

TWO ULTIMATELY AVOIDED EVILS

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Election rejected moralistic and potentially putschist "udenismo" and the evil of the Americanization of the political debate.

Last Sunday's elections were free and democratic. These were the elections of a consolidated democracy, because Brazil has a huge middle class of entrepreneurs and professionals and a working class that participates in the productivity gains. Because it has a constitutional and legal system endowed with legitimacy and supported by a modern State, that is effective in assuring the law, and increasingly efficient in managing the social and scientific services that make it possible to reduce inequality.

It is true that the two major candidates were unable to develop a debate offering the voters clear ideological and programmatic alternatives. This is why they were criticized by the vast majority of the analysts. I think they were mistaken. There was no debate because Brazilian society today is a cohesive rather than a divided society. Evidently, there still is a strong gap between the rich and the poor, as showed by the election polls. But today Brazilian society is cohesive enough not to allow candidates with very different programs to have equal possibilities of being elected – which is a good thing.

The two evils that actually haunted the October 31 elections were the evils of the moralistic and potentially putschist "udenismo" and the evil of the Americanization of the political debate. When sectors of the society and partisan militants stated that the elected candidate represented a threat to democracy, to the Constitution, and to public morality, they were adopting again a political

practice that had characterized the UDN (União Democrática Nacional), the moralistic and putschist political party that overthrew Getulio Vargas in 1954. There is nothing more antipolitical or antidemocratic than this kind of argument and practice. The three accusations are very serious; if they were true – and their advocates always think they are – they would justify a preventive coup. Fortunately Brazilian society showed maturity and rejected this kind of argument.

As to the evil of the Americanization of politics, I understand this as the mix of religion with politics in a modern country. The United States, that at the end of World War II were an example of democracy for the whole world, experienced thereafter a political and social decadence that had as one of its characteristics the invasion of politics by religion-based subjects as the condemnation of abortion. Suddenly a candidate becomes a friend of God or a friend of the devil, depending of his being pro-life or not. The separation between politics and religion – the secularization of politics – was a major democratic improvement in the nineteenth century. To reunite them is a major backwardness, the return of intolerance.

Brazilian society resisted well to both threats. And democracy emerged from the elections unscathed and strengthened. In her speech after the election, Dilma Rousseff restated her commitment to the poor and at the same time proposed to implement a conciliation policy, making no distinction between winners and losers. I am sure that she will be faithful to this commitment, as were the last presidents. Our democracy requires it and makes it possible.