

## BOOK REVIEW

**Brazil on the Global Stage\*****by Magno Klein**

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(Stuenkel, Oliver and Taylor, Matthew M. (eds.) *Brazil on the Global Stage: Power, Ideas, and the Liberal International Order*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015)

Edited by Oliver Stuenkel and Matthew M. Taylor, 'Brazil on the Global Stage' brings together the reflections of researchers from Brazilian and American institutions about Brazil's engagement with the current liberal order. In the book, the liberal global order is defined by "open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, democratic community, collective problem solving, shared sovereignty over some issues, and the rule of law" (STUENKEL and TAYLOR, 2015, p. 06), all of which follows the common understanding of liberal internationalists such as John Ikenberry. It reached its peak in the post-Cold War period under the auspices of the U.S., but in the past two decades, it has been passing through a process of decentralization and multipolarization that puts in check the hierarchies of that order, U.S. supremacy, and the bases of international liberalism.

In this context of change, the book follows debates that are becoming more and more common about the roles being taken by emerging powers in the global order and their capacity to reform and undo current institutions. The main theoretical frameworks in International Relations have divergent expectations about the behavior of these countries in the face of an order in which they have always had peripheral roles. A liberal institutionalist argument defends the proposition that these emerging powers tend to become integrated into this hegemonic order because it sustains a favorable environment for their development without demanding large costs for establishing global public goods. For some realists, however, this would mean underestimating these emerging powers' desire for power, which would tend to cut against the status quo. A

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good part of this debate has been concentrated on the rise of China (and, to a lesser degree, that of India) as a factor of systemic transformation.

The book edited by Stuenkel and Taylor contributes to this debate with a reflection on how Brazil understands and operates in the current liberal global order. It starts from the premise that Brazil does not confirm the expectation that liberal capitalist democracies will necessary converge in the direction of the U.S.-led liberal order. In fact, they can actually present important challenges with different understandings about what democracy means on the global plane and how international relations should operate among sovereign states.

The interest in the case of Brazil is justified by its recent engagement in important international matters, its active role in the region, and its interest in contributing to global matters that had until recently been quite uncommon for Brazilian diplomacy to engage with. Brazil was a big sponsor of regional integration projects (such as UNASUL and CELAC) and South-South coalitions (such as the BRICS and IBSA). Brazil took on the leadership of the group of 20 developing countries during the negotiations of the WTO (G-20) and become involved, along with Turkey, in the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear crisis. It led proposals for changes in the current governance of the Internet and on the legitimacy of the norms of humanitarian intervention, proposing the concept of the 'responsibility to protect' and accepting the challenge of leading a peacekeeping operation in Haiti. Brazil's international image improved with its response to important global events and its victories in elections for key positions in multilateral organizations such as the FAO and WTO.

Placing the realist assumption of emerging powers' disruptive tendencies in relative terms, the book edited by Stuenkel and Taylor draw attention to Brazil's stance, which in no way is antagonistic to the current liberal global order. They bring to light Brazil's 'ambiguous relationship' with international structures of governance, sitting on the fence between adhering to them and contesting them. Brazilian decision-makers have been questioning the bases of the liberal global order, and expressing distinct visions about the scope of cooperation and the bases of international law and authority, and thereby displaying disagreement with the central practices of the international post-war order.

In the words of Stuenkel and Taylor, "at the extreme, liberal internationalism has been interpreted by Brazilians as a form of liberal imperialism, and the power of the

hegemon at the center of the liberal order has been portrayed by Brazilians as a menace at least as threatening as anarchy within the international system" (STUENKEL and TAYLOR, 2015, p. 07-08). This vision of the international system is responsible for a critical stance towards the international liberal project in regards to many agendas such as trade, human rights, and nuclear non-proliferation. Even so, Brazil has shown itself to be favorable to the general principles of the global order and has reaped the benefits of it too much to truly feed a disruptive discourse. Brazilian diplomatic rhetoric, for example, has traditionally defended multilateralism in the international system, and Brazil is active in its main international organizations, especially the United Nations. It also, however, advocates reforms that make this multilateral order more democratic and responsive to the demands of countries from the South.

The book edited by Stuenkel and Taylor show how this larger degree of international engagement 'with nuances' can produce dilemmas. With the acquisition of more power and responsibility, will Brazil be able to maintain its critical discourse about the use of coercive diplomatic measures to solve crises? Will it be able to maintain its identity as a country from the South when facing countries with far less in the way of capabilities? Will it be able to maintain the ambiguity of a discourse that is critical of the international financial system at the same time that it continues to be engaged in that same system? Will it accept larger production costs for global public goods?

More international engagement puts in question Brazil's relationship with the current hegemon of the liberal order. The U.S. has an incomparable capacity for international intervention, but over the last 20 years, the limits of its power and capacity to make other states adhere to the institutions of the global order have become more evident. This is the result of not just the rise of new poles of power, especially in Asia, but also the failure of some of its initiatives, such as the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. The international rise of Brazil has made the differences in the visions of these two countries clearer and clearer.

The chapters of the book edited by Stuenkel and Taylor emphasize some of these divergences, such as the traditional criticism of the U.S.'s double standards about its conducts (at the same time as it demands conformance to a liberal regime, it avoids sanctions for itself violating these norms). This bilateral relationship is marked profoundly by Brazil's identity as a developing country in the specific context of Latin America and by the incapacity of U.S. agents to understand how important a North-

South cleavage is for Brazil's vision of the world. The global leadership of the U.S. is not seen by Brazil as free of its own interests. Brazil distrusts American hegemony, which leads it to reinforce its traditional defense of the principles of state sovereignty and the equality of states.

The book presents an analysis that is relevant for those who study the performance of emerging powers, changes in the international system, and the insertion of Brazil into that system. It is worth noting that, since its publication, important events have occurred that have altered this book's context. The international order seems less and less favorable to a middle power that bases its diplomatic actions in soft power, and the implosion of multilateral negotiations on trade and climate change seem to indicate that. In addition, the election of Donald Trump as President of the U.S. put in check the U.S.'s interest in continuing to be the guarantor of the liberal global order and is the most strident case of the resurgence of populist movements based around economic nationalism in central countries. During the government of Xi Jinping (2013- ), China, in turn, has been taking more assertive positions in the international system and timidly beginning to take on responsibilities for creating global public goods, with consequences for the hegemonic order that are still uncertain. Domestically, the great political instability from which Brazil has been suffering since 2013 (and which, in 2016, resulted in the deposing of Dilma Rousseff), has had profound impacts on Brazil's foreign policy, and its relationship with the international system that had been maintained during the PT governments. The emphasis on South-South cooperation and the quest to make Brazil a global player are projects that have been sidelined by the current government.

The book edited by Stuenkel and Taylor do not pay special attention to the foreign policy of the Rousseff administration, and the book was released before she was deposed (that is, before the beginning of the Temer administration). This has been a peculiar phase in the recent trajectory of Brazil's insertion into the international system, which seems to clash with the optimism present in the book about Brazil's capacity to be an actor that will become more and more relevant in the world order. The book, however, defends the argument that Brazil's active role transcends its governments' positions, and is instead a long-term characteristic that is the result of an understanding embedded in the diplomatic thinking of the country. As such, one would expect that it would be maintained in the future. Its role as a mid-size power, and its traditional discourse in defense of peaceful solutions to controversies and international law, would

endow Brazil with the international legitimacy to act in global matters in which central powers cannot or will not intervene. Its reputation as a coalition builder and bridge between countries in the North and South would be one of its diplomatic assets. The chapter authored by James Goldgeier sums up this argument: "Brazil is well positioned to develop a more powerful voice in global governance. It is a democratic state, and thus shares affinities with those nations that support the rule of law and protection of human rights, but its long-standing opposition to American hegemony and support for the Global South affords it credibility among countries not allied with the United States".

Translated by Ryan Lloyd