Saudi Arabia's heavy hand

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Enriched by oil, the fundamentalist dictatorship became the biggest ally of the West

Since the end of World War II, the history of the Middle East is a history of tragedies, whose main protagonists have usually been an Islamism in search of a mythical Caliphate and the three imperial powers: Great Britain and France, which were then forced to grant independence to the countries under their dominance, and the United States, the new imperial power. Their imperialism was no longer formal, but continued to exist. And the world from then on was divided between good and evil – between subjugated people and those who insist on keeping their autonomy and are therefore enemies, "threats to democracy".

The three countries are rich, have already achieved their industrial and capitalist revolution long ago and are therefore sound democracies. Therefore, they declare to be the guardians of democracy, and accuse unsubmissive countries of being authoritarian. Which is usually true, because these are relatively poorly developed countries, where there are no conditions for a sound democracy.

Their imperialism is particularly violent in the Middle East, where Iran and Syria are the representatives of evil, whereas much more authoritarian countries (the Persian Gulf monarchies headed by Saudi Arabia) are friends, allies, side with the forces of good.

This is a well-known setting. The news is the active role that Saudi Arabia is playing. Enriched by oil, this fundamentalist dictatorship, in which the disrespect for human rights, including women's rights, is incomparably greater than in Iran or Syria, became the West's main ally, its armed wing.

Even before the three powers decided to intervene in Libya, Saudi Arabia was financing the revolution. Today, the main sponsor of the rebellion in Syria is Saudi Arabia, a country where there are more than thirty thousand political prisoners. Without Saudi Arabia, Syria's dictatorial but secularist government would have already ended a civil war that has already killed more than one hundred thousand people. A civil war in the name of what? Of democracy, the rebels say. But if this was true, Saudi Arabia would not support them.

Today Egypt experiences a tragedy. Its people conducted a democratic revolution a year ago, but the elected government was unable to respond to the economic and political crisis in which the country is plunged, and was relatively authoritarian, which took the people back to the streets. Mistakenly this time, because the result was a military coup, political chaos, and the murder of more than a thousand members of the Muslim Brotherhood who protested against the coup.

As in Syria, the military coup in Egypt enjoys the embarrassed support of the three powers, and the decisive support of Saudi Arabia. When, a year ago, a rebellion broke out in Bahrain against its dictatorial regime, it was Saudi Arabia that prevented the rebellion from winning.

In Brazil and, more broadly, in democratic countries, we find it difficult to criticize the three powers, because they are democracies, whereas their enemies are usually authoritarian regimes. But the role played by Saudi Arabia in the Middle East dispels this doubt. In the Middle East, the West is not fighting for democracy; it is simply fighting for its power and for the submission of those who think they need national autonomy to achieve their industrial and capitalist revolution and someday achieve democracy.