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The Return of Conflict: Republican Democracy¹

Maria Aparecida Abreu

Maria Aparecida Abreu

is Associate Professor at the Political Science Department of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (*Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro*)

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to present an association of the concepts of conflict, in the sense proposed by Machiavelli, in freedom as non-domination, according to the definition of contemporary neo-republicanism, and especially Philip Pettit, and in categorical inequality as defined by Charles Tilly. The intention is to formulate a theory that can be used as a guide for the State in situations of inequality that are intolerable for democracy – particularly those in which practiced by groups of people with special traits in detriment of others. This theoretical formulation will be denominated republican democracy as it combines the formulations of democratic theory proposed by Tilly with the contributions of the leading contemporary theoreticians of republicanism.

Key words

democracy, republic, conflict, domination, inequality

Introduction

Conflict, in political reality, is everywhere: in opposing views of the State, which can mean intervention in this or that sphere of private activities, in the demand for rights certain segments of society consider legitimate, in the struggle for equality among several groups and for the freedom of each one of them. However, in contemporary political theory, maybe its major attribute is absence. Since Carl Schmitt – who attributes conflict a central, though disruptive, role, for in conflictive situations one of the parts must be excluded –, there seems to be no one who places conflict at the heart of politics, much less present it as an integral part of politics, nor even viewing it as something positive. Luis Felipe Miguel (2012) describes Chantal Mouffe as a seemingly discordant voice by pointing out the need to reexamine conflict – not the schmittian disruptive one, but the agonistic one – and points out his theory's limitations in reestablishing the space for conflict in political theory.² In fact, by labeling as legitimate only the conflict between adversarial, not inimical, positions – probably to escape from the Schmittian reference – Mouffe ended up much closer to the nuances of pluralism than claiming a central role for conflict in politics.

Instead of conflict, consensus became the main player in political theories – in Habermasian filiation theories, or pluralism, be it in a democratic theory inspired by Dahl's polyarchy, be it in the admission of plural conceptions of good which are not disputed by Rawlsian theories of justice.

In a certain republican strand of thought, conflict is also not at the center of the debate. Even with all the theoretical work to salvage and reexamine the republican oeuvre of Machiavelli, which glorified conflict, its most well-known contemporary interpretations by Pocock, Skinner, and Pettit, do not give it a central role (Appleby, 1985:1992). On the contrary, in the case of Pocock, emphasis was placed on interest by the Federalists, replacing the theme of virtue and even *virtú* – in Machiavellian terms –; and Skinner and Pettit discussed the concept of liberty, seeking an alternative to the negative/positive liberty dichotomy presented by Isaiah Berlin. In this discussion a new concept emerged,

which is liberty as non-domination. With this concept, contemporary republicans believe they have differentiated themselves from liberal thought, in which the concept of liberty is very centered on the individual and on limiting State action (of the republic or political community) in relation to this individual. Liberty as non-domination allows for political communities not be considered free even they have within them entire groups which are dominated. In other words, the reference point for liberty as non-domination puts forwards a concept not only of individual liberty – with which the State shall not interfere – but also collective and, at its limit, also as an attribute of the political community itself.

Even though he admits the differences between liberty as non-domination and liberal liberty, John McCormick points out that the former, inspired by Machiavelli, did not retain its conflict-ridden character. McCormick's critique is very focused on the need for a more accurate appropriation of Machiavelli – from the point of view of the historical position he held within his context – and also more adequate from the point of view of the demands of contemporary democracies. In other words, McCormick criticizes Skinner and Pettit for placing Machiavelli in a position closer to the one adopted by his theoretical adversaries in sixteenth century Florence and also for not providing the bold answers required by the dilemmas of contemporary democracy.

McCormick, unlike the authors he criticized, states that the conflict and tension between the people and the Roman Senate exposed by Machiavelli are the great source of inspiration for the creation of contemporary elites' response mechanisms towards popular classes. According to him, it is because of the "fear" of popular classes felt by the aristocracy that we can create institutional mechanisms in which every individual's position can be openly expressed in public debate. By endowing the people with veto powers, elites need to establish policies jointly or, at least, consider the peoples' opinions. Even though McCormick recognizes the existent social division between the people and the elites – which originates the constitutive conflict of political communities (republics) – he does not discuss the sociological characterization of this conflict.

This limitation, arising from McCormick's permanence in the sphere of institutions and power games – true checks and balances not between any institutions, but between those representing the social sectors in conflict – which characterize contemporary democracies, made him, even if he reinterpreted Machiavel in a more radical fashion than the other contemporary republican theoreticians, perhaps wasted an opportunity to take advantage of Pettit's insight, which was placing domination at the center of the debate, which can be used – even though this was not exactly what the author intended – as a criterion for identifying what conflicts should be prioritized and whose expression deserve to be considered necessary for the constitution of the liberty of citizens and the political community itself.

Faced with this scenario, and believing the theoretical republican school to be the most suited for bringing back conflict to politics, precisely because it has Machiavelli as one of its main reference points, and for reintroducing domination into the debate – despite not pointing out the conflicts it originates –, what we can propose is that we should admit liberty as non-domination, as formulated by Pettit, as a normative referential, but also seek to give this concept a conflictive density, going beyond the contestation democracy proposed by him, recognizing McCormick's critique and building on it.

In this article, we propose that the conflictive relation that exists between the dominant and the dominated be the one we use as a reference. This relation does not include,

obviously, all conflictive situations,³ but we can say that it is a situation no democracy can tolerate, or no republic can be considered free. In other words, we can not say there that there is democracy or free republic, or as we will discuss, a republican democracy, if expressive situations of dominance exists. But how do we characterize such dominance?

Based on the feminist literature and its formulations on the constitution and the practice of masculine domination (Bourdieu, 1999; Pateman, 1992), we can say that when Charles Tilly was elaborating his concept of categorical inequality and how it is created and how it lasts he provided us with very useful theoretical assistance, even if he did not use the term "domination." And this becomes even more meaningful if we consider that domination is, from a social and political point of view, even more worrisome when it generates inequalities like those described by Tilly.

The purpose of this article is to suggest that there is, in contemporary republican theory, a very fertile territory once again for debating and tackling conflict with theory and politics and also institutions, as long as it gives sociological density to the concept of liberty as non-domination – which is probably the greatest contribution contemporary republican thought – precisely to make domination the primordial identifying criterion of conflicts that should be dealt with by a political community that sees itself as democratic and free, which in this article is called republican democracy. In this endeavor of searching for sociological density for liberty as non-domination, the work of Charles Tilly may be a useful toolbox and also compatible with the republican theory.

With this purpose in mind, we will discuss (i) Philip Pettit's formulation of liberty as non-domination and its limitations, adhering to a large degree to McCormick's critique; (ii) McCormick's insufficiencies and his Machiavellian appropriation; (iii) Tilly's formulation of categorical inequality as a reference for characterizing domination; (iv) the explanation of why a theory such as this one can be more appropriate for dealing with some current social problems that political systems have to confront.

Pettit's concept of liberty as non-domination

Philip Pettit's formulation of the concept of liberty as non-domination fits within a context of affirmation of a strand of republicanism, the neo-roman (Silva, 2007 and 2011, Skinner, 2008), which seeks, simultaneously, to distance itself from elitist conceptions of a certain republican tradition and also from the revival of the ancient Greeks liberty, or positive liberty, as defended by Hannah Arendt (1963) and mentioned by Habermas (1995). On the theme of domination, Pettit (2007) formulates, as a general precept that, within the diverse republican experiences and also in theoretical texts that undergird them, what we can learn is that people desired *not to be dominated*. With this as a starting point, he defended that, in republican thought, positive liberty would not prevail, at least not in the form described by Habermas. Pettit's defense could suggest that liberty as domination is a variation of the negative liberty already championed by Isaiah Berlin, but actually, it added a new element, as Berlinian negative liberty is eminently liberty as non-interference, while Pettit points out in his analyses that there situations of non-interference where domination is present and there are situations of interference without domination. Following this rationale, we find a third element in the dichotomy of the theme of liberty, as initiated by Constant, in the form of the coupling liberty of the old/liberty of the modern and championed by Isaiah Berlin, in the form of positive liberty/negative liberty.

Therefore, Pettit's formulation of liberty as non-domination not only contributes to further the complexity and sophistication of the concept of liberty, but also broadens

the discussion to include the role of the State and its institutions in the promotion of the liberty of individuals and of the political community itself. Placing liberty at the center of the discussion on the role of the State in its promotion (and not only as a limit to its expression) is a typical theme of the republic tradition. The State is an agent whose action, though it must be legitimized, is indispensable for the creation of appropriate institutions that protect the general well-being and for a life free of domination, and therefore, free. The relevance and fecundity of Pettit's formulation can be seen in the influence his oeuvre had on the work of theoreticians such as Skinner, and also on state intervention, as in the Spanish case of the José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero administration (Pettit, 2011).

Domination, in its theoretical context, is divided into two types – *dominium* and *imperium*, the first being the type of domination exerted among citizens, and the second, the one exerted by the State over them. I will not address the second type, since its typically characteristic of authoritarian regimes that are unequivocally against any kind of democracy, which is the starting point of this paper.

Let us focus on *dominium*. When he analyzed this type of domination, Pettit's main concern was the possibility of minorities being dominated by majorities and how the State could provide institutional means for the citizens and groups who felt threatened be free to react and veto a potential domination. Pettit's institutional formula takes on a confrontational form, and such characterization helps distance his formulation of liberty as non-domination from the form of positive liberty, as it is not about defending the right of these groups to have permanent voices – even though he is not opposed to them –, but not necessarily prescribe them in order to have liberty characterized as non-domination, or having to actively participate in institutional mechanisms through which these groups can protect themselves against domination by others.

Pettit's formulation is sufficient to guarantee its originality. In fact, liberty as non-domination is not simply negative liberty, because it is not enough to guarantee that the State will not interfere in private life, as majorities can dominate minorities; nor can it be mistaken for positive liberty, which demands from citizens a constant, and often costly, participation in political life.

However, if we examine the impact this theory had beyond the debate on liberty, we see that the concern about the existence of institutional mechanisms that deter the domination of the minority by the majority was already present in the Federalist Papers, which places Pettit's formulation within the republican tradition, which if not part of the Athenian neo-republicanism, seems also not to be part of the one started by Machiavelli, in which the central concern is not the eventual domination of a minority by a majority, but the capacity of a majority, the *populus*, as opposed to the *ottimati*, to express its antagonistic impulse towards these and not be represented by them. And, from a contemporary point of view, his theory does not seem to differentiate minorities – which should also be represented and whose domination should be avoided – from majorities who go through lasting and persistent situations of dominations throughout history, as is, practically universally, the case with women, blacks, and ethnic majorities who suffer discrimination in many countries which had slavery or other forms of domination as part of its national formation.

This distancing from Pettit – and, as a result, Skinner and Pocock – was pointed out by John McCormick in many of his articles and recently in a more consolidated fashion in his book "*Machiavellian Democracy*" (2011). For McCormick, Pettit, Skinner, and Pocock, instead of reclaiming a Machiavellian republican tradition, bring back instead a

tradition which is, in fact, part of civic humanism, Machiavelli's adversary, and defended by Guicciardini. To illustrate this, McCormick argues that the title of Pocock's famous book "*Machiavellian Moment*" should actually be called the "*Guicciardinian Moment*."⁴ McCormick's argument takes place in a context which, beyond the concept of liberty or republic, is in confrontation with an also correct interpretation of the meaning and role of Machiavelli's work. This dispute is not exactly the subject analyzed by this article. What interests us in McCormick's formulation, is which Machiavellian formulations are more useful in his appropriation for the fulfillment of demands in contemporary democracies.

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In this regard, McCormick seems to be right in saying that the formulation of the concept of liberty as non-domination and the subsequent confrontational democracy proposed by Pettit, coexists very well with the elitist forms that contemporary democracies have taken. In other words, according to McCormick, we can have confrontational democracies without dominated minorities, in Pettit's terms, coexisting with elitist structures of representation. In the present democratic context, we can state that any populational segment has access to some mechanism of contestation. However, we can also say that the effort these segments have to make to access these mechanisms is much greater than the done by the elites who already control most modes of representation. For him, therefore, some more radical solutions must be attempted and, if representative democracy is in danger, maybe the theoretical effort that must be done should be returning to a democratic formulation that predates the origins of contemporary liberal democracy. Therein lies the need to return to Machiavelli as interpreted by McCormick. Let's move on to his reading.

McCormick and the machiavellian concept of conflictive democracy

McCormick's starting point is the economic inequality which characterized contemporary democratic societies. This inequality is a propitious terrain for relaunching Machiavelli's ideas on conflicts between the people and the Senate. Worried about the responsiveness of elites and with the assurance that existing inequalities between classes made possible for the privileges of elites to be turned against the popular class, McCormick proposes a new model of democracy, the "*Machiavellian democracy*", in which there are a groups of institutions which limit the elites' power and enhances their responsiveness. In such an interpretation, the proposal is for a greater plurality of deliberative, representative, and participatory bodies which allow the poor enough of a voice to eliminate any space for elites to act exclusively on their behalf.

In this aspect, McCormick is quite bold and all his formulations start with the premise that there is an inescapable conflict between the rich and the poor, and its expression should be made possible and even stimulated by institutions.⁵ McCormick is returning to the conflictive roots of Machiavellian theory and, based on the deficiencies of contemporary democratic institutions, seeks to postulate a democracy — *a machiavellan democracy* — that has conflict as its starting point. This conflict is characterized by the elites' domination of the poor and the need for this to be the main purpose of a democracy that makes domination impossible. This democracy is the only form of government, according to him, that can serve as an alternative to the elitist proposals of the republican tradition that includes Cicero, Guicciardini, and the Federalists. He mounts a defense for *largo* government, as opposed to *stretto* government.

The greater accountability of elites to popular sectors is made possible, in McCormick's proposed democracy by a series of institutions, inspired by Machiavelli, which control the fury — practically naturalized, by Machiavelli and McCormick alike — with which elites

dominate and subjugate the poor. This elite fury control ends up indirectly contributing to the prosperity (greatness) of the political community itself, since the poor, not being dominated, and the rich, with their lust for domination controlled, will contribute more for the good of the republic.

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But what are these institutions, benefitting the republic as a whole? McCormick is aware that they are not simply a channel for popular fury which may empower citizens, but actually allow the poor to express themselves as a collective body, and not as a group of individuals reacting angrily to domination by the rich. In this sense, Brudney (1984) had already characterized, before McCormick, the type of conflict appreciated by Machiavelli. According to Brudney, the conflicts defended by Machiavelli are collective, even though he did not classify them as such. Besides this collective/individual dichotomy, the Machiavellian conflict is also based on other dichotomies: public/private; particular/common; faction/collective. In other words, certain positions have legitimacy to integrate the conflictive clash of the Machiavellian republic if they have a public, not private vocation, if they have the potential to become common and never become broad and particular privileges, and they can not be a result of sectarian movements which seek to destabilize the republic.

Therefore, the Machiavellian conflict of interests should be manifested publicly, that is, segments with opposing interests must be identified, and after their political clashing, the institutional solution, which is also public, can happen. In this manner, interests which are manifested secretly or deviously can not be submitted to institutional arbitration mechanisms and are, therefore, possible sources for the corruption of the republic. The interests in conflicts, which will constitute the source of liberty through institutions, must be transparent and public.

The conflict of which Machiavelli speaks of, mentioned by Brudney, and though it is not discussed by McCormick would be in accordance with his propositions, is the one of partial interests, yes, but they present themselves as common, and do not desire privileges or benefits that strengthen one segment to the detriment of another. And, above all, conflict of interests Machiavelli talks about happens with collective and common interests, capable of being expressed through public and transparent institutional mechanisms, which consequently become an essential element of the republic's liberty. But, hoping to update this Machiavellian characterization of contemporary democracies, would these interests in conflict be expressed in the same deliberative arena, the same representative institution? McCormick's answer seems to be no. The existence of exclusively popular institutions increases the need for deliberative processes within it, as these institutions would be less susceptible to privilege mechanisms and asymmetry of persuasion resources, and, because of these characteristics, the possibility of more reasonable options being selected increases.

In terms of this deliberative aspect, the Machiavellian McCormick insists that popular deliberative institutions be separated from the elite ones, precisely to avoid the latter from manipulating the former (McCormick, 2011). These separate chambers could be inspired by the ancient tribunes of roman plebs, and be legislative micro-bodies in which specific issues could be decided, and where selection mechanisms, such as lottery, could be used. In these institutions, the idea of representation could be put aside in favor of actual participation, where those interest in a certain issue could be present. In this manner, McCormick distances himself completely from the idea that there should exist, in the same political arena, the plural space for the exchange of opinions and the possible

persuasion by the best argument. It seems that his position is not motivated by a dislike of pluralism, but due to his belief that the division between the poor and the elites is so deeply seated that there is no reason expect that either segment – especially the elites – would be amenable to being persuaded by its opponent.

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According to the author, besides the separate deliberative chambers, it is necessary to create popularly controlled punishment mechanisms for elite magistrates, veto mechanisms for elite decisions that do nothing for the public interests (McCormick, 2011), and mechanisms for denunciation of any type of corruption. As we can see, we are dealing with various institutions, which lead to a broader balance of powers than the one found in the classical separation of powers in contemporary democracies, which have become amalgamated in mixed governments influenced by the victorious proposition, from a historical point of view, of Montesquieu and his separation of powers and its later variations. The balance of power in McCormick's Machiavellian democracy is based on the capacity of the poor to curb the dominating impetus of the elites and make their domination impossible.

In this institutional pluralism, McCormick's focuses mainly on representative institutions and on critiquing them. To accept his proposal, we must relativize the assumption present in institutions that are prevalent in united sovereign democracies – which, despite co-existing with separation of powers, it presupposes a certain type of unity in the representative body (unicameral or bicameral) – so we can think about plural representation mechanisms where the concept of "people" is not unified, but divided between the rich and the poor.

Even though McCormick's formulation deserves credit for again placing Machiavellian conflict at the center of the debate and questioning if contemporary democratic institutions have the capacity to deal with it, his formulations do not tackle the mechanisms of domination which often hinder, in public arenas, the dominated from defending their dominated position and truly exercise their power of veto over the dominators. Actually, McCormick himself admits that in the deliberative assemblies of various bodies, the opinions of white American men end up prevailing over those of women and/or blacks and/or immigrants. Therefore, there is domination within the popular classes. The simple differentiation between elite and popular representative institutions cannot be sufficient to eliminate domination, at least not the type reflected in representative bodies. In other words: providing a space for the people and the elite to express themselves publically in institutions is enough to curb one segment's domination over another, or at least, significantly decrease it?

In order to answer this question without discrediting the importance of institutions and their power to influence the actions of political actors, we have to delve deeper into the concept of domination and the ways it is accepted and protected, even by institutions. In this sense, we have to weave in some sociological density into the idea of domination initially discussed by Pettit.

Imparting sociological density to liberty as non-domination: Charles Tilly's categorical inequality

Taking into account McCormick's criticisms of Pettit, we return to the concept of liberty as non-domination. We can say that, leaving aside any dominated groups, there is a reasonable expectation that a certain political community will be free and also that its individuals will have liberty within sight. Actually, this is one more positive attributes

of this concept, since liberty as non-domination characterizes not only private groups or individuals but the political community as a whole. However, is it enough to ensure the non-domination of minorities or promote measures that undermine the position of dominated groups? This is a sensible question in the context of Pettit's work, especially in relation to his manifestations in contexts of intervention, where he points out very relevant measures as evidence of the promotion of a republican democracy.

Furthermore, perhaps seeking to escape the identification of liberty as non-domination with positive liberty, Pettit focused the meaning of confrontational expression with the idea of claims, which is very similar to the claim to rights, or the deconstitution of an unfavorable situation (Pettit, 2011 and Silva, 2011). As mentioned before, contestation democracy is associated to the possibility of individuals or a group of individuals who perceive themselves as dominated to reverse their situation of domination, but not as a point of legitimation for the State to act and intervene repeatedly in situations of contested domination.

However, one of the effects of successful domination is making the dominated one behave in a way that validates and repeats the mechanisms that ensure its prolonged existence. This is a view often expressed in the literature on gender inequality and masculine domination⁷ (Bourdieu, 1999,⁸ Pateman, 1992, Elshtain, 1993). And this view is not at odds with Weber's more general formulation about the characterization of domination as an "as if,"⁹ in which the dominated behaves as if he had adopted the rules and orders of the dominator by himself. This eliminates the need for domination to be expressed and explicit.

Even though he did not use the concept of domination, or even the term itself, in his formulations on inequality, Charles Tilly has something to offer to our conceptual discussion. Tilly (1998), when describing the formation mechanisms of durable inequality, ended up facilitating the identification of formation mechanisms of the most pernicious effect of domination – categorical inequality. Not that domination by itself is not a problem, but durable inequality – categorical – is the main effect and at the same time the most intolerable symptom of domination. Durable inequality among men and women, blacks and whites, immigrants and natives, poor and rich in the field of income, political representation, access to more qualified public spaces, among other indicators, are signs of categorical inequality among these groups as well as relationships of domination.

Categorical inequality is defined by Tilly as historically reproduced situations which involve unequal distribution of benefits by pairs of groups separated by a frontier that structures inequality. Despite its undesirable effects, it takes hold because some of its effects are considered positive for the social structure: it can simplify social life and facilitate the production of collective goods by making the behavior of social actors more predictable (Tilly, 1998: 84). For example, in the corporate life of a company, a routine becomes much more achievable if workers fulfill the expectations which correspond to their position, ethnicity, and sex, and the creation of expectations begins as soon as workers are hired by the company and continues through all stages of their careers. To produce this positive effect and structure itself, categorical inequality is characterized by four elements: (i) exploitation; (ii) opportunity hoarding; (iii) emulation; and (iv) adaptation.

The exploration and appropriation of resources are the most primitive mechanisms of domination and involve social and economic aspects which are often easily observed and easily denounced. They are mechanisms that allow inequality to establish itself. But emulation and adaptation are more diffuse mechanisms that facilitate the preservation and durability of inequality. Emulation consists of the process of imitation in which those

who find themselves exploited and disadvantaged submit to, in order to be included in the world of the of the exploiter and please him. They are mechanisms developed for the exploited, the displaced, the dominated, to be accepted by that group of people on the other side of the frontier of inequality.

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Adaptation is related to the acceptance of the other, but also with self-acceptance of one's position in inequality. What Tilly means to say, with all these elements describing the establishment of durable inequality, is that without a "contribution" by the dominated, it would probably not last. This contribution happens because, in their point of view, their social situation would be even worse if they did not emulate the behavior of the dominator or adapt to their situation.¹⁰ In this sense, there is a strategic component in the attitude of those dominated which may lead many to relativize domination or blame the dominated exclusively for their situation. Well, if the more durable inequalities, and therefore the most "worrying" from the point of view of social structure, happen with the "contribution" and "consent" of those in the unfavorable end of the spectrum, how can we expect that creating mechanisms for channeling and expressing dissatisfaction, interests, and even a "veto" for the dominated will be effective in reducing domination and its effects? Therefore, demanding and contesting, in these cases, seem to be actions with too high a price – not only the price of the hard work necessary for collective action – which indicates that, in this case, a democracy based only on contestation institutions will be insufficient for dismantling the efficient domination structures.

In this aspect, McCormick's formulation, though quite useful in showing the limits of Pettit's appropriation of the theory and his own moderate appropriation of Machiavelli, is also insufficient. Perhaps it is adequate for more restricted conflicts between rich and poor (of which there are plenty), but existing inequalities and dominations among other types of groups cannot be analyzed with his formulations. This is reinforced because McCormick focuses his theoretical impetus on critiquing and seeking the construction of a representative democracy structure different than the one we have now. But, predictably so, the demand for representation and the capacity to construct representative bodies with bargaining power and veto power already depends on some sort of visibility, recognition, and a disposition for dealing with existing societal conflicts, conditions which are often not present.

All these aspects lead us to consider what type of institutional solution is necessary to dismantle categorical inequalities. In this sense, Tilly is still useful by discussing, in his later book, *Democracy* (2007), democratization processes as more than established and stagnated institutional democracies: it is more likely for democratization to happen when the political process reduces the transformation of quotidian categorical inequalities into public policies. In this book, Tilly progresses to a relational concept of inequality, defining it as "the relationship between people or groups of people for which the interaction generates more advantages for some more than others" (Tilly, 2007: 111). To reverse the logic of the production of inequalities, the author introduces the notion of state capacity, where he suggests as criteria for evaluating how democratic a State has to be to promote the necessary actions to ensure a series of rights and also eliminate categorical inequalities. The State can often contribute to the persistence of these inequalities by, for example, protecting inheritance laws, which reaffirm the inequalities between blacks and whites. But the State can revert this process by drafting new rules for accessing benefits, such as spots in public schools, for example. Here, the focus is not on the representative bodies but on the capacity of the State (including all its powers and ramifications) in dealing with categorical inequalities and facing them head-on.

And how would this confrontation happen? With the official international data systems and the growing and deepening knowledge we have of distribution, among the population of one State, of diverse goods — be they economic, social, or political — it is possible, in given situations, to establish limits which make state intervention necessary and available on request by individuals, including those not directly involved in said inequality. This reference point would be a type of conflictive limit, which for a certain society, a society that could be qualified as republican, the State would be obligated to execute a series of socially legitimated measures whose objective was reducing these inequalities and render conflict manifest.

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Conflict and inequality: the republican democracy

The valorization of conflict as a relevant political category — not necessarily the one that delineates the territory of the political, as Schmitt wanted — is convenient in the sense that it indicates that, in the field of public deliberation and discussion of several themes and issues that have to be increasingly managed by public/state institutions, there are divergences and diversity of interests, situations and positions that are more relevant, or that, at least require a different treatment than simply “hearing the diversity of interests and opinions of society,” required by pluralist conception of democracy. McCormick is very successful in claiming that contemporary democratic representative institutions are insufficient to deal with one of the structural divisions in society, namely, the inequality between rich and poor. But not all structural inequalities coincide with this one discussed by McCormick. Even within economically homogenous groups there are differences in gender, ethnicity, and citizenship status (immigrant/nonimmigrant), which can create conflictive and domination structures.

On the other hand, maybe not all conflictive situations involve structural inequalities, as described by Tilly. But we can say that groups separated by the frontier of categorical inequality described by him are in conflict, even though they often do not openly declare it¹¹, and such conflict may not be resolved simply with the creation of institutions that provide a venue for different groups to express themselves. We can also say that the conflict of groups that demand expression is one that has already in a certain manner “breached” the barriers of the domination process. Actually, speaking of groups in terms of subjects with claims is perhaps inadequate. The “groups” emerging from categorical inequalities are not groups linked by a common and conscious interest or a desire to come together to protect these interests.

In this sense, they are not even potential candidates to protect these interests. There is no identifying mechanism that necessarily limits them. What characterizes them is an unfavorable situation identified by data and external results of social interrelations — for example, persistent differences in salary, existence of violence inflicted specifically on these disadvantaged groups, among others. Mechanisms to combat prejudices and restructure the institutions that these groups can participate in are necessary to make reversing categorical inequality possible. Maybe not all categorical inequalities are easily identifiable. But simply monitoring statistical data produced by the State itself can identify many of them. These situations of inequality can be a type of “red flag” warning every State when to use its power to intervene in its own institutions and others.

In the case of gender inequality, the demand for the gender category to be seen as “structural” dimension of society is not new, and it is requested from the theoretical point of view (Risman, 2004) as well as the political, in the series of actions contained, as seen in

the official documents of the 2004 I National Conference of the Rights of Women in Brazil (SPM, 2004: 103). These inequalities can be, therefore, a type of indicator that sounded the alarm when conflict and domination clashed and something extremely urgent and structural should be done by the State.

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With a State that mobilizes its capacity to tackle categorical inequalities among groups, and in doing so, intervening in the structure of domination among these same groups which are part of these pair, we have attained a democracy in which not only rights and minimum social condition are guaranteed, but also where its citizens can expect to be free, without this meaning only a potential condition for the demand rights. Such a State is the one capable of identifying, thanks to its institutional capacity, the mechanisms that structure inequalities and tackle them. It is a democracy that establishes a relationship with the body politic that goes beyond the State/citizen, or the State that deals exclusively with interests expressed through conflict.

We can say that among groups separated by frontier of structural inequality, or Tilly's categorical inequality, there are opposing and conflictive interests, but demanding that they be expressed in order to be valid maybe not take into account all mechanisms that create it. A democracy that declares categorical inequality to be its own problem and not a problem of the groups, nor only individuals, is a democracy that will have to be capable of dealing with these conflictive situations and redistributing scarce resources. It is also a democracy that opens a space for the additional protection in addition to the individual judicial protection already consecrated by liberal democracies, which use their State's capacity to identify situations of domination and fight against them. This could be a republican democracy.

Translated by José Pedro Fonseca

(Submitted on August 2012)

(Resubmitted with revision on March 2013)

(Approved for publication on May 2013)

Quote this article

ABREU, Maria Aparecida. The return of conflict: republican democracy.

Revista Estudos Políticos: the bi-annual electronic publication of the Laboratory of Hum(e)an Studies (UFF) and the Nucleus for Political Theory Studies (UFRJ). Rio de Janeiro, nº 6, pp. 245-260, July 2013.

Available at: <http://revistaestudospoliticos.com/>.

Notes

1. A preliminary version of text was presented at the II International Colloquium on Theory, Discourse, and Political Action/IV IFCS Symposium on Political Theory. I would like to thank the participants of this event for their comments, especially Ricardo Silva and Luis Felipe Miguel. I also would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of the Revista de Estudos Políticos who helped refine this paper.

2. According to him, “Mouffe does not escape from a *conciliation* with the ideal of consensus — through his differentiation between the enemy and the adversary, between “antagonism” which must be contained and “agonism” which must be stimulated — it is a clear demonstration of the power of this *démarche* in current political thought.”

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3. We could cite here, as an example, a situation where conceptions of social security models to be adopted by a State are in dispute: one defends every individual's right to retirement benefits relative to their social security contribution, the other claims that the State should provide what is necessary for an individual to live, regardless of their contribution. In this case, conceptions of the State are in conflict and they are not necessarily derived from the domination of one group over another.

4. In fact, this argument had already been the specific subject of one of his previous article (McCormick, 2003).

5. For a specific discussion on the appropriation of Machiavelli with regard to class conflict, see Brudney (1984), as discussed below.

6. Here I come back, in a very summarized fashion, to arguments that were discussed in the paper presented at the I Colloquium on Theory, Discourse, and Political Action and later published in a book (Abreu, 2012).

7. In the case of gender relations, the sexual contract, the origin of domestic family organization, contributes to the consented domination structure.

8. In this regard, even though symbolic domination is not the subject of this article, this passage by Bourdieu is quite harsh: “The acts of knowing and practical recognition of the magical frontier between the dominant and the dominated, which the magic of symbolic power sets in motion, and by which the dominated contributed, often unknowingly or even against their will, to their own domination, tacitly accepting the imposed limits, takes on the form of *corporal emotions* — shame, humiliation, timidity, anxiety, guilt — or of *passions* and *feelings* — love, admiration, respect -; emotions that are sometimes even more painful, since they are exposed through visible manifestations, such as blushing, stuttering, awkwardness, tremor, anger, or omnipotent rage, and many other forms of submission, half-heartedly, or even *against their will*, to the dominant force, or so many other ways of living, often with an internal conflict and the rupture of the ego, the subterranean complicity which a body that ignores the directives of the conscience and of will establishes with the inherent censures in social structures (Bourdieu, 1999: 51).

9. “Si se quiere tomar por base el concepto de dominación aquí indicado, es inevitable formular la anterior definición con la reserva de um “como si”. Por una parte, no son suficientes para nuestros fines los meros resultados externos, el cumplimiento efectivo del mandato, pues no es indiferente para nosotros el sentido de su aceptación en cuanto norma “válida”. Por otra parte, el enlace causal que liga el mandato a su cumplimiento puede adoptar formas muy diferentes. Desde el punto de vista puramente psicológico, um mandato puede ejercer su acción

mediante “compenetración” — endopatía —, mediante “inspiración”, por “persuasión” racional o por combinación de algunas de estas tres formas capitales. Desde el punto de vista de su motivación concreta, un mandato puede ser cumplido por convencimiento de su rectitud, por sentimiento del deber, por temor, por “mera costumbre” o por conveniencia, sin que tal diferencia tenga *necesariamente* un significado sociológico. Mas, por outro lado, el carácter sociológico de la dominación ofrece diferentes aspectos de acuerdos con las divergencias existentes en los fundamentos generales de su validez” (WeberEBER, 1996:, p. 699).

10. Tilly’s description is quite compatible with the Bourdieu’s description of symbolic domination, as mentioned earlier, and also with the Weber’s description of sociological characterization, also mentioned earlier.

11. There is an interesting article (Cramer, 2003) discussing, based on its criteria of economic analysis, the relationship between inequality and conflict. The article makes it clear that many inequality situations can not create conflicts that can be expressed socio-politically. However, we know that there is something “wrong” in these relationships if our goal is an equal distribution of goods.

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