

The Brazilian Coup d'État and the right-wing tide

In view of the rise of right and far-right forces both in the Americas and in Europe, our aim consists in promoting a discussion about the putsch in Brazil. After a period of stability, alongside the emergence of a series of popular demonstrations, in 2013, Brazil witnessed the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff, which was entailed by an illegal parliamentary manoeuvre. The Brazilian Coup opened the door to a series of institutional reforms, deepening the distance between the represented and their representatives, as it promoted a political program that was not certified by any electoral dispute. The ultimate achievement of this process came through in the form of an amendment to the Constitution, which precluded any real increase of the public expenses for the next 20 years (Constitutional Amendment n. 95, approved by the Senate in December 2016). It goes without saying that such radical modification would never be approved by popular choice¹.

However, the Brazilian context cannot be understood without reference to the continual growth in importance of the right-wing (and far-right) discourse amid the political turmoil. Since massive rallies in 1984 which culminated in restoration of democratic institutions, the depth of the Brazilian social problems has undermined the power of the right-wing rhetoric on both liberal and conservative sides. The very qualification “right-wing” has been regarded as an efficient disqualification method in the political arena. For this reason, right-wing intellectuals have repeatedly insisted on the need to overcome the left-right dichotomy in Brazil – when they did not simply reject any affiliation to right-wing ideas. The last few years have changed this situation. The right-wing is not ashamed anymore to state their ideological preferences. Organized through think tanks, as well as ideologues, and with the support of the main newspapers, they have developed a sophisticated ideological *front*, which spreads violent ideas against minorities and what they label “cultural modernity”. There is a clear effort to neutralize every idea that could be regarded as leftist, ideas that are depicted as cognitive pathologies and moral deviations. Moralism has become a central feature

¹ According to a public opinion survey published by Datafolha in December 2016, only 24% of the population approved the amendment.

of the new Brazilian conservatism, which, notwithstanding its intrinsic heterogeneity, reveal important general traces.

In Brazil, criticism against the “cultural modernity” comes alongside the appraisal of capitalism and market-driven distribution of wealth. Accordingly, it combines elements of the far-right trends with the neoliberal view over economics. Analyses such as those from Jürgen Habermas on the new conservatism or Jacques Rancière’s “Hatred of Democracy” express the global inscription of the right-wing tide and prevent any isolated interpretation of the Brazilian context. On the other side, it is necessary to take into consideration the particularities of the right-wing and far-right discourses in Brazil, which, for example, do not give too much importance to a discussion regarding xenophobia.