



# Multilateralization of Promotion of Democracy in Latin America: an Analysis Through the English School Tradition<sup>1</sup>

*A Multilateralização da Promoção da Democracia na América Latina: uma Análise a partir da Tradição da Escola Inglesa*

Mariana Andrade e Barros<sup>2</sup>

## **Abstract**

*The article aims to discuss the adequacy of using the English School tradition as a theoretical approach to analyze the promotion of democracy in Latin America. We conclude that it is suitable because of the emphasis on internationally shared values and norms, the acceptance of change and of methodological pluralism.*

**Keywords:** *Democracy promotion, Latin America, English School*

## **Resumo**

*O artigo objetiva discutir a adequação da utilização da tradição da Escola Inglesa como quadro teórico para analisar a promoção da democracia na América Latina. Conclui-se que se trata de uma perspectiva teórica apropriada devido à ênfase no compartilhamento de valores e normas, aceitação da mudança e do pluralismo metodológico.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Promoção da democracia, América Latina, Escola Inglesa*

1. The subject of this paper is an ongoing research for a doctoral thesis that is focused on the “Multilateralization of Promotion of Democracy in Latin America” and that has as theoretical framework the English School. The thesis is developed in a joint program between PUC-Minas – International Relations – and Université Sorbonne – International Law –, what establishes the doctorate at an interdisciplinary framework.

2. Professora do Centro Universitário UNA e do UNI-BH

## Presentation of the subject

The emergency of democracy as a subject in the international agenda is the result of a long historical journey, which implies in the review of traditional paradigms that inform centuries of international relations. A change of such magnitude does not happen without questions and contradictions. A term with such a controversial content as “democracy” in multilateral forum discussions is accompanied by much communication noise. After all, what does the democratic political regime – so much vaunted in the last few decades – mean? What is its configuration? Systemically, what are the consequences of the democratic rupture in a State? The development of democracy as a value in the international sphere had specificities determined by regional rationales, even though recently it is possible to notice its promotion on a global scale. With these questions in mind, the aim of this study is the process of multilateralization of Latin-American democracy, its configurations and unfolding.

There are many factors that make Latin America an intriguing object of study in this sphere of global governance. Latin-American countries were among those that suffered military interventions from the United States under the pretext of a need for democratization (PECENY, 1999). In the American continent occurred the first multilateral manifestations, in treaties which considered democracy as a value to be preserved and defended after the Second World War<sup>3</sup>. In the same region, some important doctrines on non-intervention were developed – as doctrines Drago and Estrada.

In the last decades, geopolitics have contributed to increase the subject complexity. On

the one hand, ideological power exerted by the United States in favor of democracy in its liberal outlook, on the other the ascension in several countries of regimes that are ideologically removed from Washington and challenge this liberal outlook. As a scenario, there are political crises rated as ruptures in the democratic regime in several States. Regional international organizations – especially Organization of American States (OAS)<sup>4</sup>, Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)<sup>5</sup> and Common Market of South America (MERCOSUR)<sup>6</sup> – have proved themselves vital players in this context, both in building the multilateral normative on democracy and in reacting in times of crises<sup>7</sup>. These facts pose the question that guides our study. How are norms, rules and values for promoting democracy in Latin America multilaterally formed? This phenomenon will be understood from three dimensions. The first of them is the context in which this apparatus is created, that is, which social and political events and debates evolved in the process of forming the multilateral promotion of democracy. The second dimension involves gauging the content, that is, the meaning of democracy according to regional inclinations. Finally, the way normative dispositions on democracy have been interpreted and applied in practice will be analyzed.

4. OAS is formed by all 35 independent states of the Americas.

5. UNASUR is formed by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

6. MERCOSUR is formed by Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela.

7. These organisations reacted to the most relevant of crises regarding democracy in the region in the last years. OEA took measures in the following cases: Nicaragua (1990-1997, 2004-2005), Haiti (1991, 1993-2000, 2002-2006), Suriname (1992-2000), Peru (1992), Guatemala (1993), Paraguay (1996, 2012), Venezuela (2002-2004), Ecuador (2005, 2010), Bolivia (2008), Guatemala (2009), Honduras (2009). UNASUR reacted to the following crises: Bolivia (2008, 2012), Venezuela (2014). And MERCOSUL reacted to Paraguay (2008, 2012) and Venezuela (2013).

3. Promotion of democracy started in Latin America with the emergency of the Organization of the American States in 1948. In Europe, it began one year later, in 1949, with the European Council.

The object of the study requires tracing the limits of the research scope from a temporal and geographic view and regarding the level of analysis. Temporally it is possible to place the end of World War II as a milestone marking the start of multilateralization as the thematic of democracy in the American continent. However, the configuration given to the theme in regional forums is directly related to the way this issue was treated up to that point – even though far from a multilateral view. Therefore, it is necessary to return to the end of the 19th century to examine the appearance of an international outlook for promoting democracy that was then being carried out both militarily and unilaterally by the United States. Strengthening and rising of democracy to a priority matter in the regional agenda happened in fact from 1990 on, a period of redemocratization of Latin America and the end of bipolarity in the international system. Therefore, three periods should be analyzed. Between 1898 and 1947 unilateral actions carried out under the argument of democratization will be analyzed. Between 1947 and 1990 there is a kind of tenuous multilateralization of democracy promotion. And finally, from 1990 on the dense multilateralization that happens with a greater profusion of normative provisions and pro-democratic actions in Latin America.

Geographically the thesis deals with Latin America. The emergence of norms on democracy happens in the American continent as a whole, or the Inter-American System, within the scope of the Organization of American States (OAS). More recently it is possible to notice efforts in the subregional sphere, especially in times of rupture of democracy in Latin-American countries. This is the case of UNASUR and MERCOSUR. Political and social specifics, the recent past of dictatorships and the relation with North-American interventions justify treating Latin America separately from the

rest of the continent.

Having as object the process of multilateralization of a subject, the level of analysis that best matches the purpose of the research is the regional one. Thus we analyze norms, rules and values shared within the scope of regional international organizations dealing directly with promoting democracy, namely OAS, Unasul and Mercosul. A point that must be clarified now: how far unilateral actions of States and normative actions of global international organizations – such as the United Nations Organization – should be taken into account in our research. Latin America is inserted in a larger context for discussion of the subject. That is why it is possible that, in certain cases, there is an influence and the relation among other international players and those that are the focus of this study in the sphere of democracy promotion will be analyzed.

## **Theoretical framework of the thesis**

Democracy promotion is, initially, a phenomenon that may produce positive results leading to more inclusive political societies. However, it is rife with antinomies that undermine its legitimacy. In the same way realization of democracy within States is marked by dichotomies, its emergence as an issue in the international agenda is characterized by incongruities that must be pointed out and criticized.

Promotion of the democratic regime cannot fit in only one perspective. It is not only one side of Human Rights or the search for democratic peace. Likewise, it cannot be reduced to a simple and pure form of imperialism or of spreading an ideology; after all, there is a certain level of sharing that the idea of democracy is a value unto itself. There is no label capable of accounting for this phenomenon, because it does not have a single cause. Attempting

to explain its existence or motivations based on a single variable means missing its complexity.

By examining values spread, normative provisions and operationalization of normative content for the specific case of Latin America, we intend to show the reach, limits and incoherences in this thematic by dealing with both its theoretical and empirical configuration. So, the theoretical framework of this research must, necessarily, provide an instrument for analyzing the following problems: the important role of history for normative construction; the relevance of changes for the understanding of the international system; the existence and causes of values, norms and rules shared on an international level. These features are important as the study includes two fields of investigation, International Relations and Law. As consequence, it aims to explain multilateralization of democracy promotion from a sociological and a historical and legal perspective. This means that the analysis will be based on diverse methodologies and methods and, therefore, the theory to be employed to think the research must include the possibility of methodological pluralism as capable of producing knowledge.

From these points, we present the English School tradition as a framework to help to elucidate our object. The basis of this theoretical current is related to questions on practices, norms and institutions considered as fundamental factors for understanding the international system. The English School deals particularly “with the intersubjective meanings (...) embedded in historical practice and historically constructed normative structures” (ALDERSON; HURRELL, 2000, p. 27), which matches both the object of the study and the perspective we intend to study it from. The fact that the English School tradition acknowledges the State as central to analyses of the international society without, however, losing sight of the existence of multiple international players, is

also relevant. This fact matters when what is examined is the multilateralization of a subject from regional international organizations. The State’s will and interest are relevant, but will be treated from a multilateral outlook according to provisions and actions of interstate institutions. Regarding the methodological question, pluralism, as explained by Richard Little, is inherent to this theoretical tradition outlook and arises both from the commitment to a multidimensional theoretical framework and to its multifaceted approach to history (2009, p. 79). This methodological flexibility is an imperative to holistically understand the emergence of the promotion of democracy in the Inter-American System and how it developed.

This research is structured from the idea of the existence of an international society as proposed by Hedley Bull (2002). Bull’s famous definition proposes that the international society is formed by a group of States related by the sharing of rules and institutions that result from common interests and values (2002, p. 13). According to Bellamy, two very diverse trends can be noticed currently in the international society. On the one hand, there is the use of force among the States and violation of International Law. On the other, there are several governance systems that, among other things, deal on how the State must organize itself internally (BELLAMY, 2004, p. 01). International promotion of democracy is a side of this new agenda of international relations that is part of the second position of deepening governance in international society. The normative construction of the international society support to democratic regime happens from the insertion of this issue in the scope of international institutions.

Institutions are understood in this paper as relatively durable and fundamental practices that can be modified in time and are constitutive of States and the international society, since they define their

characteristics and purposes (BUZAN, 2004, pp. 166 - 167)<sup>8</sup>. Among authors of the English School there is a consensus of treating International Law as a constant and fundamental institution of the system of States (BUZAN, 2004, p. 174). Even though, lacking a central power, the utility of International Law as an instrument for social change is limited when compared to domestic law (WILSON, 2009, p. 169), understanding its configuration and changes means learning about significant characteristics of international society itself, of the values shared by it and of the will and interest of the most relevant players in the system.

By proposing a normative analysis of the path toward multilateralization of democracy, we analyze International Law and its material and formal sources. By material sources, we understand “the sociological bases of international norms, their political, moral or economic basis” (PELLET *et al.* 2009, p. 124). The material sources are a reflex of the structure of the system and ruling ideologies (PELLET *et al.* 2009, p. 124). It is only possible to understand the emergence of positive law, its content and its application by taking into account the social and political context that gave rise to them. In other words, understanding of International Law requires understanding the international society itself (WILSON, 2009, p. 168).

On the other hand, formal sources of International Law are the procedures that lead to the creation of positive law. There is almost a consensus in legal doctrine for the adoption of Article 38 of the International Court of Justice Statute as the most relevant legal text to ascertain the formal sources, without, however, considering it as covering all possibilities. According to the provision, the following are considered as sources of International

Law: treaties, international customs, general principles of Law, judicial decisions and the writings of publicists. Besides these, unilateral acts of the State and decisions of international organizations must also be considered as formal sources (PELLET *et al.* 2009, p. 126).

The multilateral way of promoting democracy in Latin America is, therefore, studied from two dimensions. The first is the analysis of the social, political and economic environment that served as a context for the emergence of the subject and for its development. The second dimension is that of normative positivation. This means studying the content of standards and rules making up promotion of democracy in Latin America and also its operationalization. As already mentioned, multilateralization of this subject happened within the scope of regional international organizations. Therefore, it is in the decisions of these organizations, in treaties executed in their sphere, in customs, in principles and in case law of regional courts that we will try to understand both the meaning of the political regime promoted and the way as it has been interpreted and applied<sup>9</sup>.

Assessment of material and formal sources of International Law allow the access to its normative components, namely, norms, rules and values (LASMAR, 2011, p. 09). It is relevant to understand how these normative components have been created and altered in the American continent since World War II in order to promote and defend the democratic political regime. According to Robert Keohane’s traditional definition norms are here conceived as behavior patterns involving considerations on rights and obligations (KEOHANE, 1984, p. 57). Now the rules specify actions and values that

8. This means that the term institution, such as understood here, is related to the wider sense of the word, which Buzan calls primary institutions (2004, p. 166). Thus, “institutions” or “primary institutions” will be terms used interchangeably.

9. According to the methodological choice explained before, unilateral acts of States will only be considered for the purposes of this research when they affect multilateral actions done within the scope of regional international organizations, so as to not lose track of the objective of this study.



make up the attitudes of players (KRATOCHWIL, 1995, p. 64). Therefore, rules are specific kinds of standards that were subject to institutionalization. The values both guide the behavior of players in their rational choices and influence perception regarding circumstances as to reality they are inserted in (LASMAR, 2011, p. 14).

The establishment of a set of norms, rules and shared values in relation to the political regime of States begun in the Americas from World War II onwards, and deepened with the end of the Cold War. These two periods marked, respectively, the end of a phase of tenuous multilateralization and dense multilateralization of the subject. During the tenuous stage norms and rules were created within OAS, but have rarely been implemented. In the dense stage, on the other hand, besides the establishment of a more robust body of norms and rules, there is a constant performance, not only by OAS, but, sometimes, also by UNASUR and MERCOSUR in times of crises of democracy in Latin-American States. Both World War II and the Cold War were events that engineered what Holsti calls “discontinuity with the past” (1998, p. 03). To them one can assign characterization of large events (HOLSTI, 1998, p. 05), since they changed standards of practices, ideas and institutions in international politics. After World War II it is possible to realize a growth in the sharing of norms, rules and values among international players, which were institutionalized by means of international organizations. On the regional sphere, among themes that came up in the agenda, the defense of democracy came up (e. g. within OAS and the Council of Europe). The end of the ideological clash after the Cold War coincided with a wave of democratization and elevated this matter to a status of priority in the international society.

Sharing of a minimum of rules and values required for pacific coexistence and order in the international system shows a pluralist interstate socie-

ty (BUZAN, 2004, p. 46). Insofar as the set of rules shared by international players goes beyond mere coexistence in a search for other objectives related to cooperation on an economic, social, communication and environmental level, this society comes close a solidarist structure (BULL, 2002, p. 67). The fact of provisions on democracy having being incorporated to International Law on democracy during recent history of the American continent evinces a manifestation of solidarism and, therefore, moves away from pluralism in the region<sup>10</sup>.

However, this manifestation of solidarism should not be seen as though it were a process of convergence without any caveat. The analysis on promotion of democracy in Latin America shows something beyond the “sharing of significant moral standards” (BELLAMY, 2004, p. 11). There is an ideological way that becomes clear with priority assigned to a specific kind of law and that would not originate without questions in a continent in which domestic politics is historically marked by external mismanagements and by attempts to assert the principle of non-intervention. Sacralization of liberal democracy is part of the trend of separating civil and political rights from others, assigning them a greater importance than to economic, social, cultural and collective rights. According to Vincent this formula discloses a liberal trend of perceiving rights, since part of the idea of negative rights – that demand non-interference by the State – and positive rights – that require constant action by the State (2005, p. 10). Even those who defend the existence and the need for application of an international norm in favor of democracy agree that the principle that rules this norm is based on a specific view tied to liberal logic. Dissemination of democracy is part of a wider picture of dissemination of liberalism as an economic regime.

10. The position adopted in the research is inspired by the teachings of Buzan, who understands pluralism and solidarism as non-mutually excluding, that is, as parts of a spectrum that allows for gradations (2004, p. 49).

These statements are followed by two propositions. The first is that, like many other traits of the international society, this one also has in relations of power a fundamental point for its actualization. The second is that promotion of democracy in Latin America is characterized by a search for homogenizing state structures. Buzan talks on the possibility of a conscious convergence for a greater “homogeneity of internal structures and values shared by States” (2004, p. 147). This convergence can happen due to calculation, coercion and/or belief (BUZAN, 2004, p. 151), each of which contributing on different levels for strengthening solidarism and, therefore, for the level of compliance of players to norms and values contained therein. The three motivations are part of the process of promoting democracy in Latin America.

It is possible to notice along history a trend toward a search for homogeneity of political structures. It happened so with the principle of sovereignty in the Modern State, with the separation of powers, with “juridification” of the State. The effort exerted by some States and international organizations for the spreading of the democratic political regime comes close to this trend, even though it has not reached such a high level of propagation as in the other examples mentioned. In Latin America this movement of searching for “homogenization” of the political regime among States has two consequences. One is the selective application of defense of democracy. This is noticed in practice when similar cases result in diverse reactions from regional international organizations. The second consequence relates to the first. It is increasingly possible to notice behaviors displaying non-agreement with the form and the ideology making up the idea of democracy advertised by the most traditional regional international organization, the OAS. There is a trend in the last few years to take to other organizations, such as UNASUR and MERCOSUR, de-

cisions related to disruption of democratic regimes in the region. This shows a disagreement of some countries in the region – especially those that form an opposition to the United States, like Venezuela and Bolivia – with the normative body of defense of democracy and, particularly, with implementation of these norms in case of disruption of the democratic order.

## Conclusion

The way multilateralization has been developed in Latin America shows the complexity of democracy promotion. The major challenge to study this issue is try to start from a multifaceted view, which will allow it to be apprehended in its legal, sociological and historical aspects. The purpose in adopting an approach including theoretical and empirical questions is contributing for a kind of approach that has been little analyzed in this field. In this context the tradition of the English School can amount to an important innovation in the studies on democracy and the international society, such as required for the preparation of a doctorate thesis and help elucidating even cloudier issues on this subject. Furthermore, the English School is one of the International Relations’ theories that make the greater efforts to comprehend the role and the importance of International Law in the international society. This is necessary link in order to respect the interdisciplinary character of this research.

The mobilization the English School tradition with the aim of understanding the promotion of democracy in Latin America may also contribute to deepen the comprehension on some elements of the theory in two ways. First, it may help to apprehend the existence or not of a regional international society in Latin America. The focus of English School works is on the European international society with little work done on other regions.

Using the theory to explain a Latin-American phenomenon may contribute to understand its possibilities to the studies of the subglobal level. Besides, the development of this research may also support the pluralist-solidarist debate as it seeks to further the comprehension of the features and nuances that characterize solidarism in general and liberal solidarism in particular. So, while putting together some themes that are not usually treated together – democracy promotion, Latin America and English School – this paper and the ongoing research aim to enrich the possibilities of investigation regarding both the subject and the theoretical framework.

## References

- ALDERSON, Kai; HURRELL, Andrew. *Hedley Bull on International Society*. New York: Palgrave, 2000.
- BELLAMY, Alex J. (Ed.). *International Society and its critics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- BELLAMY, Alex J. Introduction: International Society and the English School. In: BELLAMY, Alex J. (Ed.). *International Society and its critics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- BULL, Hedley. *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics*. New York: Palgrave, 2002.
- HOLSTI, K. J. *The Problem of Change in International Relations Theory*. Institute of International Relations. The University of British Columbia Working Paper No.26 December, 1998.
- KEOHANE, Robert O. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- KRATOCHWIL, Friedrich V. *Rules, Norms and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- LASMAR, Jorge Mascarenhas. *The Impact of the Global War on Terror on the Primary Institutions of International Society*. Doutorado em Relações Internacionais. Tese (Doutorado). London School of Economics and Political Sciences, LSE, Inglaterra. 2011.
- LITTLE, Richard. History, Theory and Methodological Pluralism in the English School. In: NAVARI, Cornelia (Ed.). *Theorising International Society: English School Methods*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 78 - 103.
- NAVARI, Cornelia (Ed.). *Theorising International Society: English School Methods*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- PECENY, Mark. *Democracy at the point of bayonets*. Pennsylvania University Press, 1999.
- PELLET, Alain *et al.* *Droit International Public*. Paris: L.G. D.J., 2009.
- WILSON, Peter. The English School's Approach to International Law. In: NAVARI, Cornelia (Ed.). *Theorising International Society: English School Methods*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 167 -188.
- VINCENT, John. *Human Rights and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Recebido: 22/02/2015

Aprovado: 8/05/2015