

# Democracy or capitalist revolution?

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In this early year, the world turned its attention to Tunisia, where, for the first time in the history of the Arab world, a dictatorial government was overthrown by a popular rebellion. We ignore what will result from this manifestation of the people, but analysts of all tendencies wish it to be democracy. I do not share this well-behaved opinion. Evidently I wish that Tunisia becomes a prosperous and democratic nation, but for its people it will be more strategic to ensure civil liberties or the Rule of law and to carry out its national and capitalist revolution. Only after that it may become a solid democracy that, in addition to the Rule of law, will be able to guarantee universal suffrage and the alternation of political parties in power (minimum requirements for a democracy).

I do not need to argue for the Rule of law. But why do I also give priority to a national and capitalist revolution? Because it is only when a society becomes a true nation, carries out its industrial revolution and, therefore, completes its transformation into a modern society, that it is able to become a strong democracy. It is almost impossible to try to reverse this order. I know of no country that became a stable democracy without previously achieving its national revolution, and I only know of one country – India – that completed its capitalist revolution by industrializing in the framework of a democratic regime, but it had already achieved its national revolution.

Dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was in power for 23 years with full support of both France and the United States. A steady support that allowed right-wing analysts to present Tunisia as an example to the other Arab Middle East countries. It was as “exemplary” as were, in the 1990s, the equally “allied” governments of Carlos Menem in Argentina and Boris Yeltsin in Russia. Based on a semi-colonial regime such as this, there was no possibility of a true economic development, of the emergence of a large entrepreneurial class, a competent professional middle class, and a well-organized working class. There was room only for the most blatant corruption benefitting the family of the wife and friends of the leader, besides, obviously, a “welcoming” environment for the interests of the rich countries.

The tragedy of the poor countries is that there is no safe path for them. The authoritarian regimes that usually govern them do not represent a guarantee that capitalist revolution will happen. For this they must also be nationalist – they must understand that it is their duty to defend the interests of national labor, knowledge and capital – facing multinational interests whenever necessary. This is what the governments of rich and middle-income countries (such as Brazil) do in order to compete internationally. But this is not enough. Nationalism must also be competent, promoting the capitalist revolution and thus making room for a solid democracy. Which in this case is not a means to an end. It is the goal to be achieved.