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State sovereignty under siege? Sustainable development and transnational capital in the Brazilian Amazon

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Supervisor: Dr. S. Valdivia Rivera
Second reader: Dr. C.L. Williams

Jeroen van der Heide
MA – International Relations: Global Order in Historical Perspective
s1785028@vuw.leidenuniv.nl
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Introduction

In their book, *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal*, Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin (2020) name deforestation as "the [second] most significant force to drive climate change", after the burning of fossil fuels (p. 26). Trees are some of the most important absorbers of CO2 from the Earth's atmosphere, making their felling an important accelerator of the release of CO2 gas, the main driver of global climate change (Chomsky & Pollin, 2020). The imperative for continued deforestation, Chomsky and Pollin (2020) contend, stems from the desire for profit, which can mainly be generated from deforested areas through corporate farming of crash crops and through cattle grazing. These industries are highly profitable and integrated into global food and commodity markets, leading to a worldwide growing impulse for the expansion of these industries and thus for further deforestation.

The Brazilian Amazon is one of the major locations for deforestation in the world (BBC, 2020). From August 2019 to July 2020, a total of 11.088 square kilometres of rainforest were destroyed in Brazil, mainly for the benefit of agricultural development (BBC, 2020). This number has especially grown since the inauguration of President Bolsonaro, who has encouraged agriculture and mining activities in the Amazon, leading to the highest Amazonian deforestation rates in twelve years (BBC, 2020). These deforestation practices have led to environmentalist outcries within the international community. In 2019, this caused a clash between French President Macron and President Bolsonaro, with Macron condemning Bolsonaro's environmental record and Bolsonaro lashing back with a denouncement of France's 'lamentable colonialist stance' on the extraordinarily destructive 2019 Amazonian wildfires (Phillips, 2019). The confrontation between the two presidents is symptomatic of the discursive opposition that Bolsonaro has attempted to create in order to protect Brazilian sovereignty from the alleged neocolonial and neo-imperial tendencies emanating from formerly imperial countries from the Global North.

The back-and-forth of accusations of environmental destruction and neocolonial tendencies raises questions about both the nature of Global North involvement in the Brazilian Amazon, and the state of Brazilian sovereignty. These questions are especially poignant when we consider how our 'postcolonial' globalising world, characterised by the increasing interwovenness of states and the rise of transnational capitalism, raises questions about what constitutes state sovereignty.

This ties in with the ongoing debate of the value of the concept of state sovereignty in contemporary international relations. Through a case study of the development of the Brazilian Amazon, this paper aims to shed light on both the neocolonial dimensions of foreign involvement in the rainforest and on the evolution of Brazilian sovereignty from a postcolonial angle. In so doing, this paper intends to answer the question: How has the development of Brazilian state sovereignty affected the sustainable development of the Amazon under the Bolsonaro administration?

This paper primarily consists of literature research. Literature from the Leiden University Catalogue, the University of Amsterdam Catalogue, the Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation and openly available literature was used as secondary sources. News articles from both Brazilian and international media outlets were used as primary sources for this paper.

This paper is divided into three chapters. The first chapter will outline the theoretical framework, presenting postcolonial international relations (IR) theory, state sovereignty, transnational capital and sustainable development. These concepts are instrumental to a study of the Brazilian Amazon, as they will help to explain both historical and contemporary developments in the governance of the rainforest. The second chapter will trace the historical development of the Brazilian Amazon and Brazil's sovereignty under the influence of growing transnational capitalism and the sustainable development regime. This historical reiteration will help understand the evolution of contemporary Brazilian sovereignty and Amazonian development, providing a historical basis for the third chapter. This final chapter will analyse the influence of transnational capital on contemporary Brazilian politics under the Bolsonaro administration, as well as consider President Bolsonaro's rhetoric on sustainability and the consequences of both of these factors for Brazilian sovereignty. The paper will close with important conclusions about the contemporary state of Brazilian sovereignty, as well as reflections on what the outcomes mean for the concept within the postcolonial framework.

Chapter 1 – Postcolonialism, sovereignty and sustainable development

In order to properly discuss the role and interests of each actor in Amazonian politics, it is important to define several concepts that will be used for the later analyses. For this research, it is pertinent to use the postcolonial international relations theory as an overarching framework to discuss how different actors are of influence on Brazilian domestic politics. Moreover, it is relevant to define three key concepts that are central components of the theorisation in this research. These concepts are state sovereignty, transnational capital, and sustainable development.

Postcolonial IR theory

To begin, the academic discipline of international relations has contentious roots. As Gruffydd Jones (2006) elaborates, the discipline finds its origins in post-WW1 Europe, when European imperial powers were at their apogee. Considering their own endeavours as the superior method to organise the world, imperial powers mounted the discipline of IR to effectuate "an expansion of European or Western international society" (Gruffydd Jones, 2006, p. 7). In line with this narrative, IR has long posited that ""the rest of the world" has benefited and continues to benefit from the spread of the Global North's [civilising] values and institutions, through development, [modernisation], state building, foreign assistance, and the construction and maintenance of international order and security" (Gruffydd Jones, 2006, p. 7). This has consequently led to the Eurocentric belief that imperial nations (in Europe as well as North America) were only rightfully taking their place at the top of international hierarchy, dismissing other cultures, traditions, science and philosophy as mere "folklore, myths, and shamanism" (Grovogui, 2013, p. 247). Postcolonial IR theory actively opposes this Eurocentric mode of thinking, attempts to break apart the Western-centric nature of IR, and offer a footing to build the discipline back up in a manner that is inclusive and representative of the world as a whole. Postcolonial IR proposes a number of claims in order to reconstruct IR theory inclusively. For the purpose of this paper, two are of particular relevance.

Firstly, postcolonialism assumes that colonialism, neocolonialism, imperialism and neo-imperialism are central forces in the ongoing creation of the world order as it

exists today (Persaud & Sajed, 2018). Moreover, it is these forces that have given birth to the conceptual differentiation between countries that now belong to the 'Third World', which has been created as a conceptual world region (Persaud & Sajed, 2018). This is affirmed by Nash (2003), who contends that "Third Worldism" creates a schism between the advanced capitalist West and the impoverished countries of the 'Third World' (p. 95). It is this distinction that postcolonial IR theory rejects, but also, in a way, asserts. In the first place, postcolonialism wants to break away from Eurocentric notions of community, society and morality stemming from European imperialism and colonialism (Grovogui, 2013, p. 248). In the second place, however, postcolonialism aims to insert into IR theory the ideas emerging from formerly marginalised minds in what we now know as the Global South (Grovogui, 2013; Nash, 2003). Through both a rejection of established Western ideas and an affirmation of ideas originating from formerly disparaged regions in the world, postcolonialism seeks to broaden the pool of ideas within the field in a way that is ubiquitously inclusive (Grovogui, 2013; Gruffydd Jones, 2006).

The second important claim of postcolonialist IR theory is that powerful Euro-centred or Global North actors in the world system are actively "[defending] the status quo both at the level of the international, and in societies where Eurocentric politics, culture and ideologies dominate" (Persaud & Sajed, 2018, p. 2). This proposition is underwritten by Gruffydd Jones (2006), who contends that IR has long sanitized and wilfully ignored its relationship to European imperialism. This disregard for the implications of colonialist behaviour and the defence of imperialist status quos can be concretised in the form of neocolonialism. As Halperin (2020) defines, neocolonialism is "the control of less-developed countries by developed countries through indirect means" (para. 1). This continuance of control over former colonies is often effectuated through "transnational corporations and global and multilateral institutions [combined] to perpetuate colonial forms of exploitation of developing countries" (Halperin, 2020, para. 1). It can thus be said that these corporations and institutions contribute to the maintenance of the aforementioned status quo constructed by (formerly) imperial powers. This theorisation on the role of international corporations and institutions will figure authoritatively throughout the present research, as light will be shed on how transnational capitalist interests affect decision-making in Brazil. This ties in perfectly with the theorisation on state sovereignty and transnational capital formulated below.

State sovereignty in postcolonial IR theory

Kurtulus (2005) underlines that sovereignty remains "an all-pervading and important feature of world politics" (p.1). This notion is strongly tied to Eurocentric ideas of how to order the world, which are contested by postcolonial IR theory. State sovereignty, however, is such an all-pervading notion within the field that even critical theories cannot dismiss its importance and have to consider the concept's centrality in their rationales. This does not take away from the postcolonial proposition that Eurocentric ideological tools, such as racism and sexism, figure in the creation of the world order (Persaud & Sajed, 2018). The concept of state sovereignty can also be strongly associated with these ideologies. Below, this chapter will discuss the definition of sovereignty that has long been the most pervasive in the study of IR. This definition will then be criticised and ensued by a definition that fits in with the postcolonial framework that this paper pursues.

The most widely accepted definition of state sovereignty can be found in the first article of the Montevideo Convention on Rights and Duties of States (Shaw, 2003, p. 178). This definition is the following: "The State as a person of international law should possess the following qualifications: *(a)* a permanent population; *(b)* a defined territory; *(c)* government; and *(d)* capacity to enter into relations with the other States" (League of Nations, 1936, p. 25). Important to add to this is the consensus that "internal" and "international" (or external) sovereignty of states is to be respected (Jennings, 2002, p. 32). Essentially, this means that states are expected to mutually respect decisions regarding the internal affairs of a state and its government's behaviour towards its constituents, as well as the external affairs that pertain to a state's relations with other governments (Jennings, 2002). This is also known as the non-interference principle.

This definition of state sovereignty has been subject to erosion (Coe, 2019; Kurtulus, 2005). The increase of globalisation and the advance of neocolonial tendencies in our time have definitely obscured where the internal affairs of a state end and where international, or external, affairs begin. Especially within the African and Latin American contexts, continuous 'exceptions' to the integrity of the sovereignty of states gave way to a narrower conception of what 'sovereignty' meant (Coe, 2019). "Over time, multilateral interference practices carried out in the name of human rights, democracy and security gained legitimacy" (Coe, 2019, p. 94). Kurtulus (2005), however, makes a valid point in saying that the ubiquity of the notion of state

sovereignty in IR research makes it imperative to give it consideration, regardless of its (growing) weakness.

An example of the obscurity of state sovereignty can be found with the emergence of the human rights ideal. As Sikkink (1993) argues, the evolution of the defence of human rights has changed sovereignty through legitimisation of intervention that ignored non-interference principles. Consequently, this has led to a change in the conceptualisation of sovereignty, which shifted more towards the protection of populations (Sikkink, 1993). This modified understanding of sovereignty has also come to include other forms of protection of populations, such as ensuring safe environmental circumstances and the protection of minorities (Sikkink, 1993). Because of this new conceptualisation, "the basic rights of individuals are not the exclusive domain of the state but are a legitimate concern of the international community" (Sikkink, 1993, p. 441). This has led to a weakening of the non-intervention principle of sovereignty.

To continue, the established notion of state sovereignty will now be critiqued. Two clashing conceptions of sovereignty can be identified, with one definition taking more liberties on the absoluteness of non-intervention, and the other underlining the importance of exactly this characteristic of sovereignty. The redefinition of sovereignty that Sikkink (1993) writes on triggered a countermovement in states that have become subject to human rights-inspired intervention. As Acharya (2011) argues, formerly marginalised Global South actors may perceive humanitarian intervention as an infringement on their more classical conception of sovereignty. This violation can then be interpreted as great power 'hypocrisy', where hegemonic states violate the norms or "standards of civilisations" they codified into the international normative system themselves (Acharya, 2011, p. 99). Such hypocrisy gives way to what Acharya (2011) calls 'norm subsidiarity', which is defined as "a process whereby local actors create rules with a view to preserve their autonomy from dominance, neglect, violation, or abuse by more powerful central actors" (p. 97). Subsequently, norm subsidiarity is used by Global South actors to support and strengthen the classical norm of state sovereignty, reaffirming the non-intervention principle and using it to protect their integrity, independence and self-determination (Acharya, 2011). This collective protection of values from norm violations by hegemonic states, then, is an expression of norm subsidiarity, where non-hegemonic states assert and attempt to rediffuse a notion that purportedly is no longer prevalent within international relations (Acharya,

2011). Through the concerted affirmation of a norm that hegemons have deemed obsolete, Global South actors try to reinsert sovereignty, and more importantly non-intervention, into the international normative system (Acharya, 2011).

With knowledge of the debates about sovereignty in mind, it is important to consider how the concept should be defined within the postcolonial framework. In short, postcolonial IR posits that powerful states often legitimise interference in the affairs of weaker states through discourses that claim to help the latter states to achieve full sovereignty themselves. As postcolonialism is critical of the Westernised, state-centric nature of IR, it is relevant to explore further a more deconstructed and dynamic definition of sovereignty that is applicable in combination with the critical dimension that postcolonialism offers for this research. Therefore, this paper will make use of the concepts of negative and positive sovereignty put forward by Jackson (1991). Jackson (1991) extends Isaiah Berlin's ideas of negative and positive liberty of individuals to include sovereignty. This way, a spectrum of sovereignty is created, the ends of which can be defined as 'sovereignty from' (negative) and 'sovereign' (positive) (Mutaqin, 2017).

Firstly, negative sovereignty is "[freedom from] interference and therefore supposes individual self-determination" (Jackson, 1991, p. 27). Included here is the notion that states have both outward and inward responsibility; external responsibility as not to violate the sovereignty of other states, and internal responsibility to protect the sovereignty or liberty of their population (Jackson, 1991). Negative sovereignty is conferred upon states (or sometimes, populations) by international society, and has primarily figured in decolonisation (Jackson, 1991; Mutaqin, 2017). Often, states that have obtained negative sovereignty have received it by virtue of postcolonial international legislation, rather than on the basis of being self-sufficient and in possession of effective governance structures (Mutaqin, 2017). This has provided states with a form of sovereignty that cannot guarantee the protection of their populations against deliberate harm, negligence or incompetence of governments (Jackson, 1991). Negative sovereignty, thus, is a somewhat ambiguous concept that stands in stark contrast to positive sovereignty (Jackson, 1991; Mutaqin, 2017).

Positive sovereignty, then, "presupposes capabilities which enable governments to be their own masters … A positively sovereign government is one which not only enjoys rights of non-intervention and other international immunities but also possesses the wherewithal to provide political goods for its citizens" (Jackson, 1991, p.

29). Consequently, positive sovereignty becomes a political attribute to apply agency both domestically and internationally (Jackson, 1991). Moreover, positive sovereignty is not conferred but rather asserted by governments by means of resources and populations (Jackson, 1991). This does, however, not mean that materially more powerful states are more capable of asserting positive sovereignty (Jackson, 1991). "Rather, it is a question of being a state in [organised] domestic reality and not merely by international law" (Jackson, 1991, p. 30). Positive sovereignty has also come to be used as a legitimisation of intervention in states that possess negative sovereignty through the human rights ideal outlined by Sikkink (1993).

As Jackson (1991) contends, the new postcolonial regime extends independence to weaker states to build these states' capacity to govern themselves and provide for their populations. In addition, international aid and intervention are justified on the grounds that this given independence is necessary but not sufficient to help states assert their autonomy (Jackson, 1991). This justification is part of the liberal perspective on the protection of human rights, for which international society is held responsible (Tesón, 2001). Humanitarian intervention is morally justifiable in cases where governments seriously violate or are unable to protect their populations' human rights (Tesón, 2001). Consequently, violations of (negative) sovereignty are rationalised under the banner of the protection of human rights (Tesón, 2001). From a postcolonial perspective, however, it is important to be wary of how the positive norms and activities associated with humanitarian aid and intervention are used to infringe upon the negative sovereignty of states. This is affirmed by Jackson (1991), who contends that the gap between states possessing positive sovereignty and states possessing negative sovereignty has become a means to legitimise violations of negative sovereignty in order to 'help' states achieve a condition in which positive sovereignty becomes achievable. Notwithstanding the positive outcomes of humanitarian aid and intervention, postcolonialism demands a degree of vigilance regarding the legitimacy of aid and intervention activities, to make sure that they are not motivated by a desire to maintain the imperial status quo through continuous violations of state sovereignty.

Transnational capital

Transnational capital is a relatively new phenomenon within the global political economy. In a nutshell, transnational capital involves the foreign direct investment

(FDI) of states, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) or large transnational corporations in the economies of target countries (Babic et al., 2020). This practice has especially taken flight in our age of neoliberal hyper-globalisation, with giant international firms buying large overseas corporations (Veltmeyer, 2016). As a part of the neoliberal hegemonic system, transnational capital has become a tool for the newly emerging 'transnational capitalist class' to extend their influence worldwide (Sklair, 2002). Transnational corporations as well as state investors form an important part of this new international class and have come to play an increasingly important role in international, regional and domestic politics (Sklair, 2002). The goals of transnational capitalist investments are manifold, but when it comes to state actors, two main strategies are identified. Firstly, state actors of transnational capital can pursue a financial strategy which is aimed at maximising profits from the sectors that have been invested in (Babic et al., 2020). Secondly, actors can choose to pursue a control strategy, where states seek to acquire majority stakes in transnationally invested companies (Babic et al., 2020).

When it comes to non-state actors of transnational capital, the most common referents are transnational corporations that are not actively affiliated to states (anymore). Such companies, more often than not, pursue financial interests that are comparable to the financial strategy of transnational state capital. An example of this is the presence of the Royal Dutch Shell in Nigeria, where the oil company capitalised on large portions of the country's national oil reserves (Hennchen, 2015). Such extractivist activities often form the cornerstone of transnational capitalist investment in Global South countries (López & Vertiz, 2015).

Interestingly, the actors of transnational capital more often than not originate in countries that are located in the Global North. As Yeyati, Panizza & Stein (2007) argue, the most prominent 'source areas' for FDI flows to developing countries are located in the United States, Europe and Japan. Strikingly, these Global North countries also have histories of imperial advances, and they are currently the most important players in the Global North-led world order. These factors lead us to look beyond the financial interests of these actors to perhaps identify a neocolonial dimension of these actors' FDI strategies. This is also in line with Halperin's (2020) theorisation of neo-colonial perpetuation of control through transnational corporations and institutions, cited before.

In order to identify the nature of the influence of transnational capital on domestic politics, we look to the work of Leonard (1980), who proposes a framework

of analysis for the influence of multinational corporations (MNCs) in developing countries based on three key dimensions: the historical dimension, the level of a country's development and the dimension of domestic politics. Firstly, the political force of a MNC is dependent on the historical context (Leonard, 1980). Leonard (1980) shows that (geo)political developments greatly influence the actions and power of MNCs, and should therefore be taken into consideration when analysing these actors. Moreover, Leonard (1980) already recognised the growing significance of MNCs as political actors worldwide in the 1980s, and this is certainly even more relevant today. Secondly, Leonard (1980) puts forward the level of a country's development as a dimension of analysis for MNCs. This dimension includes a country's "levels of learning, economic stability, economic diversity, and technical capability that can alter a developing country's ability to counter undesirable influences or activities on the part of multinational corporations" (Leonard, 1980, p. 482). This dimension is more diverse amongst developing countries as it is less dependent on geopolitical developments (Leonard, 1980). Ultimately, this dimension determines the willingness and ability of a developing country to take control of its authority over MNCs. Thirdly and lastly, domestic politics are of importance when analysing MNCs (Leonard, 1980). A state's behaviour towards MNCs is mostly determined by domestic politics (Leonard, 1980). These politics, in turn, are often defined by the wants, needs and motivations of different elite groups (Leonard, 1980). The study of these groups' shaping power on domestic politics is imperative, as is an analysis of the dynamics between these players (Leonard, 1980). This way, the position of countries towards MNCs can be clarified, and insight can be generated into how restricted or free MNCs are in their influence on domestic politics in these states.

Through combining these three dimensions of analysis, it becomes possible to analyse the implications of transnational capital for Brazil. As transnational capital is most often embodied by MNCs, be they state-owned or not, this framework allows for a thorough analysis of how financially motivated actors influence Brazilian domestic decision-making in the country. When combined with postcolonial IR theory, the framework can help identify if and how differing international financial interests are part of a scheme of perpetuation of neocolonial tendencies.

Sustainable development

To start with the words of Kuokkanen (2004): "The doctrine of sustainable development represents contextual justice which seeks to coordinate, reconcile and optimise long-term environmental concerns and short-term economic interests" (p. 341). This definition adequately underlines the financial dimension of sustainable development, which is especially important for this research in light of the transnational capitalist interests outlined above. As Kuokkanen (2004) argues, sustainable development has gained ground after the publication of the Brundtland report in 1987, which forms an important cornerstone of environmental and developmental thinking. The report, called *Our Common Future*, has yielded four primary dimensions of sustainability, which are identified by Holden, Linnerud and Bannister (2014) as "safeguarding long-term ecological sustainability, satisfying basic human needs, and promoting intragenerational and intergenerational equity" (p. 131). Ultimately, the Brundtland report set in motion a trend of theorisation on sustainable development, culminating in what we now know as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. The mission statement associated with these goals is "A blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all by 2030" (UN, n.d.). More concretely, the goals aim to unify the eradication of global social problems, such as hunger and poverty, with conservation of the environment and with continued economic development all around the globe (UN, 2017).

The realisation of these goals, however, is not without its problems. As Bratman (2019 argues in her book *Governing the rainforest*, sustainable development of the Brazilian Amazon, or anywhere else for that matter, demands the unification of three developmental dimensions (economic growth, ecological health and social equity) that are, in her view, incompatible. Nonetheless, sustainable development discourses continue to offer an important framework for 'conscious' decision-making (Bratman, 2019). Bratman (2019) points out that the fallacies of the doctrine primarily lay within the vagueness of the concept. Much like the concept of state sovereignty, sustainable development has been subject to interpretation and reinterpretation, leading to a multiplicity of definitions which permit the idea to proliferate unconstrainedly (Bratman, 2019). Nonetheless, the concept has proliferated as a policy frame and as a doctrine of international development agendas, of which the Sustainable Development Goals are a prime example (Bratman, 2019).

The fluidity of the concept makes it imperative to consider the activities that take place under the banner of 'sustainable development'. A case in point is Abelvik-Lawson's (2014) analysis of Brazilian economic development policy in the Amazon and Mozambique, which pursues sustainable development in name, but which also has resulted in human rights violations at home and abroad. This is an example of the duality of the sustainable development principle, which on the one hand is morally considered to be inherently good, but on the other hand has become instrumentalised as a justification of certain human costs of neoliberal economic development (Abelvik-Lawson, 2014). Looking at the theorisation on sovereignty, it becomes important to consider whether sustainable development has become a feature of discourses that seek to legitimate violations of negative sovereignty.

Together, the theories and concepts described above enable us to inquire into the actors that influence domestic politics in the Brazilian Amazon. The overarching framework of postcolonialism permits an investigation of the position of Brazil in an 'ex-colonial' world, and the concept of state sovereignty allows for an analysis of both the state of Brazilian sovereignty and the state of the concept of sovereignty itself. Lastly, the concepts of transnational capital and sustainable development will aid to understand what motivates actors to get involved in domestic governance of the Amazon rainforest.

Chapter 2 - Development of Brazilian state 'sovereignty' & the Brazilian Amazon (1820-2021)

Through the concepts outlined in chapter one, this chapter traces historical and recent developments of Amazonian politics in Brazil. In doing so, this chapter will give an overview of how the contemporary political landscape of Brazil has come into place. This chapter will be structured similarly to the previous one, along the concepts of sovereignty, transnational capital and sustainable development. Using these concepts, the development of Brazilian sovereignty will be traced throughout history, and the influences of both transnational capital and sustainable development on this sovereignty will be exposed.

Brazilian sovereignty & regionalism in Latin America

To begin, the Brazilian development of sovereignty needs to be understood in the wider context of the evolution of the new republics in postcolonial Latin America. In the early 1820s, continuous wars of independence against the Spanish crown and increasing tensions between the Brazilian colony and the Portuguese metropole ultimately led to the independence of all Latin American states (Williamson, 1992). Nonetheless, whereas the former Hispanic colonies acceded to total independence from European monarchy, Brazil became a constitutional monarchy under the reign of Dom Pedro, son of the king of Portugal (Williamson, 1992). Dom Pedro played an important role in the Brazilian accession to independence; in 1822, under pressure from his Chief Minister, Dom Pedro rejected the Portuguese crown and proclaimed Brazilian independence (Williamson, 1992). At first, Portugal was reluctant to recognise Brazilian independence, but under pressure from the British, who extended recognition in return for the Brazilian abolishment of slavery and to diminish the influence of the US in the hemisphere, Portugal caved (Manchester, 1951; Williamson, 1992). The significant role of Portugal and Great Britain in Brazil's accession to independence is an example of how great power interests shaped global politics, especially in colonial relations. To continue, this first recognition of the Brazilian state, especially by its former coloniser Portugal, is a first instance of attribution of negative sovereignty to Brazil. Through acknowledgement of such negative sovereignty, Portugal formally accepted Brazil's freedom from interference and the country's right

to self-determination. Brazilian postcolonial sovereignty was thus established for the first time in history.

Paired with the independence of the other new Latin American states, this recognition brought Brazil into the Westphalian state system, and forced Spain and Portugal to relinquish "pre-Westphalian forms of divided sovereignty like the protectorate" (Strang, 1996, p. 24). However, despite the official abandonment of such colonial governance structures, the threat of continued European intervention and meddling did not wane (De Almeida, 2013). Continued Iberian interest in the region, British economic hegemony over the entire continent and the fast-paced rise of the US inspired cooperative Latin American efforts to reinvigorate the Westphalian principle, particularly the respect for national sovereignty (De Almeida, 2013). To this end, Argentine foreign minister Luis María Drago in 1902 invoked the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, which informally barred European states from interfering anywhere in the Western hemisphere, including the US (De Almeida, 2013; Scarfi, 2016). This doctrine, conceived by Pan-American politicians and intellectuals, was initially intended as a safeguard of the non-intervention principle against European powers, but would later become instrumental for unilateral interventionism in Latin America by the US, thus developing into a legitimisation tool for violations of negative sovereignty (Scarfi, 2016). This renewed danger of US interventionism unified Latin American states, which in unison demanded an official affirmation from the US that the principle of non-interference would be respected (De Almeida, 2013). This way, Latin American nations sought to guard their sovereignty, although the US never officially complied with the demands (De Almeida, 2013).

Brazil took the middle ground in international discussions about sovereignty and non-interference. Where most Hispanic countries strongly defended the Drago-Monroe principle of absolute non-interference, Lusophone Brazil was more inclined to stay neutral on the question, with in mind its ambitions for regional hegemony together with the US (De Almeida, 2013). Still, Brazil was wary of the hegemonic great power status of the US and invoked the principle of absolute sovereign equality of states to balance out the conventions on rights and duties of states (De Almeida, 2013). This invocation shows Brazilian insecurity regarding its state sovereignty, which it saw in need of protection through the Drago-Monroe principle. In light of continued interventions by the US in the early 1900s, such as in Cuba and the Philippines, the growing perception of US interventions as being (neo-)imperialist caused the non-

intervention principle to gain clout in Latin American states (Couso, 2010). Together with other Latin American nations, Brazil tried to moderate US interventionism through a renewed "Monroe Doctrine along the lines of Pan-Americanism, multilateralism, and non-intervention" (Scarfi, 2016, p. 192). This affirmation demonstrates that Latin American states (and thus Brazil) recognised that their sovereignty was weak and in peril, prompting a process of norm subsidiarity in which the non-interference principle received renewed importance in order to render Latin American sovereignties more defensible. The process of norm subsidiarity was especially driven by the great power hypocrisy demonstrated by the US through its continued interventions and disregard for the non-interference principle it had defended before.

In the post-war Western hemisphere, US hegemony became unavoidable and "justified new concerns for the preservation of national sovereignty of Latin American states," further proving Latin American sovereignty insecurities (De Almeida, 2013, p. 479). The emergence of military regimes in Latin America was symptomatic of this trend (De Almeida, 2013). Despite collective regional fears of US interventionism, increased regionalism on the continent encountered resistance. Whereas European integrative efforts demanded renouncement of national sovereignty, Latin American states proved not to be open to giving up sovereignty in favour of regional cooperation (De Almeida, 2013). This changed incrementally with the introduction of the human rights regime in the 1970s and 1980s. As has been shown before, the understanding that the protection of human rights is an affair of the international community rather than of the state has changed the international community's thinking about sovereignty as being absolute (Sikkink, 1993). In the Latin American context, this shift is demonstrated by the examples of Argentina and Mexico put forward by Sikkink (1993). In these countries, the international human rights network exposed severe human rights violations, leading to international outcry that, in turn, mounted external pressures on the Mexican and Argentine governments which would eventually ameliorate their human rights practices (Sikkink, 1993). The rise of the global human rights movement thus gained momentum in Latin America, changing understandings of national sovereignty under global pressures.

In the 1980s, a consensus was reached among Latin American states that democracy could not flourish without occasional resort to intervention (Coe, 2019). This meant that conceptions of state sovereignty thus were recognised not to be as

absolute as they had been before. Before democracy was brought back in 1985, Brazilian thinking on sovereignty was mainly informed by the pragmatism of the military regime and the country's powerful position in the region (Santiso, 2003). After its democratisation, the ideal of spreading democracy far and wide also lived in Brazil, but increasingly proved incompatible with the country's attachment to the principles of sovereignty and non-interference (Santiso, 2003). This incompatibility is further demonstrated by the 1988 Constitution, "which identifies the promotion and protection of democracy and human rights as an essential element of Brazil's foreign policy" (Santiso, 2003, p. 344). These incongruences in Brazilian foreign policy show a shift in the status of Brazilian state sovereignty, which had arguably become more consolidated now that immediate fears of extracontinental hegemony had waned.

Brazilian attitudes have shifted even further towards a belief in legitimacy of intervention throughout the 2000s. Brazil became increasingly active in humanitarian intervention, bringing its national attitudes towards national sovereignty and non-intervention in a "flux" (Spektor, 2012, p. 54). In 2004, Brazil even partook in an enormous peacekeeping effort after the Haitian coup d'état (Spektor, 2012). This shows not only that Brazilian beliefs in absolute non-intervention had weakened, but also that Brazil felt adequately strengthened in its sovereignty to actively engage with the sovereignty of other states. This exemplifies that Brazil had gone from being a state with negative sovereignty, accorded by European colonial powers and later the US through simple non-intervention, to being a nation possessing positive sovereignty, able to apply its agency internationally to promote its interests. Using a rationale of Brazil's consolidating role in regional stability "oriented by the principle of non-intervention, but also by an attitude of 'non-indifference'", the country legitimated its interventionism under the banner of the protection of human rights (Spektor, 2012, p. 57).

The assertion of positive sovereignty by Brazil seems to be strengthened even further by the country's growing importance in world affairs. For instance, Brazil had a key role in the formulation of important contemporary human rights principles, such as the responsibility to protect (R2P) (Stuenkel & Tourinho, 2014). This principle claims that states are responsible for the protection of their populations, and where states are incapable of providing such protection or are threatening to actively harm their population, the international community assumes responsibility for the population's protection. In formulating this principle, Brazil remained an important

advocate for state sovereignty, but it would also demonstrate that its belief in the absoluteness of sovereignty had eroded (Stuenkel & Tourinho, 2014). This became expressively clear through President Rousseff's discourse on military intervention in R2P, which she claimed should be subject to strict regulations rather than outrightly condemned (Spektor, 2012). These discourses relate to Brazil's experience of its own sovereignty, as a discontinuation of its advocacy for absolute non-interference illustrates a diminishing need for the defence of sovereignty principles. Having become a state possessing positive sovereignty, the change in power status may have brought Brazil up to a point where it now considers its sovereignty to be safeguarded, thus no longer needing the fervent protection that it demonstrated before. Indirectly, then, Brazil seems to assert its positive sovereignty through increasingly projecting its newfound power outward, rather than investing this power in continued protection of its sovereignty, which it considers well-founded.

Brazilian state sovereignty, thus, seems to be strongly established nowadays. The country has arguably shifted from being a postcolonial state with negative sovereignty towards a truly independent state with positive sovereignty, which is substantiated by the country's outward policies of interventionism. Brazilian discourse on its role as a stabilising factor in regional affairs further affirms the country's confidence in its sovereignty. The true state of Brazilian sovereignty, however, is arguably more complicated. A further analysis of the contemporary condition of Brazilian state sovereignty will take place in the next chapter, taking into consideration the influence of transnational capitalist interests and sustainable development ideas.

Transnational capital in Brazil

Transnational capital in Brazil has a short but vivid history. Already after the Second World War, Brazil was an important recipient of FDI (Da Silva e Silva, 2018). The foreign interest in investing in the country, however, rose sharply throughout the 1990s (Da Silva e Silva, 2018; Egan, 2015; Lana, Moura & Falaster, 2019; OECD, 1998). Among other reasons, this was because of Brazil's participation in setting up Mercosul in 1991, a free trade agreement between Brazil and several of its neighbouring countries (Lana, Moura & Falaster, 2019). Moreover, this development was further strengthened by Brazil's ongoing shift towards a more liberal market system after its democratisation, as well as an opening of state-reserved activities to foreign actors in 1995 (Da Silva e Silva, 2018; Egan, 2015; OECD, 1998). This latter development led to

an increase in domestic companies being transferred to foreign capital, and the Brazilian service sector was observed to become increasingly denationalised (Da Silva e Silva, 2018; Lana, Moura & Falaster, 2019). Interestingly, all these developments led to an increase in Brazilian production but were not conducive to a growth of Brazilian exports (Da Silva e Silva, 2018). Rather, the new production outputs entered domestic Brazilian markets, demonstrating the market-seeking orientation of FDI in Brazil (Da Silva e Silva, 2018; Egan, 2015). Even though this form of FDI cannot be considered intrinsically positive or negative, Egan (2015) observes that market-seeking FDI is less likely to "lead to developmental outcomes in the host economy" (p. 157). Moreover, Brazil, as well as the Latin American continent as a whole, are observed to not have moved "beyond resource-based and other traditional forms of investment" (Egan, 2015, p. 157). In the case of Brazil, this was curious, as the country's infrastructure and relatively well-educated population should have been conducive to improved forms of investment (Egan, 2015).

Brazilian domestic politics caused the country's ineffective control of FDIs, explaining the lack of more complex FDI methods. Even though Brazil's economic climate was stimulative, the country's largely passive and non-discriminating stance towards FDI in the 1990s hampered the attraction of more complex FDI methods (Egan, 2015). Because the country long did not distinguish adequately between different types of incoming FDI, due to its new attitude of neoliberalism and openness towards international markets, Brazil was not selective as to which FDIs were beneficial to its economy and which were not (Egan, 2015). Considering Brazilian sovereignty, this development was to some extent logical. Paired with its growing advocacy for international interventionism throughout the 1990s, it was no longer defensible for Brazil to pursue discriminatory policy based on the sovereignty narratives in which Brazil itself no longer seemed to believe. Eventually, though, more discriminating policies to attract higher-quality FDI gained ground, especially at the end of the Cardoso administration and during the first Lula administration (Egan, 2015). The preceding indifference, however, had already put Brazil at an economic disadvantage (Egan, 2015). Despite this disadvantage, the installation of new laws and agencies by the Lula administration promoted export by both domestic and multinational firms throughout the 2000s (Egan, 2015). Yet, these efforts were hampered by the multiplicity of investment promotion actors, such as the Brazilian ministry of foreign affairs (Itamaraty), as well as the Association for the Promotion of

Exports (APEX), which caused a lack of coordination in Brazilian efforts to attract investments (Egan, 2015). Moreover, these different actors demonstrated a degree of territoriality in their attitudes towards FDI, rather than seeking compromise and working together (Egan, 2015). These problems show how FDI in Brazil relates to the other two dimensions of MNC investment described by Leonard (1980). Firstly, it shows how Brazil's level of development was influential on the country's management of FDI inflows; as has been shown above, Brazil has not been effective in countering undesirable influence (in this case: low-quality, market-seeking FDI) and was unable to effectively enforce its authority over the incoming FDI because of its lack of agency. Secondly, the influence of domestic politics and elites on decision-making on FDI is demonstrated by the multiplicity of actors and agencies exhibiting territoriality in their attitudes towards attracting FDI, which can be argued to be primarily self-interested (Egan, 2015).

Transnational capital in the Amazon

When looking at the history of transnational capital in the Amazon rainforest, several phases of extractivist activity are identified by Rivero and Cooney Seisdedos (2010), in an extensive overview of transnational capitalist interests in the Brazilian part of the rainforest. Firstly, the 16th-17th century Portuguese colonisation of Brazil brought with it the extraction of spices from the rainforest (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). Then, the rubber boom happened around the turn of the 20th century, and an increase of transnational capitalist demand could be observed, owing to the overseas demand for Brazilian rubber (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). Later, the Amazon became the scene for development projects related to mining, cattle and lumber with the advent of the military dictatorship in the 1960s (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). These projects, in turn, set the stage for the Amazon to become a 'frontier of capitalist accumulation', with the integration of the Amazon into the world market as a goal (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). In 1966, *Operação Amazônia* was launched by the military government (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). This operation was mainly aimed to set up Amazonian *latifundios*, or megafarms, ran by domestic or international capitalists (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). Statistics on ownership and on Amazonian *latifundios* are largely unavailable due to inconsistencies in governmental bureaucratic administration (Dillman, 1976). This obscures our analysis of the true dimensions of international involvement in Amazonian capital development.

Nonetheless, the diverse domestic and international ownership of *latifundios* does demonstrate the difficulty in differentiating between domestic and foreign capital interests in the Amazon, obstructing an analysis of the difference between such interests in relation to Brazil's sovereignty.

From the end of the 1980s onwards, the Brazilian cattle and soy industries were intensified throughout the Amazon (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). Both products are strongly integrated in global markets, leading to an export-driven engagement with the global economy steered by MNCs (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). Most of these MNCs were originally in Brazilian hands, but large parts of the soybean industry were bought by global food-processing and agribusiness giants, such as Bunge, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), Cargill, and Dreyfus (Rivero & Cooney Seisdedos, 2010). Even though other transnational companies such as the AMAGGI group and the JBS/Friboi corporation remain in Brazilian possession, the increasingly international ownership of Brazil's agricultural and food-processing sector shows that Brazil's neoliberal strategies towards transnational capital have led to a growing interwovenness with global markets and transnational capital (Flynn, 2007). This integration, Flynn (2007) argues, was structurally motivated by the interests of the Brazilian elite, whose desire to accede to the transnational capitalist class shaped the country's policy on international capital and FDI. Domestic institutions and companies were used to consolidate the accession of Brazilian elites into the transnational capitalist class (Flynn, 2007). These tendencies show that "[global] and domestic class relations have shaped Brazil's foreign policy strategy" (Flynn, 2007, p. 23).

When taking into consideration Brazilian sovereignty, two observations can be made. Firstly, Brazil has initially taken control of its domestic industries, demonstrating that it has developed the necessary capacities and economic stability to counter foreign influences from taking control of its markets and asserting sovereignty over its economy. This shows that Brazil possesses at least some degree of positive sovereignty, and that the country is able to harness this sovereignty for the protection of its public goods. Secondly and contrarily, the behaviour of Brazil's elite seems counterintuitive when it comes to Brazilian sovereignty. The sale of large parts of Brazilian domestic agribusiness to MNCs by Brazil's elite in favour of its accession to the transnational capitalist class can be seen as a crippling factor to Brazil's sovereignty, as such sales purposefully weaken Brazil's competitive position in global soy and cattle markets, and thus Brazil's economic power. Finally, it can be maintained

that for Brazilian elites, the desire for ascension to powerful positions amongst the transnational capitalist class trumps the sense of duty of these Brazilian leaders to provide political wherewithal and care for the country's citizens.

Sustainable development in the Amazon

With the increasing exploitation of the Amazon rainforest by the token of both domestic economic development and transnational capitalist impulse, sustainability concerns also began to rise. Brazilian concerns about growing international interest in the Amazon rose as Western world leaders continued to make discursive claims to shared global ownership of the rainforest's resources throughout the 1980s and 1990s, using discourses of environmental preservation (Bratman, 2019). Fears of the Amazon's 'internationalisation' instilled anxiety in Brazilians, which was further exacerbated during the military regime (Bratman, 2019). Such concerns persist into the present day (Bratman, 2019).

Apart from these concerns of international involvement in Amazonian governance, Brazil did install environmental protection policies throughout the 1980s, even though development would remain focused on economic goals (Bratman, 2019). This legislation was in line with the definition of sustainable development put forward by Kuokkanen (2004), as it sought to "make social economic development compatible with the preservation of the quality of the environment and the ecological balance (…) aiming at its rational use and permanent availability" (Brazilian Federal Law, as cited in Bratman, 2019). With Brazil's transition to democracy in 1988, the new constitution even contained a whole chapter on environmental issues (Bratman, 2019). In 1989, the *Nossa Natureza* policy was approved, which had a nationalist character in taking control of the Amazon, claiming "Amazonia is ours, even to destroy" (Allen, 2006 as cited in Bratman, 2019). This policy clearly defends Brazilian sovereignty and displays the strength of this sovereignty, demonstrating the country's confidence in the face of new international interests in its territory and resources. Despite the ambiguous discourse surrounding *Nossa Natureza*, the policy did address some environmental concerns and instigated the creation of new national parks (Bratman, 2019).

A very important actor in the acceleration of Brazilian thinking on sustainable development was Chico Mendes, a Brazilian rubber tapper activist from the state of Acre (Bratman, 2019; Schwartzman, 2018). Mendes and his movement started representing their interests in Brazilian politics in the 1970s, organising the First

National Rubber Tappers' Congress in Brasília in May 1985 (Bratman, 2019; Schwartzman, 2018). Over time, the movement grew to be representative of the struggle against deforestation, which was ultimately acknowledged to be a larger issue than just one of the rubber tappers (Bratman, 2019). The news of Mendes' murder in 1988 reverberated around the world, and Mendes became a martyr for the continued loss of rainforest in Brazil (Bratman, 2019). Ongoing funding for Amazonian highway projects ceased, and the impending Brazilian *Nossa Natureza* policy was put into question internationally, as wariness about the protection of populations and lands in Brazil grew (Bratman, 2019). Combined international and domestic lobbies pushed for a rethinking of the way in which the Amazon should be sustainably developed (Bratman, 2019).

Throughout the 2000s, the Brazilian government became growingly active in promoting sustainable development schemes internationally (Fagundes Visentini & Reis da Silva, 2010). The country sought to strike a balance between exploitation of natural resources and the defence of the environment, aiming to become an 'environmental power' in international forums and debates (Fagundes Visentini & Reis da Silva, 2010). Interestingly, however, the Lula administration was also a fervent supporter of the Belo Monte dam construction, exposing what Abelvik-Lawson (2014) calls 'internal colonialism' in the Brazilian Amazon, where large indigenous populations are endangered or displaced in favour of large-scale industrialisation of the rainforest. This shows how capitalist interests continued to trump environmentalism and human rights in Brazil.

Brazilian environmentalism took a hit during the Rousseff presidency. Changes to the country's Forest Code are described as another step in the progressive weakening of environmental laws, a process that started under the Lula administration (Hurwitz, 2012). Neoliberal convictions of economic growth and desires for capital accumulation of the Brazilian transnational capitalist class showed once again to be more important than environmental protection, and the Rousseff administration stimulated exploitation of Brazilian lands by extractive industries (Hurwitz, 2012). These processes were heavily influenced by Brazil's 'rural caucus', agribusiness lobby officials who hold important sway over Brazilian policy and decision-making (Kröger, 2017). This lobby became especially powerful during the second Rousseff presidency, where Kátia Abreu, a notorious member of the caucus, became Minister of Agriculture (Kröger, 2017). Through this appointment, the Rousseff administration's

environmental trajectory started to break harshly with the Brazilian tradition of environmental pioneering of the 1980s and 1990s (Hurwitz, 2012; Kröger, 2017). An example of this is the administration's work on the circumnavigation of environmental protections of land in order to build multiple dams on Brazilian rivers, a project that would severely damage protected regions by flooding (Hurwitz, 2012). Moreover, the influence of the agribusiness lobby was felt in Congress, where it pushed for changes to Brazil's Forest Code as well as for the installation of further detrimental environmental legislation with 27% of the Congress' seats (Hurwitz, 2012).

After the 2016 impeachment of Rousseff, the Temer and Bolsonaro administrations have continued to promote 'agrarian extractivism', which is characterised as a form of agricultural expansion without sectoral links that is controlled by an oligopoly, environmentally destructive, and does not lead to any type of industrial development, nor contribute to inclusive rural development (Soyer & Barbosa Jr, 2020). This shows the continued and growing influence of agribusiness interests in Brazilian politics, even on the highest levels. The Bolsonaro administration's position on agriculture is described as 'total extractivism', defined as a global imperative of the capitalist economy, which unfolds through the use of violence, attacks on rural social movements, the paralysis of institutions and agrarian reform and an ultimate impossibility of food sovereignty (Soyer & Barbosa Jr, 2020). The evident disregard for human rights and environmental protection is thus shown to prevail in policymaking by the Bolsonaro administration. Arguably, these policies expose once again the duality of Brazilian sovereignty: on the one hand, the Bolsonaro administration's experience of Brazilian sovereignty is strong enough to pursue the destruction of the rainforest through discourses of radical territorial sovereignty. On the other hand, however, the administration's disregard for human rights and its blunt refusal to provide its Amazonian population with political wherewithal shows a lack of respect for Brazil's positive sovereignty, ruled by the elite's ambitions for capital gain and accession to the transnational capitalist class. The ambiguity of President Bolsonaro's stance on Brazil's sovereignty shows the problems of Brazilian sovereignty, which seems to have weakened over the past decade.

Chapter 3 – Bolsonaro's Brazil, transnational capital & the convergence of elites

Building on the theoretical framework and the historical reiteration of the previous chapters, this chapter will take into consideration the influence of transnational capital on contemporary Brazilian politics. Thereafter, the chapter will shed light on Brazil's contemporary attitude towards its Amazon, while taking into consideration the discourse and position of the Bolsonaro administration on the rainforest and examining the effects of the rise of the rural caucus. The chapter closes with a brief reflection on Bolsonaro's response to recent international pressures for reducing deforestation in the Amazon.

Transnational capital in Brazil & transnational capitalist elites

As has been demonstrated, transnational capital in Brazil used to rely greatly on extractive industries, such as mining and lumbering. More recently, however, the economic landscape has shifted towards more renewable and sustainable products, of which the soybean and livestock industries remain the most important (Zissou et al., 2020). In 2017, the most-exported Brazilian products were soybean complex (processed soybeans) and meat, accounting for US$13,4 billion, and US$2,4 billion of Brazilian exports respectively (Zissou et al., 2020). These industries thrived on the neoliberal policies instigated by the Cardoso administration, allowing for the establishment of transnational companies that remain powerful actors in Brazil's political landscape, such as Monsanto, ADM, Bunge, Cargill, Dreyfus, Amaggi, BR Foods, JBS and Marfrig (Ioris, 2017). These companies became increasingly important in the stabilisation of the Brazilian economy after its numerous crises. In turn, the installation and maintenance of important social policies instated by the Lula and Rousseff administrations were financed through a dependency on an agribusiness industry that was strongly oriented towards the international market (Ioris, 2017). In turn, growing demands for Brazilian soy from China led to further intensification of the industries and growing exports, even further consolidating the political position of these MNCs in the Brazilian political landscape, which has become strongly dependent on agricultural neoliberalism, or agro-neoliberalism (Ioris, 2017).

In Brazilian politics, the influence of agribusiness is felt through the presence of the *bancada ruralista*, or the rural caucus, in Brazilian institutions of the state. In 2016, 207 of the 513 deputies are shown have had ties to the *bancada ruralista* (Medeiros & Fronseca, 2016). In 2019, the number of seats for the rural caucus grew even further to 257, providing the caucus with a representation of over 50% in the Brazilian *Câmara* (Congresso em Foco, 2019). Paired with the election of many more right-wing conservative politicians to Brazilian congress, these numbers are demonstrative of the interwovenness of the influences of Brazil's agricultural sector with the country's government, as well as indicative of Brazil's 'right turn' to populism. This populism, Borger (2021) argues, was caused by "the shaky foundations of the party system [which were] further unsettled by a series of major corruption scandals and a deep economic crisis between 2016-2018" (p. 3). A more detailed analysis of the emergence and reasons behind the current populism in Brazil is beyond the scope of this study[1]. Therefore, the present analysis observes its importance in relation to the growing political influence of the agricultural sector in Brazil.

Brazilian decision-making is heavily influenced by the interests of agribusiness actors. This was already visible during the Lula and Rousseff presidencies, where, notwithstanding important social programmes, investments in agribusiness remained an important allocation of the Brazilian governmental budget (Carneiro & Blanc, 2018). Under pressure from the rural caucus, both administrations authorised neoliberally and macro-economically inspired infrastructural projects that would have severe detrimental effects on Brazilian environmentalism (Carneiro & Blanc, 2018). This was further intensified with the Temer and Bolsonaro administrations, whose vastly conservative policies and ties to the rural caucus aimed to undo environmental legislation in favour of agricultural development (Carneiro & Blanc, 2018). This has resulted in a spiking increase in Amazonian deforestation, a poignant outcome of which were the extremely destructive 2019 Amazonian wildfires, which were the worst since 2010 and which showed an increase since Bolsonaro's inauguration on 1 January 2019 when compared to earlier years (Escobar, 2019). As transnational capitalist impulses arguably lay at the root of this deforestation, the above developments show how the influence of transnational capital in Brazilian politics has increasingly harmful

[1] A further elaboration on populism in Brazil can be found in: Daly, T.G. (2019). Populism, public law, and democratic decay in Brazil: understanding the rise of Jair Bolsonaro. *14th international human rights researchers' workshop: 'Democratic backsliding and human rights'*, 1-22.

effects for the Amazon, demonstrating the Brazilian government's growing submission to the interests of this group. This will now be further explored through the application of Leonard's (1980) theory on the influence of MNCs in politics of developing countries.

Brazil's relation with transnational capital influences can be explained using the three dimensions of the development of influence put forward by Leonard (1980). Firstly, the political power of transnational capital in Brazil can be explained through the historical dimension; as has been outlined above, the geopolitical shift of China's emergence as an increasingly important global power allowed for an increase in international demand for Brazilian soy. Moreover, postcolonial thinking of the past two decades has increased the propensity for South-South-based networks, creating important Global South markets for Brazilian soy (and other products) that would further strengthen the impulse for capitalist export production in Brazil (Ioris, 2017). As such, these geopolitical developments should be considered to form the historical dimension of transnational capitalist influence in Brazil, as the increasing export production of MNCs in Brazil provided these companies with growing political wherewithal, which was cannily solidified through the instalment of political representatives of agribusiness interests in the institutions of the Brazilian state. The political weight of the *bancada ruralista* shows the power of agribusiness elites in Brazil and demonstrates how MNCs have been able to formally consolidate their power in the state. More broadly, this shows how transnational capitalist interests have become highly influential within the Brazilian political system from the democratisation onwards.

Secondly, Brazil's level of development is an explanatory factor in the growing power of transnational capital in the country. This power is especially manifest in the continuing convergence of transnational capitalist elites with Brazil's political elites, which is visible through the growing number of congressional seats acquired by the rural caucus. The convergence of these elites can be explained when looking at the periods of Brazil's democratisation and the country's turn to neoliberalism. These periods were marked by extreme economic instability (and thus low levels of development), giving way to transnational companies that seized the opportunity to increase their economic and political power in Brazil. This was further exacerbated by the low level of diversification of the Brazilian economy, making the country dependent on agricultural revenues for the execution of its social policies. In turn, this shows a

lack of political power and a low level of development of the Brazilian state, as a consequence of the preceding economic crises (Ioris, 2017). The deficiency of political power, combined with the pressure generated by the growing numbers of transnational capitalist representatives within the Brazilian state, made it increasingly difficult to counter the growing political control of MNCs over the Brazilian economy. This is interesting when taking into account the theorisation of Babic et al. (2020), as it seems that the control strategy of transnational capital is applied here in reverse: rather than a state taking control of MNCs to secure economic power in another state, MNCs here take control of the Brazilian state to enhance their economic power.

Thirdly and lastly, Brazil's domestic politics have also continually been influential on the country's behaviour towards the MNCs active on its territory. The newly emerged democratic Brazilian elite that came about after the end of the Brazilian dictatorship was made up of opposition parties and social movements that had long opposed the dictatorial leaders, but still had to cooperate with substantial parts of this former elite to actually come to power (Mainwaring, 1986). This led to what Mainwaring (1986) calls *continuismo*, a continuation of old policies, sometimes even with the same leaders that were active during the military regime, who obtained new positions of power in democratic Brazil. This continuity in political elites led to a continuance of the neoliberal methods of the military regime, allowing for the growth of agribusiness, as well as of the Brazilian economy as a whole (Mainwaring, 1986). With this latter national economic growth, the Brazilian state was able to provide its citizens with increased economic and social stability (Draibe, 2007). This also enabled Brazil to progressively assert its positive sovereignty, as its resources increased, and its population gained economic power. On the other hand, the growth of the agribusiness sector in Brazil facilitated the political power of this group, eventually manifesting itself in the form of the rural caucus. This way, Brazilian politics were not only influenced by agricultural elites, but also practiced by them. In the end, this means that the Brazilian elites' wants and needs are not only a function of the influence and interests of the agribusiness lobby, but that these wants and needs are also increasingly coming to be defined by a convergence of political and agricultural elites.

This convergence can be further observed in contemporary Brazil. As has been shown in the previous chapter, Brazil's political elite seems to increasingly make use of domestic institutions and companies to increase capital gain for themselves or for MNCs, echoing the imperial structures of exploitation present during Brazil's colonial

period. The merging of the interests of these two groups becomes clear from President Bolsonaro's openly favourable position on agribusiness, which led to the further weakening of Brazilian environmental protection and of the protection of indigenous' rights for the benefit of ever-increasing agricultural expansion (De Area Leão Pereira et al., 2020; Münch, 2019). This is also reminiscent of the colonial schemes of the past; imperial nations also more often than not pursued extractivist strategies of exploitation without regard for the wellbeing of the environment or indigenous peoples living in colonised lands.

All of the analyses above show how transnational capital has influenced political decision-making over the past two decades, and how a convergence of Brazil's political and agricultural elites have led to a convergence of Brazil's national interests and the interests of transnational capitalist elites. This development is reinforced by populism, which has become increasingly influential over the past few years, especially with the election of incumbent President Bolsonaro (Barros & Silva, 2020; Borges, 2021). These two factors can be considered to have a weakening effect on Brazil's positive sovereignty. Firstly, the shift in focus of the Brazilian state towards transnational capitalist interests weakens the state's ability to provide political wherewithal to its population, as it will increasingly use its resources to promote and expand (agri)business, rather than to effectuate popular programmes of social and financial support. This is demonstrated by the Bolsonaro administration's 2019 executive order to make the Agriculture Ministry responsible for deciding on lands claimed by indigenous peoples, effectively putting agricultural elites in control of some of Brazil's important social issues and economic assets (Stargardter & Boadle, 2019). Secondly, as Müller (2016) argues, populists' propensity to use partisan and discriminatory discourse and policies ultimately weakens a state's social equity and thus the state's ability to provide political rights and protections to its (indigenous) populations. Bolsonaro's populist administration, thus, is likely to weaken Brazil's capacity to provide political wherewithal to parts of its population, especially given his negative attitude towards Brazilian indigenous peoples, whom he has blamed to be responsible for the Amazonian wildfires of 2019 (Boadle, 2020). This lack of social equity and refusal to provide political rights and protections to parts of the Brazilian population weakens the country's positive sovereignty.

To continue, the weakening of Brazil's positive sovereignty arguably also leads to a weakening of Brazil's negative sovereignty. With the demonstrated shift of the

Brazilian state's focus towards transnational capital, the country arguably opened up to foreign influences, weakening its own defence against foreign pressures. This compromises Brazil's negative sovereignty through allowing interference from foreign actors, as well as compromising Brazil's ability for individual self-determination. Moreover, the influence of transnational capital demonstrates how foreign forces are once again taking control of Brazil, taking away from the negative sovereignty that Brazil had built after its independence from Portugal, as has been demonstrated in the second chapter. All of this shows how the diminishing strength of Brazil's positive sovereignty also affects the country's negative sovereignty. Interestingly, however, the discourse used by President Bolsonaro seems to point in a different direction, at least on the issue of sustainable development, as he continues to affirm Brazilian sovereignty in the face of international pressure for the sustainable development of the Amazon.

Sustainable development of the Amazon and Bolsonaro

Brazil's environmental pioneering of the 1980s brought with it the conviction that stewardship over the Amazon was an exclusively domestic affair (Bratman, 2019; Raftopoulos & Morley, 2020). This became expressively clear from the *Nossa Natureza* policy, the nationalistic character of which shows how Brazil in this period already stuck to its belief in its national sovereignty and to the defence of the Amazon from internationalisation (Raftopoulos & Morley, 2020). This discursive tradition of protecting Brazil's territorial sovereignty over the Amazon finds continuation in the rhetoric of President Bolsonaro, who claims to 'love' the Amazon (Fox & Lang, 2019). Moreover, Bolsonaro also fervently defends Amazonian governance from foreign influences through aggressive discourse of Brazilian sovereignty and combative language at the address of 'radical environmentalists', mainly from European governments and countries (BBC, 2019; Biller & Savarese, 2020; Raftopoulos & Morley, 2020). On the contrary, Bolsonaro's agricultural policy of 'total extractivism' goes against all notions of sustainable development for the Amazon, affirming the administration's disregard for environmentalism (Soyer & Barbosa Jr, 2020). In addition to Bolsonaro's contempt for Amazonian peoples and their (indigenous) rights, it can be considered that in contemporary Brazil, the primary dimensions of sustainable development (economic growth, ecological health and social equity) as theorised by Bratman (2019), are hardly being unified in the country's most recent policies. Rather, Brazil's development schemes have become heavily tilted towards

economic growth, whereas the ecological health of the rainforest and the social equity of the people living there severely deteriorate.

The policies effectuated by the Bolsonaro administration are thus mainly inspired by capital gain and industrialisation of the Amazon, reflecting his close ties with the agribusiness elites, as outlined in the previous section (Raftopoulos & Morley, 2020). The drive for industrialisation of the Amazon leads to further deforestation and can also be considered one of the main causes for the devastating Amazon wildfires of 2019 (De Area Leão Pereira et al., 2020; Escobar, 2020; Raftopoulos & Morley, 2020). The administration's disregard for environmentalism caused international outrage amongst environmentalists. Yet, President Bolsonaro's discourses on these fires remained extremely accusatory towards NGOs and Western governments, as the president continued to try to shift the blame for the wildfires to anything but his own administration. He even stated that European conservationist efforts are "purely motivated by their desire to exploit the Amazon for themselves" (Raftopoulos & Morley, 2020, p. 1617). Interestingly, Bolsonaro adopted similar discourses in relation to Brazilian environmentalists, calling domestic groups a "cancer that he can't kill" (Human Rights Watch, 2020, par. 7). This shows the ambiguity of the president's attitude, which rhetorically seems to be inspired by nationalism, but which actually seems to be applied to all actors that are opposed to the administration's vision, be they foreign or Brazilian.

Bolsonaro's drive to effectuate environmentally destructive policies stems from the administration's need for finances and political goodwill, which are mainly generated through the agricultural exports of agribusiness and the heartening of these same businesses' interests (De Area Leão Pereira et al., 2020). As has been shown, agribusiness in Brazil is politically well-represented through the *bancada ruralista*, making governance of the country near-impossible without the support of the agribusiness elite. In turn, the continual securing of financial and political support from this agricultural elite leads to policies that are environmentally destructive, especially when it comes to the Amazon. The agricultural elite, mainly interested in capital gain and agricultural expansion, thus seems to have a stronger voice in Brazilian political decision-making than the majority of the Brazilian population. The rise of this agricultural elite arguably has populist roots (Andrade, 2020) and is further strengthened by the Bolsonaro administration's dependence on the rural caucus' political power. The interplay between the Bolsonaro administration and the *bancada*

ruralista is further illuminated by the support Bolsonaro's Social Liberal Party (PSL) received from the *Frente parlamentar agropecuária* (FPA), the main representatives of the rural caucus (AgênciaFPA, 2018). This support arguably is part of a political strategy to secure support for agriculturally beneficial legislation for Brazil's agribusiness elites, as well as to create ties between the FPA and the presidency to influence later policymaking. This gave way to the establishment of a strongly right-winged government that was more oriented towards agrobusiness interests than towards the interests of the Brazilian state itself.

This shift has led to an increasing neglect by Brazilian officials of the ecological health of Brazilian territory and of the social equity for its constituents, also demonstrating the concentration of power in the small group of Brazil's agro-political elite. This is further illustrated by Bolsonaro's request for the rural caucus to support his nomination of Arthur Lira, a leader of the political centre, to become President of the chamber of Deputies, showing Bolsonaro's dependency on the *bancada ruralista*'s political power for the realisation of his political goals (Carvalho, 2021; Estado de Minas, 2021). Without aiming to defend or condemn Bolsonaro's discourses and actions as president, it can thus be argued that his administration's policies are fuelled by historical precedents and external pressures. In the end, Bolsonaro's populist government lacks real political power, making the installation of policies heavily dependent on the votes of established elites, which are mainly from the agribusiness sector and often motivated by capital gain with destructive consequences for the Amazon. Combined with Brazil's long-standing tradition of defending its sovereignty through scepticism of foreign involvement in its Amazon, all of this creates a scenario in which Bolsonaro can secure the exclusive exploitation of the Amazon by transnational capital in the name of Brazilian sovereignty. This is further strengthened by Brazil's political elite, which is not only influenced by transnational capital, but which increasingly consists of transnational capitalist elites. This convergence of elites brings with it a confluence of Brazilian national interests with transnational capitalist interests, creating a political elite that is effective in side-lining international organisations and actors, as well as local populations in their struggles for more sustainable and egalitarian forms of development in the Amazon. This underlines Brazil's propensity for 'internal colonialism' as theorised by Abelvik-Lawson (2014).

Conclusion

In the most recent of developments, the international response to continued deforestation in the Amazon has culminated in US President Biden's attempt to apply pressure onto the Bolsonaro administration through "unspecified economic threats" (Nugent, 2021, par. 1). Even though President Bolsonaro has sent a seven-page pledge to eliminate deforestation, important Brazilian political figures have warned President Biden to "not trust his Brazilian counterpart", as "he won't even try" (Nugent, par. 3). Moreover, two former Brazilian ministers of the environment, Marina Silva and Rubens Ricupero, have warned the Biden administration to be cautious towards the climate-sceptic Brazilian president, whose disregard for Amazonian deforestation "is not the result of a lack of money, but a consequence of the government's deliberate failure to care" (Silva & Ricupero, 2021, par. 5). Bolsonaro's response is to call the American initiative "coward threats" and to condemn the US as well as other countries as "greedy" (Spring, 2020, par. 3). All of this speaks to the paradox of Bolsonaro's discourse and his actions in terms of sustainability, once again putting into question Brazilian sovereignty.

When taking into consideration Jackson's (1991) theorisation on sovereignty, the historical reiteration of Brazilian sovereignty, as well as the current state of affairs in Brazil, a number of conclusions can be drawn. Firstly, it can be contended that Brazil's positive sovereignty has severely weakened over the past three decades. The insertion of transnational capital into Brazilian politics in the form of the rural caucus has led to an important convergence of the interests of the Brazilian state with the interests of the transnational capitalist elite, causing a loss of willingness to provide political goods to the Brazilian population. This deteriorates the Brazilian state's capacity to apply agency both domestically and internationally, ultimately abating the country's position in the world order.

Secondly, it can be stated that Brazil's negative sovereignty has also declined under the influence of transnational capital. The demonstrated convergence of transnational capitalist elites with Brazilian political elites shows how, albeit through a slow process, representatives of the international capitalist system have integrated into Brazilian domestic politics. Arguably, this integration is a perpetuation of colonial structures of the past, especially through the Western-led capitalist world system. In turn, this has made true self-determination by the Brazilian state impossible.

Thirdly, the ardent discursive defence of Brazilian negative sovereignty by officials such as Bolsonaro is also detrimental to Brazil's negative sovereignty. The elites' discourses are more aimed to defend the sovereignty of their person and to protect their political power, rather than to safeguard the Brazilian state from outside influences. This shows how the Brazilian elite, which is partly made up of transnational capitalists, actively tries to maintain its political position within the Brazilian political landscape, especially under mounting international pressures from the sustainable development lobby.

Fourthly, it can be argued that Brazilian sovereignty in general has regressed over the past two or three decades. This not only becomes clear from the analyses of Brazil's positive and negative sovereignty, but also from an integration of Jennings (2002) theoretical framework of states' mutual respect for sovereignty over internal and external affairs. In the case of Brazil, this theory seems to have become obsolete, as continued globalisation in the form of transnational capitalist integration has made it near-impossible to differentiate between what constitutes the internal and external affairs of the country. This puts Brazil's sovereignty further into question.

Through a postcolonial lens, the outlined deterioration of Brazilian sovereignty as a consequence of the profound integration of transnational capital in the country is an example of how, in our so-called postcolonial world, patterns of neocolonialism and neo-imperialism continue to shape the world. This becomes especially clear from an application of the postcolonial framework to the case of the Brazilian Amazon.

Prima facie, President Bolsonaro's highly defensive discourse on the Amazon and Brazilian territorial sovereignty seems to be defensible from a postcolonial standpoint. Key components of postcolonialism can be recognised in his rhetoric, as Bolsonaro actively criticises North American and European imperialism purportedly directed at the exploitation of the rainforest 'for themselves' (Raftopoulos & Morley, 2020). This reflects the first dimension of postcolonial thinking outlined by Persaud and Sajed (2018), in the sense that Bolsonaro's discourse effectively confronts Eurocentric nations with their colonial past, invoking past colonial and imperial structures to demonstrate the immorality of any attempt to acquire resources or control in the Global South. This also ties in with the second dimension of postcolonialism of Persaud and Sajed (2018), as Bolsonaro actively engages with the idea of the Western defence of the colonial status quo, condemning any Western country's attempt to reinsert itself into Brazil's domestic affairs as an attack on

Brazilian sovereignty. This way, the Brazilian President conjures the possibility of the neocolonial nature of Eurocentric advances on the Amazon, effectively putting into question the righteousness of the Western countries' initiatives. From a postcolonial perspective, the above makes Bolsonaro's rhetoric a tenable expression of anti-(neo)colonialism and anti-(neo-)imperialism.

On the other hand, the Bolsonaro administration can be argued to perpetuate exactly the neocolonial and neo-imperial tendencies that its discourse aspires to denounce, putting into question the true state of Brazilian sovereignty. Especially the presidency's demonstrated ties to transnational capitalist elites in the form of the *bancada ruralista* are indicative of how foreign economic forces heavily influence Brazilian policymaking in favour of transnational capitalist impulses. Taking into consideration Halperin's (2020) theorisation on the influence of MNCs, it can be said that the transnational corporations that are active in Brazil are part of a strategy of developed countries to perpetuate "colonial forms of exploitation of developing countries" (para. 1). Besides the already important political weight that these capitalist elites have developed through their insertion into the Brazilian political system, the active heartening of transnational capitalists' interests by the current and two previous administrations shows how new forms of imperialism continue to control important parts of the Brazilian state, casting further doubt on Brazil's capacity for true self-determination. Bolsonaro's discourse and his actions thus demonstrate a paradox, with his discourse being aimed at a denunciation of all forms of neocolonialism and neo-imperialism, but his government's actions demonstrating a preservation of these particular forms of exploitation.

In the end, the above repudiates Bolsonaro's contemporary claims to Brazilian sovereignty. Even more so, it casts doubt on the reality of Brazilian sovereignty as a whole. Through a postcolonial lens, it can be argued that the growth of the power of transnational capital in Brazil is a sign of the increasing clout of neocolonialism in the Brazilian economy and state, further weakening the Brazilian state's self-determination and sovereignty. Moreover, it can be argued from a postcolonial perspective that Brazil's negative sovereignty has been severely compromised by the rise of transnational capitalists within the country's institutions, demonstrating a far-reaching breach of the principle of non-intervention.

In turn, all of the above attests to Coe's (2019) theory on the ongoing erosion of the concept of sovereignty. The neocolonial and neo-imperial tendencies that Coe

(2019) observes to have emerged with growing globalisation are also visible in Brazil, making the present case study another affirmation of her theorisation. Together with the neocolonial and neo-imperial trends that have been found through the postcolonial framework, all of the above ultimately puts into question the vivacity of state sovereignty in general. It is not unlikely that, as in Brazil, deteriorative processes of crippling sovereignty are present all around the world, and that the growing forces of globalisation may further dilute or even obsolete the concept that has so long reigned the international world system. In the end, between state sovereignty and transnational capital, the Amazon seems to be the big loser, and the future consequences of the Amazon's destruction don't bode well for the rest of the planet.

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