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Ruy Mauro Marini's thought and neodevelopmentalism in Brazil (2003-2016): Subimperialism, autonomy and renewed dependency

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Ruy Mauro Marini's thought and neodevelopmentalism in Brazil (2003-2016): Subimperialism, autonomy and renewed dependency

Abstract: Marxist Dependency Theory is currently experiencing a revival as a pivotal framework of analysis for the study of global economy from a peripheral perspective. In particular, Ruy Mauro Marini's thought still holds a prominent place both in Marxist theory and in Latin American critical social sciences as an irreplaceable tool and method for analysis and agency. As this paper will show, his original and situated approach to the theory of imperialism offers a key grounding to the study of the capitalist State in Brazil in the context of a new stage of South America's subordinate international insertion into the global economy. Marini's subimperialism comes in play when assessing the foreign policy of "neodevelopmentalism" (2003-2016) as a "hybrid" international politics between renovated efforts at independence and autonomy and recharged subaltern imperialism. Also, his contributions around the concept of semiperiphery, are paramount to apprehend the progress of processes such as the "mundialization" and the "deconcentrated centralization" of capital and their effect on Brazil's enhanced dependent international insertion. As such, Marxist Dependency Theory analytical tools, and Marini's "method" of complementing thorough class analysis with a Political Economy perspective on a country's mode of insertion in the world market, prove once again to be key to any effort at understanding the contemporary transformation of the centre-periphery nexus worldwide and Brazil' subordinate role in it.

Keywords: Marini; Neodevelopmentalism; Brazil; Subimperialism; Semiperiphery; Marxist Dependency Theory

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Introduction

Ruy Mauro Marini's contributions to the study of the capitalist state in Brazil (chiefly, 1965, 1969, 1973, 1977, 1985, 2022) still constitute an inescapable reference for those who wish to approach the recent history of the South American country in a critical, Marxist fashion. Most of all, his legacy resides in offering a research method that would combine geopolitics, characterised as a "process and field of changing forces", with a rigorous analysis of the relations of force and the class composition of the capitalist states involved in that same field. The application of such a rich and consistent epistemological proposal - surprisingly rare in a Marxist field that would generally and incoherently hold to the mainstream rigid dichotomy between "the internal" and "the external" – allowed him to deliver an original analysis of Brazil's economic development and its foreign policy in relation to the evolution of global capitalism. Together with Vania Bambirra (1974) and Theotonio dos Santos (Dos Santos, 1970), Marini gave birth to a Marxist approach to dependency, or Marxist Dependency Theory, a peculiar rereading of classic Marxism from a peripheral, situated point of view. One that, as their biographies show (Bichir, 2024; Latimer, 2022), would not renounce frontline political activism in favour of intellectualism. Their aspiration to understand Latin America by considering local societies in their peculiarity and historicity as well as in their relation to the world structure and global processes; their fundamental recognition that the peripheral condition of the continent does not allow for the uncritical use of concepts elaborated in the North, not even Marxist ones; gave us a theory from and for Latin America that still holds true to its emancipatory goal.

The persistent power of this thought, of the categorical universe that Marini, above everybody else, elaborated, becomes clear when we consider the effervescence of recent debates around the validity of his analyses and his peculiar approach to Marxist theory. In particular, the Marinian concept of subimperialism has enjoyed a renewed circulation, which is explained mostly by the need to understand in all its magnitude the unprecedented expansion of Brazilian capitalism that has taken place during what I here call "neodevelopmentalism". Thus, several authors (Treacy, 2022; Cerqueira, 2014; Vuik, 2013; Luce, 2011; Seabra and Bueno, 2009) have turned directly to Marini's work to bring his concepts to a present moment where Brazil is no longer a military dictatorship and the globalisation of capital has radically transformed the conditions of accumulation worldwide. Others (Berringer, 2013; Souza, 2013) despite declaring his classical concepts inadequate for our time and age, felt the need to also pay reverence to Marini's work, building a framework of analysis of contemporary Brazil based on the rejection of his central ideas. At the same time, by means of its recovery (Bond, 2015; Féliz, 2019; Slipak, 2016), critique (Fontes, 2010;

Katz, 2022) or rejection (Smith, 2010), the concept of sub-imperialism has been recalled and extended to try and categorise the rise of the BRICS countries and the new centre-periphery relations that mold the world economy. Similarly, the Marinian category of "medium-sized centres of accumulation", originally elaborated to depict '60s Brazil in-between capitalist development, has been retrieved in order to critically appraise the renovated protagonism of the 'emerging" and "semi-peripheral" economies of the 21st century (Peinado, 2011, 2014). Overall, this vindication of the late Brazilian thinker's legacy takes place in the context of a general revitalisation of the debate around all strands of Dependency Theory and its relevance (see introduction to this special issue) for a class-based analysis of the current stage of capitalism at a global level (Higginbottom, 2023; Kan and Kitay, 2020; Martins, 2022; Osorio, 2016; Valencia, 2017).

This is the debate, and homage, I want to follow up with here, recovering Marini his thought, his dialectical method - to engage with contemporary Brazil. In particular, I am interested in (re)exploring his categories as useful tools to address the foreign policy dimension and the form of international insertion promoted during neodevelopmentalism in Brazil (2003-2016), a peculiar relation of domestic forces and distinctive State phase I studied in-depth elsewhere (Clemente, 2019, 2022; Clemente and Féliz, 2023). To that end, we must first acknowledge the "[...] radical difference that separates 21st century capitalism from that of Marini's time" (Katz, 2018, p. 224, personal translation), a stage in which military and economic power were more clearly interconnected. A fundamental difference that, according to Katz (2018), would suggest the need to separate the analysis of "semi-peripheral economic structures" and "sub-imperial roles" to understand today's global reality.

The structure of the article is composed of three sections. In the first one, the novelty of Marini's classical approach to dependent development in Brazil is presented, stressing the utmost importance of the introduction of the concepts of medium-sized accumulation sub-imperialism centres capital and development/underdevelopment and Dependency Theory debate of the '60s. The following two sections address these two key concepts separately and discuss their relevance for the study of the foreign policy and the international insertion of Brazilian neodevelopmentalism. In the second section, I advance the hypothesis that neodevelopmentalism has expressed a "hybrid" international policy containing elements of both subimperialism and autonomy, the latter a concept absent in Marini's work but linked to his analysis of pre-dictatorship "independent" governments and their foreign policy. The third section, on the other hand, assesses the persistent validity of the conceptualization of Brazil as a medium-sized centre of capital accumulation and a semi-periphery, aiming to understand the form of dependent international insertion pursued by neodevelopmentalism and its significance within the new centre-periphery relations established by global capitalism in the 21st century. A conclusion section closes the paper.

Ruy Mauro Marini's Brazil

The starting point of Marini's own Marxist elaboration is the detection that the validity of Lenin's theory of imperialism is limited to the industrialized centre and its capitalist powers. Its applicability in the periphery rests on it being complemented with a situated elaboration that would enhance its otherwise curbed explanatory power. In his theory, modelled after the Brazilian case but relevant to other semi-peripheral countries, by the '60s the global expansion of capitalism had already modified the classic centre-periphery structure that was paramount to the Prebisch-Singer hypothesis and Latin American structuralism. Having reached, through dependent integration into the world market, a higher level of "organic composition" of capital, some traditional peripheries such as Brazil had transformed into medium-sized centres of capital accumulation, at the same time still politically and economically dependent on the developed centre and now dominant vis-à-vis their own periphery. The formula Marini coined to represent this peculiar condition was that of "sub-imperialism", defined as "the form that dependent capitalism assumes upon reaching the stage of monopolies and finance capital" (Marini, 1977, p. 17 as cited in Latimer, 2022, p.42). Marini also urged (1985) readers to overcome static views of world affairs based on simple dichotomies such as East-West, North-South and centre-periphery, defending instead an approach that considered international relations as a "process and field of changing forces". As an intricate web constantly shaken by the struggle between the imperialist pinnacle and the emerging capitalisms in want of ascent, all of them intent to preclude each other's rise as well as to avoid sliding downwards themselves (Marini, 1985).

In particular, Marini's approach is pioneering since it introduced in the framework of dependency theory the existence of an intermediate level between the centre and the periphery -the medium-sized centres of capital accumulation-, a new stepping stone later integrated by Immanuel Wallerstein (1979) and Samir Amin (1975) in their models through the category of "semi-periphery". In his view, the so-called development of the periphery was a subproduct of the internationalisation of domestic markets through their incorporation into global chains of production. Only, here an economic structure stifled by the luxury goods imports of the elites and a general specialisation in raw materials exports inhibited, as happened, the establishment of a Fordist consumerist society: the expansion of local markets and

the creation of mass consumption (Clemente, 2018). Without resorting to Samir Amin's traditional model of "introverted" vs "extroverted" accumulation (Amin, 1994, p. 179), Marini similarly argued that the main difference between the centre and the periphery was that in the latter a structural hiatus between productive capacity and mass consumption could be observed. Since production was largely determined by the needs of external markets, endogenous economic growth was extremely dependent on external relations rather than internal requirements, with popular consumption suffering as a result. On the other hand, a characteristic feature of the periphery would be the "super-exploitation" of the labour force: an exacerbated extraction of value from local labour obtained mainly through low wages but also through the denial of minimum living standards. Through super-exploitation, dependent ruling classes were thus able to extract sufficient profits from local workers to enrich themselves, while at the same time transferring to the bourgeoise of the central economies, to whom they were subordinated, a significant share of the economic surplus generated.

Therefore, an under-sized domestic market and super-exploitation or "double exploitation" were, according to Marini, the main characteristics of dependency. However, the global expansion of capitalism had unintentionally led to the formation of medium-sized centres of accumulation by transferring capital, means of production and technology to the periphery. Those semi-peripheral countries then found themselves in a novel situation, being able to retain part of the economic surplus produced domestically while, at the same time, keep transferring the bulk of the economic surplus to central countries. This continuous drain of resources, determined by the structural unequal exchange and reinforced by dependency on foreign debt, constitutes the main obstacle to the expansion of local markets in the periphery. At the same time, having attained an "[...] average organic composition on the world scale of national productive apparatuses" (Marini, 1977, p. 17) subaltern integration into the world market means for semi-peripheries that they are now too able to extract surplus from smaller peripheral countries. In particular, the local bourgeoise:

"[...] manages to appropriate an extraordinary profit, either by internally leading production in their respective branches, or by operating in other economies subjected to sub-imperial expansion, appropriating the value produced in the weaker nations. And a part of this mass of value - the rest is drained by relations with imperialism - is incorporated, making possible, within the limits of a dependent economy, a certain development with some

technological control in production and with some presence, albeit subordinate, in the circuits of financial valorisation. (Luce, 2014, p.137, personal translation)."

Specifically, Marini was referring to the formation of Brazilian monopolies or "national capitalist trusts", which, seeking to offload surplus production onto neighbouring countries, from the 1960s on began to export goods and capital and to expand abroad, aiming to secure a steady supply of raw materials. The geopolitical contour of this capitalist expansion was of course "subimperialism", an aggressive and militaristic attitude towards neighbouring countries that started in the post-coup of 1964 and that Marini considered a response both to the demands of the Brazilian bourgeoisie and to the power-seeking project of the military junta. However, this by no means meant that Brazil had achieved a proper imperialist power status, as capital flows abroad and a burgeoning military strength could suggest if red with narrow Leninist lenses. In fact, here is where Marini's contribution to Marxist (dependency) theory innovation fully come to fruition. What the prefix "sub" showed was that, despite occupying a preponderant, imperialistic position in the region, Brazil and its ruling classes remained in a subaltern position vis-à-vis the centres of imperialist irradiation, Europe and the United States, and could only exercise a "relatively autonomous" expansionist policy. Alas, what Brazil was experiencing was not only greater integration into the productive system of US imperialism, but also into its political hegemony (Marini, 1969). In the economic sphere, Brazil's sub-imperialism required facilitating US capital expansion in the region, including its own domestic market, to consolidate the integration of the South American bloc into the continental system dominated by the United States (Marini, 1966). In terms of foreign policy, sub-imperial Brazil took on the role of a minor ally and "regional policeman" which, in the context of the Cold War and the global fight against communism, meant enforcing Washington's own foreign policy in its perceived "backyard". The not-so-hidden link between the economy and geopolitics here was the integration of the whole continent into the U.S. military apparatus, that the Brazilian Junta sought through various initiatives. Beyond beginning to send personnel of the Escuela Superior de Guerra to the U.S. to be trained, something that would be later institutionalized during the Operation Condor years, the technical harmonisation of armaments between the two countries was pursued, a project strongly backed by the then burgeoning U.S. military-industrial complex, along with the creation of a Latin American army or police force (Marini, 1967).

On the flip side, openly associating with the U.S. and its foreign policy as a loyal ally also meant being able to count on its political and economic backing, something the military Junta sought to take advantage of to build its own zone of influence in the

region. At the same time, given the impossibility of expanding the domestic market without radically transforming the structure of accumulation and upsetting the precarious balance between fractions of the bourgeoisie - chiefly the agricultural sector and foreign groups-, something the de facto government was unwilling to do, this search for geopolitical leadership in South America was also an explicit effort to protect the bourgeoisie rate of profit by projecting the economic potential of Brazilian industry abroad (Marini, 1969). In particular, the sub-imperialist strategy was to find new markets for domestic surplus production by seeking the incorporation of minor yet already established markets such as Uruguay and Paraguay, and the development of a powerful industrial-military complex. Accordingly, Marini (1966a) points to the fact that the passage from a mere "alignment" with US foreign policy to the adoption of a full sub-imperialist strategy was marked by an earth-shattering movement inside the Brazilian ruling class. In fact, while in the past the industrial bourgeoisie had shown sporadic support for trabalhistas projects of autonomous national development backed by the masses, it now appeared to consciously and definitively choose to abandon them in favour of an open acceptance of its subordination to the US imperialist bourgeoisie. Marini's sub-imperialism is thus presented as an organic project of domination -domestically and regionally-, which finds its political articulator in the military government. The relative autonomy of the state, according to Marini (1985), allowed the Junta to temporarily condense the representation of the ruling classes as a whole and strike a precarious balance between the conflicting interests of these fractions of the bourgeoisie maintained.

The contours of this ploy of geopolitical domination, to which South America was the main stage, become clearer when we compare subimperialism with the governments of Quadros (1961) and Goulart (1961-1964). Those brief experiences, Marini states, exhibited a search for an "independent" foreign policy where the exploration of new markets was a priority too, although it was then based upon the strengthening of diplomatic relations with peripheral countries and non-alignment with imperial powers, all accompanied by a programme of radical reforms in the domestic economy. This strategy was justified by the impossibility of expanding the domestic market and the need to create an "external market reserve" for national production, but was meant to be a temporary strategy, to be pursued until structural reforms had finally removed the obstacles to internal economic development. On the contrary, when this goal was taken up again by the Junta after the coup in 1964, capital expansion abroad became the main option and one alternative to radical internal reforms (Marini, 1966). If in South America this meant complementing the export and commercialization of Brazilian products abroad with the "extensive

incorporation of already formed markets", in Africa Brazil came to be a direct "intermediary" of Western imperialist domination (Marini, 1985).

This is one point where Marini's thorough approach to critical analysis shines, brilliantly conflating domestic relations of forces with global dynamics: as already said, one has to look at the industrial bourgeoisie's abdication to an "independent" foreign policy to find the decisive trigger to the birth of sub-imperialism. In fact, Marini finds in the open support shown by this fraction of the bourgeoisie for the military coup of 1964 proof of a programmatic shift from backing a programme of national development that included the working class to a tactic realignment with the interests of the agrarian bourgeoisie and foreign monopoly capital which necessarily included a direct association with of imperialism. In this view, the "local" or "native" bourgeoisie, who abandoned the Goulart support coalition in terror of the partial empowerment of the working class during trabalhistas government and dissatisfied with the stagnation of the economy, had to be of considerable importance in granting the balance of power between the different fractions of the Brazilian ruling classes and in catapulting the military into government. However, it is important not to lose sight of one of the key consequences of sub-imperialism on the structure of the bourgeoisie in Brazil, as analysed by Marini: the irreversible and subordinate integration of Brazilian economy into imperialism - a process that entailed the internationalisation, concentration, centralisation and financialisation of the domestic market - had a destructive effect on "local" or "native" fractions of the ruling classes. In other words, opting for sub-imperialism also meant for the so-called "national" bourgeoisie to foster its own disappearance.

Neo-developmentalism as a Hybrid between Sub-imperialism and Autonomy

Brazil's international activism between 2003 and 2016 originated a debate on its role as a regional "leader" or "power" in South America (Flemes, 2016; Malamud, 2011; Merke, 2010; Mesquita, 2016; Nolte, 2006; Sanahuja, 2012). On the one hand, a series of institutional successes such as becoming a founding member of the G20 group and of the intraregional blocs IBSA (India, South Africa and Brazil) and BRICS (IBSA plus Russia and China), winning the elections to chief the World Trade Organization WTO in 2013 and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 2011, as well as acting as the leading country of the military mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) led to an international recognition of Brazil as a "global player" (Tussie, 2016). Moreover, through heading coalitions of peripheral countries in the WTO and supporting reforms of the IMF and the World

Bank, Brazilian diplomacy was repeatedly able to present the country as a champion of the "Global South" in a world rapidly adapting to multipolar governance.

On the other hand, given the partial disinterest shown by the US towards the region in the 2003-2016 period, Brazil would have profited to partially remove US patronage on its own "backyard" and promote a cooperative regional order based on a revitalised Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and newly created regional institutions such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) with its infrastructure and energy plan (the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America-IIRSA) and its South American Defence Council (CDS), and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), conceived as an alternative to the U.S. dominated Organisation of American States (OAS). In fact, according to Burges (Burges, 2008, 2015), Brazil's regional project was organised around offering the region an "ideational package" based on three pillars: the formation of a regional market where South American firms could flourish; the consolidation of a common platform to negotiate global trade with northern powers on more equitable terms; the implementation of an ambitious regional infrastructure plan (IIRSA) partially financed by Brazil. Overall, the offer of a "smooth" integration into the global economy to regional partners, together with access to the superior technologies and cheap financing that Brazil could provide, would have allowed this project to gain traction in the region (Burges, 2008). Beyond friendly cooperation tough, this regional expansion allowed Brazil to enhance its position as the geographical and economic centre of South America, unrolling the IIRSA productive and commercial corridors as a spider's web trough the region and orienting the primary economic interest of neighbouring countries towards its domestic market (Clemente, 2021a).

However, after a successful first phase of consolidation as a "regional leader", Brazil's project waned due to the growing divergence between the country's global and regional focus since the country's global insertion objectives prevailed over regional integration (Katz, 2018; Vigevani e Ramanzini, 2009). In particular, Lula da Silva's governments attempted a reorientation of Brazil's foreign policy guided by the concept of "autonomy through diversification", in open contrast with previous neoliberal "autonomy through participation" that predicated explicit, acritical adherence to international regimes (Vigevani and Cepaluni, 2007, 2011). The "diversification" part would have been evident in the active promotion of a "south-south" policy oriented at fostering political and trade relations with Africa and the Middle East (Lechini, 2009; Paikin, 2019) as well as strategic alliances with "emerging" countries such as China, India and Russia. At the same time, one outcome of this reorientation, and of the parallel spike in trade with Asian countries

the country experienced, was a loss of importance of South America in the view of Brazilian political and economic elites (Vigevani e Ramanzini, 2009). This also produced a sort of "double dealing" as Brazil combined the mild confrontational tactic adopted with the U.S. to "increase the cost of involvement" (Quiliconi, 2013) for the imperialist power in South America with a "pragmatic and moderate" positioning in international forums aimed at legitimising itself as a "responsible mediator" between the great powers and the region (Sanahuja, 2012). This behaviour was particularly evident in the regional competition with Venezuela, where Brazil halted in more than one occasion Chavist projects or "dilute" their radicalism within the scope of a common South American position, as in the case of the energy projects and of proposals for establishing a Bank of the South, the common Sucre currency or a Latin American armed force (Clemente, 2017b).

This account of neodevelopmentalism's international projection is still missing a key piece though, one dear to Marini's "method", namely the link between Brazilian foreign policy between 2003 and 2016 and the domestic relation of forces underlying it. A first step in this direction is surely possible through a critical recovery of the concept of sub-imperialism as revisited by many and put to work in contemporary global capitalism (Bond, 2015; Clemente, 2018; Féliz, 2019; Fontes, 2013; Katz, 2016; Luce, 2007, 2011; Seabra e Bueno, 2009; Slipak, 2016). Recovering Marini's traditional thesis here is undoubtedly tempting, given the remarkable similarities that can be observed both in terms of economic dynamics and foreign policy between the neodevelopmentalist phase and the period analysed by the Brazilian author, similarities that seem to point, fascinatingly, to a structural condition that would escape the singularity of a given conjuncture. Nonetheless, I believe that the differences between the two periods are so striking that it seems more apt to speak of a "neodevelopmentalist international policy" with its own specificities. At the same time, this does not prevent from drawing insightful parallels with Marini's reality, an exercise that could lead to consider neodevelopmentalism as something intermediate between the "independent foreign policy" of the Quadros and Goulart governments and post-1964 sub-imperialism.

With the pre-coup phase, neodevelopmentalism shared the search for new markets abroad through the establishment or strengthening of diplomatic relations with peripheral countries, which, as we have seen, took the form of a "south-south cooperation" and the pursuit of "autonomy through diversification". This was partly due to the fact that the domestic market, although much more developed than in the 1960s and despite the generalization of mass consumption facilitated by the expansion of credit (Fontes, 2010), continues to be undersized if compared with the central countries. At the same time, the fact that its strengthening, which would require radical transformations of Brazilian society in order to be lasting, was

neglected by neodevelopmentalism in favour of exports promotion, the increase of which mainly almost exclusively benefitted the industrial and agro-industrial bourgeoisie, constitutes a striking similarity with the dictatorship. Accordingly, the expansion into new markets abroad pursued during neodevelopmentalism, an orientation that the "independent" governments of Quadros and Goulart had only considered as a temporary way out while internal structural reforms took their course, was once again elevated to a solution to the problems of domestic capital accumulation in itself. If looking specifically at the South American region, this similarity between the military dictatorship and neodevelopmentalism can also be explained by pointing to another economic constant throughout much of Brazilian history: the attractiveness of neighbouring markets for Brazilian firms because of the lesser cost of services and labour and the greater availability of cheap raw materials (Clemente, 2017c).

Nonetheless, the true raison d'être of sub-imperialism was the special relationship with U.S. capital and the North American superpower. As we have seen, similarly to the pre-1964 "independent" governments, neodevelopmentalism tried to nuance the traditional association between Brazilian and US capital by pursuing a market diversification focused on other peripheries and emerging countries. Also, Brazil's foreign policy during neodevelopmentalism was not, in general, aligned with Washington strategies. Brazil's regional integration scheme, as we have seen, implied the explicit exclusion of the US power and a rapprochement with Argentina that, contrary to what happened in the 1970s, when both countries were governed by military dictatorships was not welcomed by the White House (Marini, 1965). Furthermore, according to Katz (2018), despite a relative rearmament, Brazil's little or no use of military power to support its novel quest for autonomy vis-à-vis the United States during neodevelopmentalism would discourage the employment of a sub-imperial terminology, at least in Marini's terms:

"[Brazil]Multinationals ventured into lucrative businesses in South America, generated conflicts with Paraguay and Ecuador, and bought assets in Argentina. Lula and Dilma acted as lobbyists for these companies, perfecting Itamaraty's diplomatic mediation. However, this expansionism did not determine a sub-imperial profile. No [Brazil]government in the new century resorted to military supremacy or explicit geopolitical pressure to prop up these companies. They appealed to mediation in the conflicts that these companies had with the radical governments of Bolivia and Venezuela. This

attitude contrasts with the positions of the military governments of Marini's time (Katz, 2018, p. 258, personal translation)."

However, we have also seen that there are elements that could point to Brazil being a sort of "semi-ally" of the US in the region, due to its role as moderator of more radical proposals (Venezuela, Argentina) and its willingness to present itself as a "responsible power" carrying reasonable reform proposals at a global level. What's more, to achieve those goals Brazil was also willing to renounce its pretended role as regional representative of collective South American interests in international fora (Quiliconi and Peixoto, 2013). So much so that, taking another page from Marini's book, both the search for new markets for the industrial bourgeoisie and the specific foreign policy contradictions between Brasilia and Washington could be understood as "antagonistic cooperation". This concept was employed by Marini to explain how, while in a context of voluntary submission of the peripheral dominant classes (Brazil) to the central ones (the US), inter-imperial competition between national bourgeoisies gave rise to a moderate dispute for spaces of influence. This underlying competition meant that the Brazilian sub-imperialist state actions had to be red also as an attempt to avoid the complete destructive absorption of the "native" bourgeoisie by global capital. This is Luce's hypothesis (2007, 2011, 2014) who, agreeing with other authors (Seabra and Bueno, 2009) speaks of an updated sub-imperialism, one where institutions such as MERCOSUR, UNASUR and IIRSA served as tools for the construction of a sphere of influence and relative autonomy for the Brazilian dependent bourgeoisie, "[...] in terms of an antagonistic cooperation with imperialism centres and at a cost for its brother neighbouring countries" (Luce, 2014, p. 41 in Bond, 2015). With some differences, the readings made by Berringer (Berringer, 2014, 2023) and Kan (2009) both make essentially the same point. Berringer, following Boito's (2012) hypothesis on the protagonism of the "internal bourgeoisie" during neodevelopmentalism, analyses how the shift in Brazil's foreign policy since Lula's first term favoured the interests of this particular class fraction, while Kan sees the industrial fraction of the local ruling class agglutinated around the powerful paulista industry as the main driving force behind the expansion of Brazilian capital in the region.

In my opinion, however, it is more appropriate to consider the foreign policy of neodevelopmentalism not as a the direct reflection of the influence of a specific fraction of the bourgeoisie but rather as the expression of a complex and diverse set of interests, as a distinctive "neodevelopmentalist international policy" that, as we have seen, could very well be described as an hybrid between sub-imperialism and a renovated quest for autonomy. This would be the case because, as I described elsewhere (Clemente, 2022), the foreign policy pursued by the Brazilian state

between 2003 and 2016 was the product of the particular correlation of forces that consolidated during the "neodevelopmentalist state phase". Specifically, neodevelopmentalism took the form of an hegemonic system with its own development model (relation between the state and the economy) and model of hegemony (relation between the state and the masses). The model of hegemony rested upon a precarious balance between fractions of the ruling class since the political strengthening of the industrial bourgeoisie coexisted with the economic predominance of the financial fraction, and was accompanied by a subaltern integration of the masses in the system through what Boito (2006) termed a new "conservative populism". On the other hand, this political equilibrium was interwoven around a form of international insertion that focused on the global market through the promotion of (agro)industrial exports and on the internationalization of selected local companies known as "national champions". Pillar of this development model, mark of continuity with '90s open neoliberalism and limit to its reforming was the maintenance of the macroeconomic trifecta: a tight control of inflation through high interest rates; fiscal austerity aimed at producing a high, continual primary surplus; and a fluctuating exchange rate that ensured export competitiveness.

Conceptually then, the "neodevelopmentalist international policy" would be better understood as something inseparable from Neodevelopmentalism as a whole and which required a detailed study of the complex reconfiguration of the forces that took place during this particular state phase in order to make any sense from a critical, materialist perspective. In particular, taking up Cerqueira's (2014) proposal to consider this international policy as a result of the expansion of the neodevelopmentalist "historical bloc", we advance the hypothesis, to be further explored elsewhere, that Brazil's foreign policy in this period can be characterized as the expansion and international projection of the neodevelopmentalist hegemonic system as we described it.

From "Medium-sized Centre of Accumulation" to Semi-periphery: Neodevelopmentalism as a form of Dependent International Insertion

Beyond foreign policy, neodevelopmentalism can also be conceived as a specific form of international insertion into the world market. This form of insertion was fundamentally linked to Brazil's semi-peripheral status, or, in Marini's terms, a medium-sized centre of accumulation, with South America being the privileged

scenario where the "paradoxical position" that the country holds between an exploited, dependent economy and a country that exploits and subordinates others showed best (García, 2012). Among others, Javier Martínez Peinado (2011, 2014) stresses the need to defend, against a modern taxonomy that pretends to dilute dependency relations through the use of categories such as "emerging" countries, the concept of semi-periphery. This middle level, "discovery" of which contemporary critics owe, as we have seen, to Marini in particular, would still allow us to explain, in a capitalism that is now fully "globalised" and no longer merely "international", the production/consumption divergence between the centre and the periphery. Specifically, it would help frame the continued impossibility for old and new semiperipheries, a group in which Peinado tellingly places the BRICS countries, to retain most of the economic surplus produced. Preserving its full explanatory value, the concept of semiperiphery would be useful, then, to understand the way in which these countries are inserted into global value chains, and to definitively overcome

"[...] the commercialist definition of centres as exporters of manufactures and the peripheries as exporters of primary products. Extroversion can also occur in the export of manufactures, and self-centred economies can be perfectly exporters of primary products (even dominating raw materials international markets by export volume, as in fact they do). Because the definition of C/P [centre/periphery] no longer rests on what is produced, but on how it is produced (Peinado, 2011, p. 35, personal translation)."

Here the pair "extroversion vs self-centeredness" is particularly useful to allow us to connect Peinado's semiperiphery to Marini's medium-sized centres of accumulation. The auto-centred, self-oriented mode of capital accumulation typical of central, industrialized countries —also labelled as "endogenous growth" or "inward development"—, revolves around the ability to retain most of the economic surplus generated by the economy and, fundamentally, a functioning articulation between the production capacity and the consumption capacity of the society overall. For Peinado (2011), in a self-centered economy the benefits derived from the increase in productivity experienced in all sectors combine with a sufficient remuneration of factors, translating into an endogenous absorption of the added value generated. More importantly here, this self-centred dynamic, further fluidified by the expansion of credit, the financial system and commerce, would grant that external relations with the global economy are primarily defined by the "needs" of the domestic market and local consumption. Much to the contrary, an extroverted economy is defined not only by the impossibility to retain the majority of the surplus generated locally, but,

mainly, by a general productive structure that caters directly to external "needs". This form of "outward development" shaped by the ebb and flows of global market demand and not by local accumulation and consumption necessities is synonymous with the peripheral condition, one marked by a constant and structural plumbing of resources towards the centre made possible by unequal exchange, permanent financial adjustment via foreign debt and low-wage competition based on the "global labour arbitrage" (Smith, 2010).

This closely resembles Marini's point about the structural hiatus between productive capacity and mass consumption being the main difference between the centre and the periphery. In the latter, endogenous economic growth was largely determined by the needs of external markets, with popular consumption suffering as a result and "super-exploitation" being the norm for the dependent labour force. The political, revolutionary conclusion was clear: dependent capitalism could not make the leap to inward development precisely because its peripheral functionality was determined, and therefore limited in its expansion, by the self-centred functioning of the centres of global capitalism. A violent rupture, or a disconnection, in Amin's terms, would be necessary.

Starting in the '70s though, this basic division between centre and periphery saw a further stratification as a consequence of the advance of the mundialization of capital, conforming what Marini called "medium-sized centres of capital accumulation" and Peinado terms semiperipheries. While Marini highlighted the novelty of this situation since the achievement of an average organic composition of capital now allowed those countries to retain part of the economic surplus produced domestically and to exploit smaller peripheral countries, Peinado (2011, 2014) stresses the change in the world market polarization and the fundamental role played by semi-peripheries in its functioning. In particular, his analysis strives to capture deep transformations in semiperipheral societies, such as the attainment of lower levels of poverty and misery and higher rates of economic growth derived from the increased participation in global capital accumulation, even leading to a stable influx of migrant workers looking to employ themselves in the more unqualified sectors. At the same time, since semiperipheries don't belong to the centre of the system, functioning rather as its outer crown, dependency persists, albeit attenuated. This, for Peinado, means that the new semiperipherical condition manifests itself as a peculiar articulation between self-centered accumulation and extroversion where the expansion of surplus generation coexists with the maintenance of a structural gap between the production and consumption spheres. To the point that Peinado finds in the semiperiphery the privileged space where the contradictory expressions of contemporary capitalism take place: ascent of "new middle classes" of consumers; skyrocketing social inequality; expansion of capitalist poverty as "working poors" become majority among the dependent labour force. Notwithstanding this, world semi-peripheries —and BRICS prominently among them— are expected to be the main areas of global capital accumulation in the next decades, with their participation in world production indicators only increasing. In analysing this, Peinado tells us, is once again advisable to retain the structural difference between self-centeredness and extroversion, now reframed as the divide between producing-and-consuming countries vs economies that increasingly contribute to world production output without proportionately augmenting their share of global consumption.

In this sense, the question of the complex coexistence, in recent decades, between a vertiginous increase in the expansion of local firms abroad, a deep reprimarisation of the Brazilian economy and fierce structural inequality is at the heart of the debate about Brazil's semi-peripheral status and the validity of the concept of subimperialism to understand the form of international insertion pursued by neodevelopmentalism. Indeed, the loss of the "aura of an ascendant industrial economy" (Katz, 2018, p. 208) derived from the marked decline in local manufacturing would make it impossible, according to Katz, to consider Brazil as subimperialist a la Marini, and would be better to consider it simply as an "intermediate economy". On the contrary, according to Luce (2007), the recent end of the "diversified industrial model" established in the '60s - that is, the loss of gravity of the transformation industry in the productive matrix in favour of specialisation in the extractive industries, with raw materials giving dynamism to the whole system- did not necessarily mark the decline of Brazilian subimperialism, but rather that this took on new forms, while retaining its essence. Among these new possible forms, the subordinate integration of Brazil into "capital-imperialism", a new phase of imperialism that according to Fontes (2010) opened up at the end of the Second World War and is characterised by the global mobility of capital and the predominance of finance. As such, for her contemporary Brazil would be part of a group of capital-imperialist countries that is internally unequal: "[...] as last among the firsts, in a tense and unstable situation, it hangs on a hallucinated race for capital concentration which, at every step, triggers dramatic social crises" (Fontes, 2010, p. 359, personal translation). In South America, this race would translate in an increased exploitation of resources and labour from neighbouring countries. However, this situation would not imply a reduction in the classic dependence on foreign capital by Brazil, but rather the creation of new contradictions:

"Brazilian capital-imperialist expansion [...] alters the scale of subordinate insertion, the space of reproduction of the capitals located here, and creates new internal political demands. The permanence of [Brazil as] a subaltern

capital export platform coexists with [the presence of] some highly competitive sectors and companies in the international arena. The export of capital as direct investments coexists with the commoditisation of a significant part of production and exports [...] (Fontes, 2010, p. 363, personal translation)."

Despite not employing the concept of sub-imperialism in rejection of its economic foundations - the scarcity of the domestic market and super-exploitation as a peripheral structural feature - Fontes (2010, 2013) considers Marini's work a fundamental one. A veritable matrix that needs to be updated to account for the major transformations that have occurred at the global level since his time and their effect on Brazil: the accelerated concentration of capital; the new international division of labour; the inter-imperialist dynamics born out of the fall of the Soviet Union; and the ascent of China.

In this sense, I believe that, when analysing the neodevelopmentalist form of dependent international insertion, building upon a mix between Marini's notion of medium-sized centres of accumulation and Peinado's use of the concept of semi-periphery is advisable. This makes it possible to account for a context that

"[...] differs from that studied by Marini. The intermediate economies that were the focus of his attention continue to play a key role, but they operate in a new framework of transnational corporations, free trade agreements and globalised finance. Compared to the 1970s, the domestic markets of intermediate countries have lost relevance to export activity (Katz, 2018, p. 224, personal translation)."

Here another staple of Marini's methodology comes handy, namely his suggestion about the need to always analyse the stage of capitalist development at the global level in order to understand the reality of dependent and peripheral states. Following this hint, both the market diversification pursued by neodevelopmentalist foreign policy and the search for alliances with nontraditional partners and "emerging powers" such as China, India and Russia seem to respond to the changes that took place in global capitalism over the last few decades. In fact, the advance of the mundialization of capital -the formation of a world market structured around the protagonism of financial capital, the internationalisation of production and trade liberalisation-led

to a fundamental restructuring of the centre-periphery relationship and modified the conditions of South America's dependent insertion into the global economy. Chief among these transformations, the increase in trade between Brazil -and the region-with Asian countries has contributed to the establishment of new relations of dependency, while the renewed gravitation of natural commodity exports on South American economies has propelled a process of deindustrialisation and reprimarisation throughout the region (Clemente, 2021b).

Going back to Burges' "package" then, and building upon his idea, I believe that the essence of the neodevelopmentalist project for South America was to promote a moderate integration of the region into the global market and its insertion into global value chains (GVCs) while maintaining a certain amount of protection for domestic markets thanks to the preservation and possible expansion of the structure and function of MERCOSUR (Kan, 2018; Katz, 2006). Proof of that is the incorporation of the IIRSA infrastructure initiative into UNASUR in 2011, a move that was part of a "supply-side regionalism" strategy (Milberg, Jiang, and Gereffi, 2014) which was no longer focused on the "classic" expansion of the regional domestic market ("demand side regionalism"), but rather on the construction of a regional export platform tied to global demand and based on the exploitation of natural resources (Saguier, 2012). Far from establishing a fair integration scheme though, the partial unpacking of the neodevelopmentalist "gift" to South America resulted in a fragmented and unequal integration dominated by Brazilian companies and organised around regional value chains with Brazil at its center, reinforcing, as a consequence, the traditional subordinated insertion of the region in the global economy (Clemente, 2021a).

In fact, the gradual integration of semi-peripheries into the movement of "deconcentrated centralisation" of capital on a global scale (Sposito and Santos, 2012) has meant an increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) originating in the periphery and the emergence of transnational corporations (TNCs) that compete globally with corporations from the central countries. In the case of Brazil, the rise to global relevance in the last two decades of local TNCs - the so-called "national champions"-, which began their international expansion in South America, considered as a regional "expanded market" and a key part of an overall strategy to build competitive positions globally, constitutes an unprecedented process in Brazil's history of dependent international insertion (Clemente, 2017a). However, there is no incongruence between the increase in outward FDI and the maintenance of a semiperipheral position that prevents Brazil from fully retaining the economic surplus (Peinado, 2011, 2014). Indeed, is the persistency of the "structural fragility" of Brazilian capitalism, that is to say, the impossibility of fully dominating the technology and productive processes employed locally, which continue to be

controlled by the countries at the centre of the system, that imposes on the country the "option for subordinate insertion in the international economy" (Cerqueira, 2014, p.210, personal translation). This translates into local TNCs developing GVCs with a lower industrial profile and higher socio-environmental impact than foreign multinational counterparts, with which they often seek to partner, albeit from a subordinate position.

All in all, neodevelopmentalism as a form of international insertion for Brazil and South America resulted in the strengthening - not the overcoming - of several negative tendencies that have plagued the region since the '90s: economic reprimarisation, deindustrialisation, subaltern insertion in GVCs, etc. (Katz, 2016). However, this scenario, and its contradictions, cannot be considered as a sign of the failure of the neodevelopmentalist scheme of integration -of South American countries among them, and of the region as a whole into the world market- but rather its necessary outcome, as a process of subordinate insertion of the Brazilian and regional economy into the world market under the new conditions that global capital grants to the Latin American periphery.

Conclusions

Marxist Dependency Theory still is an invaluable tool for critical analysis of and from Latin America. In particular, the work of Ruy Mauro Marini, the protagonist of a pioneering, situated reflection in the field of Marxism in the 1960s, continues to offer an irreplaceable framework for analysis and action in a new century of dependent international insertion for our region. Indeed, neodevelopmentalism meant the return to center stage of ideas and slogans that never truly go away, now revived by a new horizon of political possibility in Latin America: development, state intervention, redistribution, social change. Just as the heated debates of the 1960s and 1970s around the elaboration of a theory of dependency had been conducive to the development of Marini's perspective, the recent discussion about neodevelopmentalism lends for a critical recovery of his hypothesis and method. While elsewhere (Clemente, 2019, 2022, 2023b, 2023a) the potency of this recovery has been tested to reconstruct the peculiar relation of forces inherent to neodevelopmentalism in Brazil, this paper focused instead on neodevelopmentalism as a foreign policy and an original form of international insertion.

To this end, in the first section I discussed Marini's situated perspective on classical Marxist theory of imperialism, identifying in the concepts of subimperialism and

medium-sized centres of accumulation his main innovations and contributions to Dependency Theory. Here Marini's "discovery" about the dependent condition is given appropriate recognition: by the 1960s the simple centre-periphery scheme elaborated by structuralists and core of the Prebisch-Singer hypothesis had already been modified by imperialist dynamics and the global expansion of capitalism. Brazil had become an intermediate economy, at once dependent on the economic centre and dominant vis-à-vis its own periphery. This new condition, for Marini, led to an aggressive attitude towards neighbouring countries and the deployment of an "antagonistic cooperation" with the United States, articulating a close geopolitical alliance with the search for autonomy of the Brazilian bourgeoisie. In other words, with the military coup of 1964 subimperialism was born.

Recovering these concepts to analyse neodevelopmentalism in Brazil, the second section deals specifically with the foreign policy deployed in the period 2003-2016. Despite the many similarities with the period studied by Marini, I suggested to consider "neodevelopmentalist foreign policy" as a hybrid between sub-imperialism and autonomy, as the radical difference in the international context as well as reminiscences of pre-coup "independent" foreign policy invite us to. Finally, I urged to seek the specificity of this foreign policy not in the interests of a unique fraction of the bourgeoisie but rather in it being the expression of a set of differentiated class interests, emanating from the particular relation of forces that consolidated in Brazil during neodevelopmentalism.

In the third section, following the warning about the need to separate the analysis of "semiperipheral economic structures" and "subimperial roles" in contemporary capitalism, I discussed the present-day validity of Brazil's semi-peripheral status and the continuous relevance of this category to understand the form of dependent international insertion that characterised neodevelopmentalism. I showed how the advance of the process of mundialization of capital in recent decades and the emergence of old and new semiperipheries have produced a fundamental restructuring of the centre-periphery relationship and modified the conditions of South America's dependent insertion into the global economy. In Brazil's case, its gradual integration into the movement of "deconcentrated centralisation" of capital on a global scale has resulted in an increase in outward foreign direct investment and the creation of globally competitive local transnational corporations while, at the same time, propelling processes of economic reprimarisation, deindustrialisation and subaltern insertion into global value chains.

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