population of the United States. To finance these new buyers, banks raised funds in the market by offering financial instruments linked to real estate mortgages.

On the other hand, interest rates rose again in the US to increase inflation. The high-interest rates caused an increase in the value of the installments of the houses, while the price of real estate inversely began to fall. Defaults increased and securities that were secured by mortgages lost value.

In September 2008, billion-dollar losses to banks and even financial institutions such as the North-American Lehman Brothers were verified. The US government injected money into the financial system to prevent further banking or financial breakdowns. On the other side of the Atlantic, the governments of Germany, France, Spain, the United Kingdom, and Portugal, among other countries, also announced billion-dollar aid to the banks.

With such a picture the crisis of confidence in the markets was inevitable, which had an impact, mainly, on the amount of money available worldwide. That is, due to the fear of defaults, the banks no longer wanted to lend money.

Therefore, to get loans, companies and also individuals began to pay much higher interest. The increase in credit has paralyzed the investment plans of companies and also caused the population to decrease consumption.

Less investment also means less ability to expand economies, because companies can no longer finance their growth. The direct result was reduced employment, which in turn decreased people's consumption capacity. The crisis scenario persisted until 2011 with the increasing effects of the crisis on countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal, Italy, and even France.

The most emblematic was the decrease of the Investment grid of the North-American economy by the agency Stand & Poor's

(05/08/2011) from AAA to AA+²⁶. Nothing that meant an economic hecatomb, but it was the first time in history that the US was demoted (downgrade). A sign that something wasn't up to standard.

Wallerstein, in a publication entitled "Twenty Years to Change the World", stated that:

Standard & Poor's reduced the credit rating of the United States from AAA to AA+, another "unheard of" fact. But this is relatively light action. China's equivalent agency, Dagong, has already reduced the United States' credibility to A+ in November, and now to A-. The Peruvian economist Oscar Ugarteche declared that the United States had become a "banana republic". He says that the country "chose the *ostrich policy* as a way of not losing hope [of improvement]". In Lima last week, the meeting of finance ministers of South American countries discussed urgent measures to isolate the region from the effects of the economic decline of the United States (WALLERSTEIN, 2011, online).

This scenario of economic and geopolitical weakening is what enables the "gaps" necessary for the emergence of challenges to North-American primacy. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century, we can observe some more emphatic contestations to the attempts of the US to impose its economic and geopolitical interests on countries such as Russia or China, and the BRICS when it comes to the creation of the New Development Bank (NDB) a possible competitor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank without the control of central countries.

In Latin America, we had found the Venezuelan case as an important example of this phenomenon since the end of the twentieth century and its reflexes until the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century. In the next chapters we will realize an analysis of Venezuela and the BRICS.

Antisystemic movements in the World-System

3.1 Antisystemic movements as an alternative in the modern world system: their origins

In the 1970s, I. Wallerstein coined the term “antisystemic movement” to agglutinate two types of historical and popular movements originated in the second half of the nineteenth century, but at the same time rivals: the “Social” and the “National” (WALLER-STEIN, 2004, p. 266).

The “social movements” would be linked to the socialist parties and trade unions, whose aim was to intensify the class struggles within each state. The “national movements”, on the other hand, were initially inserted in the construction of national states, such as the Italian case (19th century). Further ahead, in the process of decolonization in the post-war period, whose objective, on the part of the African and Asian nations, was the search for independence from the European “metropolis”.

In the work “Antisystemic Movements”, the antisystemic movements had been organized under five aspects until the 1960s:

First, opposition to oppression has been a constant of the modern World-System. However, before the middle of the 19th century, this opposition was short-term and spontaneous and, as such, largely ineffective at the system level. This innovation had important repercussions on the dynamics of the world capitalist system [...] (ARRIGHI; HOPKINS, 1989, p. 29-30).

According to Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein, the first aspect would be the realization that oppression as a form of effective control of antisystemic movements was losing its effectiveness in the political process of the capitalist world system in the late 19th century and the beginning of the XX century.

The central aspect was founded in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the Marxist perspective of the conflict between social classes. Social movements would be willing to “replace Capitalism with Socialism” (ARRIGHI; HOPKINS, 1989, p. 29-30).

The third aspect was based on the idea that social movements would control states. The fourth constituent aspect of the counter-hegemonic movements would occur due to the bankruptcy of public policies in the less developed states, the former “Third World”. And, finally, the fifth milestone: the social insertion of the less favoured classes within the system itself did not guarantee the minimum conditions of dignified survival for these people. All pillars would be a result of the following factors:

(a) reduced capacity of the First and Second World states to police the Third World; (b) a reduced capacity of dominant status groups in central countries (older generations, men, “majorities”) to explore/exclude subordinate status groups (younger generations, women, “minorities”); (c) a reduced ability of managerial strata to apply workplace labor discipline and the associated global search for “safe skies” of three of these disciplines; (d) a reduced ability of states to control their respective civil societies and the associated crisis of “bourgeoisie” [...] (ARRIGHI; HOPKINS, 1989, p. 103-106).

From a macrosystemic perspective, the central countries would not have the ability to assist the peripheral countries towards economic growth at the same time as the elites of the least developed countries, on the other hand, they would not reduce internal tensions arising from social inequalities (ARRIGHI; HOPKINS, 1989, p. 103-106). Both national and social movements entered into crisis in the late 1960s.

The 1968 world revolution was an important milestone in the configuration of the new antisystemic movements as Wallerstein states (WALLERSTEIN, 2004, p. 271). The objectives pursued by the movements in the previous period (the socialist revolution, for example), did not occur. On the contrary, it has been demonstrated that the socialist parties are becoming more democratic and that revolutionary ideals are being removed almost everywhere in the world.

From 1968 the considered “classical” antisystemic movements would be replaced by a new perspective. For Wallerstein, there have been four attempts at antisystemic movements. They were: the “Maoism”²⁷ between 1960 and 1970, the “new” social movements²⁸, human rights organizations, and, in the late 1990s, the anti-globalization movements.

By analyzing this latest movement, the protests in Seattle in 1999 at the meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), have become a milestone in the construction of a systemic front by encompassing under a single banner the social movements of different shades and, at the same time, local and transnational action groups.

The unifying factor of these movements was the fight against neoliberalism and its disastrous social effects that affected several countries across the world, from Europe to Latin America. Even so, each group maintained its immediate specificities. The unification of movements under the anti-liberal banner led to the creation of the World Social Forum (WSF) - *Fórum Social Mundial* -, which has had a large number of participants since then.

In Wallerstein’s vision we would be living in an era of antisystemic manifestations as a result of the expansion of the contradictions and tensions of capitalism on a world scale (CARVALHO, 2008, p. 216), specifically in a period of “bifurcation and chaos” (WALLERSTEIN, 2004, p. 276) from the systemic point of view. Therefore, such manifestations would be the “national liberation movements, insurgencies, proletarians, resistance and civilizational challenges, countercultures [...]” (WALLERSTEIN

apud CARVALHO, 2008, p. 216). Antisystemic movements address the current situation with well-directed objectives and, in this regard, Carvalho argued that:

Therefore, it is possible to verify, a priori, that the antisystemic movements include, currently, a series of anti-hegemonic manifestations, against capital and the neo-liberal model, seeking alternatives for the construction of a new social structure and a redefinition in the economic and political arena (CARVALHO, 2008, p. 216).

Antisystemic movements, whether micro or macro-scales, are faced with a scenario of systemic crisis and an important reality for overcoming the Contemporary World-System.

If social groups organize themselves around a “common enemy” such as neoliberalism or discrimination against minorities, from another angle, it’s possible to visualize, from a macro perspective, countries that also assume an antisystemic stance in the international arena facing the primacy of the main economic and military powers of the world.

3.2 The US and Latin America: control and rebellion

To facilitate the understanding of the origin of the performance that can be qualified as antisystemic by Venezuela, we will make a brief historical retrospective of the North-American diplomatic and military actions on the continent.

Washington’s foreign policy towards Latin America, since the last XIX century, has always been based on the maintenance of governments subservient to their interests²⁹.

Central America and the Caribbean have always been the “immediate periphery” of Washington, considering its geoeconomic location, so it would be necessary for it to be under “direct control” as a region. South America, on the other hand, would be a “distant periphery”.

Throughout history, Washington has always worked to keep the continent under its area of influence, as Santos states:

It can be said that North-American interests in the region have always moved according to their national security concerns, domestic policies and the economic interests of their companies, configuring a history of periodic and cyclical changes, with continuities and modifications depending on variables such as turnover, the degree of adherence of the Latin American elites, the resistance of various Latin American segments, the importance of a particular country in the hemispheric security system, etc. For these reasons, North-American diplomacy has not always treated the different regions of Latin America homogeneously (SANTOS, 2007, p. 19-20).

If in the nineteenth century the concern was with the European “outsiders”, in the twentieth century it was the Cold War. The main enemy became communism and its “representatives” on the continent. Under the excuse of fighting the “communist threat”, Washington implemented, after 1945, a new offensive of political destabilization against Latin American governments that presented measures or positions qualified as “Antiamericans”. It is worth mentioning that the “Anti-American measures” could be any attitude of defense of the economic, political, etc., interests of the accused nation itself, such as the protection of its industry.

From a historical point of view, this interventionist stance took shape in the administration of Theodor Roosevelt (1901-1909), who abandoned “strategic isolationism”. The Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine in 1904 allowed Washington the right of intervention and interference throughout Latin America. Latin American countries should “behave correctly”, otherwise they would suffer direct North-American action (invasions) or indirect (political and/or economic pressure), and in practice this implied:

The Roosevelt Corollary enshrined the Big Stick diplomacy that involves the use of strategic military interventions to

ensure economic, political, and security interests on the continent. It was an aggressive diplomacy, involving brute force methods and even the overthrow of governments (SANTOS, 2007, p. 28).

However, such North-American performance already occurred before the Roosevelt Corollary, more precisely in 1898. The Spanish-American War provided Washington supremacy over Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. Haiti, in 1902, had already been forced by the US to pay its debt to “Old World” creditors. That same year, the Platt Amendment was passed, which allowed the United States to intervene directly in Cuba if the political situation did not please Washington.

The following year, “Uncle Sam” acted in the separation of Panama from Colombia. This would pave the way for North-American control over the Panama Canal. In 1903, the US “gained” the right to install a military base in Guantánamo (Cuba).

From the late 19th century to the 1930s, the Caribbean and Central America would literally feel the North-American “stick” above their heads: Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and the Dominican Republic.

In the post-war period, when socialist ideology gained strength in the so-called “Third World”, the North-americans set in motion their interventionist policy. With the march of social and political movements in the region demanding changes in the archaic socio-economic structures of Latin American countries, Washington’s foreign policy became more incisive and aggressive.

The possibility of the rise of political groups outside the right-wing spectrum has led to significant North-American military interventions in Latin America. Among them was the intervention in Guatemala in 1954, where the CIA overthrew Jacobo Arbenz; ten years later another intervention, in Panama. In 1965 it was the turn of the Dominican Republic to be invaded and then, perhaps the most important of all interventions, now “political”: the overthrow of Salvador Allende in 1973 by the coup d’état of Augusto Pinochet, with direct action of the CIA.

It is also worth mentioning the US participation in the military coups of Argentina (1962, 1966, and 1976); Guatemala, Ecuador, and Honduras (1963); Brazil (1964), Chile, and Uruguay in 1973. With the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the counterinsurgency sponsored by the US gained high levels, mainly with the financing of the repressive apparatus in Latin America.

We must not forget the actions of Washington³⁰ in partnership with the “Contras” in Nicaragua, from 1979, and in El Salvador (1980s), when the Farabuto Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) had a staunch military opposition against the US, whose troops were lodged on the Honduran border.

With the re-democratization of the continent from the 1980s onwards and the diminishing of the “communist impetus” through the mass murder and repression of opponents, US control began to loosen. The arrival of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in the USSR, and the implementation of the Perestroika (Reformation) and Glasnost (Transparency) were enthusiastically received by Washington.

With Moscow’s resignation in supporting new governments to become communists, or at least support the successful movements, the US noted that they would be left with the geopolitical control of Latin America. In post-Cold War times, the region began to lose its importance (if indeed ever), and the US directed to the Middle East, an oil-rich region of great strategic importance.

With the transition to democracy across the continent in the 1980s, the Latin American Left began to reorganize itself for the institutional struggle that would begin in the following decade. The election of George W. Bush (2001-2009) and his total preoccupation with the Middle East allowed the political rise of “the Left” across Latin America³¹.

The victory of progressive governments in the region must also be understood as a natural process of the bankruptcy of neo-liberalism on the continent. Those effects were analyzed in the previous chapter.

As a historical result, the legacy left by the US with its interventionist foreign policy has profoundly marked Latin American

social, political, and economic life. Thus, it is inevitable that governments that configure themselves as antisystemic take into account this historical interventionist past and seek to diminish or even break with North-American influence.

3.3 An antisystemic example: Hugo Chávez's Venezuela

The use of Gramscian theory to explain the role of Venezuela is based on his pioneering work and the renewal of the analysis of capitalism from the political and social perspectives. We understand as a “renewal” an approach that adds to the “economic question” social and political aspects for the understanding of capitalist society within the frameworks of materialism-history.

The consolidation of his historic bloc in Venezuelan society allowed Hugo Chávez (1954-2013) to raise “new flights” on the international stage. By playing a proactive role in terms of its resourcefulness on the international and Latin American scene, Venezuela has come to play an antisystemic role.

The Venezuelan antisystemic character refers to his anti-imperialist, anti-North-American, and “Piedmontese” stance. The “Piedmontese factor” derives from the process that occurred with the State of Piedmont during Italian unification in the 19th century and was analyzed by Antonio Gramsci (2002). In practice, the Piedmontese function would correspond to a State that takes the reins of a process, leaving behind initiatives originated by social groups.

As Gramsci stated “*the Piedmont function in the Italian Risorgimento is that of a leading class*” (GRAMSCI, 2002, p. 328). The Italian thinker, when analyzing the reality of the formation of the new Italian national state, pointed out the existence of a political class, that weren't real leaders and did not want such a function. According to Gramsci: “[...] wanted a new force, independent of any commitment and condition, to become the arbiter of the Nation: this force was the Piedmont [...]” (GRAMSCI, 2002, p. 328-329).

The Piedmont was compared by Gramsci³² to a “party” – performing such a function. When we look at the current process of action of Chavista Venezuela, especially while Hugo Chávez was alive, we argue that the country had a very close perspective on Latin America: a nation that acted as a “leader”, a state with that function. That is, what we would call a “Piedmontese Venezuela” (PENNAFORTE, 2013).

As an example, we had the leadership of Venezuela in Latin America within the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas Peoples’ Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP), with the member countries coming to accept the economic and ideological guidelines of the country, denying the traditional influence coming from Washington.

Another important concept used by the Italian thinker in his theoretical elaboration also included the process of “Passive Revolution”. This concept is of great importance for the understanding of “Piedmontese Venezuela”. According to Gramsci:

The concept of “Passive Revolution” must be rigorously deduced from the fundamentals principles of political science: 1) no social formation disappears as long as the productive forces that developed therein still find a place for a new progressive movement; 2) society does not set itself tasks for which the necessary conditions have not yet germinated, etc. Of course, these principles must first be critically unfolded in all their dimension and purged of all residue of mechanism and fatalism. Thus, they should be referred to as the description of the three fundamental moments in which one can distinguish a “situation” or a balance of forces, with the maximum appreciation of the second moment, or balance of political forces and especially of the third moment, or military-political balance (GRAMSCI, 2002, p. 321-322).

The passive revolution would correspond to the action of political leaders who, due to the political weakness of society to overcome the status quo, became the “guides” of the transformation process without the need for classic social revolutions. The participation of

Hugo Chávez³³ would then, in our perspective, be included in the process of transforming Venezuela into a passive revolution.

Despite the political struggles that have taken place in Venezuela throughout history, only Chávez has managed in a personalistic way to alter the correlation of forces historically favorable to the Venezuelan elites.

Gramsci also assessed the “political orientation” of passive revolutions. For the author, they could be reactionary or progressive. The tutelage of social movements by leaders would cause the emergence of “Caesarism” (leaders with great political force) or “Transformism” (through the formation of broad-spectrum political alliances)³⁴.

The Venezuelan case has come closer to the category of “Progressive Caesarism” by establishing a line of political action that aims to satisfy the wishes of the poorest population in the country and create a new political paradigm for Venezuela. His performance on the continental stage, as well as his influence on the domestic politics of several countries in the region, demonstrated Chávez’s interest in creating a favorable environment for his geopolitical, antisystemic, and anti- (*North*) American plan.

A Plan that has demonstrated the antisystemic character of Venezuela was the formulation of a “Counter-Agenda” of both regional and global character, which was based on four points:

- The search for a multipolar order;
- The promotion of participatory democracy as a model;
- Emphasis on regional integration without US influence and
- Use of the country’s energy capacity as an instrument of geopolitical support.

We add to the forementioned four points one more: ideological influence. With the use of the theoretical and political legacy of Simon Bolivar and the proposal for a “Socialism of the XXI century”, Venezuela provided an alternative to the continental economic and political *status quo*.

Venezuela has led several countries in Latin America using its great economic capacity derived from oil. His “oil diplomacy” allowed for greater resourcefulness to put his geopolitical project into practice. Although “led” countries had little or no influence on Latin American geopolitics (such as Cuba, Ecuador, and Bolivia) such leadership came to the point of a “division of power” on the continent from an anti-imperialist rhetoric.

What we would call a proactive stance, for Venezuela led by Hugo Chávez, should be understood within a perspective of more incisive action in Latin America and confrontation towards the US. Logically we know the difficulties and contradictions of such a project; we will make a detailed analysis in the next chapter on the subject. However, despite such difficulties, it is possible to establish a dialectical line of action that allowed Venezuela to put into practice “its model”, its project.

3.4 Chávez’s foreign policy: an overview

The understanding of Venezuela’s antisystemic action is related to the development of foreign policy carried out by the Hugo Chávez government. The Venezuelan role on the international scene was the subject of numerous favorable or contrary analyses by experts in that period³⁵.

Caracas foreign policy caused great concern in Washington and the conservative Latin American elites for the proactive and challenging stance of the Bolivarian Republic toward the traditional regional *status quo* led by the US. Between 1999 and 2013, the country built an arc of strategic alliances that increased its performance on the international stage and its prestige.

At the same time, it occupied the political vacuum left by Washington in the period. In practice this implied:

Venezuela has undertaken a foreign policy whose central objective is to build a policy of alliances, in particular a policy

of anti-American alliances, which is defined as the central instrument for reducing dependence on the United States, to promote a new international geopolitical map and to promote a new global leadership (MÉNDEZ, 2007, p. 19).

We must not forget that Venezuela's (as well as other) governments' "most challenging" actions in Latin America reflected the weakening of the US ideological and political position, especially during the George W. Bush administration.

Under the Punto-Fijo Pact³⁶, Venezuela maintained its democratic process free of direct North-American interference, while remaining aligned with Washington, especially in the fight against communism. As Saraiva and Briceño Ruiz stated:

[...] Venezuelan foreign policy was an expression of the system of conciliation between elites that, in the international scenario, proposed similar objectives to those that of the Punto Fijo Pact sought domestically. This explains the permanence of goals such as the commitment to the consolidation of democracy, the constant pursuit of conciliation, consensus, and compromise, and the awareness of interdependence, especially concerning the United States (SARAIVA; BRICEÑO RUIZ, 2009, p. 158).

Going back a little in time, Visentini pointed out that the Venezuela, during its historical development, faced some problems with the small and poorly distributed population territory, as well as the predominance of agrarian activity. These aspects have made it difficult to form a coherent foreign policy. According to Visentini:

[...] Venezuela was a rather modest player in international relations, losing even much of the national territory to neighboring states and the English colonial power, through the unfavorable demarcation of the contested frontiers (VISENTINI, 2003, p. 58).

Since the 1960s, Oil wealth is a good puts Venezuela in a privileged situation and, provided the country with the necessary conditions to maintain its autonomy. In 1878 Oil was discovered in the province of Táchira. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Royal Dutch Shell consortium initiated the exploration of oil in the lake of Maracaibo, opening the exploration of Venezuelan oil to foreign companies. Despite the administrative and fiscal easiness, the Venezuelan state remained the owner of all wealth. At the end of 1920, Venezuela produced 137 million barrels of oil against almost 1.5 million barrels at the beginning of the decade. The country became the second world producer, just behind the US.

From the historical point of view, Venezuelan diplomacy was influenced by its colonial and peripheral position in the Spanish structure. Thus, oil contributed to reverse this framework:

[...] has been the main “vehicle” for Venezuela’s insertion into contemporary international relations. This factor has also promoted a political culture considered as regulating private activity, promotion of State dependency by society, vulnerable to fluctuations in oil prices (VISENTINI, 2003, p. 58).

The abundant availability of oil has transformed the country into the main continental exporter of raw materials, and the pre-Chavist governments have always seen regional foreign policy as “a basic instrument in the pursuit of economic development, which produced friction with the central countries, in particular, the USA”³⁷. Gratius and Fürtig pointed out the real size of “Bolivarian” Venezuela. According to them:

Venezuela is the only petro-state in Latin America and sixth largest oil producer in the world. Oil has been the main resource to finance Hugo Chávez fourth “Bolivarian Republic” of Venezuela based on a strong state and centralization of politics in the hands of president. Under his presidency, Ven-

ezuela developed regional and even global power ambitions for the first time in its history, despite the country's limited size and power resources (GRATIUS, 2009, online).

In the 20th century, Venezuelan pre-Chavista foreign policy was characterized by its role in the Non-Aligned Movement³⁸ countries with considerable diplomatic autonomy, while achieving good relations with the United States (VISENTINI, 2003, p. 57). As Carlos A. Romero stated:

Following the restoration of democracy in the country in 1959, the governments of Acción Democrática and COPEI had an active diplomacy that led many to think that the Venezuelan global presence was overstated, by the action in the United Nations, for the participation of Caracas in the creation and development of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, OPEC, and for the promotion of the economic and trade integration mechanism known as the Cartagena Agreement (now called the Andean Community of Nations). To this must be added the rapprochement of Venezuela to the Non-Aligned Movement and the pursuit of a new international order, a North-South dialogue (ROMERO, 2010, p. 2).

According to the analyst, there would not necessarily be any new stance in the current foreign policy Bolivariana as we can see above. Venezuela has always had considerable autonomy in drafting its international operations since 1959. However, the author emphasizes that:

In our opinion, Venezuela is going through a “revolutionary situation,” which means that the foreign policy of President Chavez's government is not the same as those that preceded it. In fact, Venezuela's activism is observed in a three-dimensional way: in the management of bilateral relations, multilateral relations, and transnational relations (ROME-RO, 2010, p. 2).

Broadly speaking the “activism” of the present Venezuelan foreign policy has been a feature since the 1960s. What would have “changed” is how Venezuela sought its international insertion in recent years under the Chávez government. Such a foreign policy shall be considered to be (ROMERO, 2010, p. 2):

[...] a political model that is based on the construction of a vision of the world in which the “friend-enemy” approach to politics, the indiscriminate use of the thesis on the “will of the majority” and the desire to promote a radical “ideological package” have been mixed with national traditions such as international activism and Presidentialism, in an offer that has had a powerful verb and a capacity for public spending that contemplates important social programs (ROMERO, 2010, p. 2).

Saraiva and Briceño Ruiz also noted that between 1958 and 1988 the international performance of the Venezuelan governments was restricted on the occasion of their democratic condition, as a western country and oil producer. Thus:

[...] These factors determined the geographical priorities of its foreign policy, in which the United States appeared as a natural partner in the defense of democracy and in which Venezuela could share a welfare strategy in the Caribbean in order to prevent the expansion of Communism [...] (SARAI-VA; BRICEÑO RUIZ, 2009, p. 157).

In our analysis, Venezuelan foreign policy should not be understood through the approach used by Carlos A. Romero, who contemplates the idea of a “friend-enemy” binomial for the movement of the country in the international system. It’s about the facts. The “enemy” on the international and Latin American scene of Chavista Venezuela became clear: the US, mainly for the support given to the failed coup in 2002. We must point out that US imperialism has always acted in the construction of an un-

democratic dimension of Latin America, despite its propagated ideology saying the opposite.

The support for military coups and all kinds of action put in place by Washington in the perspective of preventing the rise of progressive social movements (if we take into account only the twentieth century), by itself, place the US not as “enemy”, but also as a concrete obstacle to democracy in Latin America³⁹. However, as much as such a statement sounds like a “leftist” speech, as the liberal sectors would certainly point out, Latin American history shows how harmful the US’s performance was, collaborating against the construction of really fairer and democratic societies.

Truly new in Venezuela, in our conception, would have been a left-wing government with no connection to the traditional Venezuelan oligarchies and their particular interests, in addition to the ideological and political attachment to Washington.

Another important aspect was the coherent conduct of Venezuela in the creation of a bloc of countries that were housed in an organization, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas -Treaty of Friendship of the Peoples-(ALBA-TCP), which followed a coherent political and ideological project (Bolivarianism and the perspective of the construction of the so-called “Socialism of the XXI century”), today in collapse. We agree with Carlos A. Romero when he states that:

But there is another historical process that is novel: the arrival of a leftist government to power in Venezuela in 1999, which has maintained the international activism of previous governments, deepening its global presence and relying on radical leftist currents, Marxists and non-Marxists who as a whole have presented themselves as different thinking from liberal ideas. Therefore, the consolidation of the Chavista experience has given rise to a bifrontal foreign policy, based on its economic power and its revolutionary commitment (ROMERO, 2010, p. 4).

Venezuela, as an interstate actor, in our analysis, frames into an antisystemic position by opposing the impositions that were originated from the systemic center of capitalism under the leadership of the USA. The attempt to maintain “control” of the country to facilitate the maintenance of Venezuelan elites through economic and political bargaining to ensure facilities through this “exchange of favors”, for example, led to the consolidation of Chavismo. The Post-Cold War scenario, without Soviet (real) socialism and its derivations as a model to be followed in opposition to capitalism, came to an end. However, the contradictions that provided the emergence of this reality (“Real Socialism”) are still present as social inequality and endemic poverty, both internally and internationally.

The historical conditions allowed a domestic environment of support for Hugo Chávez, facilitating the implementation of his foreign policy. At the beginning of the 21st century, Hugo Chávez initiated a change in Venezuelan foreign policy which includes, in our opinion, the following points:

- To increase ideological influence, through the dissemination of a “Latin American” world vision and diffusion of “Bolivarian values”⁴⁰;
- Leadership in Anti-(*North*) American stances in international forums;
- The defense of a multipolar world without North-American supremacy;
- The creation of an economic bloc (ALBA-TCP) that presented components of political and social synergies;
- Natural use of “oil” resources to achieve a prominent role in the integration process by financing the countries that would join the process.

Of course, it was a confrontation with the North-American hemispheric agenda that inevitably causes clashes between Washington and the Miraflores Palace. The Bolivarian project was extremely coherent in creating new ways of acting in the

international system with the decrease of US influence in the continent and the new positioning of Venezuela on the international stage during the period⁴¹. As the foreign minister, during that time, Nicolas Maduro, remarked:

We know that the conquest of the pluripolar world depends to a large extent on the articulation of new leaderships in the South. A concrete articulation, based on these projects, based on the construction of the Bank of the South (*Banco del Sur*), the new financial architecture for the development of the countries of the South, based on the construction of a new model of fair trade among nations, based on a new model of technology exchange and reindustrialization of the countries of the South, based on a new conception of political integration. We know that these leaderships are on trial and we know that the great challenge is that they succeed in building the elements that in financial, commercial, and political terms replaced the imperialist hegemony that has subdued our countries and that is deeply over (MADURO, 2006, online).

The demonstration of this role can be visualized with the re-equipment of the Venezuelan Armed Forces carried out by Hugo Chávez and the increase of his influence in economic life, and that today constitutes the milestones for the maintenance of Nicolás Maduro in command of the country. It is important to make some considerations about the purchase of weapons by Venezuela during Chavez's government.

We defend the idea that the Bush Doctrine accelerated the Venezuelan "imperative" for the re-emergence of its Armed Forces during the period⁴². The creation of the "preventive war" against "enemies" and "non-collaborators" in the War on Terror was consubstantiated in the defense perspective of countries that were included in the category of Rogue States (Iran and Iraq, for example). In the Venezuelan case, we could explain the high volume of purchases of war materials for the modernization of their defenses against the USA. According to Albernaz:

[...] Venezuelan motivations [were divided] between perceptible and latent. The obvious reasons or justifications of the government are: preparation for an asymmetric war with the US, related to Chávez's conviction and, consequently, the strengthening of the borders with Colombia, an ally of the US and a potential enemy, and the diversification of military suppliers; and the need to replace obsolete equipment. The underlying reasons, which most influenced the Venezuelan decision, are two: the maintenance of Chávez's base of support (which guarantees his political freedom) composed of a coalition of the strong military sector and the civil sector; and the expansion of his political power in the region, the search for a regional hegemony (ALBERNAZ, 2010, p. 103).

As a “collateral effect”, it can be pointed out that with such a volume of purchases of military equipment, the Latin American and Washington elites and lit the “red light” for a possible “Venezuelan imperialism” in the region at the time. In Brazil, the conservative media tried to emphasize the danger of Hugo Chávez with the purchase of weapons by his government. At the time senator and former Brazilian president, José Sarney (during the 1985-1990 term) wrote an article in the newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo* addressing the “danger of weapons purchase” by Venezuela⁴³.

Statements like this, inconsistent with the reality of the facts at the time, reflected the opinion of experts and policymakers in the US. The media pointed to the possible beginning of an “arms race” in South America. The concrete fact is that in order to act with resourcefulness in his antisystemic role, Chávez had to create a symbolic and geopolitical confrontation against the US, as a way to mark his position in the contemporary World-System and provide a possible alternative in Latin America to the influence of Washington.

Outside the continent, in addition to Russia, Hugo Chávez has made visits to Libya, Iran, and Iraq, among others, since he took office in the late 1990s. Countries that at the time were ruled by historical enemies of the US such as Saddam Hussein

(Iraq), Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (Iran), and Muammar Gaddafi (Libya). Its goal was to “make a stand” and gain international projection, especially in relation to the US. The fact is that Chávez made international headlines for this stance and disapproval by Washington.

The partnership with the Russians, for example, was inevitable, given the fact that they did not accept North-American pressure for any kind of arms embargo on Venezuelans. Military cooperation with the Russians involved joint naval exercises in 2008, when two strategic Tu-160 bombers arrived in the Caribbean (known as Blackjack) and Tu-95MC, the nuclear cruiser “Peter the Great” and the frigate Admiral Chabanenko, among other escort ships. Since the Missile Crisis of 1962, there haven't been such foreign military presence in the Caribbean.

Under the Maduro government, the Russian presence remained active in support of the regime. In December 2018, the air forces of the two countries made joint maneuvers against possible North-American aggression (O GLOBO, 2018, online). In March 2019, two Russian aircraft arrived in Caracas with military material (FOLHA DE SÃO PAULO, 2019, online).

Venezuelan influence in Latin America occurred not only in the political field but also in the economic sector by granting generous aid to all allies or countries that were sympathetic or close to the Bolivarian proposal when high oil prices helped. It was the same mechanism put in place by the White House over time.

Argentina, another example, despite not having a position that can be classified as alignment with the Venezuelan policy developed in the region during the first decade of the 21st century, found a great ally in Venezuela when it needed economic aid.

Before leaving the government in 2007, President Néstor Kirchner had financial aid from Hugo Chávez. Argentina issued USD 500 million in National Government Bonds (Boden) with maturity in 2015. The country paid an interest rate of 10.43%, considered within the margin practiced by the market according to analysts (GUIMARÃES, 2007, online).

The transaction was of great importance to the Argentines since the country did not yet have a good assessment of international financial communication after declaring that it would not pay its debt in December 2001, even with the subsequent renegotiation. Between 2005 and 2007, Venezuela had already bought USD 5.6 billion in Argentine bonds (GUIMARÃES, 2007, online). In 2008 Argentina returned to issue government bonds (Boden) 2015 totaling USD 1.461 billion to sell them directly to Venezuela. Adding up the bonds purchased in 2005, Venezuela had already bought USD 7.802 billion in Argentine sovereign bonds (UOL, 2009, online).

The importance of Venezuelan aid to Argentina can be assessed by the public thanks were given by President Cristina Kirchner in January 2009 on a visit to Caracas. According to her: “it is important to give this recognition, besides convictions, of the common visions that unite us in relation to the destiny of our continent” (UOL, 2009, online).

At the time, the Argentine president also thanked the Venezuelan aid of USD 85 million to the dairy cooperative SANCOR, which was in the process of bankruptcy. This aid allowed keeping control of the company in the hands of national capital. In return, Sancor began supplying powdered milk and sector industry technology for Venezuelans (UOL, 2009, online).

President Cristina Kirchner also stated on the occasion that:

[...] the sister republic (*Venezuela*) helped the country when Argentina needed access to the capital market because of a moratorium that was not declared by the governments that came after 2003 (UOL, 2009, online).

Venezuelan foreign activity transcended merely political aspects. There was a project that presented a relative success in creating a favorable environment for Venezuela’s foreign policy during the Chávez era. We identified in our analysis the existence of two actions of the Chavista project to put into practice its anti-

systemic Chavista project: The first was related to the increase of its political and ideological influence on Latin America, and the second was its international performance to gain greater visibility and projection.

However, the end of the commodity boom (2009) and the death of Hugo Chávez in 2013 shortened the Chavista project to create a counterpoint (with the proper parameters) to the US influence in Latin America. With the fall in oil prices that directly impacted the economy and its effects on social investments, the success of the “Bolivarian model” did not happen.

Nicolás Maduro remained in power through a series of judicial and political maneuvers, as well as in the repression of the anti-Chavista opposition. Even in the midst of one of the worst crises in Venezuelan history, the support of the Armed Forces is a guarantee of the regime’s control over the country.

On the regional and international stage, the political siege on the regime increased, especially after the arrival of Jair Bolsonaro (2019). With an aggressive policy against the government of Nicolás Maduro, Brazil accelerated the isolation of the Maduro government in the continent (Venezuela had already been suspended from Mercosur in 2016, for example) alongside the government of Mauricio Macri (2015-2019). The same thing happened in Europe and Washington, and the Donald Trump administration took a series of economic measures that caused the asphyxiation of the country.

On the other hand, the support of Moscow and Beijing guarantees legitimacy on the international stage for the Maduro regime. Russia provides military supplies and advice, for example. On the Chinese side, medicines and food are sent to cope with the Washington-sponsored embargo.

The anti-systemic project initiated by Hugo Chávez seems to be coming to an end, with the possibility of Maduro as the last chapter of the Venezuelan crisis. And it is worth mentioning that the “Bolivarian Project” (*Proyecto Bolivariano*) no longer exists under the Maduro government: its only government rhetoric.

What we see is a process of financial plunder of the Venezuelan state that has no relation to ideological aspects as some sectors of the Latin American left likes to think of (PENNAFORTE; OLIVEIRA, 2019, online).

The BRICS: antisystemic action

With Ricardo Luigi

Based on the decline of US geopolitical and economic influence in recent decades, the emergence of important “players” at the beginning of the 21st century, and their questioning of unilateral postures, the BRICS have reached a common multipolar and multilateral world perspective for tackling global problems and the North American action.

Despite the disbelief in parts of the central core of capitalism, the BRICS gained geopolitical projection of great importance at the beginning of the 21st century. The Nation-States of this power block own 26% of the world’s territory, 42% of the world’s population, and 14% of GDP, and have contributed to more than 50% of the world’s GDP increase between 2005 and 2010 (VISENTINI, 2003, p. 155).

For many conservative analysts, the BRICS had no possibility of organizing a common agenda that would involve major coordination on the international scene. However, the Sino-Russian role is important for confronting Washington in its stance of shaping the world to its interests.

The history of the emergence of the BRICS is well known: in 2001, the original proposal made by economist Jim O’Neill, through the Building Better Global Economic report, was a way of jointly analyzing such economies by the Goldman Sachs investment bank. Thus, the acronym for the four largest emerging economies in the world (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) emerged in 2010, added to South Africa, allowing the current configuration. The arrival

of South Africa for the “globalization” of the group increased its representativeness within the emerging world⁴⁴.

Despite this expansion in 2010 and sometimes suggesting the entry of other countries into the bloc (mainly by isolated Chinese initiatives), the hard core of the BRICS is in the so-called “strategic triangle” or “hard core” of the RIC (Russia, India, and China). Brazil and South Africa enter more to fulfill the representation of regional powers in their respective (sub) continents. India could be framed on the same label, but its growth projections and its strategic location with Eurasian partners has set apart India from Brazil and South Africa at the moment.

The BRICS must be analyzed from a long-term perspective, its economic and geopolitical character in the face of the fight against the unilateral dimension advocated by Washington. Thus, Immanuel Wallerstein addressed the BRICS in two articles, from 2013 and 2016, showing concern about the bloc’s geopolitical and economic aspirations:

The structural crisis of the world system is moving very fast, and in many uncertain ways, to assume sufficient relative stability to allow the BRICS as such to continue to play a special role, geopolitically or economically. Like globalization itself as a concept, BRICS can become a fleeting phenomenon (WALLERSTEIN, 2013, p.1).

Wallerstein (2013) draws attention to the fact that geopolitics is not the only thing that matters, because we need to look at the domestic issues of the countries that make up the BRICS, the relations between the members of the bloc, and the relationship of the group members with the countries outside the bloc. Despite domestic issues of the second-line members of the BRICS, the Chinese and Russian leadership is confronting Washington’s wishes to gain favorable positions in the world geopolitical chessboard, an aspect of fundamental importance for nations that aspire to a better position in the international stage.

If the current World System is still tied to the North American primacy of the post-Cold War, both Russia and China have been seeking to act anti-systemically in the current systemic cycle of accumulation. Wallerstein is right to point that out. Unlike Russians and Chinese, which historically commit to national unity, that is, a clear definition of the roles to be played by their states, Brazil does not usually recognize its attributions as a regional power.

In the relationship between the BRICS countries and the rest of the world, there is an evident concern about the direction of globalization and the effects on the US actions, something that was clear in the final declaration of the tenth BRICS summit, held in 2018 in South Africa. In the final text, it is said that:

We recognize that the multilateral trading system is facing unprecedented challenges. We reinforce the importance of an open global economy, allowing all countries and peoples to share the benefits of globalization (PAMPLONA, 2018, online).

In the relationship between the members of the bloc there is a little expressive intra-bloc trade and with few social results in the countries that can be related to participation in the group, as Lobato demonstrates, emphasizing that: *“this can be attributed to the difficulty of making commitments to very disparate national contexts with very different social policy system structures”* (LOBATO, 2018, p. 2143). However, initiatives such as the NDB aims to a still growing cooperation within the bloc. The NDB, the “BRICS Bank”, can still accelerate the institutionalization of the bloc, which until then functioned more as a forum for discussions than as a formalized institution.

The creation of the NDB was a process that began with an approximation of the economic guidelines at the Fourth Summit of the group, in 2012, in New Delhi. The financial cooperation agreement signed between the national development banks was what provided a greater economic rapprochement between the mem-

bers, creating consensus among the countries to create the BRICS Bank at the Durban Summit in 2013.

The Bank was formally created at the VI BRICS Summit in Fortaleza in 2014. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Brazil (2019): *“the creation of the bank aimed to respond to the global problem of scarcity of resources for the financing of infrastructure projects”*.

The Bank identifies a need for resources from both its member countries and developing countries, as they generally receive much lower investment than is required from traditional sources of funding, and often national governments cannot carry out such infrastructure works. In addition to its economic importance, NDB was an important step in the process of institutionalization of the BRICS as a formal group, and not only an informal consultation group, where there were no formally established links (STUENKEL, 2017).

Furthermore, the dominant currency is the dollar, but the group intends to adopt a basket of regional currencies to intensify trade and financial exchange, which could be the beginning of a process of “de-dollarization” of the world economy (PIRES, 2015). It can be inferred that there is an attempt to obtain greater autonomy because the loan transactions do not need to pass through the currency controlled by the US, and are commonly used by other banks and the International System.

One perspective to approach the NDB is the need to create and adjust a monetary and financial system that is no longer adequate and does not meet the needs of member countries, a kind of complement to the IMF and traditional institutions (STUENKEL, 2017).

In Brazil, the creation of the NDB was received with skepticism by experts, the same reception given by the international financial community of the USA and Europe. The creation of a possible competitor in offering financial resources on a fairer basis than those offered by the IMF and/or the World Bank would alter the traditional monetary power center set up since the end of World War II. As a consequence, the geopolitical center of power would

be altered, accentuating the decline of the traditional core of capitalism. The consolidation of the NDB as a real alternative would be an important gain for the Sino-Russian geopolitical architecture of creating another geoeconomic pole.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, for example, has demonstrated that the strategic partnership between Moscow and Beijing has already begun. China not only supported the Russian government but also did not participate in economic sanctions against the country. A fact that mitigated the heavy economic impacts provided by the European Union and the USA against Moscow.

Within the BRICS, India, South Africa and Brazil also did not follow the Western sanctions on Russia. The increase of Russian influence either by the sale of war material or trade with various Asian and African countries, for example, reflects the new international geopolitical scenario in which the US is no longer able to impose its geopolitical and economic interests as before.

Despite this scenario of uncertainty, of the crisis of the World-System with the increasing decline of the primacy of the USA, the BRICS has an important role to offer an alternative in a scenario of systemic re-adequacy, seeking to be an actor capable of proposing alternatives amid an order that collapses in the face of the rearrangement of power in global geopolitics.

Conclusions

The analysis of antisystemic movements in the field of International Relations is still configured as something new. What we proposed here was a (re) reading of reality and international relations outside the traditional (mainstream) perspective. And, at the same time, to make way for a more “heterodox” analysis of our inter-state reality.

Anglo-Saxon academic thinking has gained prominence in universities around the world in the last 100 years, at the same time that other theoretical perspectives have emerged to analyze international relations that have been incorporated into their study since the 1960s. However, none can rival the realistic dimension and all its variations regarding its diffusion.

The new approaches are relegated to the background in teaching practice because they are chronologically the last to have emerged in the series of the Great Theoretical Debates of the discipline and by the own adherence, greater or not, of the faculty to such perspective.

The main point is that the systematic center of capitalism does not analyze the system to alter or transform it, but rather to maintain it. And some of their great academic names fulfill their function as the mainstream intellectual body of the discipline of International Relations with generous government resources and companies that finance, through Think Thanks, the publication of books, research, media prominence, etc.

In the academic field of the peripheral countries of the system, we find the theoretical predominance of this Anglo-Saxon core as an analytical framework to understand, for example, the role of Brazil in Latin America in the capitalist system. In the end, this is what the “great authors” defend from International Relations.

Without the slightest self-criticism, this knowledge is re-produced consciously (or not) and sold as the only “*correct and scientific*” way to analyze the complex world of interstate relations. And what is worse: in Latin American universities and the former Third World, with rare exceptions. In practice, it is about “seeing the world” from the “eyes” (interests) of the capitalist systemic center without taking into account what are the interests of Brazil or Latin America, for example. It is the “State of the Art” of ideology (or *soft power*) that continues its perpetuation.

On the other hand, in recent years, Latin American colleagues have been analyzing Latin America under a critical dimension compared to traditional centers of power. They are: Marcelo Gullo, with his books “Insubordinación y Desarrollo - Las Claves del Éxito y el Fracaso de la Naciones” (2012); “Insubordinação Fundadora - Breve História da Construção do Poder pelas Nações” (2014); “Relaciones internacionales: Una teoría crítica desde la periferia sudamericana” (2018). Also Alejandro Simonoff and José Briceño Ruiz with their joint work “Integración y cooperación regional en América Latina - una relectura a partir de la teoría de la autonomía” (2015), and Miguel Ángel Barrios in this work “Por qué Patria Grande: teoría y praxis de una política latinoamericana en tiempos de pandemia” (2022).

These aforementioned authors have tried to approach the situation of Latin America within the current dynamic of international relations from a regional analytical framework.

We believe that the economic and geopolitical decline of the US opens a window of opportunity for countries that have elites committed to their national projects. China and Russia, in our conception, fit this perspective of the creation and consolidation of a multipolar world.

Finally, in this work, we tried to propose another re-reading of the reality of international relations outside the traditional perspective (mainstream). We hope that the reader from now on will have a new look at the facts to analyze reality.

Notes

1. PENNAFORTE, Charles. **Movimentos Antissistêmicos e Relações Internacionais**: uma perspectiva teórica para compreender o sistema-mundo. Pelotas: Editora UFPel, 2020.

2. “In the first place, Capitalism is and foremost a historical social system [...] something distinguishes the social system we are calling “Historical Capitalism”: in it capital began to be used (invested) in a special way, having as its primary goal, or intention, self-expansion. [...]” (WALLERSTEIN, 2001, p. 13).

3. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Former National Security Adviser to the Jimmy Carter Government, for example, in his book *Strategic Vision: America and the Crisis of Global Power* (2012) analyzed the North-American economic and geopolitical decline.

4. Later on, we will make a more detailed discussion on the topic of US “hegemony”.

5. Gramsci’s reflections were elaborated for approaching the Italian reality. However, important work has been done to “transfer” these analyses to the international system. Besides Arrighi, Robert W. Cox (2007), Mark Rupert (2006).

6. “In the movement towards hegemony and the creation of a historic bloc, Gramsci distinguished three levels of consciousness: the economic-corporate one, in which a particular group is aware of its specific interests; solidarity or class consciousness that extends to an entire social class but continues on a purely economic level; and Hegemony, which harmonizes the interests of the ruling class with those of the subordinate classes and incorporates these other interests into an ideology expressed in universal terms.” **Gramsci, hegemonia e relações internacionais: um ensaio sobre o método**. In: GILL, op. cit., p. 112.

7. Basic political doctrine of the French revolutionary Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-881). This revolutionary advocated for a relatively small,

centralized, hierarchical elite that would carry out an insurrection to replace capitalist state power with its revolutionary dictatorship.

8. From the Annals School: “[...] Wallerstein got from Braudel’s his insistence on the long term (*la longue durée*). [...] The impact of the *Annales* is at the general methodological level.” From Marx, “Wallerstein learned that (1) the fundamental reality is social conflict among materially based human groups, (2) the concern with a relevant totality, (3) the transitory nature of social forms and theories about them, (4) the centrality of the accumulation process and competitive class struggles that result from it, (5) a dialectical sense of motion through conflict and contradiction”. [...] Wallerstein “draws heavily from dependency theory, a Neo-Marxist explanation of development processes, popular in the developing world [...]. Dependency theory focuses on understanding the ‘periphery’ by looking at core-periphery relations (VELA, 2001, p. 3).

9. Driven by the need for ever new markets, the bourgeoisie invades the entire globe. It needs to be established everywhere, to explore everywhere, to create bonds everywhere. By exploiting the world market the bourgeoisie imprints a cosmopolitan character on production and consumption in all countries. They are supplanted by new industries the introduction of which becomes a vital issue for all civilized nations, industries that no longer use indigenous raw materials, but raw materials from the most distant regions, and whose products are consumed not only in their own country, but in all parts of the globe. Instead of the old needs, met by national products, new needs are born, which demand for their satisfaction the products of the most distant regions and the most diverse climates.

10. “[...] a notion of law, or rather a new register of authority and an original project of production and legal instruments of coercion that enforce contracts and resolve conflicts” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2006, p. 27).

11. The books *The Long Twentieth Century*; *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System* (co-authored with Beverly Silver) and *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21st Century*, Together, they form their trilogy on capitalism in world-historical perspective and are among the main works of the World-Systems Analysis.

12. A Kondratieff wave would have a period of determined duration (from 40 to 60 years), which would correspond approximately to the

return of the same phenomenon. It has two distinct phases: an ascending phase (phase A) and a descending phase (phase B). These long-term fluctuations would be characteristic of the capitalist economy. The first reference of the Russian economist Nikolai Kondratieff to prolonged cycles occurred in his book *The World Economy and its Conjunctures During and After the War* (1922).

For him the particularly acute nature of the post-war crisis is explained by the fact that it marked a point of change in the prolonged cycle and the beginning of its descending phase.

In 1926, Kondratieff presented, in his work "About the Question of the Major Cycles of the Conjuncture" the hypothesis of the existence of long cycles. Kondratieff made his basis on the analysis of wholesale price chronological series, from 1790 to 1920, of the capitalist powers of the period: the United States, France and the United Kingdom.

Based on empirical curves, Kondratieff elaborated theoretical curves that, in his view, showed secular trends. He considered to have found two long and a half cycles between 1780 and 1920, starting the descending phase of the third cycle. According to Kondratieff, the basis of long cycles is the wear, replenishment and increase of the fund of basic capital goods, the production of which would require huge investments. The replenishment and increment of this fund would not be a continuous process and would run for jumps. The economic cycles would occur from these facts.

13. "The main aspect of the temporal profile of historical capitalism here outlined is the similar structure of all the long cycles. All these constructs consist of three distinct segments or periods: (1) a first period of financial expansion (extending from S_{n-1} to T_{n-1}), during which the new accumulation regime develops within the old one, its development being an integral aspect of the full expansion and contradictions of the latter; (2) a period of consolidation and further development of the new accumulation regime (ranging from T_{n-1} to S_n), during which its main agents promote, monitor and benefit from the material expansion of the entire world economy; and (3) a second period of financial expansion (from S_n to T_n), during which the contradictions of the fully developed accumulation regime create room for the emergence of competing and alternative regimes, one of which eventually becomes (in time T_n) the new dominant regime." (ARRIGHI, 1996, pp. 219-220).

14. In the Dutch cycle its commercial supremacy was based on a capitalist logic of power (represented by the formula D-T-D'), while the

later commercial supremacy, the English one that begins in the early eighteenth century, was based on a harmonic synthesis between the territorialist logic of power (T-D-T') and the capitalist (D-T'). This synthesis was the key factor for the English regime to have achieved a much more advanced systemic cycle of accumulation than the Dutch.

The British cycle was characterized by a continuous process of expansion, restructuring and financial reorganization of the capitalist world economy. The periods of financial expansion were times when competitive pressures on both governments and businesses and trade increased. These pressures favored English industrial expansion, which remained in world economic supremacy until the early 20th century (ARRIGHI, 1996, p.204).

15. Dependency Theory is a theoretical formulation originated in the 1950s/1960s, based on a critical and non-dogmatic Marxist reading of the processes of reproduction of underdevelopment on the periphery of world capitalism.

16. The Welfare State gained strength after World War II when European political forces accepted the role of the state as an important agent of social and economic protection and promotion.

17. “[...] rigidity of long-scale fixed capital investments in mass production systems that prevented much planning flexibility and assumed stable growth in invariant consumer markets. [...] rigidity of state commitments intensified as assistance programs (social security, pension rights, etc.) increased pressure to maintain legitimacy at a time when rigidity in production restricted expansions of the tax base to public spending. The only flexible response instrument was monetary policy, the ability to print money in any amount that seemed necessary to keep the economy stable” (HARVEY, 1992, p. 135-136).

18. “The deep recession of 1973, exacerbated by the oil shock, evidently removed the capitalist world from the stifling lethargy of stagflation (stagnation of goods production and high price inflation) and set in motion a set of processes that undermined the Fordist commitment. As a result, the 1970s and 1980s were a troubled period of economic restructuring and social and political readjustment. In the social space created by all these oscillations and uncertainties, a series of new experiences in the domains of industrial organization and social and political life began to take shape. These experiences may represent the first impe-

tus of the landscape to an entirely new accumulation regime, associated with a very distinct system of political and social regulation.” (HARVEY, 1992, p. 135-136)

19. At the same time, Japan, which entered rapid economic growth from 1960, reached the position of second capitalist economy and third in the world, behind the then USSR in the early 1980s. With emphasis on the high-tech sector and manufacturing production, the Japanese have become major competitors of the USA.

20. Dispute between the reformist and conservative wings of the Communist Party. Deng Xiaoping was one of the main reformist exponents (1904-1997). To contain such influence, conservatives provoke political and economic regression, closing the country to external contact and persecuting the reformists. The so-called Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) ended with the death of Mao Zedong in 1976.

21. The Sino-Soviet conflict has as its backdrop the ideological divergences around the model of communism that should be followed and expanded throughout the world. Chinese “voluntarism” was criticized by the Kremlin and the absence of “actions for the construction of communism on a global scale” by the Soviets was not accepted by the leaders in Beijing. Thus, in 1969, the two countries entered into military friction over an island on the Ussuri river called Damansky by the Soviets and Zhenbao by the Chinese, a border region. With the allegation that they had been attacked initially, the two nations went into conflict, which led to the death (unofficial data) of 100-600 Chinese and 58 Soviets. On 21/02/1972 the then US President Richard Nixon was received by the Chinese leader Mao Zedong, becoming the first North-American leader to visit the People’s Republic of China. The fact gained great international prominence within the context of the Cold War. The relations between the two countries, since then, have undergone great dynamism.

22. Even in the 20th century, the USA was not an isolated protagonist on the planet. The very idea of an American hegemony does not stand up to a historical review of the facts. Incidentally, Joseph F. Nye Jr., in the article “*Is the American century Over?*” (2015), addressed this topic, and what seems to be correct to designate that period is the term “Primacy” or “Prominence”. In this analytical work, we have preferred the term “Primacy” due to verified geopolitical reality: “As we have seen, the term ‘hegemony’ is too imprecise a con-

cept to be useful in defining ‘the American century’. Sometimes it means having a preponderance of power resources, sometimes the behavior of setting the rules for others, and sometimes getting the outcomes one prefers. Because of this ambiguity, we cannot date when it begins or ends. Noam Chomsky even states that the ‘loss of China’ was the first major step in ‘America’s decline’, or about the time that many others see ascendance. If there ever was a U.S. hegemony, it would have been from 1945, when the United States had nearly half the world economy as a result of World War II, to 1970, when the U.S. share of world product declined to its pre-war level of a quarter of world product. Yet during this period, the United States often failed to get what it wanted – witness Soviet acquisition of nuclear weapons; communist takeover of China and half of Vietnam, stalemate in the Korean War, Soviet suppression of the revolts in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Fidel Castro’s control of Cuba, and so forth. Thus, instead of ‘hegemony’, I prefer to use the terms ‘primacy’ or ‘preeminence’ in terms of a country’s disproportionate (and measurable) share of all three types of power resources” (NYE, 2015, p. 14).

23. Spontaneous popular revolt against the economic policies imposed by the government of the People’s Republic of Hungary and the Soviet Union. The Movements dated from 23/10 to 10/11 of 1956. The uprising began through a student demonstration that brought thousands of people to the Hungarian parliament in central Budapest. The news spread quickly and disorder and violence erupted throughout the capital, causing the fall of the government. A new government was formed, political prisoners were released, and people linked to the previous government were executed. On 11/04/1956 Soviet troops invaded the country clashing with the rebels. More than 3,000 Soviets and Hungarians were killed during the uprising. A wave of political repression followed the end of the conflict and any kind of political opposition in Hungary was suppressed.

24. Under the command of the Slovak reformer Alexander Dubček, Czechoslovakia tried to make a political and economic liberalization contrary to the precepts advocated by the USSR which controlled all of Eastern Europe. The attempt to relax the regime lasted between 05/01/1968 and 21/08/1968 when the troops of the USSR and the Warsaw Pact invaded the country.

25. According to Wallerstein, “Géoculture [...] ce terme, créé par analogie avec celui de géopolitique, désigne des normes et des pra-

tiques discursives largement reconnues comme légitimes au sein d'un système-monde. Dans ce livre, nous expliquons qu'une géoculture n'apparaît pas auto- matiquement avec l'émergence d'un système-monde, mais qu'elle doit être créée" (WALLERSTEIN, 2006, p. 150).

26. AAA: Extremely strong ability to honor financial commitments. Higher rating. **AA:** very strong ability to honor financial commitments;**A:** strong ability to honor financial commitments, but is somewhat susceptible to adverse economic conditions and circumstantial changes;**BBB:** adequate capacity to honour financial commitments, but more subject to adverse economic conditions; **BBB-:** considered the lowest level of the investment grade category by market participants; **BB:** less vulnerable in the short term, but currently facing a high susceptibility to adverse business, financial and economic conditions; **B:** more vulnerable to adverse business, financial and economic conditions, but currently has the ability to honor financial commitments; **CCC:** currently vulnerable and dependent on favorable business, financial and economic conditions to honor its financial commitments; **CC:** currently highly vulnerable; **C:** a bankruptcy application has been filed or a similar action filed, but payments of financial obligations continue to be made; **D:** Defaulting on his financial commitments (NEHMI, 2016, ONLINE).

27. Doctrine based on the thinking of the leader of the Chinese Revolution Mao Zedong (1893-1976).

28. Greens, environmentalists, feminists, racial and ethnic minorities. (WALLERSTEIN, 2004, p. 272).

29. "Relations between the United States and Latin America were determined by the Monroe Doctrine for about 150 years. The relationship during this long period, which includes most of the 19th century through 1970, was based on the presumption that the United States was Latin America's primary partner, perhaps the only relevant, and therefore negotiations should be based on North-American interests." (TORRIJOS, 2009, p. 18).

30. The Ronald Reagan government (1981-1989) acted decisively against leftist governments and movements in Central America during his term. In global terms, it accentuated the arms race to weaken communism, according to him, the "Evil Empire".

31. “Some suggest that the United States forgot about Latin America, which has little hold in the past, nor in the administrations from Bill Clinton to Barack Obama. What happens, therefore, with the approach of the Council on Foreign International Relations, is that the pillars of relations between the United States and Latin America have not been adapted to the new realities, to the point of allowing the emergence of an anti-American sentiment that was unprecedented in the region” (TORRIJOS, 2009, p. 18).

32. According to Gramsci, “Piedmont, therefore, had a function which, in certain respects, can be compared to that of the party, that is, of the leading staff of a social group (and, in fact, always spoke of a Piedmontese party’); with particularity that it was a state, with an army, diplomacy, etc.” (GRAMSCI, 2002, p. 329).

33. “The resulting deadlock with the traditionally dominant social classes created the conditions of what Gramsci called a “Passive Revolution”: the introduction of changes that did not involve any uprising of popular forces.” (COX, 2007, p. 108).

34. “According to Gramscian analysis, a typical example of passive revolution is Caesarism: a strong leader intervenes to resolve the impasse between equivalent and opposite social forces. Gramsci admitted the existence of both progressive and reactionary forms of Caesarism: Progressives, when the strong government presides over a more orderly process of creating a new state; Reactionaries when it stabilizes the existing power. In this analytical frame Napoleon, I would be a progressive Cesarist, while Napoleon III - would be the classic example of a reactionary Caesarism - more representative of the style most likely to arise in the course of a passive revolution. Beyond Caesarism, the second most important feature of Italy’s passive revolution is what Gramsci called “Transformism” exemplified in Italian politics by Giovanni Giolitti, who sought to make a coalition of interests as broad as possible and who dominated the political scene in the years preceding fascism. [...]” (COX, 2007, p. 109).

35. “In the 21st century, the specter of totalitarianism appears, presumably eradicated after the defeat of Nazi Germany and the fall of Soviet Russia, in the figure of the populist leader who promises widespread welfare, justice, and equity. The post-cold-war world is a world in which democracy is threatened” (TORRIJOS, 2009, p. 17).

Several Latin-American newspapers pointed to Hugo Chávez as a “dictator”, “despot” etc. The American press followed the same logic, but in a more “radical” way portraying the Venezuelan president as a “drug user” and “drug trafficker” without, however, presenting evidence. The documentary *South of the Border*, by Oliver Stone (2009), made an interesting summary of the news spread in the US by the “big media” about Hugo Chávez. Another analysis always unfavorable to the Venezuelan leader was that of Norman Gall, executive director of the Fernand Braudel Institute.

36. The Punto Fijo was established on 31 October 1958 by the parties that opposed the military coup: Democratic Action (AD), Independent Electoral Political Organization Committee (COPEI) and Democratic Republican Union (URD). The Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) didn't join the agreement. The pact established governance and alternation of power, especially between AD and COPEI.

37. “[...] [the] conversion of foreign policy into a basic instrument for the pursuit of economic development, which produced friction with hegemonic countries, in particular the US, and the formation of a more autonomous diplomacy (also a form of bargaining)” (FRANKLIN, 2006, p. 22).

38. The Association of Third World countries emerged in the 1950s to maintain a position of neutrality against the geopolitical and ideological clash between the USSR and the USA.

39. We mentioned the killings, assassination attempts, conspiracies, support for destabilizing groups of democratically elected regimes, torture, etc.

40. An example of a proposal to reduce the ideological influence of traditional US-based international media, for example, and to offer information from the countries of the continent. For this reason, the TV channel TELESUR (La Nueva Televisora del Sur -The New South Television station-) was created on July 24, 2005, through an initial idea of Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez.

41. In addition to Venezuela, the founding countries of the station were Argentina, Cuba, and Uruguay. They later joined Bolivia (2006), Ecuador, and Nicaragua (2007). Under the slogan “nuestro Norte es el Sur” (Our North is the South) is possible to get main the idea behind the proposal of the station of a counter-ideology tool to the channels based in the central countries, specifically in the USA. At the beginning of 2016, with

Mauricio Macri elected president, the Argentine government left the channel society.

“From a world point of view, President Chávez has become a kind of «enfant terrible» who has been weaving a hyperactive diplomacy. His quarrels with the United States, his rapprochement with the Cuban regime and other governments viewed with reservations by the United States, the promotion of OPEC, his clamor for a multipolar world, its belief in absolute national sovereignty and its support for the continental revolution arouse many sympathies in social and intellectual sectors of Latin America” (MÉNDEZ, 2007, p. 12).

42. It should be mentioned that much of the equipment of the Venezuelan Armed Forces was obsolete and wasn't at level of the needs of the country's self-defense. Inevitably, sooner or later, some of this equipment had to be renovated.

43. “[...] Chávez's plan to spend \$60 billion on weapons, turning Venezuela into a military power, is a threat to the continent. He said he will remain in government until 2031 (I will not be here anymore) and shows himself to be a (Latin-American) integrationist. But who knows if a president of Venezuela will not think he should occupy the Amazon to prevent its internationalization? With the new equipment - 14 Su-25 fighters; 600.000 GPS-guided bombs, China's JYL three-dimensional ultrasound radar stations and, the acquisition of 138 ships, 10 to 15 submarines and 150 supersonic (planes) -, our sovereignty turns to dust. No one imagined this could happen on the South American continent. Why all this? To face the United States? Now for the superpower this is worthless, but for us, it is a frightening force. One of two things: or Brazil enters the arms race to ensure its defense, withdrawing the scarce money from its budget that is serving our social programs, Or, to survive, it has to cover up under the umbrella of NATO, tragically returning the thesis of Menem, as the only way to defend itself. Menem was against Brazil, now we will all be united to defend ourselves from the “new military” power that will dominate South America” (SARNEY, 2006, online).

44. “South Africa's inclusion was remarkable for three reasons. First, because it has weakened the importance of the civilizational aspect in international politics - after all, the BRICS has its origin, to use the definitions of Samuel Huntington, in five distinct civilizations. In this regard, is the aspect that the BRICS diverges most radically from the common alliances of international politics” (STUENKEL, 2017, p. 82).

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(...) Historical and political dynamics lend themselves to a series of interpretations. They are sometimes convergent, sometimes divergent, sometimes complementary. One of these frameworks is constituted by the writings and analyses of neo-Marxist authors. Professor Charles Pennaforte in the present book draws largely on those authors, for instance Immanuel Wallerstein, Giovanni Arrighi, Beverly Silver, Antonio Gramsci, Luciano Gruppi, Antonio Negri, Michael Hart. Immanuel Wallerstein's contributions to the analysis of contemporary societies through the concepts of the World-Economy and World-Systems Analysis are well known. Professor Charles Pennaforte provides a clear, dense and solid synthesis of this important scientific contribution, recalling that its origins lies in François Braudel's Ecole des Annales, Marxism and the Dependency theory. The process of economic globalization is studied in a precise, clear and detailed way by Professor Charles Pennaforte through the neo-Marxist perspective.

(...) Consequently, the reading of Professor Charles Pennaforte's book is particularly invigorating because it opens several fields of reflection, analysis and questioning. The book mobilizes a very dense bibliographic corpus and it is part of a school of thought of international relations that has produced high-level works. Professor Charles Pennaforte's book allows us to (re)discover authors whose analyses are somewhat less classical and traditional than those usually used in the study of international relations in the 21st century. In this regard, his book constitutes a solid, strong and stimulating basis for debate, for discussion, for reflection. After reading it, it is up to each reader to extend and prolong these debates, discussions and reflections...

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