



Beyond the centre: The third phase of modernity in a globally compared perspective

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Abstract

This article develops an argument about what it defines as the ‘third phase of modernity’ and tackles, in a comparative manner, the cases of Latin America (especially Brazil), South Asia (especially India) and China. It tries to identify specific modernizing moves which imply individualizing comparisons as well as encompassing comparisons in relation to these areas and countries. It builds its argument from a few theoretical assumptions and moves in an inductive manner in order to dislocate the discussion of modernity from its strong referents in the West and the conceptual definitions that stem from this. The article tries also to connect the discussion of modernity to debates about development. It proposes a multidimensional approach and analyzes the main dimensions of contemporary modernity and modernizing moves in those regions and countries.

Keywords

Brazil, China, globalization, India, modernity

A number of fractures in the social, political and sociological analysis of the contemporary world reproduce inherited patterns of study as well as divisions, reflecting the very structure of the world in which they are formulated. The theorizations of modernity and development were and remain to this day, to a great extent, one of them. Despite much recent talk about ‘post-colonial’ theory and some world-system theories

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referring to East Asia, countries in the centre of the global system are usually studied in separation from countries in other zones, which could be defined as peripheral or semi-peripheral. Theorists in the centre rarely turn their gaze outwards and often take what happens in their countries or in the connections between them as the sole reference points. While students of other areas of global modernity often compare 'developing' countries and a few overall continental or subcontinental efforts at interpretation may on occasion be spotted, their experience has not been the focus of much general theoretical activity in relation to contemporary modernity, nor have those central country theorists shown much interest in such analyses. China's momentous transformations, for instance, have been scrutinized carefully, but no overall theoretical discussions have been proposed. This is as true of states vis-à-vis globalization as it has been of developments in citizenship, as much as of religious change and identity building.

This article proceeds differently. Instead of departing from general debates about the relation of states to globalization or about post-national developments of citizenship, it will focus mainly on regions which are not in the centre, and, even though issues that turn up directly in Western social theory will be present in what follows, I shall try to develop my arguments with more direct reference to those areas, in a more exclusive manner. My starting point will be the periodization of modernity, taken as a civilization, in three phases. The first was the liberal restricted phase, spanning the nineteenth century, which had – at least as a telos – the market at its core and faced a crisis from the 1890s to the 1920s; the second, operating roughly from the 1930s to the 1970s, was more inclusive and more centred on the state – Keynesian, welfarist or developmentalist – its crisis characterizing in particular the 1980s. The former had colonial structures as its counterpoint in the periphery, the latter was witness to a piecemeal process of decolonization from the European yoke, Latin America emerging already from this in the nineteenth century (Wagner, 1994; Domingues, 2006b). Basic to this characterization is the idea that we have witnessed a steep growth in the complexity of social life, not only as traditional political economy and sociology had posited, in terms of the division of labour, but more generally in terms of the whole gamut of social practices and identities, via processes of differentiation (which include redifferentiation and de-differentiation too). An intensification of globalization, also a long-term process, adds to this complexity, as an important force that comes from outside individual countries and interferes with them, even more so today than in previous decades (cf. Domingues, 2009). In this process, the role of analytically conceived networks (based on voluntary collaboration) has increased vis-à-vis that of hierarchies (based on command) and the market (based on voluntary exchange), as a consequence of attempts to deal with the increased complexity of social life. The third phase emerged in the mid-1990s.

My more concrete objects will be Brazil – as well as more generally Latin America – China and India – with some further general reference to South and South-east Asia. How do we understand these countries and regions within the advancement of modernity? Instead of searching for an answer which would compare them with the United States or Europe, I shall move directly to a comparison between them, those countries which are at the core of changes in contemporary modernity. Both the domain of culture in a large sense and related social practice, that is, the hermeneutic fabric of social life, including world views and identities, and economic issues – the dimension of the

interchange of humankind with nature – will feature prominently. The state will, however, be taken as central for the articulation of those two dimensions, hence as key for the reasoning about and conceptualization of the third phase of modernity as I shall propose. From this let us proceed then more inductively than deductively. As we should expect, there is much more variation in the way different regions and countries modernize, today and before, depending on their own civilizational background but also on how they answer to the Western institutions and imaginary, as well as colonial experiences, a combination of which produces what we can call ‘modernizing moves’.

The outstretching social fabric

Social complexity means social pluralism, based on differentiation, whose development may depend on previous processes of de-differentiation, for instance, via the formal establishment of citizenship, which allowed for professional but also religious and other more open sorts of identity. Of course, a region such as the Indian subcontinent may seem to play havoc with this proposition, since its level of ethnic, linguistic and caste variation looks so bewildering. It is true that a lot of ethnic and cultural amalgamation over many centuries has produced an extremely variegated social fabric, in a region which was nevertheless rarely unified. But this is probably more apparent than real. These were peasant and small village porous social formations, composed of multi-layered populations, whose basic patterns of differentiation did not vary so much, sharing similar caste patterns, to start with. The processes of modernization that began with the arrival of the British and were given a national character with independence implied a much greater level of social differentiation than before, although the principles upon which this is based often hark back to pre-colonial times (cf. the now vastly transformed caste system) (see Weber, 1988 [1920]; Bayly, 1999; Srivinas, 2002).

In China, despite the splendour and power of the successive empires in the vast land-mass of the Sinic civilization, a rather simple society, based on agriculture and rather stable patterns of social life and identity persisted, regardless of invasions and changes in ruling dynasties. In fact, even for most of the twentieth century, due to the failures of the Republic, long-lasting civil war and also, intentionally, the Cultural Revolution, China did not see much in terms of a far-reaching process of modernity. However, since the economic and social opening of the late 1970s, with the intentional economic differentiation promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), social liberalization and the impacts of globalization, the Chinese social fabric has become far more complex (Anderson, 1974: 538–40; Roberts, 2006). In Latin America also, starting from a model of society traversed by Western patterns, marked by a meeting of European, Indigenous and African cultures, as well as characterized by forced labour and mainly agriculture, partly the nineteenth and especially the twentieth centuries were witness to a process of increasing social complexity. If initially the imperial states of Spain and Portugal did not care about the heterogeneity of their populations, provided they were Christian, the emergence of the nation state changed the situation, albeit in a piecemeal fashion, since Latin American state membership in the nineteenth century basically concerned the upper and middle classes (Domingues, 2008: Ch. 3).

Nation and state building all over the world during the first two phases of modernity partly aimed at controlling the heterogeneity and floating aspects of identity brought about by modernity's own inner drive since its very beginnings, its attempts to make uniform nations displaying different degrees of success. The Latin American twentieth-century model, which tried to overcome the narrow bases of its nineteenth-century predecessor, met with varying degrees of success, higher in Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, very low in Bolivia and Ecuador. The mixing of 'races', largely under white hegemony and without the actual abandonment of racism, or the affirmation of truly white nations, were the two main strategies (Domingues, 2006a). In India, things were far more complicated, insofar as building a nation there implied bringing together different ethnic and linguistic groups, let alone religions and the difficult caste problem. Except for the break-up of Pakistan, it did become, however, a single nation, despite strong internal tensions (Mahajan, 2005; Guha, 2008). China had culturally and ethnically unified most of its population long before modernity set in, although the country did include vast areas populated by other groups, including Tibet and Muslim regions. The concept of a nation among others emerged only with modernity (Wong, 1997: 168–76; Mackerras, 2004; Baobang, 2005).

In the 1980s and 1990s, far-reaching changes took place, heralding a new phase of modernity. Not only did former processes of development throw up new economic agents; diversifying the class and occupational structure, as well as allowing for the mushrooming of life-forms, at least in general ways, in the religious and cultural dimensions, a powerful process of 'disembedding' set in, whereby people were further 'freed' from former more ascriptive identities and forced to search for new individual and collective 're-embeddings' in all these regions.¹ Besides, increasing globalization, bringing with it new moral, cognitive and aesthetic frameworks, was added to those which would develop inside nation states. The pluralization of social life stemmed from such new re-embeddings, but a search for homogeneity can often also be discerned in them, drawing upon previous memories and configuring attempts at affirming supposed primordial identities. Some of these are long-term constructions (such as Hindutva nationalism in India). Muslim radicalism or an exclusivist outlook is found in the region too, as well as incipiently in China, as indeed also is found a globalizing influence. But what stands out is the mushrooming of religious identities, epitomized in Latin America by the rise of Pentecostal evangelical movements, and of new ethnic (indigenous) identities also there, the so-called crisis of secularism in India, and a much more varied social, cultural and even political landscape in China, as well as the rise of a diversified consumer culture everywhere.

In India, complexity is a long-standing phenomenon. It acquired such great salience due to compression by the British of loose social formations within a single administrative entity, leading to the boundaries of what would become two (and later three) countries – India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. A slow process of industrialization created new social classes, while economic and political disembedding processes engendered by capitalism and the nation state have produced a far-reaching reworking of caste, as well as reinforcing linguistic and reshaping religious ('communal') identities. Other, supplier identities have been in the making too, related to social movements, consumption, changing gender roles and women's rights. The main trend, however, has been very

traditionally modern in the sense of rebuilding the nation, a trend that may seem to contradict what has been argued here. I think this is just apparent and that a more complex dynamic can be found in this respect.

First, with the Congress-led national movement, nationalism in India entailed the acceptance of a high level of cultural and religious pluralism (although only reluctantly of linguistic states), but with *Hindutva* a stronger tendency – which was at work before, through the ‘semitization’ of its main tenets, that is, a new shape to the religion which included an attempt at homogenizing and unifying Hinduism – has been towards lending it a new and stricter meaning, which would potentially exclude Muslims from Indian identity (Veer, 1994; Vanaik, 1997; Nandy, 2002 [1990], 1994). This impinges very strongly on the development of secularism. Originally the Congress-led Indian state apparently embraced what is often supposed to be the Western secular model, implying total state independence and aloofness in relation to religions.² In fact, what happened in practice was more like acceptance and patronizing them all. Nationalist Hindu movements have fought to change this, mostly mixing majoritarian Hinduism, with a religious gloss, with a more strictly (anti-Muslim prone) secularized state.

That is, some shift towards a less accommodating instance is somehow at work in India now, away from the twofold policies of the Congress – formal secularism and practical accommodation and enmeshment with all national religions, which was probably a legacy of the former, Mughal state traditions. But the fact is that religious-communal identities have become once again paramount in India, with particularisms being reaffirmed, regardless of the manipulation they may undergo, which result in outbursts of violence. The homogenizing trust of secularist nationalism – itself a form of regulation of social life, mediated by the state – seems to have been faltering in the past 20 years.

The re-embeddings, especially in urban areas, of large masses of disembedded workers make recourse to religion a way of rebuilding identity. This has also been happening with caste identities and issues related to this sort of oppression and inequality, with identities partly instrumentalized as political weapons. As a consequence, but also as causal forces, strong modernizing moves are at work here and it is difficult to forecast their success, Indian society is showing itself nevertheless to be resilient in the sense of reaffirming its ‘traditional’ memories as a basis for those moves as well as preventing further polarization of religious, though not caste, identities. In any case, here too the state is crucial for the regulation of identity and mobilization, accepting but also provoking it, especially with the establishment of reservation for the lowest castes (as well as tribal groups) and then for the other backward castes. In the other South Asian countries more stringent and closed forms of re-embedding, attempting to get rid of reflexivity, have tried to reinforce either religious or/and ethnic identities – for example, Islamism, increasingly radicalized, is found especially in Pakistan, where it is also fragmenting (Ali, 2002; Harrison, 2009), Sinhalese Buddhist majoritarianism is found in Sri Lanka, with Tamil reactive nationalism as an answer (Tambiah, 1992). These countries have a reasonable level of internal pluralism and even fragmentation, but not at such an advanced stage as India, although without its mechanisms of accommodation.

In Latin America, the issue is more straightforward and seems to mirror Western developments. Formally secular states, more or less close to the Catholic Church, have witnessed far-reaching changes and pluralization in indigenous ethnic identities,

mobilization by blacks and women, as well as gay communities, the emergence of new religious beliefs and organizations, a youth and consumer culture, the family structure, social movements and non-governmental organizations, without detriment to variably strong (urban and agrarian) labour and peasant movements. Some level of fracturing, or rather reconstruction, on a more flexible basis, has ensued therefore in relation to national identity. In many cases the state actively regulates new identities, practices and organizations, however, in principle granting them greater autonomy, except when changes in the relations between them (for instance, between 'genders') must be enshrined in legislation, constitutional, ordinary, or administrative (García Canclini, 1990; Martín-Barbero, 2001; Domingues, 2008: Ch. 3). Mainly a liberal order is reinforced in this regard, although the notion of the 'person' is also undergoing change, in particular insofar as what concerns the constitutional recognition and rephrasing of indigenous peoples' identities and rights (Mota, 2009).

China is in this regard a puzzle. Until very recently largely a peasant, very closed society, as well as unified socially, culturally and politically a long time ago (Wong, 1997: 168–76), the speed of its modernization and increasing complexity is staggering, responding to the CCP's renewed modernizing move in the aftermath of Maoist defeat and semi-chaos. While peasants are internally differentiated, a pluralization of identities proceeds apace: migrations to cities imply the formation of a new urban proletariat, working in very insecure and uneven conditions, and the rise of a new professional stratum as well as of a, very state-dependent, class of entrepreneurs. Lack of meaning, with the crisis of socialist ideology and more flexibility, has led to the re-emergence of old religions, such as Buddhism or Taoism, as well as of local cults at the village level or the rise of new ones, such the Falun Gong, alongside a 'new' Confucianism. New concerns such as environmentalism, youth practices and consumerism, as well as rampant individualism and new gender roles, have also developed. 'Minority' ethnic or national problems linger on or are even reinforced (Gries and Rosen, 2004; You-tien and Kwan, 2010). The state tries to closely regulate these changes and the attempts at organization they engender. It does not allow them to prosper beyond the local level, ensuring its hold over the overall modernization process and confining those collectivities to much more limited modernizing moves, except, in a decentred manner, in the economy, via the spread of market relations. Labelling the Chinese state 'totalitarian', beyond the problematic character of such a concept, would falsify reality. Yet the whole direction of the process stems from its Marxist-Leninist, nationalist, and now clearly instrumentally developed Confucian perspectives and legitimation strategies, whose impact is, however, difficult to measure in the long run.

New patterns of economic development

The end of the long 1970s–1980s crisis of capitalism entailed entirely transformed patterns of capitalist accumulation, no longer liberal or state-centred, nor simply neoliberal (that is, market-driven and exclusively based on voluntary exchange), but also implying a new phase of modernity in this respect (see Castells, [2000] 1996, 1998). Increasingly complexity can be seen here almost with brutal strength, demanding new forms of coordination. If Japan had already climbed a ladder to the global centre, Korea,

Brazil and India tried to follow, after earlier developmental efforts, to control new technologies. While Korea has succeeded to a great extent, Brazil has failed and India has achieved only partial success (at the low end of software production and international call centres installation, mainly in Bangalore). China has more recently joined in and taken important and quick steps in the direction of becoming more confident in this area. After a long stretch of economic growth, spanning most of the twentieth century, Brazil had to face the crisis of its model of development, moderately centred on the state since the 1930s. The 1980s debt crisis that engulfed Latin America aggravated the situation. India faced the same issue, with lesser intensity, in the 1990s. China had to grapple with poverty and backwardness in the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution, soon having the disaster of the Soviet Union's attempts at reform as a warning about the dangers of quick liberalization and privatization. In all these countries the crisis of the second phase of modernity demanded new answers, which both tackled the internal problem and allowed a different relationship with global capitalism, whose strength was visibly growing.

For many interpreters of Korea, Brazil and India, the problem relates to the state capacity to sponsor development. For Evans (1995), Korea was the country whose state, following the path of Japan, achieved 'embedded autonomy', with a strong and goal-searching bureaucracy, which had autonomy and cohesion, but at the same enjoyed close *institutional* links with the business community. Brazil and India fell in between this sort of state and predatory ones, exemplified by Zaire. Brazil had a less autonomous bureaucracy, with development bogged down by loose internal structures and the state's ties with landed oligarchies, while the links with businessmen were mainly of a personal type. India had an autonomous bureaucracy, but too many demands from society, which prevented the link between public administration and entrepreneurs, with, in addition, the decadence of the civil service in terms of corruption and patrimonial encroachments. Kohli (2004) was extreme in his assessment and excluded Brazil and India from developmental states, which Korea was indeed, a form which he calls the 'cohesive capitalist state' that actually prospers only under authoritarian regimes. They were 'multi-class states', but not nearly as bad as Nigeria's ideal-typical case of a 'patrimonial state'. More recently, comparing Brazil and India, Pedersen (2008) was less harsh and suggested that both countries had been able, even under the new pattern of global capitalist development, to remake the links between business and bureaucracy, within largely democratized political systems, moving forward, although with difficulties, in developmental efforts.

While Brazil and India both have important industrial bases, originally partly developed by the state, prior to the present period and especially now, their path has differed a lot. The former has always relied a lot on transnational capital and witnessed a partial process of refocusing of its economy, although this is not nearly as bad as what has happened in most other countries of Latin America. It has had enormous difficulty moving into high-technological areas, let alone, until very recently, improving its mediocre rates of growth. The latter has not bet on transnational capital, maintaining a very closed and state-based economic framework, but has been growing fast, with great help from the software sector, although this remains mostly in the low-value end of international operations, since its firms work to a great extent as subcontractors for foreign companies (Domingues, 2008: Ch. 2; Pedersen, 2008: 94–7; Lima, 2009).

We might then exclude Brazil and India from the definition of developmental states, or, more obviously, 'cohesive capitalist states', considering that their performances are a far cry from that of East Asian countries, especially Korea and Taiwan, latecomers after Japan's latecoming, which could be considered very successful developmental states (see Amsden, 2001).

This would be, in fact, far-fetched. Johnson (1982: 19), for instance, when analyzing Japan, stressed that commitment to economic growth above all was key to the definition of a developmental state, as against the merely 'regulatory' state which was the hallmark of American capitalism, but that this was not a guarantee of success. Besides, both Evans' and Kohli's definitions draw too much on the Weberian ideal-types methodology. This is problematic: rather than defining variables that might lead to an assessment of the relative success of states that searched for development, the game is decided in advance by positing one of them – usually Korea – as the yardstick whereby all others are measured. This is not say that Japan, Korea and Taiwan did not perform exceedingly well, but that the context and the internal variables must be better defined if we are to understand how countries as complicated as India and Brazil have managed to move from a basic peripheral position as agrarian economies to what could be defined as semi-peripheral economies, in which value-added in production processes does not approximate to what happens in central countries, but which is far above that of peripheral countries, especially in Africa and Latin America, but also in Asia, which have not managed to move beyond primary commodities or low valued-added industry. We can therefore take especially Evans' and Johnson's concepts, as well as my differentiation of mechanisms of coordination, as analytical instruments rather than ideal-types and use them to interpret specific cases, without pre-judging reality according to, in the case in point, categories which actually have a very immediate reference (i.e., Korea, and to some extent also Taiwan). Brazil and India would be developmental, with some rate of success, despite their size and inevitable level of state fragmentation and greater social porosity, as well as being partly (neo)patrimonial.

China poses an even more complex problem, which the French Regulation School and 'varieties of capitalism' approach have generally avoided. To start with, it is not totally clear if China is really capitalist and, if so, which seems to be the case, what sort of 'state capitalism' it would present. In addition, Nolan (2004: especially p. 24) has observed that China is in fact, despite its size, a backward, underdeveloped country, increasingly dependent, facing tremendous challenges for its development. Others have stressed the speed and amazing capacity of the Chinese economy in developing more sophisticated industrial products, especially in the information technology industries, which Evans (1995: 7, 11) pointed out as the sector from which a 'conspiracy for development' might take off. While the theme is very controversial and several assessments of the development of China's political economy exist, usually with exclusive empirical and often liberal standpoints passing as conceptual wisdom and underpinning the analysis, it is clear that a push for development is happening (Naughton, 2007; Macnally, 2008; Brandt and Rawski, 2008).³

If one reads the evaluations of developmental states, this would be almost impossibly the case. China is not a 'cohesive capitalist state', nor does it show any actual traces of 'embedded autonomy', unless we unduly stretch the concept. Some have tried to use

corporatist, which usually deals with Latin America, or neo-corporatist literature about Western Europe, to analyze China, but this is hardly convincing. In fact, the Chinese state is very amorphous, prone to corruption, with little differentiation between politics and bureaucracy, on the one hand, and the economy, on the other. Despite considerable efforts by the central government, it shows no cohesiveness, nor are there independent economic agents. Yet China is growing astonishingly fast and its state-sponsored and often partly state-owned high-tech firms have been in many cases able to thrive, holding their ground internally and expanding globally, often through the exploitation of advantageous niches abroad as well as occupying important spaces internally, and building *networks* with global corporations, in order to further common projects (Howell, 2006; Macnally, 2008; Wang, 2009: Ch 2). In areas of extreme technological complexity, with radical differentiation of processes and products, with amazing speed of change, such networks are crucial for company as well as country success. Brazil notoriously lacks them, although it is the only one in Latin America that possesses at least some clusters of innovation (Botaragay and Tiffin, 2002). This is a variable as important as the role of the state, although often it is linked to the latter via sponsorship, funding, and collaborative efforts.

To be sure, there are patrimonial elements in all these states, and they could actually be deemed 'neopatrimonial', but this is not detrimental at all to their nation state characteristics (see Domingues, 2008: Ch. 3, which draws upon, albeit in variance with, Eisenstadt, 1973). However, we must proceed carefully here. While developmental characteristics of the state must not be read in ideal-typical terms, but rather as furnishing analytical elements for the analysis, patrimonial characteristics must receive the same treatment. Overall, the idea that patrimonialism is necessarily inimical to development is misguided, as we see especially in the case of China, but also in those of Brazil and India, apparently to a smaller extent.

Here I must once again make recourse to the analytical distinction between market, hierarchies and networks, the latter more flexible and suited to deal with greater complexity and the staggering pace of change. While networks between state and society were effective in the case of Japan and Korea, as well as between firms from these countries, in China, this has been the case too, within a very distinct constellation, which includes a much higher level of globalization than in those cases from almost the very start. The state as a developmental agent is part of such networks, but it is neither cohesive nor autonomous. If anything, business is to a high degree embedded *within* the state. Yet the roles of custodian (regulatory) and demiurge (including direct participation in production) plus midwife (assisting the emergence of new entrepreneurial groups) and husbandry (cajoling and assisting them to meet new challenges) (Evans, 1995: 13–15; Chs 4–6) are clearly performed by the Chinese state. Brazil and India are very different from that. To borrow Johnson's (1982: 20–2) categories for bureaucratic, plan-rational, and market-rational criteria of evaluation, effectiveness rather than efficiency has been the Chinese goal, the opposite being true of Brazil and India. In fact, China ascended to the World Trade Organization (WTO), but has very little to do with a merely regulatory state, much less one of a liberal sort; nothing signals a change in this respect, despite demands and prophesies to the contrary. Brazil and to a lesser extent India have, however, embarked on this path. Privatization on a large scale as well as new modes of

regulation have come into being in the former in 1990s, along with massive inflows of foreign direct investment since then (which have not, however, contrary to China's experience, brought any upgrading in the country's technological prowess). More recently, the Lula government has strengthened somewhat the role of the state and tried to build new links with business groups of a more formal kind through the creation of consultative councils. India keeps much of its economy under state ownership but clearly is searching now for a more business-friendly relationship, and has sponsored technology parks, opened up to foreign capital and looked for new, liberal regulatory frameworks (Domingues, 2008: Ch. 2; Pedersen, 2008).

Chinese regulatory frameworks, while somehow conforming to WTO standards, remain strongly in the hands of the state. Bureaucrats are firmly protected, even while law and courts have gained some sort of autonomy to hold administrations at local and regional levels accountable. Only limited 'selective adaptation' has taken place. Besides, the agrarian economy remains largely separate (Potter, 2003; Naughton, 2007). This model is, by the way, even more radical in recently rather developmentally successful Vietnam, mobilizing the interests of managers of state-owned corporations, the most important of the national 'socialist' market (Kerkvliet et al., 2003; McCargo, 2004). It has a lot to do with party and state power and privilege, but this may not be the whole story. In developmental states like Japan, this has been usually the case and in Brazilian and Indian history examples abound too, regardless of their smaller success rates (Johnson, 1982; Evans, 1995). However, overall in Latin America and South Asia this has changed a lot. The US model of regulatory agencies (which inform in reality the WTO rules and the World Bank's so-called 'best practices') is overwhelming. From Argentina, Mexico, Brazil and their neighbours (Jordana and Levi-Faur, 2005, 2006; Domingues, 2008: Ch. 2), to Sri Lanka, Pakistan and India (Sanghi and Sarkar, 2004; Anant and Singh, 2006; Metha and Regavan, 2006), independent agencies have been established in order to regulate competition, prices, standards, in markets which cannot, by their very nature (infra-structure, telecommunications, water), be perfect, but their effectiveness is, however, doubtful in several instances and also lagging behind in many countries. This model was exported from the US and to Europe together with privatization of the main public services, entailing also in particular the autonomy of Central Banks, which would presumably become technically independent of political manipulations as the overseers of monetary policy and exchange rates (Pedersen, 2008: 106).

This allows a huge amount of autonomy of such agencies from executive national governments and parliaments, although often clashes occur between them and the agencies, as well as between the latter and the courts. This is in fact one of the loci, along with sheer economic openings and privatization, where a loss of power of the nation state is institutionally visible. It may also be regarded really more as a symptom than as the foundation of these changes. In any case, China is fast globalizing but, instead of assuming the basic role of regulatory state prescribed by neoliberalism, it chose to keep or develop the role of a more directly involved state – its central political-bureaucracy is even more insulated than those other countries, although this is surely not the case of its regulatory apparatus in relation to economic decisions. Despite elements that pull them in a different direction, Brazil and India (and even more so Mexico or other countries in these regions) look much less like developmental states today than they used to. In this regard,

although measures that keep the East Asian developmental states going, though more restrained, remain possible in principle, such state behaviour and regulation have brought Latin America and South Asia closer, at least in comparison with China, to a (neo)liberal 'variety of capitalism' – but as peripheral or semi-peripheral, dependent and only at best partly developed economies and states.⁴ This does not mean that they will not grow, or that in some areas they will not accomplish some goals. It is unlikely, though, despite India's recent growth rates, that they will break through to radically new positions in the global economy.

A remaining issue must be tackled. How can we conceptualize the position of these countries in global terms? Even Brazil would hardly fit in the periphery, with its large and relatively sophisticated industrial basis. India, which is much poorer, also has a strong industrial basis and has managed to slip into a software niche. They would easily qualify as semi-peripheral countries, although the distinction between them and countries such as Taiwan and Korea would have to be elaborated, since these do not qualify as central countries but cannot be just lumped together with the former. A renewal of such analytical tools, never too sharp, must be undertaken. The case of China poses even bigger problems (only partly replicated by India). It should overtake the economy of the United States in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the 2020s. But does that mean that China has made it, passing from a country that tried to break with modernity to an underdeveloped one to a semi-developed one rapidly and then more slowly but fast enough to a central country? Its per capita income will certainly remain much lower. Moreover, its control of advanced technology will probably be better, but unlikely to match that of the US, Japan and perhaps even Western Europe. Does sheer size of population and GDP, as well as natural endowments and military power, matter to economic definitions and, more than that, to a country's standing in global terms (cf. Vanaik, 1990: 258–9, especially for India's case – with explicit and direct influence of international relations realist theory)? That is an issue that global political economy still has to tackle properly. In any case, capitalist development is extremely uneven in China, as much as in India, as well as, for instance, in Mexico, albeit less so in Brazil, which, despite its difficulties with the economy as such, has been pursuing a more cohesive path of social development.

The evolution of citizenship and political systems

We cannot really say that the world today is a safe haven for democracy. The aforementioned disembedding mechanisms are yielding ever more autonomous and to some extent unruly populations. This constitutes a socially given emancipatory potential. It is not, however, always translated into politically democratic cultures and even less in democratization, which is evinced by a large number of neo-authoritarian regimes across the world.

In South Asia, for instance, Pakistan has never actually achieved democracy, Bangladesh qualifies only charitably, while Sri Lanka has fallen prey to serious democratic involution, let alone Burma/Myanmar. India has, however, against supposed odds, maintained a democratic political system and evolved in contradictory ways, irrespective of constant turmoil and even endemic violence. Latin America has set the stage in the

past three decades for the strongest and deepest process of democratization in the contemporary world. China is far from democracy, though, despite local elections, some cultural liberalization, and some advance in the rule of law, that is, civil citizenship. In fact, while India and Latin America, and, to a much lesser extent, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh (radical, reactionary Islamism having influenced especially the situation of women in Pakistan) have traditionally Western definitions of citizenship, but with some distinct elements, in their Constitutions, China only indirectly approaches that. To be sure, citizenship underpins the People's Republic of China, but the rationale behind such definitions is possibly not the same as that which we find in those other areas, although a mobilized population has been agitating for (citizenship) rights, within so far at least the limits defined by party and state. Although democracy and citizenship imply also culture and practices, state regulation is intimately enmeshed therein, actually in their own basic definition.

It is important to note that although these countries subscribe to international human regimes, in none of them can we identify any relevant development that might take citizenship to a 'post-national' level. Citizenship and democracy remain rooted therein at the national level. In fact, due to large number of migrants from these countries to the West above all, it is in relation to them that one could speak of changes in terms of citizenship in a post-national direction (Soysal, 1994). To be sure, methodological nationalism must not be dwelt upon, but that must not prevent us from seeing that within these peripheral or semi-peripheral nation states citizenship is not undergoing a significant transformation in this regard.

In Latin America, the 1980s saw the emergence of strong social movements of diverse sorts which produced what can be called a 'molecular democratic revolution', a powerful modernizing move that has stood in sharp contradiction to much of the neoliberal transforming move that took over the economy and is often associated with restricted views of democracy or even open authoritarianism. Deriving from modernizing moves that have often been decentred, with concentrated moments of political change, however, this has implied changes in political culture, and the structure, diversity and inter-relationships between social movements, along with more formal processes, leading also to an overhaul of many institutions. New constitutions (more inclusive and flexible) came into being, popular participation has been institutionalized in different ways (for instance, participatory budgets and councils of all sorts); political rights and elections seem very much entrenched, although social rights as well as some more modest civil rights face much greater difficulties in finding legal positive embodiment or simply being practically guaranteed, though the right to property has been a long-standing secured feature of liberal Latin America (contrary to what liberal thinkers are wont to forget, pretending that there would have been, for instance, an inversion of Marshall's sequence of rights). The rule of law has been much strengthened and the judiciary has widened its role, with sometimes great judicial activism and the judicialization of social life and politics (Avritzer, 2002; Domingues, 2008: Ch. 1).

The core values of modernity, namely freedom, equality, solidarity and responsibility, have become more institutionalized, at least to the extent that this is possible within a capitalist and politically unequal social system, based precisely on the liberal principles that give rights to the citizen. Liberalism is surely dominant, but not entirely, insofar as

some forms of republicanism (in the participatory sense) and also persistent socialist demands remain either strong or linger on. Perhaps the heyday of this molecular revolution is already past, even in Bolivia and Ecuador, perhaps the last to undergo it. But it bore important fruits, embodied in the political culture and institutions, although to different degrees in different countries.

While other countries in South Asia face too many problems in relation to democracy, India has had a very interesting development in this regard. A tough caste society, not as unequal as the Latin American countries, but increasingly more so, India has been capable of opening room for all sorts of social struggles, with unions (however very weak), Dalit, Tribal and 'other backward castes', environmental, women, peasants, and all sorts of social movements, as well as different political perspectives, with long-run experiences of left government in West Bengal and Kerala. Some would say that democracy in India has become more 'authoritarian', others that in spite of everything it has allowed room for popular mobilization, whereas others might point out the role of Supreme Court and its brand of judicial activism in favour of the very poor, although within circumscribed limits. India could be said to have created almost its own model of 'multiculturalism', recognizing and formally institutionalizing social complexity, much in advance of the West, allowing for collective rights of lower castes and, some might argue, ethnic, linguistic and religious pluralism, without collapsing into chaos (Kohli, 1990; Vanaik, 1990; Guha, 2008). But the consolidation of democracy in India, amidst much pessimism, has been a steady process since its 1947 independence, the Emergency period under Indira Gandhi apart, without a specific cycle of mobilization, although the 1980s were a decade of great social agitation. In this regard, although the idea of 'passive revolution' is widely and negatively used in India (Kaviraj, 1988; Chatterjee, 1993),⁵ it has consisted instead of a piecemeal and perhaps even more decentred, though contradictory, process of democratization than the one I have called above a 'molecular revolution' in what concerns Latin America.

The same cannot be said about China. Even Vietnam, with on the other hand less separation between state and society, displays a more inclusive and bottom-up political process, alongside Marxist-Leninist party dominance (McCargo, 2004). One could possibly speculate if or if not, why, capitalism is not bringing (liberal) democracy to China – though the proposition smacks too much of liberalism and modernization theory. In fact an alliance between the CCP and the new rich is very clear. China does not seem to be heading towards a crisis, although general problems of legitimacy loom large and will not easily go away. Confucianism – with the idea of 'harmonious society' – has been mobilized to help in the face of a discredited socialist discourse and a formal and outdated Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology. Yet, popular struggles have been waged – remaining mostly at the local level, except for the women's movement in its non-governmental organizations (NGOs), a legacy of the 1995 Beijing United Nations' Fourth Conference on Women. The legal form of domination which the CCP has sought has permitted dissatisfied individuals and collectivities to address their grievances at least to some extent, drawing on a somewhat strengthened judicial system. Moreover they can also invoke the legacy of the revolution, which had put popular mobilization and demands at the core of political life. The CCP in particular, but the state machine by and large, nevertheless maintains a strong grip on social life and any mobilization

by the citizenry, lest it challenges its absolute political dominance. Apart from more effective local elections, modernizing moves associated today with political democracy are limited in China. But this is not a matter of cultural essences and they can be broadened: as any other sort of modernizing move, this would be highly contingent, beyond present authoritarian 'depolitization' (Wang, 2009: Ch. 1).

The question of universalizing versus particularizing social policies acquires in this connection dramatic contours. Increasing demands by different social groups and the state's efforts to answer them, in a situation of ever greater pluralization add to further complications, bringing up thorny issues especially regarding the very definition of citizenship, including focalized social policies, within very dynamic and mobilized polities especially in India and Latin America, as a mark of democracy in the third phase of modernity (Domingues, forthcoming).

Conclusion

The implications of the comparative analysis of these three regions, with special reference to China, India and Brazil, can now be drawn. Social complexity and globalization, which develop partly due to uncontrollable, long-term tendencies, are dealt with by these countries in quite distinct ways, depending of course on their own propensities, through various modernizing moves. In this respect, the analysis carried out thus far has led to *individualizing comparisons* between these countries and regions, different from what most investigators have done especially in relation to the West, where commonalities that lead to *universalizing comparisons* are easily found in state structures, which tend to get dislocated from the national polis and the citizenship acquires, arguably, post-national features, although to a great extent the latter occurs under the influence and power of the US, whereby those common traits are just not merely parallel events (cf. Sassen, 2006).⁶

Yet, it is clear that common elements can, despite important differences, also be discerned in the cases at stake here. Very clearly, if increasing complexity and tendencies towards a more heterogeneous social life can be pinpointed as a common trait with varying degrees of intensity and specific contents and modernizing moves in each of them, also quite deliberate attempts at re-introducing distinct forms of homogeneity are also present, especially nationalism and religion. These are all internally filtered, by states and societies, according to national and civilizational traditions (hermeneutic elements and practices), to a higher degree than the impact of global trends could be said to display, although here things vary too. Yet the disjuncture is clearer when we deal with democracy.

Democracy is a trend that has answered to internal dynamics in all these countries and regions, of course drawing upon what were Western imaginary elements, made endogenous long ago. This is evident in the case of Latin American and India, as much as in relation to other countries in South Asia and China, by default. Liberalism is, to be sure, an important legacy in this regard, very clearly a feature present in Latin America and, in South Asia, above all also in India, as a legacy of British colonialism. A traditional liberal 'civil society' can be found there. China stands in a very distinct position, insofar as a liberal 'civil society' relatively insulated from the state simply does not exist there.

To be sure, democratization tends to overflow such boundaries and bring the state back into 'civil society' when social rights are concerned, while increasing 'governmentality' efforts by the state in any case tend to blur that frontier. On the other hand, economic modernization has meant everywhere an adaptation to the neoliberal order, with institutions and agencies being reproduced in similar features as well. But in this regard, while Latin America and South Asia can be seen as sharing the same liberal approach and hollowing out their states and regulatory mechanisms, as well as the very structure of economic life via privatization (although this has never gone that far in India), China seems to be really a modernizing outlier, with a very different project, quite successful hitherto, with its variety of capitalism not leading, despite hopes and exhortations in a different direction, to anywhere near a liberal regime of property, regulation or accumulation.

Although quite underdeveloped and still to a great extent semi-peripheral, China is much less dependent – that is, vulnerable to the power of the US, of international organizations, and of transnational corporations. This may sound like a trivial point, but presses home once again the idea of different modernizing paths, which we could see in all issues touched upon above and the way the state in particular deals with them in the different regions and countries, in the previous and the present phases of modernity. In conceptualizing the new features of global modernity, we must be careful not to think that we could falsely generalize from what Western social theory conceptualizes, mainly focusing only on Europe and the US, at most Japan, hence resuming the old bad habits of modernization theory or even of traditional Marxism. The decentred view of the third phase of modernity presented here aims precisely to overcome these limitations and open a different path for theorization.

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Notes

1. For this concept, see Giddens (1990) and Domingues (2006b: Ch. 2).
2. This is of course merely an idealization especially in the case of the United States and the French republic, among a few others – in particular, in most of contemporary Latin America, despite the Catholic Church occupying a privileged position. See Stepan (2009) and Oro and Ureta (2007).
3. Other elements to consider are the labour-intensive 'industrious revolution' of East Asia (different from the West's capital-intensive industrial revolution), which is still having an effect today in China, especially in the rural areas (Wong, 1997; Arrighi, 2007), as well as its revolutionary heritage (Anderson, 2010). See, however, Wang (2001).
4. See Cardoso and Faletto (1970: 25ff), and Domingues (2008: Ch. 2), for these definitions: centre, semi-periphery and periphery refer to the roles they play in the global capitalist accumulation process, dependent or not in relation to external sites of power (more powerful states, transnational corporations, and international organizations modelled mainly after those states' dictates), and underdeveloped or developed in relation to the level of internal differentiation of the economy (especially insofar as concerns large countries), in all counts, all these countries,

except China in terms of its independent, but fast changing position in this respect, fall within the less desirable categories.

5. 'Passive revolution' was for Gramsci the same as 'transformism', as well as 'molecular revolution'. But he had a very Jacobin (and Leninist) view of what a revolution meant, with highly centred political agents. Processes of change which did not approach this active pattern were deemed passive. But then almost all 'revolutions' would be passive. We need to separate those three elements in order to use molecular processes-related concepts as well as transformations which change little of the power relations, without taking the French Revolution as the counterfactual model for other long-term processes. If this was not an exception, it did not offer the most common pattern. See Domingues (2008: Ch. 3).
6. For different types of comparisons, see Tilly (1984).

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