

## **US - the democracy that fell behind**

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*Folha de S. Paulo*, November 5, 2012

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Tomorrow is election day in the United States. I hope Obama is re-elected, because he was a good president, and because he is a much better candidate for the American people than his opponent. But, surprisingly, this outcome is not guaranteed.

Why surprisingly? Because Mitt Romney is the perfect representative of the conservative and neoliberal political regime that dominated the United States and, from that country, most of the world since the late 1970s, except for the fast-growing Asian countries.

Between 1979 and 2008, Capitalism's 30 Neoliberal Years were a period of radical policies and economic reforms that reduced growth rates in comparison with the previous 30 Golden Years, increased inequalities and multiplied financial crises, which ended up in the global crisis of 2008 and in the Long Recession still experienced today by the rich countries. Mitt Romney is clearly and directly associated to all this: he is the candidate of the rent-seekers and financiers who prevailed during that period.

How is it possible, then, that the American people is blind to all this? How is it possible that the polls are still undefined? There are many explanations, but in this brief space I will limit myself to the one that I think is the most important: American democracy fell behind, and today it is a second-rate democracy compared with the other rich countries, and does not make a good impression in comparison with Brazilian democracy.

Am I exaggerating? After all, the United States has always presented itself and has always been regarded as the example of democracy for the rest of the world. And in the past, indeed it was. But since the postwar period, European democracies progressed and became superior. And since the 1980s Brazilian democracy also advanced and, despite all its problems, probably presents today a better quality than the American one.

American democracy is presently dominated by money. Electoral campaigns are astronomically expensive. Here, although we do not yet have public campaign financing as Europeans do, campaigns are cheaper thanks particularly to free television and radio time. Here the people is already able to think ideologically, as we saw in the last electoral campaigns, and, particularly, as it was recently demonstrated in the first round of local elections in São Paulo. An ideologically empty candidate was ahead in polls during the whole campaign, but in the last week there was a turnaround, and the two candidates that made sense, representing the left and the right, got ahead.

The better the people is able to vote, the better the democracy. When the people vote in terms of programs and in terms of the candidates' personal qualities. In tomorrow's elections, president Obama represents an assurance of good government for the vast majority of the voters – for the poor and for the middle class. But these latter are being fooled by arguments such as, for instance, that the country's problems result from Obama's help to the banks at the height of the crisis, at the expense of the poor who pay taxes. When absurd arguments such as these flourish, it is a sign that voters are confused, and that democracy is weak. I hope that my words would be less true tomorrow.