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EVEN MORE STATE?

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EVEN MORE STATE?

Abstract:

Latin America remains a hotbed of ideas and projects, which is a sure sign that it is more alive than ever.

This time, the problems of terrorism, drug trafficking and insecurity are harassing this society at a time of economic prosperity. As a remedy, we propose then, the increase of the state apparatus.

Keywords:

State, insecurity, security, civil society.

Latin America has always been popular in Spain. On the one hand, the Foundation for Social Studies and Analysis (FAES) presented its report called '*Latin America. An agenda of freedom 2012*', as a second part to the publication of 2007, in Cadiz, on March 19th, coinciding with the anniversary of the Spanish Constitution ("La Pepa"). During the presentation, the president of FAES, Mr. J.M. Aznar, mentioned that most countries in Latin America are going through the honeyed years of sustainable growth, while Europe is immersed in a crisis. He also made reference to the problems endured by some of those countries as a result of drug trafficking and organised crime, as well as the need for the territorial and economic integration of those countries. In order to face those challenges, Aznar advocated greater state institutionalization.

On April 11th he also attended the VI International Conference on Transatlantic Studies at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, led by Professor Julio Ortega and with the participation of Ricardo Lagos, Sergio Ramírez, Juan Luis Cebrián, Carlos Fuentes, Darío Villanueva... The Conference participants stressed the "stagnation of Ibero-American democracy" as well as the need to reduce the gap between citizens and politicians.

Now we will study in depth the report : "The State of Citizenship, Changes, Achievements and Challenges facing the State in Latin America during the 21st Century", presented on the 6th of March at the Madrid headquarters of the Ibero-American General Secretariat and which was prepared by experts from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The ceremony was led by Heraldo Muñoz, UNDP Regional Manager for Ibero-America and the Caribbean, Enrique Iglesias, Ibero-American Secretary General, Jesús Gracia, State Secretary of International Cooperation and Ibero-America, and Carlos Malamud, Researcher from the Elcano Royal Institute.

The verbal thesis of the report, which contains a highly interesting insight to the recent Ibero-American History, is based on the supposition that UNDP has detected that Ibero-American citizens "demand more State presence in the region". But the question is: What does State mean? Wouldn't it be better to ask for more efficient States, less spendthrift, less corrupted, less interventionist?

This dialectic between less or more State is not a new thing. Its roots lie in the appearance of modern State as we conceive it nowadays, back in the 17th Century, and it has remained this way up until today, with natural ups and downs.

It was Thomas Hobbes who, in 1651, signed in Paris his *Leviathan*, the primal State power which arises from an alleged "social contract". In the same line John Locke introduced the concept "consent" in his *Essay on Civil Government*, published in 1690. But in 1776, in the middle of the Age of Enlightenment, where a new political and social climate began to emerge, another Briton, Adam Smith, wrote: *An inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, where the "width and role of the State" was called into question. That is

to say, we have passed from the Absolutist State to a Liberal State of Law whose role should be limited to guaranteeing the free development of a civil society but without interfering in the process. Later the theory and political practice derived into State Socialism, Totalitarian States and finally we have ended up with the Welfare State.

Life in Europe had been starting to get complicated since the economic and then social crises which broke out in the 70s in last century. The path of new theory and political practice had to be corrected, and thus arose the Social-Democratic State and the Neo-Liberal State, that is, we continued immersed in the aforementioned dialectic.

Undoubtedly, at the root of, or, rather, on the basis of those theoretical and practical political movements, we find a certain social and economic structure. When a country follows a prosperous path, wealth flows, equality reaches a high level and opportunities abound, then many branches of government become superfluous and rescindable. But when there are economic difficulties and the social structure undergoes significant imbalances, citizens demand the State's presence and then the State extends its leafy branches over the whole.

Logically thinking, this picture is subject to more variable conditions, taking into account geography, time, internal problems of each country, international politics...

Thus, in addition to defence, external representation, fiscal system and justice administration, the State functions include many other which have become deeply rooted such as to referee and promote relations between citizens, to care for civil society, and to create participation among the citizens...

But the development of the state apparatus involves a very significant budget increase in the chapter of activities and personnel, which also steadily creates a vicious circle. On the other hand, the statutory or labour government employees tends to form a pressure group with their own requirements, and they are liable to be corroded by corruption. Not forgetting — and this is very important — that the tendency of the state apparatus is to cover more and more skills, and to participate in civilian life further to justify itself among other things..

And this is the case of Ibero-America, but at a different level depending on the country.

In some American countries two circumstances converge. In our opinion, those circumstances have led the UNDP to detect that aforementioned "demand for more state". One of them is the rise and consolidation of the so-called "middle classes", and another, the burden of drug trafficking and organized crime.

By definition, the "middle classes" are conservative. Its members have reached a status which is difficult to achieve in some countries, and they want to defend it against any

possible threat. Nonetheless, drug trafficking and organized crime threaten the "middle classes" and even the State itself.

The proposed solution would then strengthen the state and increase the state apparatus under a new concept: the "State of Citizenship", which would increase the already long list of historical formulations of Political Theory.

However, nationalization without control means transforming the State into, at least, a Welfare State. This leads to the encouragement of passivity among the people, to the establishment of a culture of subsidies, grants, lack of employee motivation and the change of security for risk.

We must ask ourselves: "What sort of State do we need?", because the State should not substitute society in those aspects society can develop: the quest for less government and more society.

This report we are analysing correctly points that "During the first decade of the 21st Century, Latin America has enjoyed relative economic prosperity, has been able to consolidate democracy as a political regime and has developed a series of social policy initiatives resulting in poverty reduction. The region has been also characterized by a dramatic increase in social insecurity, crime and murder rates. Confidence in the institutions has not significantly increased in those countries where there has been social progress, and has fallen further in the other countries. "

In view of this finding, I believe that what I call "The Way of Ibero-America" —which of course does not have to follow the steps of Europe in this or in other ways, but to find their own path— begins with strengthening the social fabric of civic organizations, in short, to give prominence to what is called "civil society", a vague socio-political concept difficult to define by, for example, A. A. Ferguson or Gramsci, but which have been accurately understood by anyone when it has to be applied. And those social fabrics are achieved with the protection of the state in education, youth policy, equality (the report states that still persisting "in Ibero-America are the highest levels of inequality in the world in terms of income"), the promotion of indigenous women, the fight against poverty, tax reforms, legal certainty... while leaving to the citizens themselves the development of these actions. Otherwise, these countries would return to the hands of the Welfare State: the Benefactor State.

Indeed, the report recognizes that in Ibero-America there is still a lack of role of civil society, and that is why we do not understand the distinction made between "social citizenship", that is, "ownership by the people of economic and social rights and respect for these rights, and " political citizenship ", defined as " the right to participate in the election of governors and to run for election". For us citizenship is an indivisible whole which respects, of course,

the points of view from the other side of the Atlantic, for historical, cultural and social reasons...

Concerning the present trend towards nationalization in Ibero-America, it is not a coincidence that the question of the number of Security and Defence Plans that have been approved and are about to be created by each of those countries has been raised. We should highlight that, while the concept of Defence is clear everywhere, the concept of Security sometimes goes overboard, especially in those countries who suffer from the attacks of drug-trafficking and organised crime.

Regarding drug-trafficking and organised crime, we are realizing that they cannot be eradicated even with our armed forces patrolling the streets. There are some painful examples of this which do not need to be pointed out. Concerning this section, the report shows some worrying figures about the region: 14.9 violent deaths for every 100,000 citizens, a figure that rises to 32.9 in the Andean countries and to 44 in some Central American countries (the world average is 8 deaths).

On the other hand, Ibero-America is necessarily going towards an integration process, a long and tricky process that could be tested in order to establish a common resolution of the dilemma “more or less state and more or less civil society”. Unfortunately, the recently concluded VI Summit of the Americas has shown that there are still many problems between Americans that must be solved before they reach an effective integration.

In short, the report represents an important contribution to political and social research in Ibero-America. However, as usually happens when books are written by a group of people, we can appreciate some contradictions in the text.

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