

Interpretations of Underdevelopment in Brazil

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Subject: History of Brazil, Intellectual History Online Publication Date: Mar 2020

DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.866

Summary and Keywords

Brazil is a vast and highly complex country that is subordinated to its central hegemonic poles and that combines both backwardness, modernity, progress interrupted by unfinished cycles of growth, and extreme inequality. Paradoxically, it is on the one hand ranked among the nine most advanced capitalist countries in the world and, on the other, listed as one of the nine countries with the worst income distribution. Attempts to interpret these dilemmas, historical disjunctives, and impasses have produced a plethora of original intellectual work that deals with the specificities of this most dynamic and yet highly contradictory national space.

A select few authors have produced extensive work on the subject and have legitimized themselves as the pinnacle of classical interpreters of Brazilian social and political thought. The originality, broad scope of analysis, and ingenuity of these great national thinkers have made them the authors of choice for those seeking to better understand Brazil as a nation. Their classics have formulated key and critical questions relating to the often-interrupted construction of this nation and the truncated, material, and spiritual or immaterial development of the Brazilian civilization as a whole, which began as a former Portuguese colony founded on slave labor. These are very comprehensive formulations, with a long-term historical perspective produced by those who have taken a very profound and highly structural look at Brazil, shedding light on aspects of its hitherto-obscure or unquestioned reality, enlightening and inviting to think more coherently, boldly, and consequently about its present and, indeed, future.

Among the main contributors are the likes of Caio Prado Júnior, Celso Furtado, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and Florestan Fernandes, who have developed approaches to help unveil the nature and characteristics of the processes of dependence and underdevelopment that are so specific to Brazil's peripheral capitalism.

Keywords: Brazilian social and political thought, interpretations, Brazilian interpreters, Brazil, nation, underdevelopment, periphery, national development, dependency

Brazil's Classical Interpretations

The works of the great Brazilian classical interpreters seek to address the country's issues, under various analytical plans, and to examine multiple national problems. These prisms of observation of uniquely Brazilian social phenomena help emphasize crucial aspects of the nation's sociability and, therefore, (re)inventing Brazilian's vision of their own country while at the same time rediscovering themselves. Hence, they produce a perspective and the foundations of a narrative that attempts to explain Brazil.

The broad agenda established by these authors helps one to understand Brazil in terms of: its national identity; the recognition of Portugal's colonization in the context of European capitalism primitive accumulation; slavery; the patriarchal family; the modernization process vis-à-vis the process of marginalization; the inorganic masses; contradictory external relations versus internal relations; the processes of development and underdevelopment as well as dependence; the difficulties faced in breaking down constraints (external and with the past); the composition of classes and class fractions as well as the correlation of socio-political forces; the state; democracy; the role of the bureaucratic establishment, including the armed forces; and the role of imperialism.

The approach of these different authors varies, thus allowing for comparisons, discord, and complementary analysis.

Specialized literature in this field invariably includes among the great interpreters of Brazil the following authors: Alberto Torres (1865–1917), Azevedo Amaral (1881–1942), Oliveira Vianna (1883–1951), Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987), Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1902–1982), Caio Prado Júnior (1907–1990), Celso Furtado (1920–2004), Darcy Ribeiro (1922–1997), Florestan Fernandes (1920–1995), Ignácio Rangel (1914–1994), and Raymundo Faoro (1925–2003).

These leading interpreters of Brazil, the first and foremost intellectual ~~points of~~ reference, have delved deep into the roots of the historical process trying to uncover the meaning of the national foundation, starting with the nation's often tense or even interrupted process of development. According to these authors, Brazil originated as an exploitation colony, very different to the settler-type colonies historically adopted in the United States and Australia. Through their reconstitution of Brazil's past, these authors analyze the historical foundations that gave rise to this somewhat winding and truncated path to development, with mechanisms and structures that promoted progress but at the same time constrained it on the road to the full institution of a nation.

Despite being marked by a diversity of intellectual influences and styles and offering a tremendous methodological multiplicity, these interpreters have a common trait in that they represent a veritable intelligentsia. This includes authors who are both studious and politically active and who, each in their own way, have one common goal in mind, namely to transform Brazilian society. In other words, they are defined by their commitment to social change, whether through a break with the past or by returning to it.

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One could say then that they approach the contradictions between the universal and the local from a variety of different angles, which are therefore related, establishing comparisons between Brazil and the rest of the world and problematizing the nature of national identity.

The pioneers of the 1920s, especially the authoritarian nationalist interpreters, such as Alberto Torres, Azevedo Amaral, and Oliveira Vianna, looked at the Brazilian people and their cultural authenticity. Thus, the debate over national identity defined an entire generation of intellectuals during the 1930s. According to them, the state (authoritarian) was primarily responsible for creating the nation. Race and culture were central themes of these early interpreters, albeit most of their views were marked by deep-rooted conservatism.

From this intellectual trail blazed by these pioneers, primarily up until the 1920s, emerged the so-called “generation of the 1930s” with outstanding contributions coming from the likes of Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, and Caio Prado Júnior. They established the agenda for a reflection on and reinvention of Brazil, as well as an in-depth examination of the nature of its national identity.¹

They sought to better understand Brazil’s characteristics, imperfections, impasses, obstacles, and the potential of various unique facets of the national space. Nevertheless, they were also aware of its specificities regarding external relations and their ramifications on internal connections, or rather, the internal connections of foreign relations. They emphasized the obstacles and the difficulty faced by the country in breaking with its structural constraints (external and those linked to its past).

As already stated, these first- and second-generation authors produced controversial dialogues that involved ethnicity, race, culture, and nationality. Even if one does not share their theoretical perspectives, one can acknowledge that they did search for the meaning of the nation’s occupation and colonization by Portugal, as part of the more general process of European capitalism primitive accumulation process.

Many of these authors dealt with the impasses of a nationality hampered by limited material autonomy, a small domestic market, and the very restricted internal decision-making centers, subject to periodic outbreaks that interrupted the course and broke the continuity of national evolution. Limited sovereignty, together with the combination and coexistence of the archaic with the modern, would also be indelible marks of Brazil’s historical trajectory. The questions they asked included: in systems with such rigid structures, the fruit of such ingrained historical processes, how can one think of movement and transformation? Are there any turning points for background changes? Rather than thinking about structure and dynamics, the more critical interpreters argued that one should think about the dynamics (and movement) of structures and ask whether they would or could succeed (or not) in metamorphosing into citizenship and a nation.

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Looking at the historical process from a long-term perspective, they sought to remove contingencies and fortuitous and occasional events and pursue the essence rather than the accessory of processes, focusing on their most indelible regularities. To concentrate on the character of Brazil's formation, they found the constancy of backward forms, the core of archaic structures and remaining colonial relations, such as the monopoly of privileges, land, and power, which are aristocratic patriarchal determinations that constitute the social order of the enslaved and seigneurial society.

These interpreters also emphasized Brazil's vast interior landmass, with its subsistence activities and some activities of internal supply, dispersed over extremely varied regionalities. These different structures and urban-regional conjunctures would have difficulty advancing along a path to national unity. Different primitive accumulation processes and different regional forms of subordination, dependence, and underdevelopment would be major obstacles to the formation of true nationhood. Such geographical social formations have very nuanced temporalities and spatiality. Moreover, Prado Júnior identified cases of slavery and patriarchalism with different regional nuances. This was essentially a structural malformation, as Furtado pointed out in his definition of the process of underdevelopment.

This was a nation whose purpose was, ever since it was first colonized, to generate profits for others, as Prado Júnior put it. From the very beginning, rather than establishing itself as a project of nationhood, Brazil was conceived as nothing more than a corporation, an adventure, a business venture governed by exogenous forces. This was a colony marked by an enormous level of institutional artificiality, considered a poor reproduction of European equivalents by a large number of other authors. With regard to the adaptability or flexibility of Portugal's institutions in relation to the new colony, the different interpreters diverge considerably in their views.

Aside from the basic, stable, and brutal relationship that existed between master and slave, there were also a number of different destabilizing and dismantling forces at work, above all because of the existence of an immense mass of disintegrated and marginalized people, all immersed in precarious alternatives in their fight for survival. People and regions remained on the edges of the material system, which would configure the "inorganic masses," according to Prado Júnior.

This marginality would be added to the characteristics of a spatiality that was also distinguished by its continental extensiveness, fragmentation, itinerancy, and the concept of "forging ahead," all of which conspired against national integration and unity.

The history of Brazil is full of moments and cycles in which some autonomy is gained and then quickly and profoundly lost, but it is also one of different expressions of authoritarianism that have helped accelerate the process of conservative modernization. Various "autocratic models" of domination mark its restricted and fragile democracy. Historical recurrences have occurred with vigorous disruptions and disconnections between democracy, modernization, and social justice.

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With regard to the subject of material productive sources, it emerges that even during the process of industrialization, this was governed by the foreign and exogenous interests of major transnational business conglomerates. Brazilian history has been marked by the predominance of mercantile capital and diversified bourgeois statements that were from the very outset linked to foreign interests. The local economic elite was only a minor partner in terms of its share of global capitalism—in other words, externally weak. However, thanks to its oppression and autocratic dominance, this elite managed to be strong internally.

A high point of the analyses made by these great interpreters of Brazil is exactly their view regarding the contradictions between external and internal relations. In looking at the nature of the processes of development, underdevelopment, and dependence, they seek to bring to light the difficulties faced when trying to break with certain conditioning factors (external and those linked to the past), given the composition of the different classes and fractions of classes and the correlation of socio-political forces concentrated within the state.

This article focuses on the contributions of Prado Júnior, Furtado, Cardoso, and Fernandes, highlighting their approaches to help understand the nature and characteristics of the processes of dependence and underdevelopment of Brazil.

The Meaning of Colonization and the Nation-Building Project

A son of the elite of São Paulo, Prado Júnior was affiliated to and a militant of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCB), which directly influenced his life and work.

He always had a contradictory relationship with the Party's rigid guidelines, and even though he was a very dedicated and disciplined militant, he always polemicized and often clashed with many of the party's traditional theoretical orientations, especially those orthodox concepts the Party believed to be the right paths for the Brazilian revolution.²

The central concept of the PCB concerned the stages that the Brazilian revolution should follow, starting with a revolutionary phase of a bourgeois-democratic nature, which would face up to and overcome the dual domination of landlordism and imperialism, fighting against the feudal-imperialist collusion that controlled Brazil, in alliance with the national-developmental internal bourgeoisie.

According to the PCB, Brazil should have a national industrialist bourgeoisie that could pursue autonomous development in antagonism to the interests of US imperialism and its servile domestic agents. They also argued that there would still be some feudal remnants in the country but that these, like the landlords, could only be fought by means of a bourgeois-democratic revolution. The archaic agrarian classes and the "external enemy" that

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ensured the preservation of a semi-slave and semi-feudal society should be confronted through a revolutionary alliance between proletarians and the internal bourgeoisie.

Contrary to this theoretical view and political project, Prado Júnior denounced the fact that “the Brazilian bourgeoisie, since its constitution, has always favoured interests linked to external interests.” In other words, its historical nature has always articulated its own commercial interests to international dictates, and it has never suffered structural ruptures or ruptured its congenital colonial connections.

Among the classic and most influential interpretations of Brazil, Prado Júnior’s book *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil*, published in 1942, offers the first consistent contribution on the country’s economic and social creation, starting with a discussion about the “meaning of colonization.”³ This work launches an original interpretation of national historical development, thereby establishing a new intellectual horizon for Brazilian social thought.

The author seeks a synthesis and interpretation of a long, historical, three-hundred-year process of colonization, which for him had not yet finished at time of writing. Understanding the significance of Portugal’s colonization was essential to comprehend the contemporary Brazil of 1942, which only emerged as an independent country in 1822.

According to Prado Júnior, the synthesis of Brazil’s colonial past contained the constituent elements of nationality, which were fundamental and permanent in the evolution of the “complete and distinct social organism” that formed Brazil, despite the transformations, and not merely as “anachronistic reminiscences.” He was referring to the continuing presence of certain fundamental characteristics of the economic and social structures in Brazil in 1942, such as the lack of organization of a free labor force, the subordination of Brazil’s economy to external markets, the corresponding absence of a solidly organized internal market, and the continuity of colonial social relations.

In *The Colonial Background of Modern Brazil*, Prado Júnior reconstructs historical reality based on the commercial goals behind the colonization enacted by the Europeans. Before Brazil existed as an independent country, it was part of the territory of the Americas linked to the overseas and commercial expansion of Europe and Portugal, especially during the 15th century. Thus, in order to understand the part (colonization) one must first consider the whole (trade and overseas expansion)—that is, view the occupation and settlement of Brazil the colony as a chapter in the history of European countries.

In considering these historical conditions of the colonial enterprise, Prado Júnior distinguishes two types of colonization, influenced by the classic study of Pierre Paul Leroy-Beulieu, *De la colonisation chez les peuples modernes* (1874).⁴ He differentiates the areas of colonization in temperate zones, which are considered “settlement colonies,” from those in tropical and subtropical zones, which are described as “colonies of agrarian exploitation.”

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In the case of settlement colonies, the currents of migration to New England, primarily, sought out a new world in which to transplant their society and exercise their religious freedoms. In the areas located in tropical zones, whose geographical environment was very different to that found in Europe, settlers needed much stronger stimuli. The natural conditions of these regions allowed for the production of attractive and rare agricultural goods with a high commercial value in Europe, such as sugar and, later, tobacco, indigo, rice, and cotton. This led to an “adjustment” in the trade objectives of overseas expansion and the new conditions presented by these areas. However, according to Prado Júnior, the settlers in these areas became managers, big landowners, and entrepreneurs of profitable business ventures rather than mere workers, employing “others to work for them” instead. These workers on the farms, plantations, and large-scale agricultural plantations were either “forced” to work (deported, minors in temporary bondage in the New England colonies) or were part of a more extreme compulsory labor system, in other words, slaves. In Brazil, the employment of free labor was not even considered, largely because the lack of migratory currents in Portugal. Thus, Prado Júnior highlights Portugal’s pioneering efforts to re-establish slavery in the modern world and to control territories involved in the slave trade in Africa. In Brazil the colony, an original kind of society emerged, preserving its mercantile nature over the course of centuries of colonization.

In short, this author considers that the meaning of colonization in the tropics, and in Brazil in particular, was one “of a vast commercial enterprise” aimed at exploiting natural resources for the benefit of European trade. The occupation and settlement of the territory was organized in favor of these external objectives, to supply exports to the European market (sugar, tobacco, gold, cotton, and coffee). The essence of the creation and evolution of Brazilian society and its economy was therefore one designed “to conduct business for the white European settlers.”

According to Prado Júnior, the transition here from colony to independent nation never seems to be complete. The process is unable to engender a national economy or an inward-looking domestic structure with endogenous decision centers that could side with its people and support their needs. One is not witnessing the birth of more autonomous forms of economic, social, and political organization.

The Macroeconomic and Historical-Structuralist Interpretation of Underdevelopment

In 1959, Celso Furtado published his book *The Economic Growth of Brazil*, which is also considered one of the most important and influential interpretations of Brazil.⁵ From a historical-analytical perspective, Furtado, like Prado Júnior, reconstructed the reality of the colonial period, distinguishing settlement colonies from agricultural exploitation colonies in the context of Europe’s trade expansion. However, inspired by Keynesian macroeconomic theory, in this book Furtado sought to present a broad perspective of the formation or growth of the Brazilian economy, analyzing the “interrelationships and the chains of causality” constituted in its historical process. This book contains the essential

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elements needed to better understand the formation of underdeveloped structures, as indicated in *Furtado's Economic Growth of Brazil: The Masterpiece of Brazilian Structuralism* (2014).⁶

The political confrontations between European colonial powers and metropolis-colony relations are essential in helping to understand how Portugal's pioneering success in the commercial-agricultural enterprise, based on slave labor and the full availability of land, acted as a block to the development of structures in Brazil the colony. Thus, these factors decisively influenced the course of its development trajectory, with a number of them impeding and limiting the expansion of economic growth in more dynamic export regions and their potential to develop an internal market, based on trade relations within the scope of "constellations of economic systems" constituted within the colony.

Once the colonial period was over, Brazil emerged as an independent country in the early 19th century, but it maintained the same economic structures that had been forged over the previous three centuries. Structural changes would only come at the beginning of the 20th century, on the back of internal tensions arising from within the coffee industry, whose crisis led to the emergence of elements of an "autonomous economic system," provoking, in turn, a "shift of the dynamic center" to within the country.

In a number of his works, Furtado describes the nature of peripheral industrialization, contrasting this process with that experienced by the world's core countries.⁷ In Brazil, industrialization is marked by specialization and heterogeneity, while in developed countries it is more characterized by diversification and greater homogeneity. Furtado was a great researcher of the features and contradictions of the import substitution process, with its inescapable external restrictions and difficulties in terms of access to foreign exchange and stable and convertible currency. His contribution is crucial to any analysis of the international insertion of peripheral economies and their structural trend toward external vulnerability, subjecting them to cyclical and successive balance of payments imbalances. These economies face enormous constraints to the introduction of technical progress, to the appropriate allocation of their workforce, and to the progression to new horizons of higher social productivity and fairer distribution of income. This is even more so because these are national spaces with low levels of autonomy and control of their endogenous decision-making centers. These are economies that have been infiltrated by dominant oligopolistic entities, namely transnational corporations, which, thanks to their position as artificial entities operating in an underdeveloped environment, are freely able to concentrate power and strategic information in an asymmetrical way.

According to Furtado, Brazil's continental landmass continues to stand out as a vast area with a huge divide between what he called the degree of development and the constellation of potential resources. In his view, the country has a history of developing its productive forces and industrializing but without, however, breaking with its condition of underdevelopment.

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As a United Nations institution, ECLAC (the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) was originally conceived (as UNECLA) by Raúl Prebisch in 1948. Its goal was to debate the process of imbalanced development on the peripheries of capitalism and try to structure both thinking in this direction as well as concrete planning initiatives aimed at ending such imbalances, all within the context of the dynamic of capitalism as a global system. In this context, Brazil and Latin America managed to conceive and accumulate, over a period of more than half a century that began at the end of the 1940s, an unprecedented analytical framework. This framework has continued to grow ever since, combining a variety of aspects into an original academic heritage that is based on a critical tradition, thereby ensuring a daring and pioneering reflection that has sought to interpret the specificities of the development process as it applies to the dependent underdeveloped region on the periphery.

This independent, original, and creative perspective was decisively focused on transforming the condition of the Latin American periphery. However, it became almost invisible in academic terms, receiving none of the attention it deserved in the world of academia, and was ultimately rendered politically unfeasible, unable to bring social and political forces together to effectively implement its ideas.

At the center of the program to develop this theoretical framework was a political project based on awareness and a desire to create tools capable of generating a break with existing asymmetrical exchange inequalities, facing structural heterogeneities head-on using a deliberately autonomous construct within a fairly hostile international environment of competitive coercion (between capital and states). In other words, it sought out tools that could be applied in a singular peripheral context to the world's most populated, contrasting, and inequality-plagued geographical regions, bringing together and forcing into contradictory coexistence the most extreme disparities between backwardness and development of capitalist productive forces.

The reality is that the conservative mainstream of European and American conceptions—with their predominantly capitalist views—ignored and remained unaware of the fact that the penetration of modernizing factors into highly underdeveloped environments, in terms of social relations and productive forces, necessarily requires hybrid and sui generis structures.

The reality of dependent economies and societies, their peripheral condition, and their underdeveloped structural conformity within the general context of the evolution and reproduction of global capitalism are all very distinct.

No interpreter or author has, to this day, managed to achieve the same in-depth understanding of the underdevelopment process as Furtado.

As a pioneer of ECLAC (1949–1958) and very close to his intellectual mentor Prebisch, Furtado was the creator and first head of SUDENE (Superintendência do Desenvolvimento do Nordeste - Northeast Development Authority)—a development authority for the northeast region of Brazil (1958–1964)—and minister of planning (1962–1963). He was al-

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so a professor at various leading universities in Europe and the United States, ambassador to the European Economic Community (1985), and minister of culture (1986–1988).

In addition to his abilities as a civil servant and man of action, he also devised a historical-structural method—a broad interpretation of historically determined social processes that could help reveal the accumulation of structural backwardness. This method allowed him to comprehensively understand the specific and intricate process of underdevelopment as a structural malformation, genetically endowed with a considerable capacity for persistence, cumulativeness, and reproduction.

This methodological procedure allowed him to scientifically show the development-underdevelopment dichotomy, which is not strictly speaking a dichotomy but rather a pair, a double dialectic (of a distinct nature), since underdevelopment is not a phase or stage but rather a feature of the development process itself.

Understanding underdevelopment also involved broadening the concept of accumulation by investigating its profile and the orientation of a society's cumulative efforts.

He questioned the reasons behind certain people or nations delaying, blocking, or interrupting their (re)productive accumulation; failing to channel their social surplus adequately; and even sterilizing it. Why do some societies attain more significant degrees of social homogenization and satisfaction of their basic needs, while others promote incompatible diversification and sophistication on the demand side and reproduce mimetic ways of life? How does a society historically accumulate backwardness and deform its social structures, only dynamizing its conspicuous and ostentatious consumption and realizing technical progress on the demand side by adopting modernization in accelerated temporality, and yet remain in the hands of acculturated elites and processes induced by foreign sources?

Differently to those national spaces that were successful in achieving progress in the joint accumulation and diversification of demand, the underdeveloped favored transformations linked to the dynamism of final demand (modernization), rather than reproductive accumulation and diversification of the productive apparatus in order to meet the needs of the domestic market (industrialization).

Other authors have also analyzed these structural tendencies highlighted by Furtado of the predatory civilization that was created in Brazil, a nation severely scarred by more than three centuries of slavery and the extreme exploitation of its natural resources, with its frontiers in itinerant expansion, destructive use of land, traditions, accumulation of marginalized and destitute masses, and destabilizing pressures brought to bear across this large and varied land.

To decipher and try to break with the historical process of underdevelopment, one must analyze the specific profile of peripheral accumulation in its essence. This process must first be understood if one is to try to redirect the country's accumulation effort, seeking to broaden the margin of discretion over its destiny.

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For Furtado, any move forward with this kind of structural transformation would necessarily imply breaking up established interests and seeking out new socio-political support from the state, ensuring that it arbitrate and coordinate conflicting interests and thus creating a path to development that could legitimize more forceful and ostensive confrontation with the problems of regional and social inequalities and the condition of insecurity and privation experienced by the majority of the population.

Explaining how to see development as a historical process, with open-ended trajectories and the fruit of decisions “whose effects are manifested at the level of so-called structures,” Furtado’s greatest challenge was to approximate and interweave the theories of accumulation, social stratification, and power. He also warned that one should consider the structural matrix (the archaic power-base structures of property: the land-ownership system, real-estate property, and indeed new constraints, such as control over intellectual property). Addressing such systems of domination would require building social homogenization; empowering the population; and giving it access to land, quality goods, and public services. It would be fundamental to make changes to the land-ownership structure and to people’s access to knowledge, which would help boost Brazil’s cultural heritage and dismantle the mechanisms generating insecurity and social marginality typical of underdeveloped, peripheral, and dependent capitalist formations.

Analysis of Concrete Situations of Dependency

Through the publication of their book *Dependency and Development in Latin America* in 1969, Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto sought to depict the process of dependency as a practical and theoretical problem.⁸

They attempted to shift the primary determination of external dependency to endogenous articulation, one that is internally introjected and backed by supportive interests from within national society. They sought to emphasize the structural and global relations that connect the peripheral situation to the center or core. According to these authors, external relationships (imperialism) and internal relations (nation) should be mediated by the process of struggles between the classes, and they attempted to understand them through the connections that exist between the peripheral economies and the central hegemonic poles.

For Cardoso and Faletto, previous theories, such as those put forward by ECLAC, were lacking in social and political determinations: “In spite of their critical nature, ECLAC economic theories and critiques were not based on an analysis of the social process, they did not draw our attention to imperialist relationships between countries, and they did not take into account asymmetric relations between classes.”⁹

Thus, dependency should not be interpreted as a mere reflection of decisions made abroad. There are contradictory rather than exclusive or antagonistic relations between autonomy and heteronomy and between development, industrialization, and dependency.

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There are also external constraints and constraints in the form of structural linkages that limit the possibilities for action, and additionally, there are certain articulations and alliances that are driven by internal social forces at work. In this sense, the limits to development are much more political than economic or material.

Nevertheless, in the context of relatively backward economies, political action and power games have made it possible to have dynamic industrial economies, even in dependent societies.

There are still dynamics in the dependency situation. This is especially true when the foundations of dependency are redefined, and the articulations between the industrialized peripheral national economy and the hegemonic centers are transformed, which leads the domestic market and foreign direct investment to be established as a dynamic impetus for national development. According to these authors, the internationalization of the domestic market becomes the primary form of the contemporary situation of dependency. This is a form of dependency under monopolistic industrial capitalism, with characteristics that are very different from the basic conditions that are typical of underdevelopment.

In their analysis of the nature and new characteristics of dependency relations, Cardoso and Faletto highlight the new type of link with the outside that is internally coordinated when the economy achieves a high level of internationalization by examining the internal systems of alliances and decision-making.

The nation and the national scale, relative to the global scale, are now seen as the political centers of the concrete action of conflicting interests and social forces. In this sense, their system of alliances allows them to expand their scope for maneuver in order to boost development and, at the same time, ensure that their ties of dependency are at the heart of any framework of analysis targeted at such situations of dependency.

Thus, these authors include the centrality of the political domain in their approach. They do not propose to suggest a theory of dependency but rather to argue in favor of carrying out concrete analyses of situations of dependency. That is, rather than putting forward a theory, they argue instead for developing a school of dependency, a method for analyzing real-life cases where one looks at the mode, or the specific form assumed by the insertion of industrialized peripheral countries in the context of global capitalism.

The way they compose, overlap, and combine interests and constraints should be at the heart of any such analysis.¹⁰

Even without ignoring past forms of domination inherent in the condition of dependency, coincidences of interests can occur between the internal and external ruling classes.

Cardoso and Faletto argue that “The specificity of the present condition of dependency is, in part that internal interests are rooted increasingly in the sector that produces for the domestic market and thus that they are united in political alliances that are supported by urban populations. The formation of an industrial economy at the periphery of the capital-

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ist system . . . incorporates not only the dominant classes but also social groups tied to modern capitalist production, such as wage earners, technicians, entrepreneurs, and bureaucrats.”¹¹

At the same time, there are constraints to the establishment of more autonomous decision-making centers, and there is a possibility of interdependence and a dynamic of international insertion. The evolution of industrial productive forces can advance, depending on the correlation of political forces. Therefore, any analysis of situations of dependency should consider the dual structural and conjunctural determination of internal and external factors.

Since the internationalization of domestic market conditions has been consolidated, the most salient feature of the Latin American situation should be one of dependency rather than underdevelopment.

Social Class Dynamics and Heteronomy in an Underdeveloped and Imperialized Capitalism

Over the course of his fruitful intellectual career, Florestan Fernandes managed to make great progress in unraveling Brazil the nation. Like the majority of the nation’s great thinkers, he chose to focus on the specificities of the racial ethnicity of Brazilian society.

Fernandes was a pioneer in seeking to develop scientific and engaged sociology, firstly in relation to the indigenous question, and then to the racial issue. He considered the latter as being a national issue, discussing the problem of colored people within a class-based society and placing them in the broader context of a society that maintains an elitist standard that is characteristic of stratificational domination. This ultimately creates structural barriers to the advancement of democracy in Brazil.

He sought out the origins of this situation by looking at the collapse of the slave-master regime, the system of patriarchal domination, and the formation of a class-based society in Brazil.

He showed the perversity of racial inequality and the impoverishment and marginalization of the colored population throughout the historical process, a process that denied former black slaves a full integration into the competitive social order that conformed.

He argued against the myth of racial democracy, hegemonic within the debate at the time he was developing his empirical research, and helped dismantle the myth that interracial distinctions do not exist in Brazil. He demonstrated that the “black issue” is not merely a “social issue.” It is both racial and social. It is linked to the techniques of domination of one class over another, to discrimination, and to the maintenance of privileges. This helps concentrate wealth and prestige and consolidate forms of domination, oppression, and repression that are primarily autocratic and ultra-conservative and ensure the crystallization of archaic Brazilian social structures. In his view, “Democracy will only become a re-

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ality when there is, de facto, racial equality in Brazil and the coloured person no longer suffers any kind of discrimination, prejudice, stigmatization or segregation, either in terms of class or race. For this reason, the class struggle, for those of colour, must go hand in hand with the racial struggle itself."¹²

Like Prado Júnior, Fernandes discussed and opposed certain conservative theories, such as those put forward by Alberto Torres and Oliveira Vianna, and those of the Brazilian Communist Party, which advocated the existence of feudal real estate holdings politically linked to imperialism. Instead, he called for a democratic alliance to be established with the national bourgeoisie to transform Brazil.

He made progress like no other interpreter in depicting the development of capitalism in Brazil, from its political emancipation to the colonial metropole (Brazil's Independence in 1822).¹³ He also showed the historical evolution of the particular way in which the Brazilian bourgeoisie acts under the influence of capitalism, which is dependent on its peculiar pattern of power and domination. His understanding of heteronomy/dependency as an explanation for the process of underdevelopment was decisive and very original. Another original point of his analysis involved his thorough examination of the dual articulation between national and foreign and between old and new, an articulation that was also analyzed by other authors, such as Ignacio Rangel.¹⁴

Fernandes looked at the internal and external articulations of the Brazilian bourgeois classes and their strategies of domination. In spatial-geographical terms, his scalar sophistication was excellent, combining the transformations of the world scale coherently and cohesively with the dynamics of the dependent national scale.

In order to better understand how Brazil's dependent capitalism functions, Fernandes avoided separating or isolating or using as his unit of analysis the national scale or the territorial-national state. On the contrary, he inserted these more dynamically into the broader, evolutionary, and expansive context of world capitalism, seeking to reveal its peculiar forms, methods, and ways of differentiated integration on this more massive scale.¹⁵ Rather than consider state in relation to state, he considered instead social classes in relation to social classes in different kinds of capitalism.

Differently to all the other great interpreters, Fernandes looked in great depth at the nature, structure, and dynamics of the concrete forms of domination in Brazil's class-based society. He attempted to unveil the workings of an economy that is simply unable to advance in terms of self-sustained and more autonomous development. According to him, the country is marked by heteronomy and dependency (cultural, ideological, moral, economic, and political). Therefore, one must necessarily analyze the way in which underdeveloped and imperialized countries are subordinated to the introjection of hegemonic values and subjectivities.

The peculiarity of Brazilian history lies in its oligarchic rural aristocracy, formed during the slave, patriarchal, and seigneurial regime, which gave rise to the local bourgeoisie. This class has always sought outward engagement and external integration, with no com-

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mitment to building any kind of endogenous coherence of national integration. Furthermore, this bourgeoisie has never sought to put together or launch, in any consistent manner, any kind of national development project targeted inward that might be fairer and more inclusive of the majority of the population, or indeed, be more democratic.

On the contrary, the over-exploitation or exacerbated extraction of domestic surplus and wealth destined for worldwide circulation demands autocratic domination, exercised through a combination of violent ideology and repression.

Its lagging nature, structural subordination, and visceral subservience are all hallmarks of integration with Western civilization and its hegemonic center. In 1969, Fernandes had already stated that the new phase of domination was already at that time marked by corporate or monopolistic capitalism, which consolidated its power of command through financial mechanisms, in association with minor and local partners. This phase was marked by the greater sophistication of external domination from within, which penetrated all aspects of social life, reinforcing the heteronomous position of the underdeveloped satellite economy.

Finally, and similarly to Prado Júnior, Fernandes stated that formal political emancipation (which occurred after 1822) did not break but rather redefined colonial ties. The construction of the independent national state occurred without any kind of significant metamorphosis in the socioeconomic structure, and within a strict regime of castes and lordly estates that had marked the creation of Brazil.

Discussion of the Literature

There is a vast and ever-increasing amount of specialized literature on the great Brazilian interpreters. More recently, thanks to the profound economic and political-institutional crisis that Brazil has suffered, the primary issues dealt with by these interpreters—defining the country and suggesting possible routes it might take in the future—have returned to the fore with a vengeance, in the form of a bold scientific agenda that can be characterized by its amplitude and in-depth and current nature.

This agenda pervades all the problems of the incomplete nation, one that is permanently under construction and often interrupted. Recent literature has returned to the debate over Brazil's historical structural inheritances and impasses. These have included colonization, the role of Portugal and slavery, the country's formation and consolidation, the decline of the patriarchal family and the patriarchal society, the oligarchic and large-scale landowners, the process of modernization, independence, unity, heterogeneity, and the diversity of a nation under construction.

Since the end of the 20th century, a profusion of new studies has come out with a renewed approach to Brazil's social, economic, and political formation, refocusing attention back to its classics.¹⁶

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Two important contributions to the understanding of Brazil's colonial past were produced by Fernando Antônio Novais and Luiz Felipe de Alencastro. According to Novais, Brazil the colony was a perfect example of how the colonial system operated.¹⁷ With regard to the creation of mega-profits through trading monopolies, the adjustment to the more general sense of European capitalism's primitive accumulation occurred through the right to direct exclusivity to exploit certain sectors on the part of the Portuguese crown itself (e.g., Brazilwood and salt) and the mercantile class of the metropole (sugar), as well as exclusivity in transportation (ships and trade ports). Thus, the slave trade in Africa solved both the problem of the regular supply of labor and ensured the generation of mega-profits by opening up a new and highly profitable trade front. The idea of opening up an important and extensive trading front on a supernational scale, creating a market and a heavy flow of slaves and goods between Brazil and Africa, constituting Brazil within the context of the South Atlantic, was brilliantly discussed by de Alencastro.¹⁸ He argued that Brazil's colonial past had been confused with the history of the Brazilian colonial territory. Nevertheless, any investigation of the labor question suggests that one should turn their attention to Africa and place the colonial spatial matrix firmly in the South Atlantic.

A broad variety of different scientific works, meanwhile, showed that the structural changes in Brazil on a national scale only came about at the beginning of the 20th century with the emergence of domestic tensions relating to the coffee economy.¹⁹ The crisis in this industry led to the emergence of elements of an "autonomous economic system," provoking the "displacement of the dynamic centre" to within the country. The internal market was developed by a regional integrating process and led the economic expansion in Brazil during a significant part of the 20th century.²⁰

With the evolution of the industrialization process (1930–1980) came the constitution of an economic system, although the peripheral-underdeveloped nation revealed itself to have limited autonomy and a fragile control of its endogenous decision-making centers. This dependency was mainly caused by the dominance of the Brazilian economy by oligopolistic units, more specifically, the transnational companies.²¹

Plínio de Arruda Sampaio Júnior produced some vital research based on the following questions posed by Furtado: How can national experiences, engendered by the European expansion process, gather, conserve, and crystallize so many elements of backwardness in terms of their structures and relations?²² And how were they able to generate such enormous "incompatibilities" and slumps, that is, dissonant movements that only got worse over time, recurrent divergences of three crucial processes: capital accumulation, increased productivity, and changes in consumption patterns?

Maria da Conceição Tavares carried out an excellent analysis of the peripheral condition and underdevelopment process.²³ In her work, she saw the peripheral situation as a process marked by structural malformation; as a combination of structures in truncated movement; and as the result of the accumulation of delays, anachronisms, and structural obstacles over the course of the history of world capitalism. Thus, an interpretation of the distinct characteristics of the center-periphery relations system and the specific nature of

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the links established with entities abroad, primarily through domestically subordinated entities, was duly revealed. Over the course of the different cycles of accumulation and legitimation or regulation, the reproduction (always on the back of renewed foundations) of the properties of concrete asymmetric relations is maintained between the center and the peripheries, which operate in accordance with a structural logic over time. This leads to unequal and heterogeneous structures that reproduce in the most varied of dimensions: economic, political, cultural, and so on.²⁴

One important point within the debate over these interpreters concerns the existence and the accumulation of a huge mass of disintegrated and marginalized people.²⁵

Another point deals with the investigation of what the peculiarities of the state might be, and what their specific forms of action might be.²⁶ Contemporary research has been carried out on the exogenous and contextual determinations that emanate from the hegemonic imperial supranational states in a global context of insertion into the interstate systems in dispute.²⁷ The works on this topic have been able to analyze the wealth of the different national trajectories (within specific processes of accumulation, regulation, domination, alienation, and legitimation), without incurring any methodological nationalism.

Finally, it is worth mentioning an avenue of possibilities for reflection on Brazil in the 21st century that has been explored since the works of Fernandes.²⁸ In analyzing Brazilian history from a long-term perspective, this author saw only cyclical changes taking place, which had limited or no impact on transforming existing structures. This permanence or recurrence thus had, simultaneously, the appearance of an archaization of the modern and the modernization of the archaic and outdated. What never changed were the extra privileges of the endowed classes, the super-exclusion and the expropriation of the elites, the depletion of Brazil's natural resources, and the need to ensure that full democracy should never be achieved.

Primary Sources

There are a number of important repositories and extensive collections of materials specifically dedicated to the study of different interpretations of Brazil the nation. Most of the archives related to the Brazilian interpreters are well organized and accessible. A lot of these have not been published or scanned, but they can be physically accessed and consulted at the institutions where they are stored. Various specialized academic institutions also offer online access to information relating to each specific interpreter:

Coleção Brasileira USP

Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros

Biblioteca Virtual do Pensamento Social (BVPS)/Fiocruz

Centro Internacional Celso Furtado de Políticas para o Desenvolvimento

Casa Oliveira Vianna

Links to Digital Material

Brazil's Interpreters.

Archives Sergio Buarque de Holanda

Personal Archives of Florestan Fernandes

Gilberto Freyre Foundation

Lineages of Brazilian Political Thought

The Sequences of a Brazilian Political Sociology.

Special Issue, *Revista da USP*, "Intérpretes do Brasil: Anos 30."

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Ricupero, Bernardo. *Sete lições sobre as interpretações do Brasil*. São Paulo: Alameda, 2011.

Sampaio Júnior, Plínio de Arruda. *Entre a nação e a barbárie: Os dilemas do capitalismo dependente*. Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1999.

Notes:

(1.) This occurred with the publication of the masterpieces of Gilberto Freyre, *Casa-grande e senzala: Formação da família brasileira sob o regime da economia patriarcal* (Rio de Janeiro: Global, 2000; originally published 1933); Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*, Edição Crítica (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2016; originally published 1936); and Caio Prado Júnior, *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo: Colônia* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1987; originally published 1942). It is also worth mentioning the publication of Caio Prado Júnior, *Evolução política do Brasil: Colônia e império* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1983; originally published 1933).

(2.) These arguments are better summarized in Caio Prado Júnior, *A Revolução Brasileira* (São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1977; originally published 1966).

(3.) Caio Prado Júnior, *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo: Colônia* [The colonial background of modern Brazil] (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018; originally published 1942).

(4.) Pierre Paul Leroy-Beulieu, *De la colonization chez les Peuples modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin Et Cie, Libraires, 1874)

(5.) Celso Furtado, *Formação econômica do Brasil* [The economic growth of Brazil], Edição Comemorativa dos 50 anos (São Paulo: Companhia da Letras, 2009; originally published 1959).

(6.) Ricardo Bielschowsky, "Furtado's Economic Growth of Brazil: The Masterpiece of Brazilian Structuralism," *International Journal of Political Economy* 43 (2014): 44-62.

(7.) Celso Furtado, *Desenvolvimento e subdesenvolvimento* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Internacional Celso Furtado/Contraponto, 2009; originally published 1966); and Celso Furtado, *Essencial Celso Furtado* (São Paulo: Penguin Classics/Companhia das Letras, 2013).

(8.) Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Developmentt in Latin America* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1979)

(9.) Cardoso and Faletto, , *Dependency and Developmentt in Latin America*, 8.

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(10.) “the particular dynamics of dependent societies, which derive precisely from the modes of relationship between the classes and the forms of appropriation and distribution of power that are established in each of the structural modalities of dependence.” Cardoso and Faletto, *Dependency and Developmentt in Latin America*, 175.

(11.) Cardoso and Faletto, *Dependency and Developmentt in Latin America*, 175.

(12.) Florestan Fernandes, *Meaning of the Black Protest* (São Paulo: Cortez, 1989), 24.

(13.) Florestan Fernandes, *A revolução burguesa no Brasil: Ensaio de interpretação sociológica* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1987).

(14.) See Ignacio Rangel, *Dualidade básica da economia brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora MEC, 1957).

(15.) Miriam Limoeiro Cardoso, “Florestan Fernandes: A criação de uma problemática,” *Estudos Avançados* 26 (1996): 89–128.

(16.) Sérgio Miceli, ed., *O que ler nas ciências sociais brasileiras (1970–1995)* (São Paulo: Sumaré, 2002); Plínio de Arruda Sampaio Júnior, *Entre a nação e a barbárie: Os dilemas do capitalismo dependente* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1999); Luiz Bernardo Pericás and Lincoln Secco, eds., *Intérpretes do Brasil: Clássicos, rebeldes e renegados* (São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014); and Bernardo Ricupero, *Sete lições sobre as interpretações do Brasil* (São Paulo: Alameda, 2011).

(17.) Fernando A. Novais, *Aproximações: Estudos de história e historiografia* (São Paulo: Cosacnaify, 2005).

(18.) Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, *The Trade in the Living: The Formation of Brazil in the South Atlantic, Sixteenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2018).

(19.) Sérgio Silva, *Expansão cafeeira e origens da indústria no Brasil (1881 –1930)* (São Paulo: Alfa-Ômega, 1978); João Manuel Cardoso de Mello, *O capitalismo tardio: Contribuição à revisão crítica da formação e do desenvolvimento da economia brasileira* (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1982); and see also Emília Viotti da Costa, *Da senzala à colônia* (São Paulo: Editora da Unesp, 1998).

(20.) Wilson Cano, *Raízes da concentração industrial em São Paulo* (São Paulo: T. A. Queiroz, 1975).

(21.) Ricardo Bielschowsky, *ECLAC Thinking: Selected Texts (1948– 1998)* (Santiago do Chile: CEPAL, 2017).

(22.) de Arruda Sampaio Júnior, *Entre a nação e a barbárie*.

(23.) Maria da Conceição Tavares, *Acumulação de capital e industrialização no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: IE/UFRJ, 1974); and Maria da Conceição Tavares, “Império, território e din-

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heiro,” in Maria da Conceição Tavares: vida, ideias, teorias e políticas, ed. Hildete Pereira de Melo (São Paulo: Expressão Popular/Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2019, 261-306).

(24.) It’s important to highlight the results of studies that are frequently debated in the International Celso Furtado Center for Development Policies Research.

(25.) This topic has been advanced from the seminal work of Maria Sylvia de Carvalho Franco, *Homens livres na ordem escravocrata* (São Paulo: Kairós, 1983); and Laura de Mello e Souza, *Desclassificados do ouro: A pobreza mineira no século XVIII* (Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1982). See also João Manuel Cardoso de Mello and Fernando Antonio Novais, *Capitalismo tardio e sociabilidade moderna* (São Paulo: Unesp, 2009).

(26.) Sonia Draibe, *Rumos e metamorfoses: Um estudo sobre a constituição do Estado e as alternativas da industrialização no Brasil (1930 -1960)* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985); and Luciano Martins, *Estado capitalista e burocracia no Brasil pós-64* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1985).

(27.) José Luís Fiori, *História, estratégia e desenvolvimento: Para uma geopolítica do capitalismo* (São Paulo: Boitempo, 2014); and José Luís Fiori, *O voo da coruja: Para reler o desenvolvimento brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2003).

(28.) Maria Ângela D’Incao, ed., *O saber militante* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1986); Miriam Limoeiro Cardoso, *Para uma história da sociologia no Brasil: A obra sociológica de Florestan Fernandes; Algumas questões preliminares* (São Paulo: Instituto de Estudos Avançados/USP, 1994); and Octavio Ianni, ed., *Florestan Fernandes: Sociologia crítica e militante* (São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2004).

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