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Editorial

Juan Russo

Sobre la expansión de los autoritarismos

En contraste con las ultimas décadas del siglo XX, cuando las democracias se expandieron en diversas areas del planeta, el siglo XXI ha iniciado con una presencia creciente de los autoritarismos. Se trata de una expansión progresiva. Como lo muestra el tema del N.5 de RELASP, los autoritarismos no son regímenes "defensivos", encapsulados en espacios delimitados de poder. Hoy no se limitan a mantenerse en un territorio nacional, por el contrario, proyectan acciones orientadas a su expansión en el mundo. El dominio pleno de Rusia sobre Bielorusia o la influencia de Cuba sobre Venezuela y Nicaragua (como lo muestran los articulos de Gabrielli y Menegol), implican mecanismos de intervención y asesoria, para acciones de represión sobre la oposición o para la producción de condiciones de competencia electoral con resultado cierto. La especie autoritaria que predomina hoy es de tipo electoral: regímenes que mantienen la ritualidad electoral, pero vaciada de competencia política efectiva, es decir, de poliarquía.

Como muestran estudios empíricos recientes, libertad e igualdad no son términos incompatibles ni de suma cero: por el contrario, son conceptos que se requieren uno al otro. La igualdad se realiza cuando las libertades políticas y sociales no son afectadas, y viceversa, la libertad sólo se hace efectiva cuando hay oportunidades y capacidades ampliamente distribuídas en las sociedades. Convertir estos términos en antinomias es postular la imposibilidad del orden democrático, y como corolario, admitir cierta razón en el sentido de los variados autoritarismos que hoy compiten. Ahora bien, como muestra la historia reciente en la región, para que estos términos se complementen se requiere, además de pro-

gramas que los prioricen, la autolimitación de los gobiernos en la manipulación de las reglas constitucionales. Sin el cumplimiento de esa condición "formal" los "contenidos" de libertades e igualdad se convierten en conjuntos de realidades distorsionadas y resultados inversos a los proclamados.

La expansión actual de los autoritarismos (y de regímenes políticos híbridos) es, en parte, un fruto germinado en el terreno fértil que las democracias han dejado por fallar a su promesa fundacional: la de producir mas libertades y en particular más igualdad. América latina continua destacando por su enorme desigualdad relativa en el planeta, y gobiernos que prometían más justicia social quedaron atrapados en proyectos patrimoniales del poder político, dando espacio al clientelismo cuando no a la corrupción sistémica.

Sin embargo, los nuevos órdenes no se construyen sólo por deficiencias de los que les precedieron, sino por prometer un horizonte. Es decir, además de las dificultades de los propios gobiernos democráticos, ¿cuál es el sustento de la expansión autoritaria, cuál el mensaje fundamental de los autoritarismos para llamar a sumarse a sus filas? Si se atiende a las visiones de dos potencias que lideran estos procesos (China y Rusia), el argumento es sencillamente: "la inevitable decadencia occidental" causada por los excesos de libertades, la perdida de la fe y el creciente individualismo. La propuesta es un regreso a los lazos de la comunidad, a las tradiciones culturales y a la soberanía absoluta del Estado (que incluye un liderazgo fuerte, "una guía"). Brevemente, se promete más seguridad a cambio de menos libertades.

Pero el terreno sobre el que crecen las opciones autoritarias no es sólo el resurgimiento de nostágicos valores decimonónicos. El orden autoritario se construye a partir del sometimiento de la verdad a la política. El avance de los ejecutivos sobre los organos de justicia en países de Europa y América Latina es una contienda por un pilar fundamental de la democracia, es un fenómeno frecuente en el siglo XXI, menos frecuente en los primeros tramos de la democratización de los 80. Claramemte se trata de un sintoma de la expansión autoritaria. Sin justicia independiente, los contrapesos pierden eficacia, la verdad se relativiza y con ello se extermina el sostén de las libertades ciudadanas.

Ahora bien, la expansión de los autoritarismos ¿refleja cam-

bios de preferencias en la comunidad política? ¿Los valores de libertad, participación e igualdad están perdiendo fuerzas frente a otros como la seguridad, la eficiencia y la efectividad? La desintermediación de la política, la emergencia de partidos personales y la volatilidad de los electorados en América Latina y Europa constatan la insatisfacción (y la inquieta busqueda) de ciudadanos y ciudadanas hacia nuevas opciones. ¿Cuanto durará este ciclo? ¿Cuando estos cambios erosionan las bases de la democracia y cuando las refuerzan? Las crisis vividas en este principio de siglo: pienso en la crisis financiera de 2008, la pandemia del Covid 19, y la actual guerra en Europa, con inflación, menor crecimiento y perdidas de empleo; han implicado que la seguridad (social, sanitaria y económica) aumente su valor en la ciudadanía. ¿Desfavorece esa ponderación el valor de las libertades políticas? Como sucede en epocas de incertidumbres, las preguntas ganan densidad y las respuestas flotan en el aire.

Por ultimo, la promoción del autoritarismo implica una contienda en el mundo de las ideas. Por ello, si la actual tendencia continua, es de esperar cierto protagonismo de los intelectuales y también de su rol respecto de la democracia. ¿Cuanto pesarán los nuevos *erasmianos* (en la feliz expresión de Dahrendorf), esto es, intelectuales con capacidad de una defensa lúcida e inclaudicables a las tentaciones autoritarias? Los nuevos escenarios, con el multilateralismo y el consiguiente reposicionamiento de Estados Unidos, así como la invasión rusa a Ucrania y la actual guerra en Europa ¿modificarán las posiciones tradicionales? Cualquiera sea la respuesta, los hechos enumerados, como muestra este dossier, exhiben las consecuencias internas en cada pais del "factor internacional", como factor interno (no externo) hacia los dos lados del Atlántico.

Dossier

La promoción de los autoritarismos

Editor

Fabio Fossati | Universita di Trieste

Autocracy promotion: theoretical framework and comparative analysis. The cases of Cuba, Venezuela, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey and Iran.

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Models of external anchorage to democracy

In the political science literature, there has been an intense debate on the patterns of the external diffusion/promotion of democracy (Fossati 1999, 2004, 2011). The classification of the processes of external "anchorage" to democracy is as follows: control by military intervention, political conditionality against authoritarian regimes, rewards to democratizing states, inertial emulation through contagion.

A) Control leads to a military intervention to promote democracy, like the Usa in Iraq in 2003.

B) Political conditionality means that foreign policy is implemented by applying negative penalties (trade sanctions, cuts to economic aid, exclusion from the enlargement process of the European Union) to authoritarian countries that strongly violate human rights and democratic procedures.

C) Rewards may be divided into three categories: democratic assistance (funds aimed at improving the political performance of the recipient country), diplomatic pressure (declarations or official missions supporting domestic pro-democracy groups), and economic assistance (increased aid to democratizing states). Then, democratic assistance consists in economic aid aimed at organizing electoral monitoring or reinforcing political participation: by financing pro-human rights NGOs and an independent press. It should not be confused with aid intended to improve good governance (reforms in public administration, the judicial system, security forces, fight against corruption…), which may be compatible with an illiberal democracy or a hybrid regime.

D) Finally, emulation is the outcome of the democratization waves (Huntington 1993), and some countries spontaneously 'follow the leader', through non-intentional processes.

These processes have been influenced by political cultures (Fossati 2017). Conservatives assume that democracy cannot be promoted from the outside, and that inertial anarchical contagion is the only instrument to diffuse it, because external manipulation has damaging effects and produces anti-Western attitudes, cultural conflicts, and terrorism. Before 1989, democratic transitions were mostly the outcomes of processes of non-intentional contagion, through three democratization waves involving Europe, Latin America, Japan and India (Huntington 1993, 1996). Liberals sponsor economic negative sanctions against authoritarian regimes, through political conditionality. The link is established between some - usually economic (foreign aid or trade preferences) - decisions of the advanced democratic government and the political performance of the recipient country (defense of human rights and democratization). Leftist constructivists prefer economic or diplomatic positive rewards to democratizing states, like foreign aid, which, before 1989, was channeled by social-democratic governments to the poorest Third World states. Political conditionality, based on negative sanctions towards developing countries, is a 'politically incorrect' coercive diplomacy. Neo-conservatives assume that only war can promote democracy, because economic sanctions are usually weak or ineffective. Leftist Manicheans do not consider democracy to be a priority and

do not support any external pressure to foster it. The combination of political conditionality and democratic rewards materializes the typical 'stick and carrot' trade-off. In fact, a less ideological foreign policy mixes different strategies of democracy promotion in a flexible way.

Autocracy promotion: a theoretical framework

The last (4th) post-1989 democratic transition wave has been frozen (Carothers 2002). Several fully or semi-authoritarian regimes have resisted, also because of the international alliances promoted by other leading authoritarian regimes: Russia (towards Belarus, Ukraine, Armenia…), Iran (towards Shiite actors), Saudi Arabia (towards Sunni actors), Turkey (towards African or Asian states), China (towards North Korea, Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam…), Cuba and Venezuela (towards Latin American governments). In the political science literature, there has been a debate on autocracy promotion (Burnell, Schlumberger 2018; Diamond, Plattner, Walker 2016; Kneuer, Demmelhuber 2016, 2020; Tansey 2016a, 2016b; Vanderhill 2013). Autocracy promotion may be defined in exclusive or inclusive terms: with reference to either direct or indirect tools. The former consist in active military, economic and diplomatic support. The latter include passive methods, such as socialization (promoting anti-democratic values), or bargaining processes, such as building a political environment favorable to the authoritarian coalition. That policy has been perceived either as a reaction to Western democracy promotion (an "objection" to the post-1989 world order), or as an independent process, that has always existed in international politics.

The success of autocracy promotion is favored by the existence of domestic illiberal forces in recipient countries: not only in the transition phase, but also in the following "implementation" phase, when authoritarian rules are imported. But these (external and domestic) actors do not necessarily share the same values. During the Cold War, autocracy promotion had been linked to ideologies; the USSR always supported other communist countries in the Third World. After 1989, the type of authoritarianism (Fossati 2018) is not relevant anymore in the cooperation among

non-democratic regimes. For example, China is supporting the military regime of Myanmar. Similarly, in Latin America, the ideological dimension has survived, for instance, with Venezuela's support of other leftist populist governments.

After 1989 autocracy promotion has been coupled with a sort of "second-best-choice": the fostering of hybrid (limited, protected or no law) regimes (Morlino 2008, Levitsky, Way 2010). It is not possible for external authoritarian regimes to fully control the evolution of other regimes. Thus, recipient states may live different (authoritarian or hybrid) phases, within the so-called "electoral authoritarian" regimes.

It has to be considered that authoritarian regimes have also been promoted by democracies: especially before 1989. During the Cold War, the USA supported (personalistic or military) authoritarian regimes, which were considered the "lesser evil", while communism was the "absolute evil". Before 1989, democracy was not promoted outside the West, because communist parties could have won elections (Fossati 2017). That conservative diplomacy survived after 1989 and has been applied to some Islamic countries, like in Algeria, where a fundamentalist party won the democratic elections at the beginning of the 1990s; thus, Western governments supported a military coup. Later on, that diplomacy was weakened, for example in Iraq in 2003 or after the Arab Spring, when many "lesser evils" were abandoned by the US; also the military coup in Egypt of July 2013 was not promoted by president Obama.

The models of autocracy promotion are four, like those of democracy promotion (Fossati 2017):

A) Military intervention, like Vietnam's invasion of Cambodia in the late 1970s.

B) Economic blackmail: by applying negative sanctions to pro-Western democratizing regimes: trade or investments' sanctions, and cuts to economic or military aid.

C) Rewards: by positive sanctions to authoritarian or hybrid regimes, through diplomatic pressure, military and economic assistance.

D) Spontaneous emulation: an authoritarian state is a cultural, economic, political and military model for other non-democratic regimes, that autonomously decide 'to follow the leader'.

The empirical cases (Cuba, Venezuela, Russia, Egypt, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Cina) should help to evaluate if some countries focus on one of the four models, or if they elaborate a mix among the four processes (Bader 2014; Bader at al. 2010; Bank 2017; Brownlee 2017; Burnell 2010a, 2010b; Erdmann et al. 2013; Risse, Babayan 2015; Van der Bosch 2020; Way 2016; Yakouchyuk 2018). All the cultural (relations among various nations and/or civilizations), economic, political and military dimensions of international interactions will be analyzed in the empirical section.

This typology classifies the processes of autocracy promotion. A rigid interaction is based on the support of only authoritarian regimes, while in a flexible relation there is the possibility of a "B plan", by promoting hybrid regimes too. Then, hard power relations are anchored to direct military interventions, while soft power is based on diplomatic, economic, indirect military inducements and blackmails.

Power	Flexible *Autocracy promotion*	Rigid
Hard	Turkey (Libya, Iraq), Russia (Nagorno-Karabakh 1990s, Transnistria, Tajikistan, Georgia, Crimea, Donbass, Ukraine)	Turkey (Syria), Saudi Arabia (Bahrein, Yemen)
Soft	Venezuela, Russia (Arktash 2000s), Turkey (Egypt), Iran (Lebanon), Egypt (Tunisia, Libya II), China (Myanmar, Thailand)	Cuba (Nicaragua), Russia (Belarus), Egypt (Sudan, Libya I), Turkey (Azerbaijan), Iran (Syria, Bahrein, Yemen), China (Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, North Korea)

Menegol has emphasized that Cuba supported Nicaragua in 1979 and 1980s with soft power and rigid ideological autocracy promotion: indirect military intervention in favor of a communist regime. Venezuela's support of other populist governments was based on soft power (economic aid through oil revenues) and flexible autocracy promotion in favor of the hybrid regimes of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. Thus, both Cuba and Venezuela preferred 'politically correct' rewards to punishing blackmails.

Morelli has shown that Saudi Arabian made direct military in-

terventions towards authoritarian regimes of Yemen and Bahrein; hard power was combined with rigid autocracy promotion. Iran gave indirect military and economic rewards to Houthis in Yemen and Shiites in Bahrein. According to Vanderhill (2020), Iran gave military assistance to Lebanese Hezbollah, that 'controls' Beirut's hybrid regime, and to authoritarian Assad in Syria. Teheran's government occupied the two boxes of soft power: with flexible (in Lebanon) or rigid (in Syria, Yemen, Bahrein) autocracy promotion.

Michelutto has emphasized that al Sisi's Egypt military regime preferred rewards, coupling soft power (economic and military aid) with rigid (towards al-Burhan in Sudan and, at first, towards the military authoritarian Haftar in Libya) and soft autocracy promotion: towards Tunisian hybrid regime of president Saied and towards Libya at the end of the war, when he negotiated with Tripoli's hybrid regime.

Canzut has shown that Turkey applied military interventions, rewards and blackmails, occupying all the boxes of autocracy promotion: flexible approach and soft power (indirect rewards to the hybrid regime of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt); rigid approach and soft power in Azerbaijan (indirect military aid to authoritarian Azerbaijan in Arktash's war of 2020); flexible approach and hard power in Libya (military intervention in favor of al Sarraj's hybrid regime) and Iraq (repression of Kurds in Iraq's hybrid regime); rigid approach and hard power in Syria (war against Kurds, in Assad's authoritarian regime). Erdogan's strategy failed in Egypt, but was successful in Libya, Syria and Iraq. Then, the agreement with Russia led to a compromise and a conflict freezing between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Arktash.

Tonetto has shown that the main instrument of Chinese autocracy promotion has been emulation. China is an economic giant and has always applied the 'Confucian model' (of Japan and Asian tigers in the past), with a combination of an authoritarian regime and moderate market reforms. Many Asian countries emulated China: especially Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Instead, North Korea partially objected to that model, by maintaining socialist economic institutions. Countries like Myanmar and Thailand remained in the middle, being attracted by both Confucian model and Western combination of democracy and the market. After 1945, Myanmar remained a 'heterodox' military regime, that applied socialist institutions during the Cold

War; since the 1990s, Myanmar's opposition parties started to ask for a democratization process, which led to a troubled transition to a hybrid regime. On the contrary, Thailand was a pro-West hybrid regime (with moderate market institutions) before 1989, but after the Cold War the armed forces staged the 2014 coup, especially to counter-balance rightist oligarch Shinawatra's power. During these different phases, China offered many rewards to both regimes with various instruments of economic support, that favored Myanmar's and Thailand's emulation. The armed forces played the role of the privileged ally of Bejing's government, but there were pro-democracy mobilizations in both countries. China's reaction was flexible, and there has not been a rigid autocracy promotion, and Bejing's government has also implemented cooperative relations with democratic parties. But China applied economic blackmails to both countries, in order to clarify that if their followers were going to abandon Bejing and imitate the West, negative effects would have been much higher for them. That political 'game' reinforced the armed forces. In Myanmar there was the military coup of February 2021, while in Thailand the armed forces neutralized the democratic election of March 2019, and now there is a 'protected' hybrid regime. China has maintained a 'soft power' approach: neither with direct military interventions, nor with any relevant support of non-democratic actors in the critical junctures: military coups, elections... Emulation prevailed in the processes of change, together with the combination of positive inducements and negative sanctions. China maintained a strong governance capability, and favored a flexible domestic political environment with both authoritarian and hybrid regimes, and those countries remained strongly anchored to the above-mentioned Confucian model. Instead, if China had applied a rigid autocracy promotion only in favor of the armed forces, democratic and pro-West actors would have prevailed in both Myanmar and Thailand. In sum, Chinese autocracy promotion in Thailand and Myanmar occupied the box of soft power and flexible approach; instead, in authoritarian Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and North Korea the combination was that of soft power and rigid approach.

Gabrielli has reached similar conclusions for Russia and Armenia. In Belarus there has been an efficient promotion of Lukashenko's authoritarian regime, neutralizing pro-West democratic protests in 2020/21. In Armenia, a hybrid regime had emerged

after the Velvet revolution of 2018, and the pro-Russia (rightist Republican) party abandoned power, after nearly 25 years of government. But Putin maintained a high governance capability. In both countries, Russia offered many economic rewards, and in Armenia there was a direct military intervention in the first Nagorno Karabakh's war of the beginning of the 1990s. In Armenia, the democratic opposition started to mobilize and won the elections after the 2018 Velvet revolution. But precisely in those years, Putin negatively sanctioned pro-West Pashynian's government with two blackmails: first, he increased economic and military aid to Azerbaijan; second, Russia withdrew its military support of Armenia in the second Nagorno-Karabakh's war of autumn 2020. Pashynian's defeat in that war was coupled with Russian mediation and the peace agreement negotiated with Turkey and Azerbaijan, that conquered one third of the enclave in 2020. After that negative outcome for Pashynian, pro-West democratic forces have been neutralized, and Armenia turned to a privileged relation with Moscow's government. Thus, Russia applied a flexible autocracy promotion, by combining explicit support for either non-democratic forces like Lukashenko in Belarus and Sargysan in Armenia, or pro-West actors, like Pashynian's party. The outcome was the consolidation of a pro-Russia hybrid regime in Armenia. If Putin had maintained a rigid approach to autocracy promotion, the Republican party would have been defeated by Pashynian's opposition, and Armenia would have become allied to the West. Russia has occupied the box of hard power in the 1990s (directly intervening in the first Nagorno Karabakh's war) and that of soft power in the 2000s, but has maintained a flexible approach to autocracy promotion in Armenia, by supporting both Sargysan's authoritarian and Pashynian's hybrid regimes. In Belarus there was a combination of a rigid approach (in favor of Lukashenko) and soft power; the democratic opposition never conquered power and thus its relations with Russia remained weak. In the long term, Russian autocracy promotion has combined both inducements and blackmails, but there also were many direct military interventions. The 'hard power' outcome materialized in Transnistria (in Moldova), Tajikistan, Georgia (in Abkhazia and South Ossetia), Ukraine (in Crimea and Donbass in 2014); in all those armed conflicts, the Russian 'volunteers' promoted an 'indirect' military intervention, while after wars there were the 'direct' military peace-keeping missions of Russia (of the Confederation of

Independent States). In 2022, there was the harsh 'direct' military invasion of Russia against Ukraine. In all those conflicts, Russian approach remained flexible, because Moscow's governments maintained relations with both their authoritarian allies and governments of hybrid or democratic regimes.

In sum, all the eight governments gave many (political, economic and military) rewards to their authoritarian allies. Blackmails have been especially applied by China and Russia, and to a lesser extent by Turkey and Egypt. Military interventions have been privileged by Saudi Arabia and Russia, but also by Erdogan's Turkey, even if with more selectivity. Emulation has been relevant only towards China.

The flexible approach, by promoting both authoritarian and hybrid regimes, prevailed over the rigid one in China, Russia, Turkey and Egypt. Venezuela only supported the latter. That outcome was favored by '*real-politik*'. Foreign policy has been maintained anchored to the promotion of interests, typical of the conservative diplomacy. Instead, if Russia and China had rigidly promoted only authoritarian regimes, pro-West and democratic actors would have prevailed, by weakening their interests. Then, ideology mattered more for Moscow's governments, because post-communist Russia supported post-communist Armenia and Belarus (but also pro-West parties in Armenia), and less for Bejing's executives, because post-communist China supported military regimes (as well as democratic parties) in Myanmar and Thailand. But precisely because Russia and China also applied blackmails, those pro-democracy actors had to accept a hybrid regime at last.

Turkey and Egypt started with a strong promotion of values, supporting either religious parties (Erdogan) or armed forces (al-Sisi), but then interests have intentionally been promoted by both of them. A compromise (with two cease-fires) emerged both in Libya (between Tripoli's regime and Haftar) and in Arktash (between pro-Armenia Putin and pro-Azerbaijan Erdogan). If Turkey and Egypt had only promoted values, wars between religious parties and armed forces would have continued in North Africa. An escalation has also been avoided in Caucasus (between Erdogan with Azeris and Putin with Armenians). A transitory compromise has emerged thanks to *real-politik*; all those leader intentionally decided to promote also interests and not only values. In sum, values have been 'frozen' by interests.

In Saudi Arabia and Iran, the rigid approach prevailed and authoritarian regimes were mostly supported, like by Cuba in the Cold War. Both countries strongly promoted values, as the deep cleavage between Sunnis and Shiites pushed them to support their allies. Conflicts have not been definitively resolved. There is an exchange: Saudi Arabia won in Bahrein, and Iran is prevailing in Syria. In Yemen there is a compromise; Shiites conquered the north, and Sunnis maintained the south. In Lebanon the consensus pact between Sunnis and Shiites is surviving. A 'regional balance of powers' has emerged, but wars are continuing in both Syria and Yemen. Thus, conflict management between Sunnis and Shiites is less stable than in North Africa and Caucasus, because it does not seem to depend upon an 'intentional' choice of all those leaders, but on the inertial effect of that regional balance of powers. In sum, values are currently still prevailing over interests, otherwise violence would have ended in both Yemen and Syria.

The sociological hypothesis on the different outcomes of autocracy promotion

How can we explain this high differentiation in the outcomes of autocracy promotion? Saudi Arabia combined a rigid diplomatic approach with hard power, and militarily intervened in Bahrein and Yemen, without worrying of the reactions of the other governments. The same is happening to Iran, even if their military interventions are indirect. That was typical of the pre-1945 period, where the major powers were used to attack other countries in an anarchical world, and ethics was not considered relevant in the decisions concerning peace and war. This attitude was typical of traditional societies, that were anchored to rigid hierarchies (men vs women, parents vs children, rural vs urban elites). Saudi Arabia and Iran are materializing a 'traditional' foreign policy, very rigid indeed and not much rational. The Sunnis vs Shiites cleavage is the only relevant conflict influencing Saudi Arabian diplomacy and direct military interventions in favor of authoritarian regimes is the typical answer to crisis management. That decision was typical of 'traditional' diplomacies, being both rigid and anchored

to hard power. In Iran, indirect military support prevailed, but this happened in order to avoid a more violent spill-over in the conflict between Shiites and Sunnis. The same happened to Cuba, when Fidel Castro militarily supported Sandinistas in Nicaragua. Putin and Zelensky are also implementing a traditional foreign policy until 2022, because war (and not diplomacy) is the only feasible strategy in their conflict over Donbass and Crimea.

Instead, post-1945 modern societies pushed governments to rational foreign policies. The example was Kissinger's *real-politik*; the Usa made several 'traffic-light' wars against the Ussr, but were always ready to negotiate and to accept a defeat, like in Vietnam. In autocracy promotion, rationality pushes governments to flexibility, like in China, that is supporting both post-communist governments (Laos and Vietnam) and hybrid regimes (Myanmar and Thailand), as a rigid and ideological autocracy promotion only in favor of post-communist allies could damage Bejing's interests and its *real-politik* strategies. China is preferring soft to hard power, because wars are rationally perceived to have negative effects on the performance of Chinese economy: see the debate on 'Confucian peace' (Goldsmith 2014). Thus, Chinese diplomacy is deeply 'modern'. Venezuela is also applying a modern approach to the promotion of populist hybrid regimes, by combining flexibility and soft power of 'petro-diplomacy'.

Russia and Turkey are flexible as well, by supporting both authoritarian and hybrid regimes, but are still choosing to start a war, on the contrary of China. That probably depends on the poorer economic performance of Russia and Turkey. Putin and Erdogan know that economic costs of wars are high, but their negative effects are not so intense, because their growth rates are lower that those of China. Thus, Russia and Turkey are influenced by both traditional and modern diplomacies. They are 'modern' because flexibility is prevailing over rigidity, but they also are 'traditional', as hard power is applied from time to time, even if not always. The same combination of tradition and modernity concerned Egypt, that has combined indirect military support to Haftar in Libya with diplomatic rewards to Saied in Tunisia.

This sociological hypothesis is the best one to explain different outcomes of autocracy promotion. Saudi Arabia, Iran and Cuba only applied traditional diplomacies: with indirect or direct military support of their allies. China and Venezuela preferred modern

foreign policies with diplomacy. Russia, Turkey and Egypt combined traditional (violent) and modern (diplomatic) approaches to autocracy promotion.

Western democratic governments forgot both (pre-1945) traditional and (post-1945) modern foreign policies. Since the 2010s, Usa and European states are applying 'post-modern' diplomacies in the Middle East (Fossati 2017). Their diplomacies are far from promoting both interests (like in the bipolar system) and values, typical of the post-1989 world order project. Trump and Biden abandoned the post-1989 hard power approach that pushed them to start some 'just wars' in the Middle east (like in Iraq and Libya); in Kuwait and Afghanistan also interests mattered. After their passive reactions to the Arab Spring and their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021, Western governments applied 'politically correct' foreign policies, by promoting only pluri-national states (in both Ukraine and Middle East) and by supporting 'weak' actors (like Zelensky). Obama and Biden have not been able to solve conflicts anymore; political correctness led to empty and reluctant diplomacies of a former great power. The Usa lost any 'Grand Strategy' in foreign policy, by combining disinterest and resignation in the Middle East, together with frustration in Ukraine (Fossati 2017, 2019).

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The articles on the case studies of Autocracy promotion will be divided into two numbers:

Number 5:

Rossella Menegol – Autocracy promotion in Latin America: the cases of Cuba and Venezuela.

Francesco Gabrielli – Autocracy promotion in Russia's foreign policy: a comparison between Armenia and Belarus.

Priscilla Tonetto – Chinese autocracy promotion towards Myanmar and Thailand.

Giulia Morelli – L'autocracy promotion dell'Arabia Saudita.

Number 6:

Lisa Michelutto – Egyptian autocracy promotion in Libya and Tunisia.

Giada Canzut – The autocracy promotion of Turkey in Northern Africa, Middle East, and Caucasus.

Autocracy promotion in Latin America: the cases of Cuba and Venezuela

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La promozione dell'autocrazia in America Latina: i casi di Cuba e Venezuela

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Abstract

The following article will examine the phenomenon of autocracy promotion in Latin America, focusing on Cuba and Venezuela, two countries that have played an active role in the region with the aim of increasing their influence, trying to export the political ideology and extreme left economic institutions that still characterises them. The main historical events of the two countries will be pointed out, which is essential to understand the nature of the close relationship between them. Furthermore, the article will highlight the main consequences of this alliance, both at regional and international level, it will show how the cooperation between Cuba and Venezuela has reached all fields, economic, political, social and military and it will examine the main tools used to achieve common goals and interests. There are many important issues to take into account when we talk about autocracy promotion: this paper focuses on the cases in which this phenomenon was successful, highlighting how the Venezuelan and Cuban influence has transformed many countries. Finally, an analysis of the current Latin American scenario will be carried out.

Keywords

Autocracy promotion, Latin America, Authoritarian regimes, Cuba, Venezuela.

Riassunto

Nel seguente articolo verrà preso in esame il fenomeno dell'autocracy promotion in America Latina, focalizzando l'attenzione su Cuba e Venezuela, due paesi che in passato hanno svolto un ruolo attivo nella regione con lo scopo di aumentare la propria influenza cercando di esportare l'ideologia politica e le istituzioni economiche di estrema sinistra che ancora li caratterizza. Verranno analizzati gli eventi principali del passato di ciascuno dei due paesi, elemento fondamentale per comprendere la natura della stretta relazione che li unisce, inoltre verranno messe in luce le principali conseguenze di questa alleanza sia a livello regionale che internazionale. Si vedrà come la cooperazione tra Cuba e Venezuela ha raggiunto tutti gli ambiti, economico, politico, sociale e militare e verranno esaminati quali sono i principali strumenti utilizzati per il raggiungimento dei valori ed interessi comuni. Si esamineranno gli aspetti fondamentali dell'autocracy promotion dei due paesi focalizzando l'attenzione sui casi in cui ebbe successo, evidenziando i cambiamenti che provocò l'influenza venezuelana e cubana nei paesi ricettori e le conseguenze generate, visibili ancora al giorno d'oggi. Infine, verrà svolta un'analisi dello scenario latinoamericano attuale.

Parole chiave

Promozione delle autocrazie, America latina, Regimi autoritari, Cuba, Venezuela.

Introduction

In the last few decades, many studies and research have been arguing about the phenomenon of autocracy promotion, given that the number of hybrid or non-democratic regimes is constantly increasing. As *Freedom House*'s research show, democracy

has suffered a decline in recent years: in 2020 there was the fifteenth consecutive drop in freedoms all over the world, confirming the recession of democracy ongoing since 2006 (Repucci and Slipowitz, 2021) and, as a result, democratic institutions began to face several threats due to the resurgence of authoritarianism worldwide. The spread of democracy, implemented through the processes of contagion, control, political conditionality and incentives for democracy (Fossati, 2018a) began to deal with a "*serious rival*" (Burnell, 2010). In fact, there was a real increase and strengthening of authoritarian regimes, which are able to defend their power with the support (military, economic or diplomatic assistance) of equally authoritarian external powers. The word "autocracy promotion" refers precisely to this support: Peter Burnell defines autocracy promotion as "the deliberate attempt to influence a regime in an anti-democratic direction and the spread of authoritarian values across borders, together with the assumption of authoritarian governance models and their institutions" (Burnell, 2010, p.34). Vanderhill defines autocracy promotion as "a situation in which an actor actively supports illiberal ruling classes, groups or regimes, through direct assistance" (Vanderhill, 2013, p.23).

Over the years, in different regions of the world have emerged different autocratic centres, in which one or more authoritarian regimes attempt to expand their power and influence in neighbouring countries. As regards Latin America, the phenomenon of autocracy promotion is particularly present in two countries: Cuba and Venezuela, both authoritarian regimes that support each other and promote autocracy with the aim of increasing their influence regionally and globally, trying to export their political ideology and their economic institutions to other countries.

Cuba and Venezuela have carried out autocracy promotion towards each other but also towards other Latin American countries, sometimes successfully and sometimes without results, as will be seen in this article. In order to better understand the mechanism of autocracy promotion carried out by Cuba and Venezuela and the close relationship established over the years, it is necessary to analyse the political history of each of the two countries.

Cuba

Over the past sixty years, Cuba was the protagonist of many events that have considerably affected international relations. In 1959 the guerrilla warfare carried out by the *26th of July Movement* overthrew the military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista ensuring the triumph of the Revolution and the establishment of an authoritarian single-party communist regime. The new Cuban president Fidel Castro implemented great changes in the political and economic structure of the country, with the aim of introducing socialist economic institutions. Castro launched an agrarian reform that included the expropriation of landowners' lands in favour of peasants, eliminated the private property and nationalised foreign ownerships. For the United States the establishment of a communist regime was a great threat, given that they were in the midst of the Cold War and Cuba was only a few kilometres from US soil. Within a short time, Washington broke off diplomatic relations between the two countries and established an economic embargo against the island, seriously affecting the Cuban economy. At the same time, Cuba and the Soviet Union began to build ever-closer relations: militarily, by sending weapons and war equipment and economically, by selling sugar in exchange for oil at a reduced price. The Soviet Union was Cuba's lifeline to emerge from international isolation and to save its economy. All ended up in 1989 when the Soviet Union collapsed and Cuba faced once again marginalisation and economic crisis. The serious crisis of Cuban economy lasted for about five years (the first half of the 90's), a period known as the *período especial en tiempos de paz* during which food consumption and the purchase of essential good were limited and restrictions were applied on hydrocarbons, causing major disruptions throughout the country.

The communist regime faced an ideological crisis too, given the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. The collapse of the Soviet model generated an existential crisis for many left-wing parties in the region which, like Cuba, had to thoroughly reassess their ideological foundations, political programmes and strategies for the future (Campos, 2011). Despite this, the Cuban Revolution survived and this was possible thanks to the strong personalistic dimension of that regime. The concentration of power in the hands of Fidel Castro made possible the preservation of socialism as the basis of economic institutions, unlike other countries that had to abandon it. So, it is possible to say

that Cuba represents a communist regime also characterised by neopatrimonialism (Fossati, 2018b).

When Raúl Castro replaced his brother in 2006, the socialist economic institutions and the one-party regime survived, despite the adaptation of the government to the new regional and international scenario and the implementation of some (limited) market opening measures (the possibility of using mobile phones, the access to the internet, the increase of wages and pensions, etc.). Even when Raúl decided to hand over the leadership to Miguel Díaz-Canel, putting an end to the era of the Castro brothers, there was no significant change in the political and social structure of the country, given that the new president always remained faithful to communist party.

Venezuela

The central element to take into account when we talk about Venezuela is oil, since it is the country with the largest oil reserves in the world; this factor will be a constant in both the economic and political analysis of the country.

Like Cuba, Venezuela faced a period of military dictatorship as well, and it was under Marcos Pérez Jiménez from 1948 to 1958, who was overthrown by a popular uprising which allowed the return to democracy through general elections. Since then, a parliamentary democracy was maintained in Venezuela for about forty years.

During the 1970s the Venezuelan economy grew strongly and steadily as a result of rising oil prices, but since the 1980s the situation changed due to the economic recession caused by the Latin American foreign debt crisis in 1982. The crisis caused reduced imports and wages, high unemployment and inflation: measures such as controlling public spending and money supply were taken but without opening up to foreign trade, preserving the protectionist economic institutions of the Isi (*Import Substitution Industrialization*) characterised by a strong trade closure and (in the 1950s and 1960s) also by radical economic populism (Fossati, 2018a). This situation, compounded by a sharp fall in oil prices, put a stop on the economic growth in Venezuela. After 1989, the social-democratic President Perez launched a package of radical liberal reforms, managed by some technicians called 'IESA boys'[1]. The population was not used to the sacrifices of austerity and a series of riots and protests occurred in February 1989. These pro-

[1)] The 'IESA boys' were a group of liberal economists who came from the *Instituto de Estudios Superiores de Administración* (IESA) and they controlled

the Ministry of Economy and the Central Bank in the early 1990s. The leader of the IESA boys was Moisés Naím, a Venezuelan writer and journalist.

tests were suppressed and the reforms continued, with some success in their initial phase.

In February 1992 there was a military coup against Carlos Andrés Pérez's government organised by Hugo Chávez, founder of the Revolutionary Bolivarian Movement-200. Chávez demanded an end to the liberal reforms put in place by the 'IESA boys' and he obtained the dismissal of this economists group but he was imprisoned. A second coup in November guaranteed Chavez's release. It was clear that Venezuela's political and social stability was collapsing. After Perez's impeachment in 1993 there was Caldera's presidency (1994-1999) who managed economic policies inconsistently, implementing a form of moderate populism (Fossati, 2021).

In 1998, Hugo Chávez won the elections and with him there was a return to populism and protectionism. Chavez's populism was radical which, unlike moderate populism, is not compatible with democratic principles. In fact, there was the establishment of an authoritarian regime (Fossati, 2020b). Chavez began to spread his thoughts and ideals, based on a populist, revolutionary and anti-US rhetoric, making economic reforms based on a partial socialism. In the political sphere, the new President saw to it that a new constitution was approved, following a national referendum for the Constituent Assembly, a body in which the opposition was under-represented. The new Constitution strengthened presidentialism (extending the term of office from 5 to 6 years), abolished the Senate, limited parliamentary control over the military apparatus and reduced the autonomy of institutions such as the Supreme Court, the Central Bank and the National Electoral Council. Chavez increased the presence of the State in the economic and social spheres, but despite the authoritarian practices implemented (restriction of civil liberties, control of the judiciary) and the concentration of power in the hands of the president, the regime was not fully authoritarian but hybrid, because it was legitimised by citizens in the elections. During Chavez's presidency Venezuela became an example of 'competitive authoritarianism' in the sense that the main party (PSUV) competed against opposition parties in general elections but at the same time weakened the control mechanisms, reducing the scope of action of the opposition (Corrales, 2015). It was with Maduro that Venezuela implemented a full authoritarian regime even if not with a single party system like Cuba[2].

In the economic field, unemployment remained low and wages were high until 2008 when oil prices fell sharply. Since then,

[2)] According to Freedom House's data for 2022 Venezuela is classified as a non-free country, with a score of

14/100, where civil liberties and human rights are not guaranteed. The level of repression of opposition is very high, as evidenced by the numerous arrests, attacks and impediments to participate in political activities. As regards Cuba, the presence of a one-party system controlling all spheres of society and limiting freedom of expression clearly shows that the Cuban regime is full-fledged an authoritarian regime. Not surprisingly, its score on the Freedom House scale is even lower than Venezuela's (12/100): there is no political pluralism in Cuba, as all parties are banned (except the Communist Party), independent media are prohibited and dissidents are imprisoned or risk their lives. The Freedom House report (2022) attributes both Venezuela and Cuba a score of 1/40 for political rights while for civil liberties Venezuela has a rating of 13/60 and Cuba 11/60.

taxes have risen, wages have fallen, inflation has increased, and electricity has been rationed, causing a series of blackouts across the country and popular discontent that led to riots and protests. The former vice-president Nicolas Maduro, the new leader of the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (established by Chavez in 2007), became the country's president in the elections following Chavez's death (from cancer) in 2013. Maduro did not have the same charisma as Chavez and the economic crisis deteriorated to the point where basic necessities became difficult to find. Since 2014 there have been popular protests promoted by various members of the opposition parties (led by the right-wing leader Guaidó) and especially by students. The repression by the armed forces left an estimated 300 deaths.

Venezuela's foreign policy has always been conditioned by its dependence on oil and the related price variation. Being the main source of wealth, the policies implemented by the various governments have been structured according to oil revenues. When Hugo Chavez came to power, foreign policy began to be characterised by the ideological component of the radical left (Manichean), producing a revision of principles, objectives and alliances. In previous years Venezuela maintained a very good relationship with the United States, the main buyer of oil, but under Chavez's presidency relations deteriorated because of changes introduced in the oil sector that conflicted with US interests. Chavez, in fact, nationalised the PDVSA company, founded in 1975, which managed the exploration, production, refining and export of Venezuelan oil.

For Venezuela, oil has been an important tool for acting in the international arena. For this reason, we speak of *petrodiplomacy* (or *diplomacia del petroléo*) to refer to the instrumental use that Venezuela has made of this resource. Oil diplomacy has been a constant in Venezuelan politics since the 1960s, but it was during the presidency of Hugo Chavez that it was exploited to the full. Chavez's petrodiplomacy consisted of using oil, sold at favourable prices, to gain political influence, votes, regional and international support. Venezuelan cooperation was involved in different areas but worth highlighting the trade and aid offered to ALBA member countries (Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines).

Venezuela is a *rentista state*, a term used to refer to countries that obtain revenues from non-productive economic activities and that in most cases more than 40% of revenues derive from a single resource. The main problem of a *rentista state* is the great external dependence in addition to the fact that it relies on only one main source of revenue. This fuelled a strong corruption which infected not only government and public administration officials, but also parties and trade unions even during the democratic phase[3].

[3] According to Transparency International data, Venezuela has a score of 15/100 on the corruption scale (where 100 indicates the absence of corruption), a decrease of 4 points since 2012. Venezuela is also in 176th place in the ranking of 180 countries, in which the last represents the most corrupt.

The relationship between Cuba and Venezuela

Cuba and Venezuela have many similarities both historically and politically, for example:

Dictatorship: both countries had military dictatorships (Fulgencio Batista in Cuba and Marcos Pérez Jiménez in Venezuela).

Attempts to seize power by force: in 1992 Chavez attempted a coup to overthrow the government of Carlos Andres Perez, as well as Castro stormed the Moncada Barracks on 26 July 1953.

Two military men who became charismatic leaders (Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez): for both characters, the political image is explicitly associated with the figure of the military leader (Oliva Campos 2011).

The political ideology of the extreme left: communism for Cuba and radical populism for Venezuela. The similarities between Chavismo and Castroism are numerous even if in Cuba it was possible to establish a one-party communist regime while Chavez's Venezuela was initially a hybrid regime characterised by radical populism and partial socialism.

Authoritarianism: both Venezuela and Cuba are currently considered to be countries with authoritarian regimes in which the fundamental freedoms and human rights of citizens are not guaranteed[4].

Today the two countries are close allies, but in the past they were strong competitors and in some cases even rivals, before becoming good collaborators and business partners. During the years of democracy in Venezuela, the Cuban communist regime

[4] The latest Freedom House report gives both Venezuela and Cuba a score of 1/40 for political rights while for civil liberties Venezuela has a rating of 13/60 and Cuba 11/60.

often posed a threat. Fidel always showed a strong interest in Venezuela, especially for its oil reserves. In fact, even before the arrival of Chavez, Cuba provided intelligence services to Venezuelan communist groups that were financed and trained by Castro.

Under Romulo Betancourt's presidency (1954-1964), Venezuela's primary objective was the consolidation of democracy and for this it was necessary to put an end to relations with authoritarian governments around the world (Betancourt doctrine), so there was a clear departure from Cuba. At that time, relations between Venezuela and the United States were close, and therefore, in order not to jeopardise this relationship, Betancourt became the main accuser of the Cuban regime, especially regarding interference in internal affairs of Venezuela and other countries (Romero, 2011). In 1961, Venezuela was one of the countries that voted to expel Cuba from the OAS, starting economic sanctions. The motivation for expulsion was the support that the Cuban government was offering to the revolutionary guerrilla movement in Venezuela. Venezuela's far-left political forces began an armed struggle against the regime, as Betancourt declared the Communist Party and the Revolutionary Left Movement illegals. For the Cuban communist regime was the perfect moment to support extreme left-wing movements in the country, with the aim of expanding its influence and ideology. Despite this, Cuba's attempt at autocracy promotion towards Venezuela was unsuccessful: President Rafael Caldera (1969-1974) decided to expand relations with Latin America and the Caribbean. The Betancourt doctrine was abandoned and the conflict between Cuba and Venezuela did not escalate. In the following years, relations were normalised: economic sanctions were lifted, diplomatic and trade relations were re-established and a trilateral oil agreement was signed between Venezuela and the Soviet Union to send oil to Cuba.

Since Chavez's victory in the 1998 presidential elections, Cuba and Venezuela have established a strong alliance and cooperation in all areas (economic, political, social and military). Initially, relations between the two countries were essentially bilateral, focused on trade agreements and on the ideological component (socialism, anti-Americanism and anti-imperialism), but then the objectives of the alliance widened with the intention of expanding its ideology and political model to other Latin American countries. The close ties that were established between Cuba and Venezue-

la replaced the historical relationship that Caracas had with the United States: from 1998 the communist regime became a model to follow for Venezuela and was an important source of aid. For Cuba, too, the alliance became crucial, particularly for the supply of cheap oil.

In 2004, ALBA (initially *'Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas*', but in 2009 it became '*Alianza Bolivariana de los Pueblos de Nuestra América*'), an alliance of far-left governments in Latin America, was founded. Both countries were looking for an alternative, anti-liberal and anti-American regional integration. Created by Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro, the ALBA represented a process of cooperation with a political and strategic purpose: it was an extreme left-wing alliance, aimed at coalescing the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean under the Bolivarian ideology, opposing US initiatives (in particular the ALCA, Área *de Libre Comercio de las Américas*). The following countries joined the organisation: Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador (withdrawn in 2018), Honduras (expelled in 2009), Granada, Nicaragua, Saint Lucia, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Venezuela.

The ALBA is based on five strategic axes: energy (since oil is one of the main elements of the alliance, used by Venezuela as a tool to promote regional integration); social projects (the missions) which were also extended to most of the ALBA countries; the *Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos* (TCP) signed in 2006 with the aim of opposing liberalism and traditional free trade treaties; Telesur, the Venezuelan television channel loaded with ideological content; the ALBA Bank, whose capital is allocated to cultural, health and educational projects.

Autocracy promotion of the two countries

The alliance between Cuba and Venezuela has acquired strategic importance both bilaterally and in cooperation with other Latin American countries. In addition to supporting each other and sharing the same authoritarian methods, these two countries have been and continue to be, even individually, autocracy promoters to other countries in the region.

Before analysing specifically how Cuba and Venezuela have promoted autocracy, it is worth examining what underlies autocracy promotion and through what methods and mechanisms it is carried out. There are three main motivations for autocrats to support non-democratic allies: ideological commonality, fear of democratic contagion and economic interests (Yakouchyk, 2016). Regarding the ideological motivation, it must be said that with the end of the Cold War it was less and less present, but it was particularly important in the case of Venezuela during the Chavismo era, with the promotion of Bolivarism in Latin America. On the other hand, fear of democratic contagion consists in undermining attempts at democratisation in a country to prevent allied authoritarian regimes from losing their authority and going through crises. The last motivation, economic interests, is the preponderant one and in the case of Venezuela it has played an important role: the sale of oil by the Venezuelan regime is vital for many regimes. The three motivations analysed are united by a fundamental variable: the strengthening of power and influence at regional level.

In this regard, it is useful to consider the concept of authoritarian gravity centres (AGCs), which refers to the attraction and contagion that some regimes exert towards other geographically neighbouring countries. The external actor that exerts attraction towards other countries has the material capacity to spread autocratic ideas, norms, institutional elements and techniques and has a great willingness to influence its neighbours in the region by occupying a central position (Kneuer and Demmelhuber, 2020). With Chavez, as will be seen, Venezuela became an AGC in Latin America.

In parallel with democratic promotion, autocracy promotion can be carried out in four ways: through incentives (economic and/or military aid), economic blackmail (negative sanctions), through spontaneous emulation or through direct military interventions. The processes through which regimes support each other can be synthesised in the four arenas of International Relations: cultural, economic, political and military. Cultural cooperation is based on common values, which have been central to Latin America, and were even more strong in the case of Cuba and Venezuela, because of their shared *'caribeña'* identity. Economic support is one of the main ones, particularly as regards the supply of ener-

gy resources. At the political level, support can be expressed in various forms: with support within the United Nations through diplomatic tools such as the exchange of votes, with media coverage in favour of authoritarian regimes and with support in local political elections to increase the chances of victory for their allies and conceal any fraud. Military support is carried out with the supply of arms, troops and military equipment with the aim of increasing security but also to facilitate repression and block revolts and/or democratisation attempts.[5]

[5] K. Yakouchyk (2017), Beyond autocracy promotion: a review, 'Political Studies Review', May 2019, vol.17, no.2, pp. 147-160.

One of the most frequent methods used by authoritarian regimes to ensure that their power does not diminish and can be strengthened outside their borders is the control of information. State control over the media is crucial for autocracy promotion. In authoritarian regimes, information is often monitored by the state, which censors regime-critical contents and mainly transmits messages in favour of it and its allies. An example is the case of the television channel Telesur, founded by Chavez in 2005, based in Venezuela but with international broadcasting. The channel has proved to be an important tool for Venezuelan foreign policy and has received support and funding from other countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Uruguay. It also shares information with other TV chains such as Al-Jazeera, RT in Russia and CCTV in China. The main purpose of the channel is to oppose the US media and compete with 'imperialist' information. The channel is considered to be a real means of political propaganda because it is loaded with ideological content.

Cuba's autocracy promotion

Cuban foreign policy has always been structured according to the objectives and interests of the State and is extremely marked by the conflictual relationship with the United States. The Cuban regime wanted to remain faithful to the socialist principles of the Revolution, so it faced many difficulties in integrating and relating with other countries, also due to the propaganda put in place by the United States to denigrate and make the regime more and more isolated. Nevertheless, over the years the regime managed to diversify its foreign policy without undermining the system established with the Revolution. Cuba developed a strong international activism with the aim of "exporting the Revolution", ac-

companied by a marked nationalism and influenced by the confrontation with the hegemonic power of the United States.

Since the 1960s, autocracy promotion has been a fundamental element of Cuban foreign policy: the communist regime supported far-left governments and trained revolutionary movements not only in Latin America but also in Africa. In this case, Cuban autocracy promotion falls into the category of incentives, as it was implemented through military assistance and logistical support to guerrilla groups during colonial and post-colonial wars (Prevost, 2011).

During the Cold War, the main factor behind Cuban autocracy promotion was the ideology: aid offered to other countries was used as a tool to forge links with potential communist regimes with socialist economic institutions in order to increase their influence. In addition, Cuba needed to find an ally in the region to carry on its fight against the United States, so it offered help to various extreme left-wing movements in some countries in Central and South America.

After 1989, with the fall of the USSR, Cuba, remained without its main ally, was forced to moderate its revolutionary attitude because it needed to establish relations in the international arena in order to emerge from isolation. With the end of the Cold War, the Cuban regime was forced to establish relations with other countries without taking into account the communist ideology and without relying on regime sharing, so it started to cooperate with different types of regimes, including democracies. For this reason, after 1989 Cuba ceased to openly support revolutionary groups and governments, weakening the promotion of autocracy and becoming mainly a beneficiary of autocracy promotion.

Cuba attempted to carry out autocracy promotion towards Venezuela in the years of democracy, again through incentives, by giving support to armed military groups. The forces of the extreme left, which had been excluded from Venezuelan politics by Romolo Betancourt, organised themselves in an armed guerrilla warfare against the government which would last until the second half of the 1960s. The help offered by Cuba by sending volunteers proved useless, partly due to the fact that in 1973 President Caldera put in place a pacification process by integrating the subversive forces into Venezuelan politics. It is clear that Cuban autocra-

cy promotion did not succeed in Venezuela but, on the contrary, caused Cuba's expulsion from the OAS.

On the other hand, Cuba's autocracy promotion had great results in Nicaragua in 1979 with the Sandinista Revolution. The *Sandinista National Liberation Front* (FSLN), a communist and anti-American military group, put an end to the dictatorial Somoza dynasty by installing an extreme left-wing government. Cuba saw in the Sandinista Front an opportunity to export the communist regime and to strike the United States, allies and supporters of the Somozas. For this reason, since the foundation of the FSLN in 1962 Fidel communicated with the leaders of the group. The Cuban regime began to train and send human resources to the FSLN and keeped doing it even after the victory of the Sandinistas and the establishment of the new government, an aid which was essential for Nicaragua's development. In this case, Cuban aid was not only limited to the sending of soldiers, but there was also political assistance: in 1978, Cuban leaders mediated the unification of the FSLN, which had been divided into three fractions since 1973. In this way, once in power, the revolutionaries could count on the support of the Cuban regime, both for material aid and for political advice and counsel (Domínguez Reyes, 1990). Again, Cuba's autocracy promotion falls into the category of incentives, since it was implemented through military, economic and political aid.

The victory of the Sandinista Revolution triggered a wave of optimism throughout the Latin American extreme left. Between the 1970s and 1980s, Cuba offered support to communist opposition groups in El Salvador (*Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional*) and Guatemala (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*). In these two cases, however, autocracy promotion did not have the same results as in Nicaragua: The Revolution did not win and the establishment of an extreme left-wing government did not take place, but there were two terrible civil wars.

As soon as the Sandinistas won in 1979, Cuba began to show its support and solidarity with Daniel Ortega's government by sending teachers, nurses, military advisers and later agreements were signed for economic, scientific and technical assistance (Domínguez Reyes, 1990). Ortega's plan was to bring about a change in the country's economic and social institutions, thus the

first reforms were introduced, such as the nationalisation of industries, agrarian reform and education reform.

However, it must be specified that Nicaragua did not immediately become an authoritarian regime because Ortega decided to share power with the other military forces that took part in the guerrilla war against Somoza, so the Government Council had a pluralist composition. In 1984, the first presidential elections after the Sandinista Revolution took place and Ortega was elected President of Nicaragua: from that moment there was a progressive centralisation of power in Ortega's hands with the consequent limitation of civil liberties and political rights until 1990.[6]

Cuban military aid was crucial, especially from 1980 when the US began to organise and fund counter-revolutionary groups called *Contras*. The Sandinista army was not ready to face an external threat, so military aid from Cuba and the USSR was needed. The Reagan administration was committed to preventing the emergence of another communist and pro-Cuban regime in Latin America, so from the end of 1981 the CIA began to supply arms to the former military of the Somoza dictatorship, preparing counter-revolutionary forces and organising the fight against the Sandinista regime, called *the Contras*. For the Cuban regime it was important that the Revolution in Nicaragua survived, in order to maintain a secure ally in the region, and the fear of direct intervention by the United States, fuelled by the US invasion of Grenada in 1983, caused a strengthening of Cuban aid to the Sandinista government. Although there is no official data to confirm this, it is estimated that there were more than 2500-3000 Cuban military advisers in Nicaragua, located at all levels of the army and within the Ministry of the Interior (Dominguez Reyes, 1990). The sending of arms by the USSR and the assistance offered by the Cuban military advisers were crucial in transforming the Sandinista army into a significant fighting force (Prevost, 1990). Attacks by the contras throughout the country gave rise to a war that only ended in 1990 with the defeat of the Sandinistas in the elections and the victory of Violeta Chamorro.

After three consecutive electoral defeats (in 1990, 1996 and 2001), Ortega was re-elected President of Nicaragua in 2006 and is still in office after four re-elections, the last one in November 2021. His government is characterised by the complete subordination of institutions and norms to the political project of his

[6] Freedom House data. Status of Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990: *Partly Free* (score: 1= free; 7= not free)
Political Rights: 1979: *5*- 1980: *5*- 1981/82: *6* - 1982/83: *6* - 1983/84: *5* - 1984/85: *5* - 1985/86: *5* - 1986/87: *5* - 1987/88: *5* - 1988/89: *5* - 1990: *3*
Civil Liberties: 1979: *5* - 1980: *5* - 1981/82: *5* - 1982/83: *5* - 1983/84: *5* - 1984/85: *5* - 1985/86: *6* - 1986/87: *5* - 1987/88: *4* - 1988/89: *5* - 1990: *3*

party, the Sandinista National Liberation Front. Already after his first re-election, Ortega gained full control of two key state bodies: The Supreme Court of Justice and the Supreme Electoral Council. In addition, the FSLN's victory in the 2011 elections for a majority in the National Assembly gave the President the possibility of making his term of office almost 'life-long': in 2013 he amended the points in the Constitution that blocked the possibility of a second and third term in succession to the first, establishing strong presidentialism without constitutional restrictions. The situation in Nicaragua was also affected by Venezuela's autocracy promotion: Chavez immediately established strong ties with Ortega, supporting him during the 2005 election campaign and quickly becoming an ally, guide and protector of the new president. Immediately after Ortega's election, the country was incorporated into ALBA and relations with Cuba were re-established, after being weakened under Violeta Chamorro's government.

Venezuela's autocracy promotion

Chavez's goal was to make Venezuela an example to follow in Latin America, promoting the Chavista model based on Bolivarian ideology and radical populism. As soon as he was elected president of the country, he set his project in motion, spreading his ideals based on populist, revolutionary and anti-liberal rhetoric. From the beginning he showed his interest in 'almost' socialist economic institutions until in 2005 he officially proclaimed his *Socialism of the 21st Century*, referring to the political line adopted by him and his party. Chavez strove to change Venezuela's economic institutions and political regime under the umbrella of the Bolivarian Revolution (Kneuer, 2021). The president's economic policies established a system characterised by strong trade protectionism and partial socialism, with some targeted nationalisations, but preserving private property.

Chavez wanted to expand his influence throughout the Latin American region, exporting his revolutionary ideology characterised by an authoritarian political model and protectionist and 'almost' socialist economic institutions (Kneuer, 2021). For this reason, Venezuela's foreign policy from 1998 onwards was characterised by a continuous search for alliances at the regional level,

on the basis of 'revolutionary solidarity'. Rising oil prices gave Chavez the opportunity to help his allies economically and increased his influence in the region by creating trade links through 'petro-diplomacy'. The majority of Venezuela's autocracy promotion was achieved through the *Petrocaribe* alliance, through which the Chavista regime attempted to export its regime model to the region. *Petrocaribe* is an oil alliance founded in 2005 by Chavez and composed of 17 member states. Used as a geopolitical tool by Venezuela, this energy cooperation initiative aimed to transform the Caribbean and Central America into a single negotiating bloc to establish strategic alliances. PDVSA sold oil to Petrocaribe member states, which had 25 years to pay for it, with an interest rate of 1 or 2 per cent. The money sent to Venezuela was paid into the Alba-Caribe Fund and then used for development projects in health, education and energy in the member countries.

In order to achieve his goals, Chavez founded the ALBA together with Fidel Castro: bringing together several Latin American countries in a single organisation based on a left-wing ideology perfectly suited to the Venezuelan president's project. After transforming the country's political and economic system, it was necessary to export the transformation process to other Latin American countries through autocracy promotion.

Chavez attempted to create a Latin American bloc to counter US hegemony and he did so by reminding the ideals of Simón Bolívar: the dream of a united Latin America, the idea of regional integration and the independence of peoples, the principles of unity and solidarity (Kneuer, 2021).

As regarding the relationship with the Cuban regime[7], from 1999 it was Venezuela under Chavez that implemented autocracy promotion towards Cuba, which from 1989 became mainly a receiver and no longer an active promoter as it had been during the Cold War. Chavez's autocracy promotion was especially successful in Bolivia and Ecuador, where two hybrid regimes were established, which imitated Venezuela's populism, although in a more moderate form.[8] Venezuela's autocracy promotion was weaker than the Cuban one and had fewer results. It was implemented through *soft power* (economic incentives), not *hard power* (direct military intervention). Nevertheless, Venezuela played a dominant role in economic incentives due to the enormous presence of oil in the territory, which allowed the country to use it

[7] It should be noted that cooperation between Cuba and Venezuela has reached all areas: politics, culture, energy, health, economics and telecommunications. The main agreement concerned the sending of qualified Cuban health and educational personnel to assist the less developed sectors of Venezuelan society and in return Venezuela provided oil and equipment necessary for the development of the island. Another central element were the social projects undertaken in Venezuela to help the poorest: the *misiones*, which, in addition to assisting a large part of Venezuelan society with the help of Cuban professionals,were also an instrument of Bolivarian ideology. The main missions were undertaken in the fields of health and education, for example, the *Misión Barrio Adentro* made it possible to build new hospitals and health centres, the *Misión Robinson* achieved the literacy of about one and a half million Venezuelans and with the *Misión Milagro* more than three million people recovered their sight.

[8] F. Fossati (2020), Populism as the post-Marxist adaptation of leftist Manicheanism, 'Revista euro latinoamericana de análisis social y político', June 2020, vol.1, no.1, pp. 87-104.

instrumentally to promote autocracy and increase power at the regional level.

In the area of military incentives, however, the Cuban regime has the upper hand: thanks to the experience gained during the Cold War years, it sent its military to train the Venezuelan army and keep it under control.[9] It is no coincidence that during the 2002 demonstrations and the post-2014 'democratic revolution' the armed forces maintained their loyalty to Chavez and Maduro. Finally, in the political sphere there was more symmetry as the two countries have supported each other since 1999, although Venezuela has been more adept to exert more influence towards other Latin American countries thanks to oil diplomacy.

The first country towards which Chavez implemented autocracy promotion was Bolivia. The support given to Evo Morales (elected president of Bolivia in 2006) and his party MAS (*Movimiento al Socialismo*) was already evident during the election campaign, when Chavez provided funding, recommendations and security personnel. As Morales reported in an interview, Chavez's political support was crucial as he taught him, through his advice, to fight the 'American empire' and to turn the ruling elite into the opposition (Kneuner, 2021). When Morales won the elections, Chavez's goal had been achieved: Bolivia was governed by a president who shared the populist ideology of the extreme left. The Venezuelan president began to steer Morales towards a constitutional change in the country: in 2006, Chavez publicly declared that in Bolivia 'the old system had collapsed and it was necessary to create a new democracy, a new republic and a new society' and that Venezuela was an example to follow. For Morales, the Venezuelan president represented not only a political ally but also a moral guide, and in fact the new president began to introduce changes in Bolivia's political and institutional set-up following the Chavista model. In 2006, the Bolivarian Congress issued a special law to convene a Constitutional Assembly, where Morales' coalition had a majority (De la Torre, 2017). Nevertheless, the Constitution was reformed through negotiation with the Congress, which was controlled by opposition parties. The constitutional reform process ended in 2009 when the new Constitution was finally approved, introducing the so-called *'indigenist model'*, the rejection of privatisation, the nationalisation of the energy sector and the increase of the presidential term to 5 years (Article 168

[9] In addition to sending doctors and teachers, Cuba also sent intelligence personnel to work throughout Venezuelan territory. An intelligence service was created (*Dirección General de Contrainteligencia Militar*, DGCIM) which, thanks to the assistance of the Cuban military, ensured the formation of an espionage system to watch over the Venezuelan troops. A paramilitary organisation, *Los Círculos Bolivarianos*, was also set up with the aim of defending the Bolivarian Revolution, which had the same structure and shared the same violent methods as the *Comités de Defensa de la Revolución* created by the Cuban communist regime.

of the Constitution lifts the ban on direct presidential re-election and allows for an automatic second term) (Kneuer, 2021).

Following the same methods used with Morales, Chavez also supported Rafael Correa and his populist party *Movimiento Alianza País* in the 2006 presidential elections in Ecuador. The Venezuelan president sent economic aid to the candidate in the election campaign and a few months before the elections there was a meeting between the two in Caracas, during which agreements were prepared to guarantee assistance to Ecuador in the field of hydrocarbons. Following Chavez's example, once he had won the elections, Correa used the referendum mechanism to authorise the convocation of a Constitutional Assembly, despite congressional opposition to the use of this method (De la Torre, 2017). Unlike in Bolivia, the Constitution was completely reformed according to the will of the President.

In these two cases, Chavez's autocracy promotion towards Bolivia and Ecuador falls mainly into the category of incentives (economic aid and political assistance during the electoral campaigns and after the election).

According to de la Torre (2017) Morales and Correa learned populist strategies from Chavez to make the regime's transition effective and strengthen it:

- the convocation of a Constituent Assembly to initiate a process of constitutional reform: the new Constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador established a new type of democracy, in which elections were maintained but power was strongly concentrated in the hands of the President;
- call frequent elections to consolidate their power;
- the use of laws in a discriminatory way in order to colonise civil society, silence critical voices and attack the opposition;
- resorting to state intervention to redistribute wealth and reduce poverty;
- the orientation of its foreign policy towards anti-liberalism, national sovereignty and Latin American integration: indeed, both Bolivia and Ecuador quickly joined the ALBA.

Chavez was able to offer economic support to his new allies thanks to the oil revenues that Venezuela was enjoying at the time. But all this gave rise to a system of corruption that spread

from Venezuela to other Latin American countries. The money sent by the Chavista regime was to be used for social projects, but of course it was also used to reward the ruling elite: in Bolivia, for example, the money ended up directly in the hands of the president's minister and was used to strengthen Morales' image in the country (Kneuer, 2021). However, Morales and Correa's populism remained more moderate than Chavez's: in Ecuador and Bolivia, the main economic indicators (e.g. inflation) remained under control, avoiding authoritarian transition. In fact, the two countries remained hybrid regimes[10] (Fossati, 2020).

As mentioned above, Chavez also carried out autocracy promotion towards Nicaragua, especially after 2007 with the re-election of Daniel Ortega. A political and economic friendship was established between Chavez and Ortega, based on anti-liberal rhetoric and the fight for the freedom of Latin American peoples (Bergez, 2018). Nicaragua's immediate incorporation into the ALBA was another success for Chavez, as his project continued to expand further and further. So began the cooperation between Nicaragua and Venezuela, both in the commercial sphere (e.g. with the sale of oil) but also in the social sphere: *'Operación Milagro'* enabled a large part of the population to recover their sight and the literacy campaign *'Yo si puedo'* succeeded in literating more than 80% of the Nicaraguan population (Ayerdis, 2018)[11].

With Chavez, the 'authoritarian transition' began in Venezuela, starting with an electoral democracy (which lasted until 1998), which then turned into an electoral autocracy, until it reached full autocracy. In Nicaragua, the process of regression of democracy under Ortega was similar, while in Ecuador, under Correa, there was a major recession but no full autocracy. In Bolivia, the regression took place less rapidly, but with the election of Morales in 2006, started an electoral autocracy. In all these countries, Chavez was a guide and an inspiration (Kneuer, 2021).

Under Chavez's presidency, Venezuela played the role of an 'authoritarian gravity centre' as it succeeded in spreading its ideology, authoritarian methods and institutional strategies to several countries in the region, as the cases of Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua show. The two strengths of Chavez's autocracy promotion were basically oil revenues and his charisma.

As regards the autocracy promotion carried out by Maduro, it must be said that it was less effective both because the new pres-

10) Freedom House data:

- Bolivia: before Morales was elected, the country was classified as free, with a score from 1 to 3. From 2003 onwards, it was considered partially free, with a fixed score of 3, which remained constant until 2021, with a slight deterioration only in 2014 and 2015.
- Ecuador: the country was classified as partially free in 2000, when the score stabilised at 3. Only in 2016 there was a deterioration, with a score of 4 for civil liberties.

11) Both projects are part of social missions, implemented with the help of Cuban professionals.

ident had less charisma and because Venezuela lost the regional influence it had, due to the serious economic, political and institutional crisis that hit the country[12].

Ortega's regime in Nicaragua remained hybrid until 2015 but it increased the authoritarian methods in 2016, when power was concentrated in the hands of the president through control of parliament and the Supreme Court.[13] This provoked a series of protests in 2018 which were brutally repressed killing more than 400 people. As Guanella (2021) states, in Nicaragua there is a dictatorship camouflaged as democracy: there are still elections but there is a real manhunt against those who oppose the Ortega government, which is now in its fourth consecutive term.

Starting from June 2021 repression has become even stronger: in the run-up to the elections on 7 November (from which Ortega emerged victorious once again), opposition candidates were hunted down, including Cristiana Chamorro, the daughter of the former president, who is currently under house arrest. Any critical voices were silenced, several academics, journalists and activists were arrested with the aim of avoiding new riots and keeping Ortega in power, despite his declining popularity.

The alliance between Nicaragua and Cuba continued and the two regimes are still supporting each other. When the European Union imposed sanctions against Nicaragua's vice-president and other Nicaraguan citizens, Cuba and Venezuela were quick to condemn the European action and show solidarity with the country. Similarly, when the Cuban regime was hit by a series of protests across the country in July 2021, Ortega showed his support for Cuban President Diaz Canel. Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua share several characteristics, including an extreme left-wing political orientation, the use of authoritarian methods and the repression of dissent.

A significant event was the change of president in Peru, which altered the balance in the region, intensifying relations with Maduro's Venezuela. Following the election of Pedro Castillo to the presidency in July 2021, the new government withdrew from the Lima Group, re-establishing diplomatic relations with Venezuela. The Lima Group was born in 2017 with the aim of supporting the Venezuelan opposition in achieving internal political change and bringing together Latin American countries that do not recognise Maduro as the legitimate president of Venezuela and that support Guaidó. The new Peruvian president clearly showed his

12) After the death of Chavez and the election of Maduro, the relationship with the Cuban regime also changed. Cuba continued to support Maduro's regime, which stands up thanks to Cuban intelligence, as it controlled the military ensuring that they would not speak out in favour of the opposition. Nevertheless, the recent Venezuelan crisis had undermined several aspects of the relationship, for example causing a significant reduction in trade due to Venezuela's lack of resources. Maduro could no longer afford to send oil at preferential prices either to Cuba or to Petrocaribe member countries, causing problems also within the ALBA.

13) Freedom House data showing the increase in the authoritarian nature of Nicaragua since 2016 (became a completely authoritarian country after 2018):

Political Rights: 2015: *4* - 2016: *5* - 2017: *5* - 2018: *6* - 2019: *6* - 2020: *6*

Civil Liberties: 2015: *3* - 2016: *4* - 2017: *4* - 2018: *5* - 2019: *5* - 2020: *5*

intention to change his policy towards Venezuela; in fact, at the end of September 2021 Castillo met with Maduro to define cooperation between the two countries[14]. Castillo also declared that he would work to find a solution to the situation of Venezuelan migrants living in Peru: Maduro proposed to the Peruvian president to cooperate in the implementation of a 'return to homeland' plan with the aim of repatriating thousands of Venezuelans.

Venezuela could implement new strategies of autocracy promotion towards Peru, but given the country's economic and political situation, it is difficult for Maduro to offer economic aid and political assistance in the same way as Chavez did in previous years.

Lopez Obrador also recently offered his help to Pedro Castillo, assuming a major change in the Mexican government's strategy.

[14)] Recently, a government crisis also arose as Peruvian Vice-Chancellor Luis Enrique Chavez departed from the government line, stating that no legitimate authority is recognised in Venezuela, while the Vice-Minister denied this statement, saying that it does not absolutely represent the position of the Peruvian government.

The role of other Latin American governments

The current Venezuelan conflict has also affected the map of alliances in Latin America. Despite the support that most European countries and the United States have given to Guaidó, other countries and paramilitary organisations have remained on Maduro's side. The main ally remains Cuba, whose control over the armed forces allows Maduro to remain in power. As for Colombia, Maduro supported the armed struggle of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), jeopardising the peace agreement signed with the government after more than 50 years of guerrilla warfare, and he also offered material aid to the National Liberation Army (ELN): consequently, these armed rebel groups have maintained their loyalty to the Venezuelan regime, while Colombian President Ivan Duque was among the first to recognise Juan Guaidó as a legitimate president. With the defeat of the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation in El Salvador, Venezuela lost another ally, as the new president Nayib Bukele decided to break off diplomatic relations with the country. Hence, Maduro remains with the support of Ortega's Nicaragua. As regard Mexico, under the previous government of Peña Nieto relations with Venezuela were rather conflictual, but the current president López Obrador, leader of the *Movimiento Regeneración*

Nacional (MORENA, a party further to the left of the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*), initially decided to act as a mediator in the Venezuelan conflict, declaring himself neutral, although he later tilted in favour of Maduro, refusing firstly to sign the Lima Group document denouncing the illegitimacy of the President's new mandate, secondly to apply sanctions and finally to recognise Guaidó. Most European countries continued to support Guaidó, as did the United States with Biden who, contrary to predictions, maintained the same policy line as Trump towards Venezuela, guaranteeing the recognition of Guaidó and condemning Maduro. With the election of the new centre-right president Lacalle Pou in 2020, Uruguay also became part of the list of countries siding with the Venezuelan opposition. Lacalle changed his relations with the countries of the region, adopting a hard-line policy towards left-wing countries such as Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua. In particular, Lacalle immediately showed his support for Guaidó and openly declared his intention to withdraw from the *Mecanismo de Montevideo*, an initiative promoted by former Uruguayan president Vazquez and Lopez Obrador in 2019, aimed at resolving the Venezuelan situation without external interference, promoting internal political dialogue. It is clear, therefore, that Venezuela's political crisis is decisively undermining the balance of Latin America and relations between countries, dividing the region into supporters and opponents of the Maduro regime, without the presence of resolute mediators. As we have seen, Obrador's Mexico initially declared itself to be neutral and aimed at finding a peaceful solution to the crisis, but over time implemented policies that disproved these declarations.

Obrador also showed his support for the Cuban government when the country was hit by protests. When Andrés Manuel López Obrador won the presidential elections in 2018, great changes were introduced in the country, which for the first time in Mexico's modern history was governed by a left-wing president, and the country began to play a fundamental role in the current Latin American scenario. A rapprochement with other left-wing governments in the region began, as shown by the recognition given to Maduro and the decision to offer political asylum to former Bolivian president Evo Morales in 2019. One event that caused quite a stir was Cuban President Diaz Canel's invitation to Mex-

ico in September 2021, which represented a blow to democracy given the lack of free elections on the island for more than 62 years. Similarly, in 2018, the Mexican president invited Maduro, thus hampering Latin America's diplomatic efforts to isolate the Venezuelan president.

On 18 September 2021, the sixth summit of CELAC (*Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños)* took place, during which a kind of division of Latin America into two blocs was noted. On the one hand there are the countries belonging to ALBA (including Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Cuba) and on the other those in the Lima Group (Ecuador, Colombia, Paraguay, Costa Rica). These two factions follow different political lines, often conflicting. During the summit, Uruguayan President Lacalle was very critical of the presidents of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, reproaching their clearly undemocratic political actions (Ortiz, 2021).

In short, Venezuela maintains close relations with Cuba, Nicaragua, Peru and the Bolivia of Luis Arce (MAS party), the new Bolivarian president since November 2020, with whom relations, interrupted with the previous government of Jeanine Añez, were re-established. During the 20th ALBA summit on 14 December, Maduro proposed the start of an economic integration between Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, based on the ALBA Bank and the creation of a common currency (*sucre*). During the summit, there have been accusations against the US government, stating that Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua are 'the victims of attacks by the empire of the north'. These three authoritarian regimes, allied with Arce's Bolivia and Castillo's Peru, share revolutionary and populist rhetoric and form a kind of 'left-wing bloc' in Latin America that influences regional dynamics and democratisation efforts. In contrast, Ecuador with Moreno switched to a pro-democracy and pro-liberal coalition, entering into agreements with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the election of Guillermo Lasso as president in May 2021 brought back the right to power, creating a pro-liberal government.

Conclusions

The analysis carried out highlights the strategic importance of the relationship between Cuba and Venezuela, both bilaterally and in cooperation with other Latin American countries. It

has been seen that autocracy promotion is a central element in the alliance between the two countries and has been implemented through various instruments, among which the ALBA and Petrocaribe stand out. Autocracy promotion, as we saw, can be implemented through four methods: three of *soft power* (incentives, imitation and economic blackmail) and one of hard power (direct military intervention). Over the years, this phenomenon changed according to the international context of the moment or to the internal situation of the country. Until 1989 Cuba was a country that promoted autocracy and implemented autocracy promotion based essentially on the category of incentives (financing and military aid by sending arms and men) but also through political assistance (in the case of Nicaragua). With the end of the Cold War, Cuba became a receiver, while Venezuela, starting with the election of Chavez, began to implement its autocracy promotion, carried out mainly through incentives (such as the political assistance offered to the new presidents Ortega, Morales and Correa)[15]. In the countries where the promotion of autocracy by Cuba and Venezuela was successful (e.g. Nicaragua) profound changes were made to the political and social structure causing a transformation in the equilibrium and dynamics throughout the region. Cuba and Venezuela support authoritarian regimes (such as Ortega's Nicaragua) but are also allied with hybrid regimes (Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru)[16]. It should be noted that Cuba's autocracy promotion has been more rigid and selective, being mainly directed towards other communist (authoritarian) regimes, while Venezuela has also supported hybrid regimes (such as Bolivia and Ecuador) and democracies, such as Cristina Kirchner's Argentina, a populist (moderate) democratic regime. Finally, it has been seen that the current scenario in Latin America is constantly evolving according to internal political changes in the various countries (e.g. the election of a new president and the consequent change in political orientation), causing a transformation of alliances and rivalries in the region.

[15] Chavez's incentives were stronger towards Bolivia (a poorer country), while towards Ecuador they were weaker, since it is an oil-exporting country with a more stable economy.

[16] Freedom House data (2020):

PAESE	CLASSIFICAZIONE (PUNTEGGIO TOTALE)	DIRITTI POLITICI	LIBERTÀ CIVILI
Nicaragua	Non libero (30/100)	10/40	20/60
Bolivia	Parzialmente libero (66/100)	27/40	39/60
Ecuador	Parzialmente libero (67/100)	27/40	40/60
Perù	Parzialmente libero (71/100)	29/40	42/60

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Otat, cris etem resse quam prortem enterte nos vem dinit. Quonvertuam, oca; nox mei iusse achum am qui pecum conicupiost di, pone nemul haet orus se, nihilic iemusquit, que ius bonloctorte, etiquo.

Autocracy promotion in Russia's foreign policy: a comparison between Armenia and Belarus

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La promozione dell'autocrazia nella politica estera russa: un confronto tra Armenia e Bielorussia

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Abstract

Russia's influence in its Near Abroad (called "Bližkoe zarubeže" in Russian) has created a permissive zone, in which the countries within that area can ignore their democratic commitments being aware that their loyalty to Russia can protect them against any possible interference of the US and the EU. The analysis of bilateral relations between Armenia and Russia on one side, and between Russia and Belarus on the other, has led to the identification of the four models of autocracy promotion: spontaneous emulation, hard power efforts (mainly concerning military intervention), rewards (primarily regarding economic assistance) and negative sanctions (or blackmailing). A combination of rewards and punishments has proved to be the most frequent tactic used by the Kremlin, which has also been facilitated by Armenia and Belarus's weak linkage and leverage with Western democracy promoters. Russia's "conservative" diplomacy, which has followed a realist approach, has not resulted in a rigorous autocratic promotion policy, but the Belarusian and Armenian cases demonstrate that in these two (non-democratic) regimes (and also in those of Central Asia) the presence of Russia is stronger than in the democratic ones, such as the Baltic States. Russia's "sanctions" against

Belarus have been less than those directed against Armenia, owing mainly to the former country's proximity to Russia in the cultural arena and the strategic geopolitical location of Belarus in Eastern Europe. Armenia, on the other hand, has also been subject to direct military intervention by Russia, which was however limited to the first Artsakh war.

Keywords

Autocracy promotion, Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Eurasia.

Riassunto

L'influenza della Russia nel suo Estero Vicino (chiamato "Bližkoe zarubeže" in russo) ha creato una zona di permissività, in cui i paesi che vi si trovano all'interno possono ignorare i propri impegni democratici, essendo consapevoli che la loro lealtà alla Russia può schermarli da qualsiasi interferenza da parte degli USA o dell'UE. L'analisi delle relazioni bilaterali tra Armenia e Russia, da un lato, e tra Russia e Bielorussia dall'altro, ha portato all'identificazione dei quattro modelli di autocracy promotion: l'emulazione spontanea, le azioni di hard power (principalmente riguardanti interventi militari), i premi (facenti soprattutto riferimento all'assistenza di tipo economico) e le sanzioni negative (o i ricatti). Una combinazione di premi e sanzioni si è rivelata essere la tattica più frequente utilizzata dal Cremlino, la quale è stata ulteriormente facilitata dai deboli linkage e leverage che Armenia e Bielorussia hanno con i promotori occidentali della democrazia. La diplomazia "conservatrice" della Russia, la quale ha adottato un approccio realista, non è sfociata in una rigida politica di promozione dell'autoritarismo, ma i casi armeno e bielorusso dimostrano che in questi due regimi non democratici (ed anche in quelli dell'Asia Centrale) la presenza della Russia è più forte che nei regimi democratici, come le Repubbliche Baltiche. Le "sanzioni" della Russia contro la Bielorussia sono state meno di quelle dirette contro l'Armenia, dovendo ciò principalmente alla prossimità tra Russia e Bielorussia nell'arena culturale e alla posizione geopolitica strategica della Bielorussia in Europa Orientale. L'Armenia, dall'altro lato, è stata anche oggetto di un intervento militare diretto della Russia, che però si è limitato alla prima guerra dell'Artsakh. .

Parole chiave

Autocracy promotion, Russia, Armenia, Bielorussia, Eurasia.

Introduction

By analyzing Russia's foreign policy in its Near Abroad (called "*Bližkoe zarubeže*" in Russian), this article examines the former's relations with two countries whose institutions are characterized by undemocratic dynamics: Armenia (classified as "hybrid regime") and Belarus (a consolidated authoritarian regime).[1] The stages in which Russia's external action has fostered the persistence of the internally non-democratic regimes, are detected on the empirical basis constituted by the two countries' relations with Moscow, whose foreign policy is marked by the consciousness of being the hegemonic power in its region. The search for a link between Russia's foreign policy and autocracy promotion shall act as the "backbone" of this article, which will eventually lead to the identification of the four models of autocracy promotion: spontaneous emulation, hard power efforts (mainly concerning military intervention), rewards (primarily regarding economic assistance) and negative sanctions (or blackmailing).

Although Moscow's interventionism can be explained primarily on the basis of geopolitical interests, of the calculation of costs associated with the possible defection of a regime (Tolstrup, 2015) and on the search for domestic legitimation (Hale, 2018), autocracy promoters act according to a combination of both values and interests, because aiming at only one of the two risks undermining the relationship among all authoritarian (or non-democratic) regimes concerned. This combination emerges mainly when the promoter seeks to achieve regional hegemony, because it needs legitimation: ideological osmosis can create a deeper bond with the leader. The maintenance of regional hegemony is, however, a dynamic and not necessarily linear process. Therefore, the assumption that Russia's foreign policy has only fostered the emergence of authoritarian regimes in its Near Abroad has to be excluded, but in these regimes (including those of Central Asia) the presence of Russia is stronger than in the democratic ones, such as the Baltic States.

[1)] According to the 2022 Freedom House "Freedom in the World" report, Armenia has a score of 55/100 (23/40 in political rights and 32/60 in civil liberties), while Belarus has a score of 8/100 (2/40 in political rights and 6/60 in civil liberties).

This article does not aim to explain why an authoritarian regime should counteract the possible effects of democracy promotion, but instead it focuses on the methods through which this occurs and tries to outline the factors that determine the choice of one way rather than the other. Given that any authoritarian regime is primarily interested in maintaining its domestic power and external geopolitical influence, a *democratic opening* can become possible also in a country where authoritarianism is fostered from outside. The promotion of hybrid regimes becomes indeed the second best option when support for authoritarianism does not ensure protection from possible contestations by civil society, which in turn is the main actor during the transitional stage until the establishment of the new government, as occurred in the 2018 Armenian velvet revolution. The "third option" entailing support in favor of democratic regimes is not preferable.

In order to clearly highlight the different stages of Belarus's and Armenia's relations with Russia, this article divides the Kremlin's foreign policy into four main periods: from Yeltsin to Putin's first term, and from the Putin-Medvedev diarchy to the current mandate of Putin. Finally, this paper will close the loop trying to evaluate the four above-mentioned methods through which Russia has fostered the presence of hybrid and authoritarian regimes in its Near Abroad.

Armenia's institutional framework and democracy scores

From its independence (1991) until the mid-1990s Armenia improved its political and civil rights performances. From a score of 5 and 5 (political rights and civil liberties) in 1991-92, it went on to 3 and 4 during 1994-95, according to Freedom House. The president's power was further strengthened by the very nature of the Armenian party system, which was atomized and characterized by over 50 political parties registered in 1996. From the mid-1990s the Freedom House score worsened (5 and 4 in 1996-97) and political rights improved only by one point (from 5 to 4) in the shift from the presidency of Ter-Petrosyan to that of Robert Kocharian. After having been reelected in 2003, Kocharian passed the baton to his political ally Serzh Sargsyan (who had

become the leader of the Republican Party - HHK) at the 2008 presidential election. Because of the post-electoral protests and consequent repression ordered by the outgoing president (who also imposed a 20-day curfew), Armenia's performance in terms of political rights and civil liberties worsened, from 5 and 4 to 6 and 4.[2] Serzh Sargsyan was re-elected in 2013 (with 59% of the votes), also obtaining the certification of regularity by the OSCE electoral observation mission. Armenia indeed improved its score in political rights, returning to 5, while the civil rights rating remained unchanged at 4.[3] In 2017, the HHK (pro-Russian conservative) obtained a wide majority conquering 58 seats, thus marginalizing the "Yelk" coalition (pro-european liberal), which was created in 2016 and included three different parties: Bright Armenia, Hanrapetutyun Party, and Civil Contract headed by Nikol Pashinyan. This coalition obtained indeed only 9 seats. In early 2018, Armen Sarkissian (after the vote by the National Assembly) succeeded Serzh Sargsyan to the presidency. The latter was however proposed by the Republican Party as the new Prime Minister, after the then premier Karapetyan had resigned in April that year. Despite the fact that Sargsyan had stated he would not run the country after his last term in office, he was appointed Prime Minister (on April 17, 2018), and this in turn immediately sparked contestation by the political opposition, which labelled this move as a premeditated takeover. After a week of intense anti-government protests, Sargsyan resigned, and was replaced temporarily by Karapetyan until May 2018, when Nikol Pashinyan was appointed Prime Minister, with 59 parliamentary votes (6 more than the 53 required to be elected). While aiming at isolating the Sargsyan's Republican Party, Pashinyan formed a government with all the other factions within the National Assembly, excluding the HHK. After having obtained only 4.7% of the votes in the 2018 snap parliamentary election, the HHK did not manage to cross the electoral threshold (5%) to access parliamentary seats, thus disappearing from the National Assembly for the first time after Armenia's independence. Nikol Pashinyan's party (Civil Contract), on the other hand created the new "My Step Alliance" (together with the "Mission Party"), which managed to gain over 70% of ballots at the same parliamentary elections, acquiring 88 out of 132 seats. The Freedom House score for Armenia in terms of political rights improved in 2018, going from 5 to 4, while civil

[2] According to Freedom House, the deterioration of Armenia's rating in political rights (from 5 to 6) was due to three main factors: the impossibility for the opposition to compete in the 2008 election, the relatively violent repression of protesters and the detention of about 100 people following the demonstrations.

[3] The Freedom House score will remain the same until 2018, following which the political rights rating has further improved (from 5 to 4).

liberties remained unchanged (4). Although the approval rate of the opposition remains lower than that of Pashinyan, confidence of Armenians in their premier has been partially weakened by the signing of a ceasefire (together with Azerbaijan and Russia) in early November 2020, after about two months of armed confrontation between Artsakh (Armenians) and the Azerbaijani army.

The agreement has been regarded by the Armenian people as a disastrous defeat, because it involves the obligation (for Armenia) to withdraw from all since 1991 occupied territories around Nagorno-Karabakh (including the Lakhin corridor) and it provides for the deployment of around 2000 Russian peace-keepers, not to mention the right for Azerbaijan to keep control over all territories it has conquered during the war (including the town of Shusha, whose majority of inhabitants is Armenian). After a dispute with the Armenian military, Pashinyan accepted political responsibility for the defeat in the war against the Azeris, and on April 25, 2021 he resigned, declaring to remain in charge as acting PM until the next parliamentary elections, which actually took place on June 20, 2021.[4] In the year before the elections, the majority retained little over 80 parliamentary seats, which were not enough to amend the Armenian Constitution.[5] At the party level, there had been a tripolarism since 2018, with the majority consisting of Pashinyan's "My Step Alliance", and the opposition constituted by two different parties: Prosperous Armenia (the more conservative, aligned to extra-parliamentary parties, like the HHK, during the 2020 protests) and Bright Armenia, which represented the more pro-European and liberal wing of parliament. The outgoing Prime Minister Pashinyan took part in the election not with a coalition, but with only his former party "Civil Contract", with which he managed to win 54% of ballots (assigned with a proportional electoral system) and 72 seats out of a total of 105. With a score of 55/100 (Freedom House, 2021), Armenia has been included in the category of hybrid regimes, with a slight improvement compared to 2019 (53/100).[6]

[4] "Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan Announces His Resignation To Enable Snap Polls". 2021. France 24. https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20210425-armenian-prime-minister-pashinyan-announces-his-resignation-to-enable-snap-polls.

[5] In order to amend the constitution it is necessary to have a qualified majority of two thirds in the National Assembly (at least 88 out of 132 MPs).

[6] Since 2018, Freedom House has used a score in hundredths (/100) to evaluate political rights and civil liberties performance. The score for the former goes from 0 to 40, and the latter go from 0 to 60.

Belarus's institutional ramework and democracy scores

Belarus can be classified as an authoritarian regime, according to the political rights and civil liberties performance measured by the Freedom House independent organization.[7] Today's authoritarianism in Belarus is the result of an involution that began after the country's independence (in 1991) when Belarus had embarked on a democratic transition, which was abruptly interrupted after the election of Aleksandr Lukashenko to the Presidency (in 1994). Between 1990 and the entering into force of the new constitution in 1994, Belarus remained de facto without a well-defined system of government. Stanislav Shushkevich (a centrist), the president of the Supreme Soviet (the unicameral legislative body) served as *de facto* Head of State. The government was instead led by Vyacheslav Kebich (conservative), whose cabinet was composed mainly of former communists. In the aftermath of Belarus's independence, two main factions emerged: the pro-Western reformists and the pro-Russian conservatives. The latter prevailed in 1993, when Aleksander Lukashenko (then chair of the parliamentary anti-corruption committee) accused 70 government officials, including Shushkevich, of corruption. These charges led to a motion of censure in front of the parliament (January 1994), by which Shushkevich was forced to resign. Two months later (March 1994), the parliament approved the new constitution, which introduced a presidential government system that entailed the presence of a Council of Ministers and a Prime Minister, whose role would however be overshadowed by that of the President (with prerogatives similar to those of the Russian President according to the 1993 federal constitution). The first presidential election, which took place in July 1994, marked the victory of Lukashenko (at the second turn) with 80% of votes. The electoral law included in the 1994 constitution entailed a majority voting system in which most voted candidates had to obtain an absolute majority in their electoral district, but the votes could only be considered valid with at least a 50% turnout.

As stated by Silitski (2005), the introduction of the presidential system in post-Soviet Belarus has been one of the decisive factors in undermining the possibility of democratization in the

[7] The Freedom House score for Belarus has been consistently worsening since 2019 (19/100): 2020 (11/100), 2021 (8/100).

country. Thus the initial (and only) democratic opening that immediately followed the collapse of the USSR was mainly due to the "delay" in the adoption of presidentialism in Belarus. Right after its independence Belarus was indeed categorized as "hybrid regime", which after 1996 turned into an autocracy that has strengthened since 2003.[8] The development of the civil society was accompanied by a simultaneous weakening of political opposition, which struggled to adopt a common strategy, owing to the control of the regime over the electoral process and to the lack of leadership within the opposition front (Silitski, 2003). Lukashenko's following electoral campaigns indeed emphasized the absence of credible alternatives to the current president. Lukashenko won the 2001 presidential election after having gained control over state bureaucracy, the security apparatus and the electoral process itself (Silitski, 2005).

Between 2003 and 2004, Lukashenko enacted his strategy for carrying out a new referendum which would abolish the clause that fixed the limit of two consecutive presidential mandates. According to the official results, 80% of the votes were in favor of Lukashenko, thus enabling the President to participate (for the third time) in the 2006 elections. After the referendum, the Freedom House scores for political and civil rights in Belarus worsened, reaching 7 (political rights) and 6 (civil liberties). Hyper-presidentialism, a form of "constitutional hybrid" (Lytvyn & Osadchuk, 2019) consolidated in Lukashenko's Belarus, providing the President with the power to dissolve the legislative, without the simultaneous possibility for the parliament to "censure" the Head of State. In accordance with the 1994 Constitution [9], the government is indeed responsible in front of both the Parliament and the President, and it must transfer its powers to the Head of State when it is censored by the lower house of parliament. The Prime Minister may ask the Parliament for a vote of confidence on its government agenda and other issues, but if the parliament adopts a motion of no confidence against the government, the President has the right to decide (within 10 days) whether to dismiss the executive or to dissolve the parliament, and call for new elections. The President can decide to keep the government in charge (despite the vote of no confidence) and has the right to revoke each member of the government. Lukashenko managed to maintain office (for the fourth consecutive term)

[8] Belarus's Freedom House score, from 1991 to 1995, was between 4 and 5. After the 1996 constitutional referendum, Lukashenko's regime has always been ranked as authoritarian, with a score of 6 (out of 7) both in political and civil rights until 2004, when the former have further worsened (7/7).

[9] Art. 106 par. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8

after having obtained 79% of the votes in the 2010 presidential election, while the remaining 9 candidates did not obtain more than 2.5% of ballots. With such a managing of the elections and of its consequences, Lukashenko was willing to accept a "defeat in foreign policy" in exchange for a significant gain at the domestic level, i.e a worsening of Belarus's relations with the European Union (and with the US) in return for an even more stable internal situation. Lukashenko won a fifth (consecutive) term (with 83% of ballots according to the official results) against the main opponent Tatiana Korotkevich (4.4%) in 2015. An only illusionary turning point characterized the 2016 parliamentary election, which assigned one seat to the opposition party "United Civic Party", the first after 2004.[10] The pro-regime faction in parliament effectively monopolized representation in the lower house after the 2019 legislative elections, even though the parliament had already been *de facto* emptied of its prerogatives since the 1996 constitutional referendum.

Lukashenko's political strategy has encountered a stronger popular resistance since the last presidential elections held in 2020, managing nonetheless to prevail on the domestic (and international) opposition. This time, the charges of electoral fraud have been embraced by thousands of citizens, that flooded the streets to protest against Lukashenko's renewed victory (officials with 80% of the votes against 10% of Sviatlana Tikhanovskaya). Lukashenko has therefore changed his tactic, i.e. not giving in to the requests of the political opposition and ordering to police forces not to carry out direct repressive actions but to conduct under-track arrests and at the same time accusing the opposition of trying to illegally seize power.

10) The Freedom House score has indeed improved just for one year (2017), when the political rights' rating went from 7 to 6, but since 2018 it has worsened again.

Autocracy promotion in Armenia

Yeltsin's Presidency

Internal factors can only partially explain the failure of democracy in Armenia, because, for instance, the authoritarian legacy of the Soviet period also characterized the Baltic republics, which however undertook a process of democratization, positioning themselves today among the countries with the best democratic performances (Freedom House, 2021). The foreign policy of

Yeltsin's Russia (1991-1999) was led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrey Kozyrev (1991-1996), who attempted to obtain recognition of Moscow's prerogatives in the South Caucasus as a first step towards regaining supremacy over the post-Soviet space and recognition of a great power. In order to accomplish this goal, Kozyrev made several concessions to the US, such as support for the UN sanctions against Yugoslavia and tolerance for discrimination against Russian minorities in the Baltic states.

The new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Primakov, became convinced that neither the EU nor the US could be Russia's "natural partners" (Trenin, 2001). The "Primakov doctrine" (Toal, 2016) stated the need to counterbalance the (growing) influence of the US in the CIS area by any means. Since the mid-1990s, Russian activism in the South Caucasus had resulted in hegemony over the region until the last war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020. The close ties between the pro-Russian clan of the *Karabakhtsi* (the natives of Nagorno-Karabakh) and the Kremlin have allowed Russia to strengthen its political leverage in Armenia, binding it to the Artsakh issue. After having created deep divisions within the Armenian government for accepting a conflict resolution plan prepared by the Minsk Group of the OSCE, the first Armenian President Levon Ter-Petrosyan was forced to resign, because both the Prime Minister Kocharian and the Minister of National Security Serzh Sargsyan (both belonging to the *Karabakhtsi*) rejected the plan. Becoming friend with Vladimir Putin, Kocharian attempted to establish a regime similar to that of his Russian counterpart (Derluguian & Hovhannisyan, 2018), characterized by numerous shared political interests, based upon a reactionary approach vis-à-vis potentially destabilizing events. In fact, after Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005), Russia and Kocharian feared that Armenia could be involved in a "colored revolution", so it was necessary to avoid such an outcome.

Putin's first Presidency

In the first presidency of Vladimir Putin (2000-2008, first and second terms), Russia initially tried to establish cooperation with the West with regard to the war on terrorism and energy policy. However, the US-Russian relations worsened rapidly after the start of the so called colored revolutions in the post-Soviet space. Since the early 2000s, Russia had begun to pursue a more prag-

matic foreign policy, with more defined priorities and structured interests. The main objective was (and still is) the preservation of its influence over the Near Abroad. For this reason, Putin gave new impetus to his foreign policy initiatives through the so called "CIS project", signing a series of new agreements with the members of the CIS, in order to fortify the Russian presence in the post-Soviet area. In 2002, Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan created the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). To avoid the further fragmentation of the CIS area, Russia developed a multi-level institutional ground, by employing the CIS summits to carry out bilateral meetings and as discussion forums between the Heads of State, but without establishing any real multilateral cooperation. The "CIS project" yielded positive results in Armenia, ushering the series of "assets-for-debt" agreements with Russia. In exchange for the cancellation of its debt (of about 100 million USD accumulated since 1991), Armenia progressively transferred some of its strategic assets to the Russian Government, which came into possession (via state-owned and parastatal companies like Gazprom and Inter RAO UES) of roughly 90% of Armenia's energy production capacity. Kocharian had made himself the promoter of this "exchange", claiming that it would have created new and better paid jobs, an increase in productivity and no more debts with Russia, which would have acted in the interest of the Armenian people. Putin's first presidential visit to southern Caucasus was in Armenia (March 2005), at a stage in which Kocharian's popularity was diminishing, due to the post-election protests in 2003 (the year of the signing of an "equity-for-debt" agreement). In his meetings with his Armenian counterpart, Putin stressed the need to ensure stability to the country, with the aim of strengthening the *Karabakhtsi* clan, who are traditionally more pro-Russian than the Yerevantsi, those who come from Yerevan (Minassian, 2008). The increased international involvement of Putin's Russia in the early 2000s, based itself on the Kremlin's engagement in existing conflicts in its Near Abroad, and the subsequent stance in favor of the status quo, in order to preserve its influence in the contested territories.[11] Aligning himself with Russia, Kocharian did not prevent military dialogue between Baku and Moscow from continuing. Russia and Armenia adopted the same interventionist policy in order to avoid the diffusion of colored revolutions, reenforcing

[11] In 2002, Vladimir Putin had told Azeri President Ilham Aliyev that Russia wanted "no winners or losers in Nagorno-Karabakh" (RFE/RL, 25 January 2002). Today Moscow keeps sev-

eral "gray areas" in Donbass (Ukraine), Transnistria (Moldova), Abkhazia and Southern Ossetia (Georgia).

the authority of the state. The backbone of the government consisted of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of the Interior and the intelligence service. In 2005, the head of the Russian FSB, Nikolai Patrushev, claimed that Russia was trying to harmonize the NGO legislation in all CIS countries, so as to prevent the spreading of colored revolutions. This ushered an "import substitution" strategy, according to which the abroad (Western)-funded NGOs would gradually be replaced by domestic organizations, which would be financed directly by the Russian Government (Henderson, 2010).

The Putin-Medvedev Diarchy

The *Rossotrudničestvo* federal agency (created in 2008) is controlled by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it plays a central role in the promotion of the activities of pro-Russian actors in the post-Soviet space even nowadays. Its Yerevan's branch is currently active in maintaining relations between those who graduate at the Russian institutions in Armenia and the Armenian students who are being sent to Russia.[12] In 2008, the then Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan ordered the creation of the "Public Council", established as a body composed of State representatives and delegates from the civil society. This was done after the Russian Federation created the "Public Chamber" in 2005, a similar entity, with a de jure advisory function, but de facto becoming an instrument to monitor civil society (Roberts, 2015). The first phase of Sargsyan's presidency was therefore characterized according to the first model of autocracy promotion, i.e emulation.

[12] Since 2015 the Armenian branch of the Moscow State University "Lomonosov" has been operating in Yerevan, with about 3500 Armenian students (mfa.arm)

After Medvedev's inauguration to the Russian presidency (in 2008), Russia's approach towards the Southern Caucasus remained the same. The role of Armenia as a pillar of Russia's strategy in the Caucasus was emphasized by the Russian military intervention in South Ossetia (besieged by the Georgians) and in Abkhazia in August 2008: such an action resulted in the Russian recognition of independence of both secessionist republics and in the creation of Russian military installations in both areas.[13] Sargsyan was tied to the "Russia first" policy (Terzyan, 2018), even as, shortly before Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (in 2015), Russia signed an arms sales agreement with Azerbaijan amounting to about USD 300 million.

[13] *Russian troops to stay in Abkhazia and South Ossetia*, su The Guardian, 9 settembre 2008.

Putin's second Presidency

Once having returned to the Kremlin (in 2012) Putin visited Armenia both in 2013 and 2015, when the Caucasian country was in the delicate phase of the controversial constitutional reform, that (since 2018) has replaced presidentialism with a parliamentary system. The start of Putin's second presidency (third and fourth terms) was parallel to Sargsyan's second mandate and it saw a surge in Armenia's (mainly economic) dependency on Russia. This aspect has to be identified in Armenia's accession to the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). On January 2, 2015, despite having continued the discussions with the EU for an Association Agreement which would also have established a *Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area* (DCFTA) Armenia officially joined the EEU. Yerevan should have signed the EU documents at the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius in November 2013 (Vielmini, 2013). Since the 2013 presidential election, Armenia had also improved its political rights score (from 6 to 5) according to Freedom House, always remaining a "hybrid regime" (non-democratic). Nevertheless, within the Armenian political opposition there were increasingly pro-Western instances, which were more directed against the pro-Russian Sargsyan than against Russia itself. Putin's meeting with Sargsyan (in September 2013), before the talks between Armenia and the EU, is not sufficient to explain Armenia's U-turn, from the withdrawal from negotiations with the EU to the accession to the EEU.

The change of course and the immediate accession to the Eurasian Economic Union have indeed been the result of three factors: Russia's assertive foreign policy, determined not to lose influence over another country of its "Near Abroad" (as had already occurred with Ukraine and Moldova), the relative weakness of the Euro-Armenian relationship and, once again, an external factor given by the conflict with Azerbaijan and the subsequent search for security and stability of Sargsyan's regime. Once reelected, Putin had indeed not only improved relations with Yerevan, but he had also boosted Russian-Azerbaijani relations, supplying Baku with around 85% of the latter's arms imports, which had increased by 249% between 2010 and 2014. Moscow wanted to deliver the following message: if Armenia gets closer to the West (EU-USA), Russia will better support Azerbaijan. The increased

sales of weapons to Baku indeed forced the Armenian leadership to refrain from the EU project and to bind to the Russian Federation (through the accession to the EEU). The "rewards" for Armenia can be identified mainly in Russia's energy policy towards Yerevan (Syssoyeva, 2019). Such an element has thus had a twofold result for Armenia. On the one hand, the accession to the EEU has significantly reduced the *linkage* effect of the US and the EU on Armenia (Libman, 2016), shifting the balance towards Russia (Armenia's most powerful non-democratic partner)[14], and encouraging the consolidation of autocratic tendencies in the Caucasian country. On the other hand, EEU membership contributed to preserving (in the short run) President Sargsyan's domestic legitimacy, because the leaders of the Armenian National Congress party and of Prosperous Armenia (the most euro-skeptic) had criticized the government, arguing that a deeper cooperation with the EU would have undermined the alliance with Russia. Sargsyan had always attempted to justify his choice emphasizing all the potential political and economic problems resulting from a possible "deviation" of Armenia from its strategic partnership with Moscow (Terzyan, 2018). The "hypothetical future" tactic did not however prevent the fall of Sargsyan following the 2018 velvet revolution, which was indeed not directed against the Kremlin's foreign policy, as repeatedly stated by the leader of the protest movement, Nikol Pashinyan.

Under Sargsyan's Presidency Moscow also became the first foreign investor in Armenia, primarily in the sectors of energy, telecommunications, metals and transports. Out of a USD 5.7 billion Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) stock in Armenia in 2019, Russia has covered around 48% of FDI in the country, by far surpassing France (11%) and Germany (5%), which are the two main investors from the EU in Armenia. The Russian FDI stock has increased after Armenia's accession to the EEU: the inflows from Russia were 21% of the total between 1988 and 2002, while since 2015 these have surpassed 45% of the total (third model of autocracy promotion: economic incentives).

The strengthening of Russian influence over Armenia since 2013 has coincided with the opening of some policy windows, such as the adoption of the new constitution (2015), the new electoral code (2016) and the amendments to the NGO legis-

14) According to Freedom House, the 2016 score for Russia was 6 (political rights) and 6 (civil liberties), thus being considered as an authoritarian regime.

lation (2017), which created an opportunity for Russia to affect Armenian policies in those sectors (Roberts & Zimmer, 2018). In 2014, the then Russian Ambassador to Armenia, Ivan Volynkin, stated that the NGOs financed by the West posed a "threat for the Russian-Armenian bilateral relations", maintaining that it was necessary to "neutralize" them through information campaigns and through the adoption of Russian NGO legislation in Armenia.[15] In 2016, however, an endogenous factor contributed to weakening Sargsyan's popularity, after also his party (the HHK) had already entered its declining stage. The "Four-Day War", i.e. the series of armed clashes between Azeri and Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh occurred in April 2016, resulted in a wave of anti-Russian protests, whose participants asked for Sargsyan's resignation. The latter was indeed blamed for endangering Armenia's national security vis-à-vis Azerbaijan. And the anti-Russian nature of the protest had once again been caused by the increased Russian arms sales to Azerbaijan (Demytrie, 2016). The Armenian President acknowledged his country's vulnerability with respect to Moscow's choices, but then reaffirmed Armenia's full support of Russia's foreign policy actions (Ukraine, Syria…).

After the start of the 2018 velvet revolution, Russia immediately chose to react more quietly compared to the Ukrainian scenario of 2014, adopting a pragmatic and prudent approach.[16] This has occurred for two main reasons: the Kremlin's realization that Sargsyan was not more popular among the majority of Armenians, and the possibility of facing further sanctions from the West if Russia had tried to stop the ongoing change in Armenia (Davidian, 2019). Unlike other protests, those demonstrations (against Sargsyan and the old *Karabakhtsi* ruling class) were not aimed at imparting a shift in Armenia's foreign policy objectives, even though Pashinyan himself, as a deputy, had voted against the ratification of accession to the Eurasian Economic Union, pointing to the asymmetric relationship between Moscow (dominant) and Yerevan (dependent). This (realist) perception notwithstanding, the adverse relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan, as well as its limited military strength, do not leave Yerevan with much room for political maneuver. After being appointed Prime Minister, Pashinyan indeed repeatedly denied the possibility of reconsidering Armenia's foreign policy, continuing to grant Russian military presence on the Armenian national territory and the presence of

15) Available at: http://www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/28090/

16) President Putin's spokesman, Dimitrij Peskov, had stated that "what is going on in Armenia is a purely domestic issue of that country", hinting at the fact that these events were different from the Ukrainian ones (TASS, 2018).

Armenia within the EEU (Batashvili, 2019). During the last four years since the end of the velvet revolution, Russian-Armenian relations (and Yerevan's dependence on Moscow) have revolved once again around the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

On September 27, 2020 the second Nagorno-Karabakh war broke out when Azerbaijan (militarily backed by Turkey) launched an offensive against the Armenian forces. The latter were defeated on the battleground (Azerbaijani dominance and incapacitation of Armenian-controlled territories), while Russia intervened only on a political level, in order to promote the peace agreement signed on November 10, 2020 (Fossati, 2021). Russian peace-keeping forces have been also deployed in the Lakhin corridor area (multilateralization). The ceasefire was violated both in November and December 2020. The Azeris reconquered about one quarter of Artsakh[17] (reciprocal incapacitation: 3/4 Armenia, 1/4 Azerbaijan), and they managed to capture the buffer zones (controlled by Armenia since 1994) such as Shusha, which surround the Armenian enclave.

Compared to the pre-war period in 2020, Russia has now a direct military presence in Nagorno-Karabakh, thus continuing to play a vital role for Armenia, but not for Azerbaijan, which has been binding more tightly to Turkey. For this reason, Russia supported Yerevan during the last war, but just up to the point of allowing Armenia not to face complete defeat, so as to be able to then deploy its (Russian) peace-keepers in the disputed territories (Sukiasyan, 2020). The presence of Russian soldiers in that area has a more political meaning, which is coupled with Armenia's domestic political unrest, engendered by the military defeat in the recent armed conflict with Azerbaijan. The precarious regional situation further increases Armenia's dependence on Russia, also because no national political party (nor the PM Pashinyan) have questioned the necessity to remain tied to Moscow (Sukiasyan, 2020). Former Armenian President Kocharian has also insisted on a "greater integration" with Russia. After having been released in the summer of 2020 and following the ceasefire signed by the Armenian government (November 2020), Kocharian has sided with the opposition forces, asking for Pashinyan's resignation and running in the snap parliamentary elections on June 20, 2021, with the "Alliance Armenia" coalition. The last elections (won by

17) In 2020, Nagorno-Karabakh was considered by Freedom House as a "partially free" (hybrid) regime (with a score of 35/100), like Armenia (55/100), while Azerbaijan was classified as authoritarian (10/100).

Pashinyan) have demonstrated that Russia's main interest lies in the stability of the region, since it also became the guarantor (together with Turkey) of the Nagorno-Karabakh peace agreement.

Russia's approach highlights the non-rigid nature of autocracy promotion towards Armenia, since a hybrid "protected" regime has been accepted by Moscow. If the latter had supported Sargsyan and the HHK during their most critical phase, it could have weakened its policy of influence over the Near Abroad and also its search for increased international legitimacy. For this reason, the incentives granted to Azerbaijan and the agreement with Turkey for the partition of influence over the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, have served to force Pashinyan to re-align to Russia. Thus, contrary to the period that immediately followed the first Artsakh war, there is now a rather symmetric balance of power in the region, without Russian hegemony. Pashinyan for his part has been compelled to downsize the pro-Western tendencies of his electorate, by showing how the misalignment to Moscow can result in losing the entire Nagorno-Karabakh territory. Hence, Russia's blackmail has been successful and Pashinyan's Armenia has returned on the emulation path (the first model of autocracy promotion).

Autocracy promotion in Belarus

Yeltsin's Presidency

Immediately after its independence, Belarus was not classified as an authoritarian regime.[18] Yeltsin's Russia played a crucial role in Belarus's transition towards authoritarianism and the consolidation of Lukashenko's personalist regime (Way, 2015). Initially, cultural affinity between Belarus and Russia was the means that Moscow exploited to maintain (or regain) its political influence also on the rest of the former Soviet space. It was not without reason that the three Slavic former-Soviet republics (Russia, Belarus and Ukraine) signed the Belavezha agreement, thereby establishing the Community of Independent States. The second track followed by Yeltsin's Russia was the re-establishment of cordial relations with the West. The internal conflict between President Yeltsin and the Parliament of the Russian Federation (which

[18] Freedom House (from 1991 to 1995) classifies Belarus as Partly Free (hybrid regime) with scores between 4 and 5.

opposed Yeltsin's reforms) culminated in the September 1993 assault on the Parliament building in Moscow. Such domestic instability was the main reason for Russia's low level of foreign policy activism in the early 1990s until the end of the constitutional crisis.

Consequently, Russian support to Belarus was put into practice through both institutional and power dynamics. The latter are related to the individuals that retained the former state monopolies of the USSR (in the material, energy and financial sectors), and they manifested mainly beginning from the 1994 Belarus presidential election. Lukashenko managed to obtain the support of the Russian parliament and of the most conservative groups within the Russian society, playing the card of "nostalgia for the common Soviet past" as opposed to the anti-Russian nationalism of the other candidate to the Presidency, Zianon Pazniak, that was part of the Belarusian Popular Front (the nationalist party). Lukashenko's ties with Luzhkov (Moscow's Mayor from 1992 to 2010) on the one hand, and with the then Russian Prime Minister Primakov on the other, were key in securing political and financial support ahead of the presidential election (and also after). The rhetoric of integration between Russia and Belarus became thereafter a constant in Lukashenko's strategy towards all leaders of the Kremlin. However, the so called "Union State" still needs to be fully implemented. In this way Lukashenko managed nonetheless to gain the direct support of Boris Yeltsin, who exploited the integration rhetoric to strengthen his domestic position, softening the pressure of Parliament.[19] A decisive stage of Russia's support to Belarus's regime was that of the 1996 Belarusian referendum, which institutionalized Lukashenko's hyper-semipresidentialism. Russia intervened in the dispute that had emerged between Lukashenko (the referendum's promoter) and the Belarusian parliament (that had proposed to abolish the role of the Presidency), managing to achieve a compromise that would make the result of the referendum "non-binding". Such a tactic succeeded in dissuading Belarus's Supreme Soviet, which after the referendum was dissolved and replaced by a new (single-chamber) "National Assembly". Russia's "mediation" (Lukashenko-biased) was however subject to an exchange: Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky acquired Belarus's metallurgical sector and Lukashenko accepted

[19] Some observers have argued that Boris Yeltsin was suffering from the "Belavezha complex", i.e a sense of guilt for having buried the USSR, through the Belavezha Agreement (Jonavičius, 2013)

the removal of the remaining nuclear weapons from the country's territory (Wilson, 2011).

The element that facilitated Moscow's intervention in favor of Lukashenko was the way in which Belarusian political actors (contrary to Georgians or Ukrainians) perceived Russia, which was not regarded as a direct threat to the Belarusian identity and state sovereignty (Burant, 1995). In the second half of the 1990s, Moscow's diplomacy towards Minsk relied on the "Union State" (integration) factor, in order to keep the Russian government domestic approval rate at a high level, since the Soviet mindset was still incisive in most of the people (Balmaceda, 2014). Without considering the latter element, it would be difficult to explain the massive economic and financial assistance provided both by Yeltsin and by Putin to Lukashenko's Belarus. Between 1994-5 and 2000, Russian support contributed to the consolidation of the Belarusian regime mainly through cheap oil and gas supplies, whose savings accounted for around one quarter of the Belarusian GDP and one third of the government's budget (Aslund, 2002).[20] Russia's support enabled Belarus to keep its Soviet-era economic system alive, without the need to pursue radical market reforms.[21]

Putin's first Presidency

Russia established bilateral relations which were essentially based on energy policy and economic interests (Jonavičius, 2013). With regard to Belarus, however, the cultural factor should not be overlooked, since it has represented a fundamental means of influence of the Kremlin over Belarusian domestic politics and also an instrument that Belarus (and Lukashenko) has exploited to keep its linkage to Russia (first model of autocracy promotion: emulation). As Putin's agenda was focused on avoiding the spread of "colored revolutions" in the post-Soviet space, Moscow's policy evolved into an effort to consolidate its position against the growing influence of the EU and NATO (and therefore the US) in Eastern Europe. Compared to Yeltsin's era, Putin's Presidency was characterized by the progressive establishment of a "vertical" power structure, aimed at reducing the power of regional leaders and oligarchs. The loss of political power of Luzhkov (Moscow's Mayor) and Berezovsky (anti-Putin oligarch), both supporters of Lukashenko, compelled the Belarusian President to reconsider his position towards Moscow. This resulted in a significant tightening

20) In the second half of the 1990s, Belarus paid about USD 22/1000 m3 for Russian natural gas, and it resold it on the national market at USD 48. In contrast, Ukraine and Poland, for instance, paid USD 40 and 75 per 1000 m3 respectively (Ioffe, 2004).

21) According to Heritage Foundation's Index of Economic Freedom, out of a max score of 100 (complete economic freedom), Belarus went from 40.4 (in 1995) to 61 (in 2021), just one point above the "Mostly unfree" category.

of Belarus's authoritarianism, which however had two opposed effects: on the one hand, Lukashenko incremented his control over society, on the other hand he distanced himself from the West, becoming even more dependent (politically and economically) on Russia (Jonavičius, 2013).

Putin's diplomatic assistance to Belarus proved to be crucial both in the 2001 presidential election (won by Lukashenko with 75% of the votes) and above all in the aftermath of the "colored revolutions" in the neighboring countries. After the "Orange revolution" in Ukraine in 2004, Belarus entered a period of political instability, which Russia exploited by adopting preventive measures to avoid a possible spillover of the revolution in Belarus. These resulted in a massive Russian support for Lukashenko's 2006 presidential campaign, against the pro-Western opponent Milinkevich. The Kremlin had indeed labelled electoral revolutions as an attempt of the West to establish pro-American regimes at the border with Russia, in order to weaken the latter's position in its Near Abroad (Trenin, 2005).

Between 2005 and 2006, Lukashenko intensified domestic repression so as to prevent a colored revolution-like scenario, and Russia simultaneously intervened by supplying political and economic assistance to the Belarusian regime, through the mechanism defined by Tolstrup (2015) as "election bolstering". The intervention of so called "black knights" (external actors that act as guardians of autocracy or challengers of democracy) is driven by two essential factors: the geo-political acquiescence of the incumbent (beneficiary) leader, and the uncertainty of the electoral results (this mode of action is included in the political-diplomatic and economic "incentives"). This dynamic is determined by the fact that elections, including those in authoritarian regimes, open a window of opportunities that anti-regime or opposition forces can exploit to carry out a regime change (Schedler, 2002).

There are four essential elements that should be highlighted in order to frame the above theoretical discussion. First, so as to improve Lukashenko's reputation towards his electorate, Russian state media as well as several Kremlin top-level politicians emphasized the absence of valid alternatives to the incumbent president, also arguing that good relations between Russia and Belarus would be possible only if Lukashenko were reelected in 2006. Second, the involvement of Russian political technicians

in planning and managing Lukashenko's electoral campaign was another essential element. Thirdly, fiscal facilitation (such as the keeping of low gas prices) by Russia enabled Lukashenko to increase public service wages shortly before the vote, thus being able to be considered the main guarantor of the country's economic stability. The fourth element consisted of the (successful) discrediting of the political opposition, both prior to and after the vote, when demonstrators in the streets of Minsk were described by Russian media as West-sponsored extremists (Silitski, 2007). The effectiveness of the Russian-backed information campaign in Belarus was then demonstrated by a public survey conducted by the Belarusian independent agency IISEPS (whose headquarter is in Minsk), which showed that only 20.4% of Belarusians approved the post-election protests, while over 46% opposed them.

One important factor that goes beyond the above mentioned elements, lies at the political diplomatic level. Both in bilateral pre-election meetings and at the meetings of the Council of Europe, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov repeatedly dismissed the charges against Lukashenko, and warned him against the attempts by the West to carry out a regime change in Belarus.[22] As a response, the then Belarusian Foreign Minister Syarhey Martynaw thanked Russia for its support, stating that "the most serious problems come from the Western front".[23] Immediately after the elections, Lavrov publicly congratulated Lukashenko on his victory, highlighting the opportunity to make "real progresses" towards the Union State (Ambrosio, 2006). The ratio of energy subsidies over Belarus's GDP reached an all-time high in 2006, surpassing (between 2005 and 2015) USD 100 billion, with an average of USD 9.7 billion a year. In 2007, however, Gazprom envisaged an increase in gas prices (and thus a reduction of energy subsidies) for Lukashenko's regime, because the latter had refused to sign a new agreement for the gradual increase in the price (fourth model of AP: punishment). The parties ultimately reached a compromise that included: the selling of Russian gas at USD 100/1000 m^3, the progressive convergence of the gas price towards the price on the European market, a 70% increase in tariffs for the transit of gas in Belarus and the selling of 50% of Beltransgaz (Belarus's state company) to Gazprom.

22) RIA Novosti (Moscow): "Russia Warns against Attempts at 'Regime Change' in Belarus," reproduced by BBCMIR, February 27, 2006.

23) *Ibidem*

The Putin-Medvedev Diarchy

The initial phase of Medvedev's Presidency (2008) was marked by Lukashenko's opposition to the creation of the Eurasian Customs Union[24],the Belarusian non-recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia's independence and the inauguration of the EU Eastern Partnership (to which also Belarus adhered). This situation resulted in increased gas prices for Minsk (up to USD 187/1000 m^3), thus further reducing energy subsidies (fourth model of AP: punishment). Compared to Putin, President Medvedev developed a less cooperative relationship with Lukashenko, upon whom the Kremlin (and the liberal élite around Medvedev) put a constant pressure, so as to force the Belarusian government to privatize State assets and hand them over to Russian companies (Jonavičius, 2013). Since Lukashenko opposed this idea, because he did not want to lose control over the economy, relations with Moscow deteriorated. Shortly before the 2010 Belarusian presidential election, Gazprom (controlled by those same liberals close to Medvedev) raised gas prices for Belarus[25], and the Russian TV channel NTV broadcasted a tv series (called "God Father") that openly insulted Lukashenko's authoritarian regime. Although the Kremlin distanced itself from this broadcast, it became evident that Russia was not satisfied with Lukashenko's governance.

This notwithstanding, nine days before the presidential election, Lukashenko went to Moscow to follow up to the Kremlin's requests (Nechyparenka, 2011): the parties signed an agreement for a "Customs Code" that would establish the Eurasian Customs Union together with Kazakhstan. Russia then supported Lukashenko's candidacy in the 2010 presidential election, which were won - again - by the incumbent. In the attempt to win back the trust of the Russian leadership, Lukashenko then openly supported Vladimir Putin in the 2012 Russian presidential election, following which Russia significantly reduced the gas price for Minsk (from USD 265/1000 m^3 in 2011 to USD 165 in 2012).

Putin's second Presidency

Belarus's prolonged economic dependence on Moscow did not prevent Lukashenko from trying to normalize his country's relations with the European Union, so as to balance Russia's lev-

[24] Available at: https://www.senno.vitebsk-region.gov.by/en/republic-en/view/alexander-lukashenko-concerned-about-belarus-interests-in-customs-union-4479/

[25] In 2010, the price of Russian natural gas reached USD 187/1000 m^3 for Minsk.

erage on Belarus. Despite not being a "U-turn" against Russia, Lukashenko's approach showed the discrepancies in the foreign policy decisions made between 2013 and 2015, primarily concerning the divergence between Russia and Belarus around the Ukrainian conflict.[26] Belarus did not *de jure* recognize the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, attempting to adopt a neutral stance, but it then also continued to adhere to Russia-led regional initiatives, such as the Eurasian Economic Union (created in 2015). This element helps to explain the peculiar relationship between Minsk and Moscow during Putin's third and fourth terms: almost complete dependence on Russia in the economic (and cultural) arena, and partial autonomy in foreign policy decisions. This asymmetric power relationship has been built on an explicit deal: Russia's economic assistance in exchange for Belarus's geopolitical loyalty (Sivitsky 2019). This asymmetry is convenient for Lukashenko, since with a greater degree of (economic and political) liberalization, the democratic opposition forces might try to seize power.

In a personalist authoritarian regime such as Belarus, the leader is permanently (and primarily) concerned about his own survival. For this reason, the apparently neutral stance adopted by Lukashenko after the outbreak of the war in Ukraine has not been directed against Moscow (which has remained the main international supporter of President Lukashenko) but it has had the aim of improving domestic political stability.

Since 2015, however, the Kremlin has begun to push for a tighter political, economic and military integration with Minsk, by progressively cutting the energy subsidies to Belarus. Lukashenko's reluctance in explicitly supporting Moscow against Kyiv, and the post-election *détente* (2015) between the EU and Minsk, have increased the Kremlin's fear of a strengthening of internal opposition to Lukashenko, which could potentially lead to an Euromaidan-like scenario. For this reason, Belarus's accession to the EEU has been used by Russia as a "stick" to discourage pro-democracy (and pro-Western) tendencies in Belarus, by further politicizing the organization in order to make it functional to Russia's own interests against the EU sanctions since 2014.

Likewise, Moscow has unilaterally pushed for a tighter military integration within the Union State (Czerny, 2020), mainly due to Belarus's attempts at balancing in the international arena

[26] In 2017, the Belarusian delegation at the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly supported the so called "Minsk Declaration", in which Russia was defined as an "aggressor" that had "occupied" part of the Ukrainian territory (Suzdaltsev, 2020).

between the EU and Russia. The latter's current strategy is constituted by three elements. First, trying to push for the establishment of a permanent Russian military base on the Belarusian territory. Second, weakening Belarus's decisional autonomy by incrementing control over its armed forces. Third, creating a gap in combat capabilities by avoiding delivering modern weaponry to Belarus at preferential conditions (Sivitsky, 2019). Moscow has used the latter element in order to achieve the first objective (the military base), arguing that only a permanent Russian military presence in Belarus can improve security and minimize the vulnerability of the Union State's western flank. The joint military exercise "Zapad-2017" (which was part of an exercise that has been taking place every four years involving both Belarus and the Kaliningrad *oblast*') represented an exclusively political maneuver by Russia, which, since the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, has used Belarus as a "cushion" in its attempts to put pressure on Kyiv. This has been confirmed by the most recent "Zapad-2021" joint exercise, which involved around 200 thousand (Russian and Belarusian) troops, compared to the previous 100 thousand of 2017.[27]

The progressive reduction of energy subsidies for Minsk has been the result of the implementation by the Kremlin of a tax on mineral extraction (instead of a direct tax on oil exports), which has affected Belarus's crude oil imports that were once duty-free. This move by Putin has served to give Lukashenko an "integration ultimatum" (Sivitsky, 2019), by putting Minsk in front of two possible alternatives: the reduction of its refined oil export or the adoption of a common fiscal legislation with Moscow. At the February 2021 meeting between Putin and Lukashenko, Russia imposed conditionality on its economic assistance to Belarus (such as the USD 1.5 billion loan of 2020), compelling the latter to further integrate with Russia.[28] After the repression of the post-election protests that had begun in the summer of 2020, three main features of Russian-Belarusian bilateral relations can be identified as a result of Russia's autocracy promotion in Belarus: first, the expatriation of most pro-Western opposition leaders, including Sviatlana Tikhanovskaya (which fled to Lithuania); second, the shutdown of more than 50 NGOs ordered in the summer of 2021 (Deutsche Welle, 2021); third, the increase in

27) https://uacrisis.org/en/zapad-2021-military-exercises

28) Available at: https://www.rferl.org/a/belarus-china-cooling-on-lukashenka-investment-leverage-eu-moscow/31136175.html

financial loans from Russia, to cope with EU and US sanctions.

In December 2021, Lukashenko eventually led to the complete realignment of Belarus's policy to Russia, and also *de jure* recognized Crimea's annexation by Russia (Al Jazeera, 2021).

Conclusion

The in-depth analysis of the Armenian and Belarusian case studies has led to the identification of the four main models of support to non-democratic regimes. With regard to Armenia, evidence shows that emulation of authoritarian practices can sometimes have uncertain results compared to the direct intervention (as occurred in the first Nagorno-Karabakh war). There have been some stages in which the adoption of the authoritarian model consolidated and went in the direction desired by the regime (as at the end of the 1990s with Kocharian), and there have been other periods in which it took an opposite direction (as with the 2018 velvet revolution). The emulation of the Russian political model has been realized in two ways: through the attempt of Belarus and Armenia to reproduce Russia's higher performances (concerning security, social stability…), thus adopting the same regime type, and through the attempt of band-wagoning to the regional hegemon (Natalizia, 2019). In this context, Russia's influence in its region has created a "permissive space", in which each country finding itself within that area can ignore its democratic commitments being aware that their loyalty to Russia can protect them against any possible interference of the US and the EU. Moreover, especially for Lukashenko's regime, Russia has established itself as an ideological and cultural model, thus generating a positive sentiment in the Belarusian public opinion towards Russia (and its objectives).

Autocratic export (Burnell, 2010) has instead materialized with the military aid (directly) provided by Yeltsin's Russia to Armenia since the first Nagorno-Karabakh war, which led not only to the restoration of Russian hegemony over southern Caucasus (and the activation of the Russian military base in Armenia), but also resulted (in 1998) in the rise to power of the *Karabakhtsi* élite (those born in Nagorno-Karabakh), with Kocharian first and then Sargsyan (both not democratic). In the most recent Nagorno-Karabakh war in 2020, after having brokered the peace talks, Russia deployed its military in the disputed territories,

further bolstering its policy aimed at maintaining the so called "frozen conflicts", i.e. the grey areas to which Russia has sent its troops or where it provides military support to local actors, as has been the case of the quasi-states of Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Transnistria.

Both in the case of Armenia and of Belarus, the foreign policy choices that favored Russia's position in the regional context have been incentivized by favorable and preferential energy pricing policies and by electoral support. This was the case of the 2006 Belarusian presidential election, which took place in an atmosphere of fear for a possible spillover of Ukraine's colored revolution of 2004. The "punishments" that Russia gave to Belarus when it did not abide by Moscow's demands (e.g. in not recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia or in Belarus's initial approach towards the Ukrainian conflict) have taken the shape of diplomatic pressure on the élite in power (to push for liberalization of the economy and integration of state institutions with Moscow) and a reduction of the energy subsidies, thus diminishing the government's budget surplus. The same procedure has also characterized Russia's policy towards Armenia, especially as the latter was approaching the EU. By exploiting its "energy weapon" (the increase in gas prices) and the military threat (the increase in arms sales to Azerbaijan), Russia deterred Armenia from improving its relations with the EU. Besides the fact that, after the 2018 velvet revolution, the Armenian regime has not *de facto* changed (according to Freedom House it can still be classified as a hybrid regime), Russia's intervention did not occur in terms of immediate support for Sargsyan's contested regime, but rather through a sort of "punishment" towards the new (Pashinyan's) regime. Moscow indeed not only did not take steps to provide military support to the Armenians after the beginning of Azerbaijan's offensive in September 2020, but it also repeatedly rejected Pashinyan's requests for military assistance. A direct Russian military intervention in the area would have triggered a deep confrontation with Turkey (which supported Azerbaijan). This can be demonstrated by the fact that, after the capture of Shusha by the Azeris, Russia took action to facilitate the conclusion of a ceasefire and a successive peace agreement (more favorable to Azerbaijan), guaranteed by Putin and Erdogan. The Kremlin's diplomatic intervention has

enabled Armenia to limit the damage suffered with the military defeat, simultaneously allowing Pashinyan's regime to survive and *de facto* restricting the scope of the punishment that Russia had enacted towards Yerevan. In the regional context, the latter's linkage with Moscow remains the only game in town for Armenia, i.e. the only possibility for the Caucasian republic to secure its (and Artsakh's) territorial integrity.

A combination of rewards and punishments has proved the most frequent tactic used by the Kremlin, which has also been facilitated by Armenia's and Belarus's weak linkage and leverage with Western democracy promoters. Russia's "penalties" to Belarus have been less, owing mainly to the two countries' proximity in the cultural arena and the strategic geopolitical location of Belarus in Eastern Europe. Armenia, on the other hand, has also been subject to direct military intervention by Russia, which was however limited to the first Artsakh war. It is thus possible to establish that the salient features of autocracy promotion have mainly emerged in Belarus, while support for hybrid regimes has materialized in Armenia. This can be explained by Russia's "conservative" diplomacy, which has adopted a realist approach in international relations. If a rigorous autocratic promotion policy were to take place, Russian diplomacy would risk weakening rather than strengthening. The ability to alternate the four above mentioned mechanisms links Russia's foreign policy to the concept of *smart power* as defined by Nye (2004), both with regard to a combination of soft and hard power and in the choice between non-intervention (anarchy) and direct support with rewards, punishments and/or military actions (governance).

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Chinese autocracy promotion towards Myanmar and Thailand

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L'autocracy promotion della Cina verso Myanmar and Thailand

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Abstract

In its autocracy promotion towards Myanmar's and Thailand's military regimes, China especially applied incentives but also blackmailing practices. However, China also supported hybrid regimes. Then, China always selected soft and not hard power; military pressure has been indirect. There were strong emulative processes of both Myanmar and Thailand. Chinese pragmatism promoted both options since, if China opposed hybrid regimes, this could cause the defeat of the military and the possible victory of pro-Western and anti-Chinese political actors. In order to avoid this result, Beijing governments adopted a more flexible autocracy promotion, reflecting a real-politik approach to foreign policy, which allowed to preserve Chinese diplomatic interests.

Keywords

China, Myanmar, Thailand, Autocracy promotion, Hybrid regimes.

Riassunto

Nella sua autocracy promotion verso i regimi militari di Myanmar e Thailand, la Cina ha applicato soprattutto incentivi ma anche ricatti. La Cina ha comunque sostenuto anche i regimi ibridi. Poi, la Cina ha sempre preferito il soft all'hard power; la pressione militare è stata indiretta. Si sono sviluppati così forti processi imitativi sia da parte del Myanmar che della Tailandia. Il pragmatismo cinese ha promosso entrambe le opzioni, perché se le Cina avesse ostacolato i regimi ibridi, ciò avrebbe causato la sconfitta delle forze armate e la possibile vittoria degli attori politici filo-occidentali e anti cinesi. Per evitare tale esito, i governi di Pechino hanno adottato una autocracy promotion flessibile, attraverso l'applicazione della real-politik alla politica estera, per tutelare gli interessi diplomatici cinesi.

Parole chiave

Cina, Myanmar, Thailand, Regimi autoritari, Regimi ibridi.

Introduction

Considering the most recent evolutions of political regimes in South-East Asia, this article is aimed at studying the Chinese autocracy promotion in the region. In order to proceed in the analysis, two case studies will be considered, the Burmese and the Thai one. Despite not being the only countries involved in the Chinese influence sphere, the role of their respective military apparatus in the political transition of the countries distinguishes them with respect to other States which are more clearly identifiable as Chinese followers. Given the historical relevance of their communist parties, the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian regimes specifically might seem to more faithfully embody the Chinese model, aimed at coupling single-party authoritarianism with moderate economic liberalism. Besides, the Vietnamese and the Laotian communist parties are still protagonists of the political life of the two countries, whereas in Cambodia a new leader has emerged since the middle Eighties, Hun Sen. On the con-

trary, in Myanmar and Thailand the role of the military has been predominant: in the first case, they established an unusual regime, associating political authoritarianism to almost socialist economic structures starting in the Sixties, maybe as a consequence of the traditional Sino-Burmese ties, while in the last decade Naypyidaw maintained a more ambiguous attitude towards Beijing; the Thai case is peculiar both because of its royal-military leadership and because of the strong relationship between Bangkok and Washington, an heritage of the Cold War period challenged since the Nineties by the rapprochement of the Chinese Popular Republic. The evolution of these two regimes, so different from one another but sharing the military attribute, seems to converge today toward the model (directly or indirectly) inspired by Beijing. It should therefore be understood whether China is actively promoting this trend in the region, and specifically in Myanmar and Thailand. In order to clarify this issue, in the first paragraph of the article an evolution of the Burmese institutions will be presented, from the independence to this day, and a parallel overview will be dedicated to the Thai regime in the second paragraph, from the Siam Kingdom of the beginning of the XX century until the most recent political developments. The third and the fourth paragraphs will deal more in detail with Chinese autocracy promotion in Myanmar and Thailand respectively; lastly, some conclusions will be drawn. The aim is therefore to understand to which degree China is relying on active autocracy promotion and, on the contrary, to which degree there are spontaneous emulation mechanisms from the Burmese and Thai regimes.

Myanmar's institutions

On the aftermath of its independence from the United Kingdom in 1948, Burma (the official name of Myanmar till 1989) refused to access the Commonwealth of the Nations and the country was shattered by armed conflicts between the different communist factions which, inspired by the Chinese example, aimed at establishing a communist regime in Burma; besides, some Kuomintang forces escaped in the Northern regions of Burma, exposing the country to the constant risk of an intervention of Mao communist forces. In order to avoid this eventuality, the Prime Minister U Nu nourished a personal friendship with Chinese leaders, coining the term "Pauk-Phaw" (meaning kinship), to describe the

bilateral relations between the two States (Myoe, 2016), based on the solid affirmation of Burmese sovereignty and of the reckoning of the opportunities arising from a collaboration with China.[1] Between 1948 and 1962 Burma was a "lawless" hybrid regime because of its weaknesses in the rule of law domain (Morlino, 2008).

The persistent armed conflicts in many parts of the country and the political fragmentation led to a growing instability which facilitated the coup organized on March 2nd 1962 by general Ne Win. There was a rapid transition toward a military authoritarian regime, led by the military Revolutionary Council. Some weeks later, the Council proclaimed its manifesto, known as "the Burmese way to socialism" and founded the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). The combinations of a military regime with socialist economic institution represented an anomalous case in the world political scenario.[2] This peculiarity is probably due to the intense relationship between Burma and China.

During the brutal dictatorship of Ne Win all political parties but BSPP were disbanded, Buddhism was proclaimed state religion, any form of opposition the federal aspirations of ethnic groups were suppressed, industry and trade were nationalized and in 1974 a new Constitution was adopted, changing the name of the country in "Socialist Republic of the Union in Burma" (Enciclopedia Treccani, 2022). China continued to sustain the Burma Communist Party (BCP), providing arms, munitions, financial technical assistance and fostering local rebellions, especially after Burma refused to cooperate with China in the Vietnam War. In 1967 some anti-Chinese rebellions took place, but Ne Win did not ask neither the US nor USSR for help. At the beginning of the Seventies the two countries reestablished normal diplomatic relations, even if China continued to secretly sponsor the communist guerrilla at least till 1985 (Myoe, 2016).[3]

Ne Win retired from the Presidential office in 1981, although he remained the head of the BSPP till July 23rd 1988. In June 1988 a wave of protests began, due to the violent repression of a student manifestation; starting from August 8th protests spread all over the country. The movement called the "8888 Uprising" was struck by general Saw Maung's coup d'état on September 18th, when the regular government was replaced by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC): Saw Maung take on in himself the office of President, Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs

[1] The Pauk-Phaw included the rejection for the Chinese suzeraineté; a non-alignment policy, even if alliance were available; the establishment of interdependence and not dependence relations with China; the recognition of Chinese interests in the area (Myoe, 2016).

[2] Another military regime which applied (semi)-socialist economic institutions was the Peruvian one with Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975). Among the most important reforms there was the nationalization of the National Bank, of mineral resources, of the fishing industry, the land reform against the landlord oligarchy, the establishment of rural cooperatives and the State control on the main telecommunication company.

[3] According to Freedom House data, in the Seventies and the Eighties Burma was to be considered a "Not Free" regime, with a score between 6 and 7 for the political rights and between 5 and 7 for civil liberties.

Minister, while the BSPP was exiled to China. The second military era of the country began and the name was changed again from in Myanmar. The Constituent Assembly elections took place in May 1990 and the National Unity Party, representing the military forces, was defeated by the National League for Democracy (NLD), an opposition party against the military regime and born from the 8888 Uprising. However, the military government refused to yield the power to the newly elected NLD and sentenced its leaders (Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin U) to house arrest. Western countries adopted some political conditionality measures, hoping to promote the respect of the electoral results and the democratic development of the country. Notwithstanding international pressure, the SLORC stayed in power and on April 23rd 1992 general Than Shwe succeeded Saw Maung as President, staying in office till March 30th 2011. The democratization attempt carried out by the 8888 Uprising exponents could be traced back to the fourth democratization wave that was spreading all over the world after 1989. In Asia the example was set by the Tiananmen protests in Beijing between April 15th and June 4th 1989. Unfortunately, the Burmese regime transition was not successful, and the country only experienced two years as a hybrid regime (with military protection) before returning authoritarian in 1992.[4] The Constituent Assembly, elected in 1990 and responsible for the revision of the 1974 Constitution, was dismissed in March 1996, without providing a new Constitutional Chart. The SLORC was officially abolished in 1997 only to be replaced by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Throughout the Nineties the regime was responsible for serious human rights violations, especially against NLD members.[5]

In 2003, a "plan in seven points for the opening to democracy" (Zin & Joseph, 2012) was announced and two years later the National Convention was convened for the first time after 1993; however, no major pro-democracy organization or party was admitted. The democratic aspirations of the country invested the military regime in September 2007, when the "Saffron Revolution" began, although it was quickly repressed bloodily.[6] The growing international pressure in the form of trade sanctions forced the military junta to concede a constitutional referendum in 2008. The resulting Constitution yielded wide powers to the military, such as a reserved part of the parliamentary seats (1/4) and the right to choose the new governments. The NLD did not

[4] According to Huntington (1991), in South-East Asia countries political-cultural factors were more responsible for the failure of the transition than economic ones; in particular, he considers the absence of democratic experience and the lack of a political leadership change. The precarious economic situation of those countries certainly contributed to hinder the process, but it was not the determinant cause for its failure.

[5] The USA and the EU consequently increate the sanctions against the regime in 1997 and 2000 respectively. Freedom House highlights that in the Nineties and at the beginning of the XXI century there was little to no change in Myanmar's evaluations. The short-lived period of improvements in the civil liberties domain was linked to the 8888 Uprising, but it was lost by the end of the decade.

[6] The precarious political situation was further worsened by the cy-

clone Nargis that devastated most of the rural lands of the country in May 2008. According to the UN, the cyclone caused damages worth 10 billion dollars, left 1 million people homeless and caused 200 thousand fatalities (Unep, 2022).

participate in the 2010 elections as a sign of protest against the new electoral law and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won with 80% of the preferences (although it was accused of electoral fraud). 2011 represented a turning point thanks to the release of the NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi (along with 200 other political prisoners) and thanks to the (nominal) transfer of powers from the junta to the semi-civil government. The newly appointed government promoted a period of reforms which assured syndical representation to workers, the right to strike, a greater (even if not complete) press freedom, a revision of the electoral law which allowed the NLD and other pro-democracy parties to take part in the political life of the country. In 2012 by-elections took place, distributing 1/10 of the parliamentary seats, while the others were reserved for the military candidates; the NLD gained 43 out of the 45 available seats (Zin & Joseph, 2012). The 2015 general elections sealed the NLD victory, which obtained a vast majority in both Chambers of the Parliament with 79.4% of the votes (Blazevic, 2016:101), and his candidate Htin Kyaw was appointed as the next President of Myanmar, the first one in 54 years not coming from the military.[7] Aung San Suu Kyi was constitutionally interdicted from the presidential office; however, she was appointed State Counselor, an office specifically created for her and which allowed her to de facto rule the government since the Prime Minister office was abolished. President Htin Kyaw resigned in March 2018 and was replaced by Win Myint, whose mandate was supposed to end in 2023.

At the end of 2016 the ethnic conflict between the Muslim Rohingya minority and the Buddhist population allied with the government troops began, leading to an operation qualified as ethnic cleansing. Many UN agencies, International Criminal Court officials, NGOs, journalists and governments have described the situation as an ongoing genocide.[8] Taking of the precautionary measures necessary to face the Covid-19 pandemics, the government forbid protests and in presence electoral campaigns, contributing to the NLD victory at the general elections on November 8th 2020. The wide NLD victory (396/476 seats) against the USDP (only 33 seats) was followed by an Internet shutdown and a reduced electoral monitoring. On February 1st 2021the Tatmadaw seized the power with a coup d'état, overthrowing Aung San Suu Kyi and Win Myint from their offices and declaring the

7) Thanks to the 2012 and 2015 political evolution, Freedom House progressively improved Myanmar's scores from 7 in both categories, and the country finally gained the "Partially Free" status in 2016 (with a score of 5 in both sections). Myanmar was considered a hybrid protected regime, and the status was confirmed till 2019. However, after the 2021 coup, the country's performance drastically worsened, achieving a score of 0/40 for political rights and 9/60 for civil liberties, thus confirming the 2020 "Not Free" status.

8) This was justified the worsening of the Freedom House scores; however, the regime was still considered a hybrid (partially free) one till 2019.

elections null and void. In the aftermath of the coup, many NLD members were arrested while general Min Aung Hlaing became the new man in power and proclaimed an emergency state for a year. Subsequently, a civil pacific disobedience movement started to protest against the military and the imposed measures (such as the curfew and limitations and control over the access to Internet and social networks).

Thailand's institutions

The Kingdom of Siam was the only territory of South-East Asia which maintained its independence through the XVIII, XIX and XX century; it was rather a buffer state between the English and the French possessions in the area. After a coup d'état led by both civilians and the military, Thailand became a constitutional monarchy on June 24th 1932; the conflict between the military and party leaders grew, until general Plaek Phibunsongkhram, also known as Phibun, became Prime Minister in 1938. The general established an authoritarian fascist regime, and inaugurated a "thaification" policy aimed at assimilating ethnic minorities.

In 1939 the Kingdom of Siam officially became "Prathet Thai", the local name for Thailand. During the Second World War the regime allied with Japan, but after 1943 the opposition to the Japanese occupation and to the Phibun regime grew and it was led by the national liberation movement Seri Thai. After the ousting of Phibun, the government was entrusted to Banomyong, the leader of the opposition. The first civilian government of the country then promulgated a new Constitution, which established a bicameral parliament and allowed the creation of free and independent political parties.

The democratic regime only lasted till 1947, when Phibun deposed the Prime Minister with a coup, and the power returned to the old military hierarchies. After the seizure of power by the communists in China and Indochina, Thailand sided with the United States, gaining military aids in return. Indeed, according to the principle of the "lesser evil" (Fossati, 2006), the US sustained both authoritarian and hybrid regimes under military tutelage against the possible victory of communist parties. In September 1957, after another coup Phibun was substituted by another general, Sarit Thanarat, who became Prime Minister in 1959. He confirmed the pro-US alignment, also during the Viet Nam

war, and promoted the renaissance in the monarchy as unifying force of the country. Thanarat's successor, general Thanom Kittikachorn monopolized the Thai political scene between 1963 and 1973, when some students protests forced king Rama IX to remove the general from its office and to send him into exile. Therefore, in 1973 the second democratic experience of the country was inaugurated; the different governments of this period ranged from hybrid regimes (either under tutelage or lawless) to limited illiberal democracies, reaching the democratic apex in 1975.

However, leaders and parties proved to be weak and unable to deal with the delicate transition period and popular unrest was always present. When general Kittikachorn tried to seize power again, protests exploded in January 1976 and continued throughout the following months. After two more coups general Kriangsak Chomanan seized power in 1977; the Constitution was changed in order to enhance the powers of the military and new elections were programmed for 1988.[9] Meanwhile, the opposition joined the Thai communist party, which could exploit the economic and military aids coming from China. General Chomanan managed to stop the Chinese action only by allowing Beijing to transit through Thai territory to refurnish the Khmer Rouge during the Cambodian-Vietnamese war. In March 1980 general Prem Tinsulanonda was elected Prime Minister, maintaining the office till August 1988; during its premiership there was an easing of the regime and a national reconciliation program allowed to effectively limit the communist guerrilla in Thailand by the end of the decade.

In 1988, there were the first "free" elections of the past fifteen years, won by the conservative right-wing Thai Nation Party. The party was born during the civil rule (1973-1976) and represented the interests of Phibun's close lobby, which had been excluded from power after the 1957 coup. Its leader, Chatichai Choonhavan, became Prime Minister and the country's regime was again under military tutelage. However, the government was involved in many corruption scandals till 1991, when another coup overthrew Choonhavan and established an authoritarian government led by the pro-monarchy Democratic Party. During the Nineties also the Democratic Party was shattered by many scandals and in 1997 it joined the Thai Nation Party with the aim of producing a new Constitution.

9) Freedom House registered an improvement for both political rights and civil liberties in the first half of the Seventies (in 1975 the scores were 2 and 3 respectively), but the events of the second half of the decade negatively influenced the Thai performance (only in the late Eighties the scores went back to 2 and 3).

The new Constitution facilitated another democratic parenthesis in the country, since the 2001 elections were won by the Thai Rak Thai Party (TRT), a party founded by the telecommunications tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra, who became Prime Minister. The TRT gained 248/500 seats, defeating the conservative Democratic Party and forming a coalition government including the Thai Nation Party (Thai Parliamentary Chamber, 2022). Shinawatra became the representative of the rural sectors in the north of the country, alienating the sympathies of the industrial and urban lobbies of Bangkok, which sided with the military; besides, the Prime Minister progressively marginalized the opposition parties and privileged a personalistic approach to power. He promoted many policies aimed at protecting the weakest classes, especially in the health and education domain, causing the rapid growth of the inflation from 0.6% in 2002 to 5.1% in 2006 (Cia World Factobook, 2006). Shinawatra represented what in politics is often called a "right-wing populist" or a "plebiscitary conservative" (Fossati, 2020). Shinawatra and its party won again the 2005 and 2006 elections, and managed to relaunch the Thai economy after the severe financial crisis of 1997-1998; Shinawatra also inaugurated a war against the drug dealers and the Islamic separatist groups of the Pattani region, but conducted it in violation of human rights (Amnesty International, 2022). The deep fracture created between the old and the new political elites facilitated the military coup led on September 19th 2006, after which all institutional offices was suspended. The country was split in two factions, one supporting conservative and military forces and (the "yellow shirts") and one supporting Shinawatra (the "red shirts"), generating conflicts in the national territory (Bbc, 2022).

In December 2007, before the elections, the military junta managed to institutionalize its role through the Internal Security Act which attributed wide powers to the military to the detriment of civil liberties. The 2007 elections were won by the People's Power Party (PPP), Thaksin's ally, which was then dismantled by the Constitutional Court one year later because of electoral fraud and the Democratic Party could therefore form a coalition government. In 2010 the protests of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship spread throughout the country and, notwithstanding the violent repression, asked for the return of Shinawatra and its party and managed to obtain new elections for

2011. The 2011 Pheu Thai victory, led by Thaksin's sister Yingluck Shinawatra, represented just a small success of the United Front forces, since Yingluck was destitute in 2012 by the Constitutional Court because of abuse of power. The social and political conflict rapidly grew till May 20th 2014, when the army Commander in Chief Prayuth Chan-ocha, leader of the National Council for Peace and Order, proclaimed the martial law and held a coup to become ad interim Prime Minister. This escalation led to the dissolution of the government, the suspension of the Constitution and the establishment of the curfew. In October 2016 king Rama X succeeded his father Rama IX, enhancing the monarchy involvement in politics, along with a major degree of centralization and an attempt to promote the monarchy absolutism. However, the 2017 Constitution, the 20th after 1932, ensured wider guarantees for the military and the Constitutional Court, specially aimed at preventing the return to politics of Thaksin Shinawatra and his allies.[10] After repeatedly postponing them, elections for the Lower Chamber were held in March 2019, while the seats of the Higher one were chosen by the military after the election results, published in May 2019. For the first time, the Thai Raksa Chart Party, an ally of Pheu Thai, proposed ad Prime Minister a member of the royal family, the Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya. However, her brother the king immediately blocked her anti-constitutional candidature, while the Constitutional Court dissolved the party and interdicted many of its member for any political activity for ten years. After some months of contestation, Pheu Thai obtained a relative majority but ended up in the opposition group along with Future Forward (social-democrats and anti-military), while the governing coalitions included Palang Pracharath (the party sustaining the former dictator Prayuth Chan-o-cha) and the Democratic Party (conservative and right-wing) (Election Commission of Thailand, 2019). The elections were considered "partly free and not fair" and, notwithstanding the party pluralism, they were rather regarded as an example of competitive authoritarianism (Sawasdee, 2020).

Although conducted with some irregularities, the elections led to the first improvement in the performance of the country after the 2014 coup and in 2019 Freedom House classified the regime as "partially free". In July 2019 the military junta devolved its power to the civil government, even if many of its member returned to the political scene, as Prayuth did becoming Prime

10) Freedom House registered a deterioration of the scores in the first half of the Nineties, while in the second half of the decade and at the beginning of the XXI century the scores stabilized around 2-3. The 2006 and 2014 coups even worsened the situation and in 2018 Thailand had a score of 7 for political rights and 5 for civil liberties

Minister, while many pro-democracy activists became targets of military attacks. In 2020 Thailand again regressed to the "not free" status because of the dissolution of the opposition part Future Forward and because of the repression of the anti-government youth protests demanding an effective protection of human rights, the abolition of the Thai parliament, a constitutional reform and a downgrading of the monarchy power. The civil government has then exploited the Covid-19 pandemics to declare the state of emergency in the country and to inhibit the right of association. The protests briefly stopped at the end of 2020 also because of a new pandemic wave and then started again in February 2021, in response to the coup in Myanmar, and lastly again in June 2021. [11]

[11] The latest scores of Freedom House show a further worsening of Thailand's performance for 2021, with a score of 5/40 for political rights and 24/60 for civil liberties, confirming the "Not Free" status of 2020.

Chinese autocracy promotion in Myanmar

The repression of the 8888 Uprising and the denial of the 1990 democratic elections caused the deterioration of the relations between Myanmar and Western countries. By the mid-Nineties Western countries adopted political conditionality measures against the authoritarian regime, mainly trade restrictions, visa blockade for the junta members, armaments embargo and suspension of military and non-humanitarian assistance. Therefore, China took advantage and became the first arms provider for Myanmar, which became China's major partner. Between 1990 and 2016 China provided Myanmar with 1 billion US$ worth arms agreement, beside providing the training to Burmese military cadres (Way, 2016); between 1988 and 2012 Chinese investments in Myanmar were worth more than 1 billion US$, and Beijing became the country's greatest investor overcoming Thailand (which was surpassed as trading partner in 2009) (Zin & Joseph, 2012). In 1991 the Indian Prime Minister attempted to involve Myanmar in its "Look East Policy", aimed at intensifying their bilateral trade, but Myanmar preferred to tighten its ties with China. After refusing to adhere to the SEATO and the ASEAN in 1967 because of the Chinese veto, Myanmar acceded the second one in 1997, when China finally agreed to its membership. Throughout the Nineties the Chinese action focused on providing incentives to sustain the isolated Burmese regime, especially as supply of

arms[12], training[13] and low quality consumption goods; Myanmar began to provide wood, gems, fish, marble, carbon, nickel and other national resources in return.

Between the end of the Nineties and the beginning of the XXI century the Burmese regime began to progressively take the distance from the Chinese giant, acknowledging the risks coming from an excessive dependence. Therefore, Myanmar decided to establish closer relations with Russia, Brazil, Ukraine and other Eastern European countries for arm supplies and with Russia, India, Pakistan and Malaysia for cooperation in training. Notwithstanding this new trend, the Sino-Burmese relations remained rather intense: in 2007 the military regime selected some Chinese state-owned enterprises for the making of more than ninety projects in the hydroelectric energy, oil, natural gas and extractive activities field, penalizing Indian and South Korean enterprises instead; on the other hand, China vetoed the US-backed UN resolution aimed at increasing the sanctions against the Burmese regime.[14] This system based on incentives and blackmailing allowed Beijing to maintain important relations with the still internationally isolated Burmese regime. Probably because of the scarce results of Myanmar in diversifying its partners, China did not feel pressured to enhance its sanctions against the regime. Myanmar remained a rather isolated regime with respect to other authoritarian and hybrid regimes.

The Western political conditionality led Myanmar to diversify its production and trading partners and only the textile sectors was eventually harmed by the sanctions; China managed to absorb most of Burmese natural gas exports previously produced for the US, allowing Myanmar to bypass sanctions. Indeed, the so-called Chinese "development assistance" traditionally included not only subsidies and soft loans, but also trade loans and investments. According to an AidData report, less than 25% of Chinese funds in the area between 2000 and 2014 were part of the Official Development Assistance; Chinese assistance came mainly in the form of export credits and extremely favorable loans. The Table below illustrates the foreign direct investment flows in Myanmar, and clearly shows that, even if with a fluctuating trend, China still remains the main provider.

[12] According to Maung Myoe 2016) in "The logics f Myanmar's China policy, Burmese armed forces received 16 war ships, 146 aircrafts, 300 tanks, a great number of anti-aircraft missiles, over 100 pieces of artillery.

[13] According to Maung Myoe (2016), the Burmese military industry was built with the technical aid provided by China; besides, between 1990 and 1999, 615 out of 942 military cadres sent abroad were hosted by the Chinese army.

[14] For the first time, in 1973 China used its veto power for a non-Taiwan-related issue.

Table 1. FDI in Myanmar, 2009-2018

(In U$S Million)

Source Country	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*
ASEAN	67.8	25.5	84.6	151.2	1,186.8	683.6	2,230.6	1,682.9	2590.4	910.8
BEST OF THE WORLD	895.5	2,223.3	1,973.6	1,203.0	1,434.1	262.6	593.8	1,306.6	1,412.0	699.0
Australia	0.0	4.4	12.4	1.7	0.1	0.2	0.0	0.7	0.6	16.9
Canada	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1	0.1	2.8	15.9
China	370.7	1,520.9	670.6	482.2	792.6	70.5	52.4	205.5	554.4	75.3
EU-28	97.8	214.8	369.3	664.2	296.2	28.3	202.9	839.0	447.3	176.8
India	0.0	13.6	1.5	0.0	7.3	0.7	8.1	1.6	-98.1	-215.5
Japan	0.2	0.2	2.2	31.1	36.0	37.7	95.1	16.0	207.7	289.1
Korea, Republic of	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.1	37.0	35.3	-189.2	-462.6
New Zealand	65.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1
Russian Federation	0.0	0.0	26.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
USA	0.0	0.0	103.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	43.3	21.6	55.3
Others	361.6	469.4	786.1	23.8	301.8	114.1	196.2	165.0	464.9	747.7
Total	963.3	2,248.8	2,058.2	1,354.2	2,620.9	946.2	2,824.5	2,989.5	4,002.4	1,609.8

Source: ASEAN Yearbook 2019.

The change in the trend inaugurated by Myanmar at the beginning of the XXI century became even more evident after Thein Sein appointment as President. In 2011 Myanmar interrupted the building of the Myitsone Dam, the greatest out of a six dams-hydroelectric project on the Irrawaddy river, and built by China in the northern part of Myanmar. Indeed, the regime was forced to this decision by a growing anti-Chinese sentiment among the population because of non-ethic environment and social practices in the building of the dam, and because of a perception of national resources exploitation. China drastically reduced the volume of its trade and investments, especially between 2014 and 2015 (Wong, 2018:7), as a form of economic blackmailing (a usual autocracy promotion measure). This economic conditionality has hardly had a preemptive role, but it was rather a consequence of the Burmese behavior. Chinese investments rose again since 2016, and even more after 2017: in fact, Myanmar was targeted again by Western economic sanctions because of the conflict exploded between the Buddhist majority and the Rohingya Muslim ethnic minority. In this new context of international isolation, State Councilor Aung San Suu Kyi (and not the military junta) promoted new ties with Beijing and the progress of numerous Belt and Road Initiative projects in the Burmese territory.

The Burmese leader probably encouraged Chinese investments in order to ensure the country economic progress and to fulfill the electoral promises (Mezzera, 2021); for its part, Beijing promptly seized the chance to sustain the Burmese government through its economic incentives. This approach is not new for China which has often taken advantage of the ethic-driven withdrawal of Western support to gain credit with pariah regimes. Aung San Suu Kyi opening to Beijing was confirmed by Xi's visit in January 2020 and was constantly thwarted by the military, who instead have generally been nationalist and wary of China's involvement in Myanmar's ethnic conflicts (Mahtani & Diamond, 2020). Notwithstanding the worsening of their relations because of the Rohingya conflict, the Burmese leader and her party tried to preserve the dialogue with Western governments, especially with the US, in order not to preclude any option for the future.[15]

After the February 1, 2021 coup, China was accused of helping building the internet firewall in Myanmar; there have been therefore many protests in front of the Chinese Embassy, but Beijing denied any involvement (The Irrawaddy, 2021). According to Ari Ben-Menashe, a lobbyist for the military, one of the reasons for the coup was also the excessive tightening of relations between Aung San Suu Kyi's government and China. Ben-Menashe was apparently hired along with his communication agency in order to establish a fruitful dialogue with the US and the West in general, especially in order to avoid becoming a Chinese client state (Reuters, 2021). However, the ambiguous relations held by the military with China in the past twenty years makes it hard to understand till what point the Tatmadaw is willing to reduce the Chinese presence in the country. Indeed, China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution aimed at establishing an embargo on arms sent to Myanmar and, along with Russia, it remains Myanmar's major provider. Conversely to what announced by the military spokesperson, the Chinese narrative doesn't seem to oppose a return of the Tatmadaw, since it is regarded as the only actor able to stabilize the country (an imperative assumption for Beijing's investments protection) (Tower & Clapp, 2021). According to an analysis by CNBC correspondent Yen Nee Lee, China would be aiming for a laissez-faire approach with respect to the military junta, avoiding to openly condemn the coup and calling instead for regional stability (Lee, 2021). Indeed, Beijing has abandoned the ideological

15) According to Yun Sun, senior fellow and co-director of the East Asia Program and director of the China Program at the Stimson Center, "Myanmar won't be back in China's pocket [...] The Burmese and the NLD government are using American acquiescence and Chinese desire to gain influence in Myanmar to their own advantage" (CGTN America).

approach to autocracy promotion used during the Cold War, and it has instead opted for a more realistic and pragmatic one, interchanging its strategies. Differently from the aftermath of 2011, in the last five years the Burmese emulation of the Chinese regime has prevailed over China's policy based on incentives and blackmailing. This trend was first observed during the civil government (after the beginning of the Rohingya conflict), and could be followed not with words but in deeds by the military junta.

Chinese autocracy promotion in Thailand

The first fundamental difference between Myanmar and Thailand is their alignment during the Cold War: while the first country tried to develop a non-alignment politics despite its proximity to China, the latter established strict ties with the US already in the aftermath of the Second World War. Thailand accepted to become Washington's anti-communist fortress in South-East Asia, thus enjoying the American military protection from the security threats coming from its neighbors.[16] The US involvement in the long term led to the creation of Western-like education and training programs for the ruling and intellectual elites and to a constant support to the pro-monarchy and traditional elites, thus eliminating all potential competition.

[16] Thailand was among the few non-NATO countries to be officially recognized by the US as an ally.

After the first semi-free elections of 1988, the official development assistance coming from the German, French, British and Japanese governments and from the European institutions significantly rose (Oecd, 2020). Funds coming from the US remained instead unchanged. The deteriorating internal political context and the 1991 coup caused a major fall in the official development assistance coming from all major Thailand's donors.[17] Only after the 1997 Asian financial crisis the European institutions and Germany increased the funds again. Political conditionality in Thailand was actually experienced at the beginning of the Nineties with a certain degree of success, since in the second half of the decade the country improved its political performance (differently from what observed in Myanmar).

[17] At the same time, according to Freedom House, Thailand reverse from "Free" to "Not Free" country status.

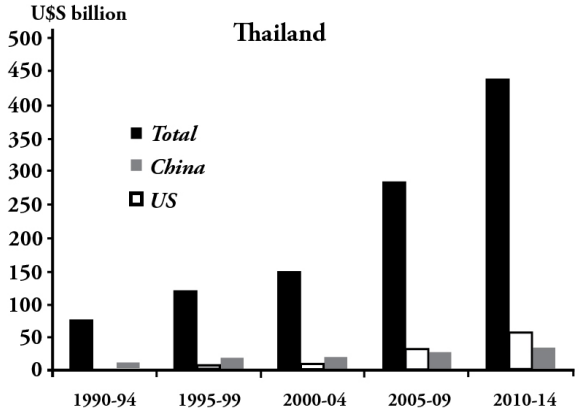
The 1997 Asian financial crisis caused also a worsening of the relations between Thailand and the US, further exacerbated by the political developments in the country in the late Nineties

and the beginning of the XXI century. Indeed, the rise of Thaksin Shinawatra was originally perceived as a democratic turn and was accompanied by an increase in the volume of aids, probably conceived as democracy incentives (Oecd, 2020). However, aids began to decrease toward the end of Thaksin's mandate, especially because of its authoritarian means that resembled those of the Malaysian and Singaporean single-party (such as the monopolization of the electoral system or the manipulation of the Constitution) (Pongsudhirak, 2008). Aids further decreased after the 2006 coup, but also with Shinawatra's 2011 return to power, and lastly they drastically dropped after the 2014 coup. Nevertheless, contrary to the political conditionality applied after 1991, the 2006 and 2014 coups caused a fall in the aids, but then they rose again without the proof of actual political progress, probably in order to avoid an excessive rapprochement between Bangkok and Beijing. Historically, China developed less ties with Thailand than the US, especially because of the country's alignment during the Viet Nam war and the Cold War in general. These premises did not lead to a Chinese disappointment with respect to the Thai political development, and China manifested instead an implicit support. Indeed, Chinese pragmatism, an essential feature of its development assistance policy[18], ended up being more attractive for Thailand than US interventionism. While during the Nineties the Chinese quota of Thai trade was essentially negligible (see the Figure below), throughout the early XXI century the quota rose significantly, overcoming the US one in 2010-2014. Besides, in 2013 China overcame also Japan as Thailand's major trade partner, winning 14% of the total trade of the country.[19]

[18]) The Chinese conception of development assistance includes not only subsidies and loans, bus also trade loans and investments.

[19]) This increase was accelerated by China's accession to the World Trade organization in 2001 and by the signature of the Free Trade Area Agreement between China and ASEAN countries.

Figure 1. Thailand's trade volumes



Source: IMF 2015.

The increase in trade volumes between China and Thailand was paired with an increase of Chinese investments in the country, another feature of Beijing's development assistance. Notwithstanding this trend that rose especially after 2010, Chinese FDI did not overcome US ones till 2016 and they remained lower than the Japanese and ASEAN ones (in 2017 Tokyo's FDI accounted for 1/3 of the total investments in Thailand).

Table 2. FDI in Thailand, 2009-2018

Source Country	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*	*2018*
ASEAN	2,685.9	2,220.9	952.2	-745.4	528.2	-940.7	433.6	2,001.4	1,814.0	1,671.2
BEST OF THE WORLD	3,725.6	12,525.8	1,521.5	13,644.4	15,407.8	5,916.2	8,494.0	806.8	6,415.1	11,534.0
Australia	124.7	23.4	6.3	276.5	343.8	79.5	661.9	42.0	80.7	48.0
Canada	793.5	782.7	50.2	2,351.5	130.0	900.7	241.2	76.5	-127.4	22.0
China	169.1	633.4	20.9	598.5	938.9	-221.3	238.1	1,071.9	72.9	662.4
EU-28	980.4	1,276.5	843.4	1,515.4	-1,117.0	221.7	1,065.1	4,378.9	710.6	1539.4
India	43.5	92.4	32.5	52.3	59.9	-55.6	-3.9	31.9	39.5	22.4
Japan	1,535.0	4,400.0	-1,370.4	3,706.7	10,927.2	2,430.9	3,006.3	2,986.8	3,131.6	5,250.9
Korea, Republic of	278.1	180.2	97.2	131.1	716.3	247.9	142.6	27.2	168.4	223.7
New Zealand	11.6	3.3	5.6	7.1	4.8	4.9	1.1	1.6	2.6	6.5
Russian Federation	13.9	15.6	-49.7	61.3	167.9	-97.8	-7.8	37.4	40.9	45.2
USA	-43.8	1,431.0	143.4	3,966.5	857.2	2023.0	1.083.1	438.6	-120.5	810.1
Others	180.2	3.733.8	1,742.2	977.5	2,379.0	382.4	2,066.3	471.7	2,416	2,903.3
Total	6,411.5	14.746.7	2,473.7	12,899.0	15,936.0	4,975.5	8,927.6	2,910.2	8,229.1	13,205.1

Source: ASEAN Yearbook 2019.

In the years following the 2014 coup, the Chinese FDI experience a fluctuating trend while Japanese and ASEAN FDI steadily stayed above the Chinese ones. Nevertheless, Chinese attraction to Thailand was already confirmed in 2014 when, just six months after the coup, the Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang visited Thailand to confirm the Chinese willingness to build a railway from Bangkok to China's Southern provinces (Wong, 2018:10). The incentives were not limited to the trade sector, but instead they progressively involved the security domain, with joint military exercises and purchases of Chinese tanks and submarines (Wong, 2018:10). A sharp increase of Chinese investments was registered in 2016, but they decreased already in 2017. In the following years Beijing's trade presence constantly increased to the point that in 2020 the Thai House of Representative discussed the threats deriving from an overreliance on the neighboring economic giant (O'Connor, 2020). Overall, China profited from the establishment of a military regime sustained by Beijing especially through economic incentives at the beginning of the XXI century, become even more relevant after 2014. China did not downsize its incentives after the 2019 election, the first ones after the 2014 coup, neither did China made use of blackmailing means; indeed, Beijing opted for a pragmatic approach and accepted the presence of a hybrid regime under military tutelage. Chinese projects in Thailand proceeded, especially those related to the Belt and Road Initiative; Bangkok occasionally showed some resistance, aimed at maintaining a certain degree of autonomy with respect to Beijing and at avoiding the so-called "debt trap diplomacy" (Zawacki, 2021). Chinese presence in the country spread also on the cultural and political ground since Thailand host the highest number of Asia Confucius Institutes, a number even higher than the rest of all ASEAN countries together. The deep ties between the two countries have been confirmed in the past years by the magnitude of university and media exchange programs and by the personal relation between the Thai princess Sirindhom and Beijing; in 2019 the city honored her with the China's Friendship Medal, the highest honor for foreigners. Therefore, the is no evidence to confirm China's disappointment with respect to Thailand's (seeming) democratic turn in 2019, also because the country remains a hybrid regime. Besides, similarly to what showcased in Myanmar, China preferred a flexible and pragmatic approach in dealing with

Thai political evolutions and this choice probably favored Bangkok's emulation of the Chinese model in the last year.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to analyze the Chinese autocracy promotion in South-East Asia, especially in Myanmar and Thailand. The initial overview on Burmese and Thai institutions has been helpful in order to highlight the Chinese reactions to the main political events of the two countries from the mid-XX century till our days. Subsequently, it has been possible to further investigate Chinese autocracy promotion in the second part of the article.

After its independence, Myanmar experiences a few short semi-democratic periods, but was mostly ruled by a military regime; the regime had to face the communist guerrilla sponsored by China for several decades, although the country officially maintained good relations with Beijing. Starting from the Seventies, Myanmar experiences an unusual combination of military political regime and socialist economic institutions; this result possibly derived from the Chinese autocracy promotion, which was ideology-oriented during the Cold War. In the Nineties, Myanmar experienced a new democratic wave under Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD, but a new military coup erupted, causing the antipathy of Western governments and facilitating the Chinese penetration instead. At the beginning of the XXI century the regime was well aware of its international isolation and of the risks linked with an excessive reliance on China; therefore, Myanmar progressively tried to diversify its partners. China did not react to this changing trend, but it continued its incentives-based autocracy promotion; the only relevant exception was the blackmailing of 2011, when Myanmar interrupted the construction of the Myitsone Dam. Nevertheless, a few years later Beijing resumed its incentives policy, which was favored by Myanmar's renewed isolation due to the Rohingya conflict and by the emulative dynamics within the country itself. On the contrary, Beijing has not probably played a major role in the military coup of February 1st 2021. It is indeed probable that the now ruling Tatmadaw will pursue the path of emulation of the Chinese political and economic model.

On the other hand, the Sino-Thai relations developed especially after the end of the Cold War because of Bangkok's alignment with Washington. Just like Myanmar, Thailand too experienced a

strong role of the military in the political life of the country since the end of the Thirties till nowadays. The few democratic experiments never survived for too long, although during the Nineties Thailand seemed to be steadily heading towards a democratic transition, probably thanks to the Western political conditionality. At the beginning of the XX century, the telecommunications tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra prevailed and developed a personalistic power, but his plebiscitarianism alienated the sympathies of the Bangkok's élites. The excessive power of the Shinawatra family and of its allies caused the 2006 and the 2014 coups, and only in 2019 elections were held again. China observed the Thai political developments with a pragmatic eye and did not bind the relations between the two countries to a specific regime. In Thailand China's autocracy promotion privileged trade incentives, even after the establishment of a hybrid regime under military tutelage in 2019. On the other hand, the most recent political developments suggest an emulation of the Thai regime with respect to Beijing's model, which would be confirmed also by the repression of the 2020 protests.

Overall, during the Cold War, Beijing's relations with South-East Asia countries were deeply affected by China's relations with other communist parties, thus leaving a major role for ideology; on the contrary, in the past thirty years China has displayed a rather pragmatic approach, supporting not only communist or authoritarian regimes, but also hybrid regimes like Myanmar and Thailand. The Chinese attitude would confirm Beijing's conservative approach to autocracy promotion, where incentives have often prevailed over blackmailing practices. Nonetheless, during the so-called "critical junctures", that is during the switches between different kind of regimes, China has preferred a laissez-faire approach. The Chinese autocracy promotion cannot be described neither as ideological, nor as rigid and thus oriented only towards authoritarian regimes. On the contrary, it is a rather flexible one, since it was directed also toward Myanmar's and Thailand's hybrid regimes: indeed, China can exploit the rise of new authoritarian regimes, but it would be against its own interests to punish democratic and hybrid regimes. Furthermore, the Chinese attitude with respect to the critical junctures has sustained emulative dynamic of the follower countries.

The *real-politik* logics exactly assumes a pragmatic stand of a country's foreign policy with respect to its interests, while refusing to rigidly apply ideology. This approach has allowed China to preserve a certain degree of versatility with respect to its follower countries, especially when they seemed to distance themselves from Beijing's authoritarian model (Alieva, 2019). In Myanmar and Thailand, China rarely used measures related to hard power practices, such as military intervention (never used)[20], military incentives and economic blackmailing (used especially in Myanmar), while soft power measure have prevailed, especially in the form of economic and emulative incentives. However, as reminded by the very creator of the term, Joseph Nye (2021), the concept of soft power is still a matter of discussion among experts, starting from the definition of power and the difference between imposed and coercive (Airaksinen, 1988) behaviors. Therefore, there are many interactions between soft and hard power measures, as observed for example in the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative. Although its authoritarian regime constitutes a limit to its full potential, China seems to have understood the importance of soft power, Indeed, Chinese leaders starting from Hu Jintao have become aware of the risks linked to a growing military-based hard power and have also developed an economic soft power aimed at avoiding the creation of a balancing coalition by neighboring countries (Carminati, 2020). This strategy probably includes the acceptance of hybrid regimes, even if sometimes not perfectly aligned with the Chinese model, which is still the most attractive one not only for Myanmar and Thailand but for the whole region. Therefore, the presence of non-authoritarian regimes is not negatively perceived by Beijing, also because hybrid experiences have often been short-lived and followed by a return of the military to power.

To summarize, in the long run China prefers incentives over blackmailing practices (which are more limited), therefore also supporting hybrid regimes. However, frequently the prevalence of authoritarian regimes or of hybrid regimes with a strong military tutelage leads to emulative practices. Therefore, Chinese pragmatism allows to accept both options since, if China took an ideological stand and opposed hybrid regimes, this could cause the defeat of the military and the possible victory of pro-Western and anti-Chinese forces. In order to avoid this result, Beijing adopts a more flexible and non-ideological autocracy promotion, reflecting a *real-politik* approach to international relations, which allows

[20] China has never been militarily involved in Myanmar and Thailand possibly in order to avoid an excessive deployment of its forces, already present in other regional conflicts (namely Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia).

to preserve Chinese diplomatic interests. Therefore, Chinese behavior with respect to Myanmar and Thailand will not probably change in the short run and emulative practices could instead consolidate in the future. Asian governments under Chinese influence are aware of the economic incentives linked to the emulation of the Chinese model, just as observed for Myanmar and Thailand. The *real-politik* approach has therefore allowed China to navigate the troubled political developments of its neighbors by alternating its support to the best choice (represented by the military) and the acceptance of hybrid regimes under tutelage, which represent Beijing's second-best choice.

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L'autocracy promotion dell'Arabia Saudita

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Saudi Arabian Autocracy Promotion in Yemen and Bahrein

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Abstract

Partendo dal concetto di Autocracy Promotion sviluppato da Fossati (2022), vengono analizzati due conflitti, quello in Yemen e quello in Bahrein. Considerate le varie tappe di entrambi i conflitti, vengono ricostruite le modalità di intervento dell'attore principale, cioè l'Arabia Saudita, e del suo antagonista storico, l'Iran.

Parole chiave

Autocracy promotion, Conflitto, Yemen, Bahrein, Arabia Saudita, Iran.

Abstract

Considering the concept of Autocracy Promotion developed by Fossati (2022), two conflict are analyzed, Yemen and Bahrein. Following the various steps of both conflicts, I reconstructed the type of intervention put in place by Saudi Arabia and its major antagonist, Iran.

Keywords

Autocracy promotion, Conflict, Yemen, Bahrein, Saudi Arabia, Iran.

Premessa teorica

L'*autocracy promotion* è un concetto che è stato elaborato recentemente nella letteratura politologica. La promozione della democrazia indica quell'insieme di decisioni da parte dei governi occidentali mirate a sostenere ed esportare le istituzioni democratiche in paesi terzi. In parallelo, l'*autocracy promotion* identifica tutti quei comportamenti messi in atto da paesi a regime autoritario che sostengono altri regimi autoritari o semi-autoritari. Fossati (2022) ha identificato quattro modelli attraverso i quali l'AP si concretizza: a) Emulazione spontanea, che avviene quando uno stato autoritario viene preso come modello di ispirazione per motivi di tipo culturale, economico, politico o militare, da parte di un altro regime, che decide di emularlo in maniera spontanea. Un esempio ne è la Cina, leader regionale dell'Asia ed emulata da Laos, Birmania, Thailandia... b) Intervento militare, quando una potenza anti-democratica interviene militarmente, come è avvenuto alla fine degli anni '90 quando il Vietnam ha attaccato la Cambogia. c) Sanzioni negative attraverso 'punizioni' nel commercio, negli investimenti oppure tagli agli aiuti economici e militari. d) Premi attraverso un sostegno militare (indiretto), diplomatico od economico.

È da tener presente che questi modelli raramente sono selezionati alternativamente, e spesso accade che nella realtà empirica vengono attuati in modo contemporaneo. La scienza politica identifica quattro ondate di democracy promotion avvenute nella seconda metà del 900, l'ultima delle quali, post-1989, è andata man mano spegnendosi; è proprio in questa fase, soprattutto a partire dagli anni 2000, che si sono intensificati i processi di autocracy promotion, quando i valori della democrazia han visto opporsi in maniera più o meno rigida vari regimi autoritari e semi-autoritari, tra cui si sono intrecciate delle alleanze anti democratiche. I processi di promozione autocratica sono da imputarsi sia ad una reazione contraria ai valori fondanti della democrazia (liberismo economico, risoluzione pacifica dei conflitti, sistema politico democratico, rispetto dei diritti umani) sia a processi indipendenti e spontanei collegati ai legami tra regimi autoritari.

Durante la guerra fredda, i processi di autocracy promotion sono stati strettamente collegati alle ideologie; un esempio ne è la Russia, che ha sempre supportato i paesi comunisti del terzo mondo, sia in campo economico, che militare e politico. È da

notare, inoltre, che durante la fase del bipolarismo, a volte paesi autoritari hanno avuto il sostegno di regimi democratici: emblematico il caso degli USA, che, in periodo di guerra fredda (come durante la presidenza Regan) ha ampiamente supportato regimi militari o personalistici nel terzo mondo (soprattutto in America latina), considerati il "male minore" davanti alla minaccia primaria del comunismo e del suo dilagare. Oggi, l'unica area in cui resta un vincolo stretto tra regime autocratici (come Cuba e Venezuela) e ideologia è l'America Latina, verso paesi con governi populisti di sinistra. I principali paesi esportatori di regimi autocratici sono: Russia verso Bielorussia, Armenia e paesi dell'Asia centrale; Cina a capo dell'area Nord Corea, Vietnam, Cambogia e Laos; Turchia verso Azerbaijan, Asia centrale, Libia ed Egitto; Iran, con l'intervento militare in Siria e in Yemen; Arabia Saudita, che ha tentato e tenta tutt'ora di esportare il suo modello politico in Egitto, Libia, Yemen e Bahrein. In sintesi, succede spesso che due regimi autoritari sostengano diverse fazioni non democratiche in un altro paese, entrando di conseguenza in conflitto, come ad esempio Iran e Arabia Saudita in Yemen.

Le istituzioni politiche dell'Arabia Saudita

L'Arabia Saudita è quello che in linguaggio politologico viene etichettato come *regime autoritario personalistico*, con una forte componente teocratica (Fossati, 2018). È una monarchia assoluta con a capo attualmente il re Salman Bin Abdulaziz, che nel 2017 ha nominato come principe ereditario il figlio Muhammad Muhammad Bin Salman. Si tratta di un regime personalistico, perché i capi dello stato sono legati alla dinastia della famiglia reale. Ha una importante componente teocratica perché la Sharia islamica è l'unica fonte del diritto, al contrario di altri paesi musulmani.

Quello saudita è uno dei pochi casi al mondo in cui non ci sono elezioni nazionali per il parlamento, che resta un'istituzione molto debole. L'Assemblea consultiva dell'Arabia Saudita, conosciuta anche come Majilis asShura o Consiglio della Shura, è composta da 150 membri di nomina regia. Essa ha poteri limitati, tra cui quello di proporre leggi al re e al governo, ma non può approvare e far rispettare norme giuridiche, essendo tali prerogative riservate al sovrano. Nell'anno della sua nomina, il principe

Mohammed Bin Salman ha fatto imprigionare molti funzionari di stato in una campagna anti corruzione e ha attuato varie forme di repressione del dissenso. Oggi la monarchia assoluta dell'Arabia Saudita limita quasi tutti i diritti politici e le libertà civili. Nessuna carica nazionale è elettiva. Il regime si basa su una sorveglianza pervasiva e sulla criminalizzazione del dissenso. Le donne e le minoranze religiose sono soggetti a forte discriminazione sia su base legislativa che nella pratica. Le condizioni lavorative per gli operai, di cui la maggior parte sono immigrati, sono pessime e spesso soggette allo sfruttamento. Il re saudita è scelto dal suo predecessore tra i discendenti maschi della dinastia, e tale scelta deve essere approvata da un consiglio apposito; egli governa a vita. Per quanto riguarda le libertà civili, Il governo controlla il contenuto dei media e influenza pesantemente la stampa e la televisione satellitare. Un giornalista può essere imprigionato per una varietà di crimini (definiti talvolta in modo vago). È in vigore dal 2011 un decreto reale che criminalizza qualsiasi tipo di critica nei confronti del governo. Tutti i blog e i siti web devono avere una licenza da parte del ministro dell'informazione. Il governo ha creato un sistema di sorveglianza e regolazione in materia di social media. Un esempio chiaro di questa repressione mediatica è avvenuto nell'ottobre 2018, quando il noto giornalista Jamal Khashoggi è stato assassinato da agenti sauditi all'interno dell'ambasciata saudita ad Istambul, a causa delle sue forti critiche verso la monarchia. Nel 2019 almeno trentadue giornalisti sono stati incarcerati in Arabia Saudita, insieme ad altri bloggers e pubblicisti, inclusi coloro che hanno scritto in favore delle proteste della Primavera Araba.

A partire dal 1992, una legge dichiara che il Corano e la Sunna vanno a comporre la costituzione del paese. L'islam è la religione ufficiale e tutti i sauditi devono essere, per legge, musulmani. Un decreto reale del 2014 punisce l'ateismo con una pena che va fino ai vent'anni di reclusione. Il governo inoltre proibisce il culto pubblico di altre religioni che non siano l'islam e ha posto delle grosse restrizioni alle minoranze musulmane Sciite e Sufi. La magistratura è scelta dal re e supervisionata da un Consiglio apposito; inoltre è presente una commissione speciale che si esprime sulle controversie in cui è necessaria un'interpretazione della Sharia (la legge islamica), che è la fonte esclusiva della legislazione saudita. La testimonianza di una donna generalmente ha metà valore di quella di un uomo saudita, e quella di chiunque non sia

un sunnita osservante può non essere accettata dal giudice. Gli sciiti, la cui percentuale fluttua tra il 10-15% della popolazione, sono soggetti a forti svantaggi sociali e discriminazione. L'educazione ed i diritti economici delle donne saudite hanno visto dei miglioramenti negli ultimi anni (come l'abolizione del divieto di guida per le donne, nel 2018); tuttavia le donne saudite sono ancora discriminate a livello sociale e legale, specialmente per il sistema in vigore che impone ad esse l'autorizzazione di un "guardiano" (che sia il marito o un altro parente maschio) per svolgere delle attività elementari.

Il cleavage sciiti-sunniti nella civilizzazione islamica

I musulmani si dividono in due principali gruppi religiosi: sunniti e sciiti. I sunniti costituiscono tra l'87 e il 90 per cento della popolazione complessiva di musulmani nel mondo. Gli sciiti costituiscono il restante della popolazione musulmana: tra il 10 e il 13 per cento. Entrambe le correnti religiose adottano il Corano come testo sacro e seguono i cinque principi dell'islam: digiuno durante il Ramadan, fare almeno un pellegrinaggio alla Mecca nel corso della vita, praticare la preghiera rituale (che comprende cinque preghiere al giorno), fare la carità ai poveri e dare testimonianza di fede. Le differenze tra sciiti e sunniti riguardano i rituali, la legge, la teologia e il modo di organizzare la società. Il termine sunnita deriva dall'arabo Ahl al-Sunnah che significa "il popolo delle tradizioni (di Maometto)". I sunniti ritengono di essere la scuola di pensiero più ortodossa e tradizionalista dell'Islam. Il termine sciita deriva dall'arabo Shi'atu Ali, ovvero "sostenitori (politici) di Ali", genero di Maometto. Sia per il suo esempio in quanto profeta e della parola coranica, sia per quanto riguarda le questioni di organizzazione politica e sociale, Maometto raccolse in sé una duplice autorità, e rappresentò la perfetta coincidenza e sovrapposizione tra leadership religiosa e leadership politica. Per questo motivo, subito dopo la morte del profeta Maometto nel 632, i musulmani si divisero in due rami: il primo (i futuri sunniti) sosteneva che il nuovo leader della comunità musulmana, ovvero il legittimo califfo, fosse Abu Bakr, compagno di Maometto e importante studioso islamico. Il secondo (i futuri sciiti) sosteneva

che diventare califfo fosse invece un diritto riservato ai discendenti di Maometto e che quindi spettasse a Ali ibn Abi Talib, il genero del profeta, dal momento che Maometto non aveva figli maschi. (Campani, 2017)

Le percentuali dello sciismo in Medio Oriente sono le seguenti: Iran (90%), Bahrein (70%), Iraq (55%), Yemen (50%), Libano (27%), Pakistan (20%), Arabia Saudita (15%), Siria (15%). La famiglia reale saudita, che pratica un filone tradizionalista dell'Islam sunnita conosciuto come wahabismo, controlla i santuari più sacri dell'Islam, La Mecca e Medina. Karbala, Kufa e Najaf in Iraq sono invece i santuari venerati dagli sciiti.

La politica estera dell'Arabia Saudita sarà di seguito analizzata in due conflitti, quello in Yemen e quello in Bahrein; questo articolo si propone di capire, sulla base della tipologia presentata nei capitoli precedenti, che modello di Autocracy Promotion è attuata rispettivamente da Arabia Saudita e Iran, le due potenze principali nel conflitto tra sunniti e sciiti.

Il conflitto in Yemen

Popolato a nord-ovest da sciiti (42% sul totale) e a sud-est da sunniti (55%), lo Yemen è stato parte dell'Impero ottomano, ed in seguito fu un protettorato inglese, nella zona a sud. Lo Yemen del nord divenne indipendente nel 1918, mentre il sud restò una colonia britannica. A seguito della diffusione del nazionalismo pan-arabo, nel 1962 vi fu un colpo di stato militare e si formò la Repubblica dello Yemen del nord, che divenne un regime autoritario personalistico, sotto la guida del presidente Saleh. Vi fu un conflitto tra i repubblicani, che erano al potere con il sostegno dell'Egitto di Nasser, ed i monarchici appoggiati dall'Arabia Saudita. Nel 1967, anche sulla spinta della violenza dei gruppi armati a favore della decolonizzazione, la Gran Bretagna si ritirò dallo Yemen del sud, e le truppe egiziane si ritirarono dallo Yemen del nord. Nel sud fu proclamata una repubblica, controllata in un primo momento da un partito arabo nazionalista. A partire dalla fine del '69, la fazione sostenuta dall'Unione Sovietica prese il sopravvento nel sud, e nel 1970 fu proclamato un regime comunista. Con la fine della guerra fredda, si posero le premesse per una re-unificazione dello Yemen. Nel maggio '90, fu raggiunto un accordo in base al quale allo Yemen del nord sarebbe andata la presidenza, e a quello del sud la vicepresidenza della repubbli-

ca. Nell'aprile 1993 si svolsero le prime elezioni, ma ad agosto i dirigenti dell'ex Yemen del sud ruppero l'accordo, e iniziò la guerra, a cui fece seguito la proclamazione dell'indipendenza del sud. Nel luglio 1994, l'esercito del nord sconfisse i ribelli del sud e la re-unificazione si attuò definitivamente. L'ex capo dello stato del nord, il militare nazionalista Saleh, divenne il primo presidente dello Yemen unificato che restò al potere dal 1990 al 2012. Il conflitto in Yemen fu a lungo risolto con il dominio di Saleh.

Nel corso degli anni '90 si è formato il gruppo fondamentalista sciita "Ansar Allah", conosciuto popolarmente come Houthi; è stato istituito nel Governatorato di Sa'da, al confine settentrionale con l'Arabia Saudita.Nel 2004 gli Houthi hanno iniziato una insurrezione contro il governo yemenita. Su un fronte separato, nel 2007 gli yemeniti del sud hanno cominciato ad invocare la secessione della zona meridionale attraverso proteste pacifiche, che vennero però brutalmente messe a tacere dalle forze governative. Nel corso del 2011, non appena Saleh si preparò a lasciare l'incarico a seguito della Primavera Araba, i ribelli Houti attaccarono alcune zone a nord e riescono poi a conquistare la capitale, Sana'a. Il nuovo presidente sunnita, Abd Rabbih Mansur Hadi (sunnita), scappò ad Aden, ex capitale del protettorato inglese, nel sud dello Yemen. Ma gli Houthi avanzarono verso sud, fino ad arrivare ad Aden, ed è in questo momento che il presidente Hadi si rifugiò in Arabia Saudita, chiedendo l'aiuto di re Salman. Il giorno dopo, l'Arabia Saudita, alla testa di una coalizione che vide come protagonisti otto dei nove paesi facenti parte del *Consiglio di cooperazione del Golfo* (l'Oman restò neutrale), intervenne militarmente. Gli aerei sauditi bombardarono i ribelli Houthi in tutto il paese, cosa che continuerà anche negli anni successivi, colpendo spesso la popolazione civile, e addirittura molti ospedali; succederà infatti che, dopo aver subito quattro bombardamenti alle sue sedi, l'ong *Medici senza frontiere* deciderà di ritirarsi dallo Yemen.

Questa coalizione ha avuto l'appoggio logistico degli Stati uniti, e ha sostenuto il presidente sunnita Hadi. Nel conflitto è coinvolto anche l'Iran attraverso aiuti militari di tipo indiretto, addestramenti dei soldati Houthi e invio di armi. L'Iran ha sostenuto la fazione ribelle, in quanto regime teocratico anch'esso sciita e punto di riferimento della coalizione sciita della regione. È da tener presente che il tipo di regime iraniano è teocratico, con due strutture di potere parallele, ma quella religiosa prevale su quella

civile. Sotto la guida di Khomeini c'è stata anche una componete personalistica, ma dopo non più.

Dopo varie vicende, il conflitto Yemenita non è ancora stato risolto; nel sud il presidente Hadi controlla lo Yemen sud-orientale a maggioranza sunnita è riuscito a riconquistare Aden e ha cercato di tener a freno i gruppi secessionisti locali sostenuti dagli EAU, che vorrebbero di nuovo la divisione dello Yemen i Yemen del Sud e del Nord, mentre i ribelli Houthi hanno ancora sotto il proprio controllo i territori del nord a maggioranza sciita. Da notare che sul territorio è presente anche una fazione di al Qaeda, che a sud est aveva occupato un zona desertica, ma che sembra essere stata poi riconquistata da Hadi.

Fino alla presa della capitale Sana'a (2014) da parte dei ribelli Houthi, l'Arabia Saudita ha fornito solamente aiuti finanziari al governo di Hadi; quindi, l'Autocracy Promotion è stata attuata con la modalità del *sostegno militare indiretto*. Dal 2015 in poi, il coinvolgimento dell'Arabia Saudita invece è stato il *coinvolgimento militare diretto*. Per quanto riguarda l'Iran, invece, sembrerebbe che nel caso dello Yemen esso applichi principalmente un sostegno militare indiretto, inviando armi ai ribelli e favorendone l'addestramento; tuttavia ci sono voci non ufficiali che sostengono la presenza di diversi soldati e volontari iraniani nel nord dello Yemen, nonché degli hezbollah libanesi in sostegno ai ribelli Houthi.

Il conflitto in Bahrein

Nel 1521 le isole furono conquistate dai Portoghesi, che vi rimasero fino al 1602, quando furono cacciati da una rivolta e il Bahrein divenne una dipendenza diretta della Persia. Fra il 1717 ed il 1735, a causa del collasso della dinastia safavide in Persia, l'arcipelago si sottrasse al dominio persiano e rimase indipendente sotto la tribù Huwala. Nel 1736 la nuova dinastia persiana dei Cagiari riconquistò il Bahrein e nel 1753 ne divennero governatori ereditari, sotto sovranità persiana, i membri della dinastia Al Madhkur. Nel 1783 il Bahrein insieme al Qatar, sotto la guida della tribù Banu Utub, si ribellò e divenne definitivamente indipendente dai Persiani. L'indipendenza fu tuttavia breve e l'arcipelago fu conquistato dal sultanato dell'Oman nel 1802. Nel 1822 una nuova rivolta ripristinò l'indipendenza dello Stato. In questo periodo vennero stipulati dei trattati con la Gran Bretagna in base

ai quali il Bahrein rinunciava alla pirateria ed in cambio la Gran Bretagna s'impegnava a difenderne l'indipendenza da eventuali aggressioni esterne; tuttavia non si trattava ancora di un vero protettorato. Nel 1869 gli Ottomani estesero il loro dominio lungo la costa araba del Golfo Persico e, con la mediazione britannica, ottennero che il Bahrein si riconoscesse formalmente loro vassallo. Con il collasso dell'Impero ottomano, nel 1916 il Bahrein divenne un protettorato britannico e lo rimase fino al 1971; questa è la data della definitiva indipendenza del Bahrein.

Il regime del Bahrein è anch'esso di tipo autoritario personalistico, con un capo dello stato che è tale per appartenenza dinastica. Ma la componete teocratica è minore rispetto all'Arabia saudita perché la sharia è la fonte principale (ma non esclusiva) del diritto. C'è da sottolineare, però, che Il Bahrein è uno stato a maggioranza sciita (circa il 70% del totale), nel quale governa una dinastia sunnita. Il 14 febbraio 2011 si verificò la cosiddetta insurrezione del Bahrein, anche nota come Rivolta del 14 febbraio o Rivolta delle Perle. Nel marzo del 2011, l'attuale Re del Bahrein, Hamad Isa al Kahlifa, dichiarò uno stato di emergenza della durata di tre mesi; numerosi furono gli scontri armati, con morti i feriti (e i morti quanti furono?). Questo conflitto mobilitò le due fazioni religiose: sciiti e sunniti. I primi erano appoggiati dall'Iran e si localizzavano principalmente nell'isola di Sitrah, viceversa i secondi avevano il sostegno dell'Arabia Saudita. Comunque il conflitto non aveva un carattere esclusivamente religioso; l'opposizione infatti chiedeva anche riforme di carattere economico, sociale e soprattutto politico-costituzionale, relative alle libertà civili e ai diritti di voto.

Nel febbraio 2011 circa 6000 manifestanti, ispirati dagli eventi della primavera araba in Tunisia ed Egitto, iniziarono a marciare pacificamente nella capitale del Bahrain, Manama, per chiedere riforme e la rinuncia da parte della famiglia reale Al-Khalifa al controllo autocratico sul Bahrain. Queste proteste sono state il risultato di mesi di crescente repressione politica e di decenni di promesse non mantenute di riforme democratiche. In risposta alle proteste sia nella capitale che nei villaggi intorno al Bahrain, la polizia disperse violentemente i manifestanti usando gas lacrimogeni, proiettili di gomma e fucili, provocando diversi feriti e morti. In risposta, i manifestanti hanno successivamente marciato verso la rotonda della Perla nella capitale il 15 febbraio, contan-

do migliaia di persone. A seguito di ciò, 1000 poliziotti vennero inviati in un'operazione violenta di dispersione che ha portato a centinaia di feriti, molti dispersi e altri morti, causati dalle truppe che hanno fatto fuoco sui manifestanti disarmati. A poche ore dal raid a Manama, sporadici scontri armati si sono verificati in tutto il Paese e l'esercito è stato chiamato a ristabilire l'ordine. Inizialmente il principe ereditario promise un dialogo nazionale, il re rilasciò un certo numero di prigionieri politici e le forze di sicurezza furono ritirate. Ma la pace non durò a lungo, e poco dopo il re dichiarò lo stato di emergenza, invocò la legge marziale e autorizzò i militari a prendere tutte le misure necessarie per "proteggere la sicurezza del paese e dei suoi cittadini". Le forze di sicurezza hanno condotto arresti di massa di manifestanti, con diversi morti in custodia. A seguito di una richiesta del Bahrein al *consiglio di cooperazione del golfo,* due dei suoi altri membri, l'Arabia Saudita e gli Emirati Arabi Uniti (EAU), hanno inviato rinforzi di truppe all'esercito e alla polizia del Bahrein. Dall'inizio delle proteste in Medio Oriente, questa è stata la prima volta che un paese arabo è intervenuto militarmente per placare le rivolte in un altro paese vicino. Ciò che ha fatto sì che l'Arabia Saudita intervenisse militarmente in Bahrein, per evitare il conseguente effetto domino che sarebbe avvenuto nel caso in cui l'isola fosse stata presa dalla maggioranza sciita. Timoroso di un cambiamento democratico, il re saudita Abdullah ha cercato di invertire i moti a favore della democrazia nei paesi vicini usando la forza.

La ferocia della repressione adottata dal governo, che ha proclamato la legge marziale e chiesto truppe al *CCG*, ha dato un duro colpo alla maggioranza sciita e ha provocato l'ira di Teheran. L'Iran, che sostiene gruppi sciiti in Iraq e Libano, ha protestato con le Nazioni Unite e chiesto ai paesi confinanti di lanciare un appello ai sauditi affinché ritirino le truppe. c'è stato da parte iraniana, solo il sostegno militare indiretto, come nel caso yemenita. È utile sottolineare che il governo del Bahrein ha partecipato anche al conflitto in Yemen in quanto membro della coalizione internazionale a guida saudita, impegnata a sostegno dell'esercito yemenita affiliato al presidente Hadi. Il suo intervento è, pertanto, da far risalire al marzo 2015, con una task force il cui obiettivo era di coadiuvare l'esercito di Hadi nella guerra contro i ribelli sciiti Houthi.

Il coinvolgimento dell'Arabia Saudita nella rivolta in Bahrein, per quanto riguarda la tipologia dell'Autocracy Promotion, è stato di tipo *militare diretto*, mentre l'Iran partecipa in maniera minore al conflitto, e solo *indirettamente*.

Conclusioni

A seguito della primavera araba, il Medio Oriente ha visto un approfondimento del conflitto tra Iran e Arabia Saudita. È stata evitata una guerra diretta tra i due principali attori regionali. Essi intervengono in paesi segnati da fragilità istituzionale e profondi conflitti interni, servendosi del supporto sul terreno di milizie locali (statali e non), e in alcuni casi inviando anche il proprio esercito, anche grazie al sostegno di altri governi extraregionali. Si è trattato di conflitti in cui l'Arabia Saudita è intervenuta direttamente e l'Iran indirettamente, ma in modo massiccio. Questa tipologia di conflitto è detta *guerra del semaforo*; tale dinamica è tipica del periodo del bipolarismo durante la guerra fredda tra Usa e Urss, ma si sta riproponendo tutt'ora nella zona del golfo persico; in tutte le guerre del semaforo, ci sono i due attori locali che si scontrano militarmente, ma solo uno dei due attori esterni interviene direttamente nel conflitto, e l'altro lo fa solo in maniera indiretta

A quanto sembra, nel conflitto in Yemen le due strategie di Autocracy Promotion attuate tendono a produrre lo stesso risultato, prova di ciò è il fatto che gli houthi stiano ancora conquistando terreno. Il conflitto tutt'ora non è risolto e c'è stata una spartizione del territorio. Iran e Arabia Saudita si neutralizzano a vicenda, seppur le loro modalità di intervento sono diverse, e il ruolo degli attori esterni come gli Usa è molto limitato, o addirittura assente.

Nel caso bahrenita invece, l'autocracy promotion dell'Arabia Saudita ha avuto successo, poiché è stato ristabilito l'ordine in senso autocratico e le rivolte sono stare represse completamente.
È possibile, inoltre, fare una distinzione tra autocracy promotion rigida e autocracy promotion flessibile; la prima sostiene solo regimi autoritari di altri paesi, mentre la seconda alterna in modo flessibile l'appoggio a regimi autoritari o ibridi.

Nel caso dell'Arabia Saudita, l'autocracy promotion attuata sia in Yemen che Bahrein è chiaramente rigida e non flessibile, dal momento che il suo appoggio è stato indirizzato esclusivamente a paesi con regimi autoritari.

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Artículos Libres

Défis et enjeux des pédagogies du sud en Amérique Latine

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Challenges and issues of southern pedagogies in Latin America.

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Résumé

Cet article aborde le problème pédagogique de la formation des étudiants latino-américains, en tenant compte de la nécessité de développer des pratiques éducatives capables de mieux comprendre les phénomènes socio-économiques et culturels de la région à partir de sa propre intellectualité et historicité. En ce sens, le développement des pédagogies du sud, avec leurs différentes approches critiques et leurs propositions pédagogiques fondées sur la reconnaissance de l'altérité et de la différence socioculturelle des communautés locales, se présentent depuis le milieu du XXe siècle, comme la conjoncture favorable pour réfléchir sur la région à partir de sa propre réalité multiculturelle. Nous pensons que la question des alternatives éducatives, face à une certaine homogénéité des techniques et des méthodes pédagogiques occidentales, se pose comme une possibilité réelle de construire un système éducatif à partir d'un cadre théorique proprement latino-américain, beaucoup plus équitable car plus sensible aux besoins et aux aspirations des étudiants de la région.

Mots-clés

Système éducatif, Amérique latine, Pédagogies du sud

Abstract

This article addresses the pedagogical problem of the training of Latin American students, taking into account the need to develop educational practices that are capable of a better understanding of the socio-economic and cultural phenomena of the region from its own intellectuality and historicity. In this sense, the development of the so-called southern pedagogies, with their different critical approaches and their educational proposals based on the recognition of otherness and the sociocultural difference of local communities, has been presented since the mid-twentieth century as the favorable situation to reflect on the region, from its own multicultural reality. We think that the issue of educational alternatives in the face of a certain homogeneity of Western pedagogical techniques and methods arises as a real possibility of building an educational system from a properly Latin American theoretical framework, which is much more equitable because it is more sensitive to the needs and aspirations of students in the region.

Keywords

Educational system, Latin America, Southern pedagogies.

Introduction

Ce travail propose de réfléchir sur les enjeux et les défis des pratiques et des méthodes pédagogiques en Amérique Latine depuis la moitié du XXe siècle à nos jours, ainsi que sur la possibilité de construire, pour les décennies à venir, une école plus inclusive dans la région. Les nommées « pédagogies du sud » (Dasen, P & Akkari, A, 2004) fondée sur des approches d'intellectuels et d'éducateurs qui empruntent leurs savoirs et leurs expériences du vécu, ainsi que leurs connaissances des collectivités et des mouvements sociaux locaux, et qui plus est mettent en valeur des pratiques et des méthodes pédagogiques dont l'objectif essentiel est une meilleure adaptation aux cultures locales, ainsi qu´une compréhension plus approfondie de la réalité depuis sa propre historicité, est un bel exemple permettant d'ouvrir le débat sur la possibilité d'une pédagogie qui prétend sortir des monopoles

et des arbitraires culturels infligés par un certain ethnocentrisme occidental dans la région. Ethnocentrisme qui se présente, selon Quijano, comme une logique d´homogénéisation qui a contribué historiquement à la non-légitimation des savoirs non-occidentaux et a fini par imposer une géopolitique de la connaissance qui ne fait que rendre invisible l´histoire et les intellectualités locales. (Quijano, 2020) En contrepartie, nous verrons comment pour la pensée pédagogique critique latino-américaine, l´acceptation des différences est une option éthique inéluctable et un véritable compromis moral. Dans ce sens, nous aborderons finalement l´importance de penser une éthique qui soit à même de rendre compte des conjonctures historiques et structurelles de la région, et capable de mettre en lumière les responsabilités et les défis socio-politiques au cœur d´un projet de libération historique.

Vers la construction d´une école plus inclusive en A. Latine

Certainement, l´école n´est pas uniquement un espace d´apprentissage, il s´agit aussi d´un lieu privilégié où se joue l´avenir des individus et leur projet de vie. C'est sans doute à l'école que l'on doit la formation des futurs citoyens. Rien ne peut donc remplacer une formation pédagogique fondée sur une relation de proximité des élèves et des enseignants, car de cela dépend la réussite éducative et l'inclusion sociale de l´éduquant, ainsi que la lutte contre toutes les formes d'inégalités dans le domaine socio-éducatif. Il devient donc nécessaire de réfléchir sur l´avenir de l'école en Amérique Latine, au risque de voir proliférer un peu partout des opérateurs peu scrupuleux en matière éducative, ainsi que toutes sortes de dérives marchandes, qui pourrait préconiser la privatisation accélérée du système éducatif dans la région, notamment sur le modèle de l'entreprise privée. Ce qui reviendrait à sélectionner les établissements scolaires selon des critères de rentabilité au détriment de l'égalité des chances des étudiants.(Verger, A, Moschetti,M & Fontdevila,C, 2017) Remarquons que c´est en Amérique Latine où l´on constate la plus haute croissance de privatisation de l´éducation au monde, tant au niveau de l´enseignement primaire, comme du taux de croissance constante des services d´éducation privés. Nombreuses sont les conséquences pour les enfants et les

jeunes en âge scolaire, parmi lesquels leur droit fondamental de la liberté de choix. L´un des exemples le plus emblématiques dans la matière est la réforme structurelle du système éducatif chilien, mis en place depuis les années 1980, et dans son ensemble privatisé. Il est question d´un système qui fait désormais partie des plus inégalitaires au monde. Nombreux ont été les mouvements étudiants dans le pays qui ont exigé une solution politique, mais qui ont été délaissés voir complètement ignorés par les autorités jusqu´à présent. À ce propos, il est intéressant de lire l´article intitulé, « El Conflicto Estudiantil Chileno Y Sus Efectos Políticos » (Penaglia, F. & Mejías S, 2019) où il est question d´une analyse sur l´impact politique et social de ces demandes, ainsi que sur l´originalité de ses mouvements étudiants qui depuis leur début dans le scénario social sont en train de pousser l´ensemble des autorités politiques chiliennes à une profonde remise en question du système éducatif imposé depuis des décennies. Sous cet angle, la question sera donc de savoir comment construire une école plus inclusive et donc plus juste dans les années à venir en Amérique Latine. Une question centrale à l´heure où la plupart des sociétés latino-américaines modernes se veulent pleinement démocratiques et préconisent la valeur essentielle de l´égalité des chances à l´école. Soulignons qu´en Amérique Latine, l´impact post-pandémie liée à la covid-19, n´a fait qu´aggraver les iniquités et les injustices historiques entre les différents groupes sociaux et a ouvert le débat sur les systèmes éducatifs mis en place au cœur d´un continent en permanente rébellion sociale. (BanqueMondiale, 2021) Il n´est donc pas surprenant que les institutions scolaires de la région, ainsi que les systèmes éducatifs, soient l´objet de différentes études critiques sous des angles théoriques et des intérêts souvent forts différents. Cependant, une chose semble converger au cœur de cette réflexion, à savoir, depuis la moitié du XXe siècle, certains intellectuels et pédagogues latino-américains font une profonde remise en question de ces bases institutionnelles et manifestent un vif désir d´entreprendre une véritable réforme des institutions, et tout particulièrement une restructuration des bases de l´éducation, en tant que l´un des piliers le plus important de toute société. Nombreux sont les pédagogues et les intellectuelles qui se penchent sur la question de la décentralisation de la vision ethnocentriste occidentale et cherchent à rompre avec une conception de la pédagogie réduite exclusivement aux méthodes et aux

technicismes enracinés à des processus didactiques formels. Les nommées pédagogies du sud,[1] présentées comme des courants de pensée alternatifs par rapport à toute pensée hégémonique, seront définies par le sociologue Boaventura de Sousa Santos comme une nouvelle manière de production et d´évaluation des connaissances ou des savoirs valides. (De Sousa Santos, 2011:21-50) L´objectif est de construire une pensée multiforme et bâtir ses expériences sur le terrain, c´est-à-dire à partir des savoirs acquis des citoyens et des mouvements sociaux.

[1)] El Pédagogues latino-américains, pédagogues de l´émancipation ou pédagogues du sud sont les noms avec lesquelles sont désignés les penseurs et intellectuels latino-américains, parmi lesquelles José Martí, José Carlos Mariatégui, Paulo Freire ou encore Enrique Dussel, et qui par leur savoir et expérience auprès des communautés locales et des minorités opprimées de la région, proposent un nouveau regard épistémologique sur le rôle de l´école et de l´éducation en Amérique Latine.

La pédagogie comme une praxis de libération

L´un des objectifs primordiaux des pédagogies du sud est l´adaptation de l´école à l´éduquant afin de mieux répondre aux besoins et aux aspirations des communautés locales. À cet effet, elles vont partir autour d´une idée holistique de la connaissance humaine dans laquelle l´avenir de l´éduquant est profondément enraciné à son processus de socialisation et d´inculturation. Il est question d´un savoir pédagogique qui s´intéresse particulièrement à l´intégration sociale et culturelle des sujets les plus vulnérables au sein de la société. Le projet n´est pas des moindres, car il s´agit avant tout de bâtir, comme le souligne le sociologue chilien Hugo Zemelman, une conscience historique collective (Zemelman, 2006) qui soit étroitement ancrée dans la réalité du sud. Ainsi, toute pratique pédagogique et didactique doit aller dans le sens d´une formation qui permette à l´éduquant de comprendre pleinement sa propre réalité contextuelle, ainsi que la réalité du sud avec ses controverses et défis. Des défis conçernant une transformation des conditions qui sont à l´origine des iniquités sociales dans la région. Dans ce sens, il est question d´une pédagogie qui doit se comprendre à partir de la reconnaissance de l´altérité, ainsi que d´une logique d´émancipation de l´éduquant, et de la recherche de scénarios sociétaux capables d´intégrer l´ensemble des citoyens dans une dynamique de solidarité et de justice sociale. En tenant compte de ses objectifs primordiaux, les enjeux qui se posent en plein XXIe siècle sont plus que jamais cruciaux pour l´avenir de

l´éducation dans la région. Car, il n´est pas uniquement question de penser un ensemble de stratégies avec les moyens du bord, mais bel et bien de réussir à formuler un plan d´études holistiques de connaissances, dont l´objectif majeur est de mettre en valeur le processus de socialisation et d´inculturation de l´éduquant. En quelque sorte, l´enjeux consiste à mettre en place des mesures adaptées aux circonstances et aux besoins éducatifs de l´éduquant et tout particulièrement des plus vulnérables au sein de la société. Selon Enrique Dussel, il faut penser une pédagogie qui soit une « praxis de libération au lieu d´une praxis de domination. » (Dussel, 1977:92) Ceci est d´autant plus audacieux lorsque l´on constate que les pédagogues du sud sont confrontés aux martellements d´un néolibéralisme éducatif et d´une politique de mondialisation culturelle qui s´impose en Amérique Latine depuis des décennies. Selon Dussel, la transcendance des ethnocentrismes ou particulièrement des eurocentrismes, reçoit le nom de « transmodernidad ». (Dussel, 2003) Notons qu´il s´agit d´un concept qui s´inscrit dans une véritable rupture avec les ontologies dialectiques d´origine hégélienne et marxiste. Des ontologies qui sont restés enracinées dans une compréhension dominatrice du sujet, ou du *cogito ergo sum* cartésien. En contrepartie, Dussel propose une métaphysique libératrice avec le « método analéctico. »[2] Une méthode capable de reconnaître la diversité et les différences, et d´assumer de façon décomplexée, un engagement éthique et moral vis-à-vis de la société dans son ensemble. Ainsi, ce qu´il nomme « la pedagógica »,[3] constitue une partie importante du processus de « praxis de libération pédagogique pour les pays de la région. » (Dussel, 2012:633-644) En tant qu´instrument de formation de la conscience critique, et de ses conséquences émancipatrices, « la pedagógica » fait partie de l´éthique de libération latino-américaine, et constitue la branche de la philosophie qui réfléchit les relations sociales et fraternelles qui existent entre les sujets d´une même communauté. « La pedagógica comprend en elle-même tous les services institutionnels, y compris les trois services primordiaux; la santé, l´éducation et le bien-être.» (Dussel, 2012:569-629) En tant que service communautaire et solidaire, « la pedagógica » n´as d´autre finalité que celle d´être une fin en soi-même, un service éducateur donné généreusement. En tant que philosophie de l´éducation, ou science de l´apprentissage, « la pedagógica » doit se comprendre avant tout comme « une branche

[2] Analéctico » ou méthode de l´altérité doit être comprise comme le moment existentiel historique où l´homme, la collectivité ou des groupes sociaux, sont en mesure de dépasser toute pensée prétendue universelle et prennent conscience de leur capacité d´ouvrir des nouveaux horizons herméneutiques, proposant des nouvelles manières métaphysiques d´être et d´exister dans le monde.

[3] «La pedagógica » est abordée dans divers livres de l´auteur, parmi lesquels on peut citer, « Filosofía de la liberación » (1977), « De la erótica a la pedagógica » (2012). Ces deux derniers sont un prolongement thématique des deux volumes de son livre « Una ética de la liberación latinoamericana.» (1973).

de la philosophie qui réfléchit sur la relation du face à face entre les sujets. » (Élèves et enseignants, malade et médecin, père et fils, etc.) (Dussel, 2012:569) Un face à face qui permet la liberté d´expression sur l´universalité de la connaissance, et qui est en mesure de façonner d´autres épistémès en tant que des manifestations de l´altérité. Observons qu´il s´agit d´une vision qui attribue à la pédagogie la mission de rendre visible les contextes et les identités socio-culturelles locales, et dont sa particularité est la reconnaissance de l´interculturalité et de la transculturalité des savoirs des communautés locales. Perspective qui inscrit le projet méthodologique dusselien dans un courant de pensée où le pouvoir citoyen joue un rôle prépondérant, et devient le point névralgique d´où se manifestent les propositions et les mécanismes de participation par la pratique éducative. Constatons qu´il est également question d´une pratique qui est en rupture avec toutes les manifestations de hiérarchisation ou de ségrégation sociale, et dont l´objectif est la mise en valeur des savoirs locaux, ainsi que l´énonciation de ses prémisses épistémologiques.

Enjeux socio-politiques de l´action pédagogique

C´est sans doute dans la pensée et l´action du pédagogue brésilien Paulo Freire[4] que nous trouvons une remarquable mise en pratique de « la pedagógica » dusselienne, car elle devient et aboutit à une praxis de libération dans le domaine de l´éducation. Dans son ouvrage, « La pédagogie des opprimés »,[5] l´éducation devient le terrain propice où peuvent se mener à bout tous les projets émancipatoires, et où il est possible « le dépassement de toutes les contradictions entre les oppresseurs et les opprimés. » (Freire, 2005:41) De sorte que cette « pédagogie fait de l´oppression l´objet de réflexion des opprimés et fait appel à leur engagement dans la lutte pour leur libération. » (Freire, 2005:42) Or, la libération des opprimés n´est pas le fruit du hasard, mais la conséquence « d´une praxis libératrice qui permet la naissance d´un homme nouveau, un homme libéré des chaînes qui l´assujettissent à son sort. » (Freire, 2005:47-48) En tant que pédagogie humaniste, « la pédagogie des opprimés se manifeste comme le dépassement de

[4] P. Freire (1921-1997) fut influencé par l´humanisme, le marxisme et le christianisme, parmi ces influences, on peut citer des philosophes comme Hegel, Marx, Fromm ou encore Gramsci et des éducateurs comme Dewey, etc. De même, beaucoup d´éducateurs furent directement influencés par la philosophie et la mise en pratique des idées de P. Freire, parmi lesquels on peut citer Peter McLaren, Henri Giroux, Ira Shor, Shirley Steinberg, entre autres.

[5] Traduit dans plus de 18 langues, il s´agit d´un ouvrage central dans la pensée critique de P. Freire, et l´une des causes principale de son exil politique du Brésil (1964-1989), ainsi que de l´interdiction de divulguer

sa pensée dans certaines régions du monde, notamment en Arizona aux Etats-Unis, car jugé trop subversif par le système éducatif américain.

toute forme d´oppression. » (Freire, 2005:55) La lutte est possible, « parce que la déshumanisation, bien qu´historique, n´est pas une fatalité mais le résultat d´un ordre injustement installé et qu´il est possible de transformer. » (Freire, 2005:40-41) De ce fait, toute forme d´émancipation commence d´abord par la reconnaissance de sa propre réalité en tant qu´opprimé, autrement dit par une conscientisation. Freire a soulevé l´idée d´une conscientisation dans le domaine de l´éducation, et a ouvert le débat sur le besoin d´une formation qui donne à l´éduquant les moyens d´une compréhension critique de soi-même et du monde. Mais pour mener à bien le projet, il est indispensable d´établir un échange équitable entre éducateur et éduquant, un échange qui soit en mesure de briser toute barrière éducative oppressive. Ainsi, l´éduquant est un sujet doué de conscience et il est dans son devoir de s´approprié le savoir. Dans le domaine éducatif, la conscientisation doit commencer par l´établissement d´un dialogue culturel ouvert entre l´éduquant et l´éducateur progressiste, afin d´établir des échanges de savoirs productifs entre les sujets, au point que les rôles deviennent interchangeables. Il faut que l´éduquant réussisse le passage d´un système éducatif strictement disciplinaire, ou nommé « bancaire », vers une éducation de la conscientisation. (Freire, 2005:78-79) Un système bancaire, « parce qu´il est fondé sur l´idée nécrophile que la conscience des élèves est un récipient statique et vide de contenu et d´expériences de vie, une «quasi-chose.» (Freire, 2005:89) Il devient donc nécessaire que le système éducatif se réoriente vers une éducation de la conscientisation, c´est-à-dire une éducation capable de répondre à l´essence de la conscience qui est essentiellement « un lieu de cognition où les savoirs, au lieu d´avoir comme seul objectif sa transmission, deviennent l´intermédiaire entre les différents sujets compris dans l´acte éducatif.» (Freire, 2005:90-91) Tout commence par l´acte éducatif en tant qu´expression d´éveil de la conscience de l´éduquant, afin que ce dernier s´approprie le savoir et puisse devenir un citoyen engagé avec son milieu de vie, et muni d´une compréhension critique du monde. Mais pour atteindre cet objectif, il faut que les citoyens réussissent à communiquer entre eux, et qu´ils soient en mesure de construire une conscience de soi-même et du monde environnant. Une conscience qui doit se forger par le dialogue entre les hommes et la recherche du bien commun. Ainsi, toute pédagogie, dite libératrice, doit trouver ses fonde-

ments dans une « méthodologie dialogique et participative, encadrée dans une dialectique émancipatoire.» (Freire, 2005:117-118) Autrement dit, dans une méthodologie qui puisse rendre possible toute transformation personnelle et sociale, et qui soit en accord avec les valeurs et les droits démocratiques des citoyens. Dans son ensemble, la pédagogie émancipatrice de Freire se présente comme une véritable pédagogie «herméneutique analogique.»[6] Il s´agit d´un concept employé par le philosophe Mauricio Beuchot[7] pour désigner une herméneutique qui propose d´aborder l´interprétation du texte (texte compris dans un sens très large, car non seulement en tant que texte écrit, mais aussi en tant que dialogue, et en tant qu´action significative) avec la prudence de celui qui a compris la complexité et la diversité du réel et cherche un équilibre interprétatif. Un équilibre permettant de ne pas tomber dans l´erreur de penser à une seule interprétation possible, ou encore, dans le piège de croire à un champ interprétatif illimité ou à l´équivocité du texte, de sorte que toute différence ou similitude de la réalité finit par laisser place à l´incertitude ou au relativisme interprétatif. Dans le domaine éducatif, cela revient à centrer ses recherches interprétatives « dans l´interaction éducative de façon que l´enseignant puisse interpréter l´élève et comprendre ses besoins spécifiques, ses propres intérêts et ses aspirations. » (Beuchot, 2017:21-36) En tant qu´herméneutique analogique, la pédagogie de l´opprimé devient un véritable instrument capable de développer, chez les sujets concernés dans le processus éducatif, leur capacité d´introspection, de réflexion et d´action transformatrice de soi-même et du monde, ainsi que la mise en pratique d´apprentissages véritablement adaptés à chaque profil. Sans oublier qu´il est question d´une herméneutique qui doit être toujours comprise dans une dynamique de reconstruction de la réalité, car « le monde n´est pas statique, mais il est toujours en train de se faire » (Freire, 1997:55), ce qui implique un exercice permanent de dialogue au sein d´une réalité toujours changeante. En poursuivant dans cette direction, il nous semble intéressant de souligner que pour Maritza Montero,[8] la pédagogie de l´opprimé de Freire, en tant qu´émancipatrice, doit s´inscrire dans un mouvement qu´elle nomme « fortalecimiento » de l´acte éducatif.[9] Concept qui prend la place du terme anglais « d´empowerment.» (Montero, 2003:71) Selon Montero, en participant de façon active dans leur propre processus de « fortalecimiento »,

6) L´herméneutique analogique cherche un certain équilibre interprétatif, ce qu´Aristote appelé *phónesis*, qui permet de trouver dans le texte la dimension métaphorique ou symbolique cachée. Cette approche ouvre un éventail possible d´interprétations, toutes valides, mais hiérarchisées afin de discerner lorsqu´une interprétation prend une tournure dénaturée de sa source originelle.

7) Mauricio Beuchot (1950) est un philosophe et prête dominico-mexicain et l´un des principaux penseurs latino-américain contemporain. Dans son «Tratado de hermenéutica analógica. Hacia un nuevo modelo de la interpratación », influencé par la "método analectico" développée par le philosophe E. Dussel, Beuchot développe l´idée d´une « herméneutique analogique », une vision actuellement reconnue comme une partie importante de l´herméneutique philosophique.

8) M. Montero (1960) est une psychologue d´origine vénézuélienne, reconnue au niveau international pour ses travaux sur la psychologie communautaire. Elle utilise dans ses recherches la méthodologie de l´action participative.

9) Il est intéressant de souligner que M. Montero n´utile pas le néologisme anglais « empowerment » lorsqu´elle fait référence à l´autogestion des citoyens, mais à sa place, elle emploi le mot en espagnol «fortalecimiento». L´argument avancé par Montero c´est la correspondance du concept «fortalecimiento» avec celui d´empowerment pour exprimer l´idée de l´autogestion des citoyens, ainsi que son utilisation historique au sein des communautés locales en Amérique Latine.

les différents acteurs sociaux sont en mesure de déployer toute leur capacité de transformation individuelle et collective, en vue d´un projet émancipatoire qui permet d´unir « les efforts, les capacités et les ressources des sujets dans l´amélioration et la transformation de leurs conditions de vie. » (Montero, 2003:72) De ce fait, le concept de « fortalecimiento » apparaît comme un modèle-type de démocratie participative, ou comme une démarche communautaire d´action sociale, qui se dresse en tant qu´expression émancipatrice dans le domaine éducatif latino-américain et qui permet aux pays de la région l´autogestion de ses ressources et de ses institutions éducatives.

Dialogue des savoirs et échanges culturels

À l´heure actuelle, le grand défi pour les pédagogies du sud est d´établir un dialogue des savoirs, ainsi que la mise en place de moyens qui rendent possible des échanges culturels perdurables. La tâche est complexe, car il met en scène différents agents en vue de la reconstruction de la société, en même temps qu´elle invite les citoyens à la réflexion sur les fondements épistémologiques du phénomène éducatif. Car, c´est en systématisant, c´est-à-dire en produisant une pratique réflexive, qu´il est possible de donner un sens à l´action qui s´opère, et ce qui permet du coup le déclenchement des processus émancipatoires. Afin d´atteindre ses objectifs, les pédagogies du sud proposent des pratiques et méthodologies alternatives en cohérence avec les différentes réalités de l´éduquant. Des méthodologies où il n´y pas de modèle conceptuel unique, et qui se façonnent selon les contextes socio-culturels et historiques des sujets concernés, mais qui gardent toujours comme fil conducteur l´idée de la construction d´une épistémologie capable de penser la diversité des alternatives culturelles, ou plus précisément, comme un moyen alternatif de penser les alternatives. (Gandarilla Salgado, 2008). Comme le souligne Laclau, la construction méthodologique des pédagogies du sud se produit au croisement de la contingence des sujets, et prend sa force non pas dans les élites intellectuelles mais bel et bien au cœur du tissu social, ou dans ce que l´on peut nommer, l´éthos populaire. (Laclau, 1996) Un éthos qui rend compte de l´hétérogénie des revendications des secteurs populaires, ainsi que de ses tensions

subjacentes, et qui se présente comme « la seule vraie voie pour comprendre tout ce qui relève de la constitution ontologique du phénomène socio-politique en tant que tel. » (Laclau, 2009:11). Cependant, observons que c´est justement dans le surgissement des tensions que les pédagogies du sud reconnaissent l'opportunité de développer de nouvelles significations du réel, ainsi que l´occasion d´établir des nouveaux consensus populaires. Ce qui revient à dire qu´il s´agit d´une épistémè qui se construit à partir « de la perturbation et de la déstabilisation. » (Mejía, 2011:103) Ainsi, toute négociation culturelle devient à son tour une bataille culturelle. (Gracía Linera, 2006) Une bataille qui entraîne une rupture nécessaire avec toutes les formes de la pensée figée, et s´érige en tant que véritable instrument méthodologique. Un instrument qui finit par se démarquer par sa capacité d´établir un dialogue démocratique des savoirs locaux avec l´ensemble de catégories de la pensée eurocentriste, ces dernières considérées jusqu´à présent comme les seules à pouvoir penser l´homme, le monde et la société.

Penser une éthique de l´Être

Il est intéressant de souligner que pour Maturana, c´est seulement à partir d´une ontogenèse (changement individuel au moyen de l´éducation) et d´une épigenèse (praxis éducatif de transformation) que les sujets deviendront pleinement éthiques. (Maturana, H & Varela, F, 2003) La transformation de la réalité est possible dans la mesure où les individus sont capables de créer les moyens d´une collaboration respectueuse dans la diversité, et manifestent une volonté de réflexion et de dialogue au sein du tissu social. (Maturana,H & Dávila,X, 2021:60) Cependant, il faut tenir compte de la complexité du phénomène social, non pas seulement en raison de la multiplicité ou de la diversité des demandes et des intérêts qui sont souvent sous tensions, mais aussi à cause des iniquités dans la distribution du pouvoir entre les différents groupes sociaux, ce qui implique des exclusions et des subordinations des uns par rapport aux autres, et qui peut se comprendre uniquement si l´on introduit la dimension historico-temporel du contexte et des sujets. C´est ce qui permet d´affirmer, selon Laclau, que « le fait politique et social, se donne au cœur d´un

terrain accidenté et définit par sa multiplicité. » (Laclau, 1996:37) Sous cet angle, il semble nécessaire d´inscrire le projet émancipatoire des pédagogies du sud dans une éthique de l´Être guidée par le principe fondateur de la libre récréation du sens multiforme de l´existence, c´est-à-dire de sa ré-signification et création permanente dans le devenir des hommes. Une ré-signification qui entraîne des tensions, « car la coexistence humaine conduit trop souvent à des conflits. La liberté produit des divergences. » (Marina, 1999:143) Des conflits qui méritent d´être reconnus afin de construire une éthique qui soit capable de régler, plutôt que d'annuler, les différences. Comme le souligne Leff, l´éthique de l´Être doit se comprendre comme « une éthique du droit à la différence et à la dissidence. » (Leff, 2006:42) Cependant, ne soyons pas dupes, le droit à la différence et à la dissidence ne donnent pas nécessairement le droit à l'égalité, car il faut tenir compte que l'homogénéisation forcée, au nom de l'égalité, a provoqué paradoxalement au cours de l´histoire, les plus grandes inégalités sociales. Ainsi, l´éthique de la différence et de la dissidence doit se formuler à partir du « principe d'équité dans la diversité, au sein d´une histoire d'hétérogenèse contraire à toute forme d'unification de la pensée et de l'Être.» (Leff, 2006:42)

Conclusion

Il nous semble que le projet éducatif des pédagogies du sud met en échec, comme l´a bien exprimé Jacques Delors en 1996 lors du rapport à l´UNESCO sur l´éducation pour le XXIe siècle (Delors, 1996), toute tentative politique de domination et de contrôle des savoirs et des ressources locales, et met en valeur l´émancipation des citoyens face aux formes de soumissions. Il est question d´un projet qui incarne, à lui seul, l´action démocratique de la participation populaire permettant une réelle décentralisation des pouvoirs. Certainement, la considération d´une autogestion des institutions éducatives dans la région, serait le point de départ névralgique vers l´ouverture des alternatives éducatives. Ceci est d´autant plus relevant si l´on tient compte qu´il est question de pédagogies qui proposent une approche holistique du savoir, où le processus de « fortalecimiento » joue un rôle prépondérant. Ce défi n´est pas des moindres face à l´emprise des épistémologies européennes en Amérique Latine. La question restera sans doute, et pour les années à venir, la mise en valeur des identités locales

ainsi que leur échange avec le monde environnant. De même, nous devons prendre en considération l´importance de penser la mise en place d´une épistémologie qui puisse tenir compte de «tous les nouveaux éléments culturels et sociaux du système éducatif.» (Urreti, 2008) L´émergence des éducomunications est notamment un exemple intéressant, parmi d´autres.[10] Urreti appelle cela un nouveau système d´objets. Autant de nouveaux langages et symboles qui ouvrent le champ à une série d´apprentissages et de connaissances qui se trouvent en dehors de l´école et sont devenues de nouveaux espaces virtuels de connaissance pour les jeunes. Ainsi, nous sommes confrontés à une nouvelle configuration de l´autorité de la connaissance, et les pédagogies du sud doivent tenir compte de ces nouveaux objets et leur donner un sens. (Quiroz, 2003) Cette entreprise doit se mener à bout avec l´efficacité et l´assertivité nécessaires de ceux qui comprennent que les sociétés humaines sont dynamiques et par conséquence doivent subir des réajustements permanents. Comme le souligne le sociologue chilien Manuel Garretón (Garretón, 2020), la crise sanitaire de la covid-19 en est un bel exemple**,** obligeant les institutions scolaires dans le monde et les politiques éducatives à réfléchir sur des nouvelles formes d´interaction et d´apprentissage de l´éduquant, et mettant à rude épreuve tout un système socio-politique et économique d´organisation et de consommation néolibérale. Outre la complexité des sociétés latino-américaines actuelles, et les défis auxquels chaque région du monde sera confrontée, les pédagogies du sud semblent en mesure d´apporter des réponses possibles et consensuelles, parce qu´elles font appel à des pratiques dialogiques et participatives de ses membres, parce qu´elles puisent dans leurs propres ressources afin d´améliorer leurs conditions de vie, et finalement parce qu´elles sont reconnaissantes de l´altérité et de l´interculturalité du monde. Une reconnaissance qui se présente comme une possibilité de penser les pays de la région d´après ses propres bases épistémologiques.

6) L'éducommunication est une approche qui a émergé en Amérique latine il y a trois décennies dans le cadre du mouvement d'éducation critique initié par P. Freire, et souligne comment la numérisation et la mondialisation ont réussi à transformer la culture, mais en même temps, à révéler les inégalités.

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Baja California y sus guerrilleros en los años setenta

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Baja California and its guerrilleros in the seventies.

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Resumen

La sociedad mexicana padecía a finales de los años sesenta del siglo pasado el agobiante peso sobre sus vidas de un sistema autoritario y represivo, que en no pocas ocasiones ahogó en sangre los legítimos anhelos de participación política de su población. Tal situación provocó un sinnúmero de manifestaciones situadas entre la protesta pacífica hasta la toma de las armas, especialmente luego de hechos de extrema crueldad, como la Matanza de Tlatelolco en 1968, con la que el régimen mostró de manera nítida su naturaleza.

En todo el país los jóvenes, en una época en que a nivel mundial la juventud impulsaba una revolución contracultural y de valores, se petrificaron del miedo o asumieron prácticas radicales de lucha violenta para enfrentar la violencia institucional extrema, en sintonía con los ideales de la época, que consideraban posible la utopía. Muchos perdieron la vida, pero contribuyeron significativamente, al lado de quienes con métodos pacíficos enfrentaron estoicos la barbarie institucional, y terminaron por transformar la vida política de la nación hacia formas de expresión más civilizadas.

Este trabajo de historia política analiza la relación y determinación mutua entre los actores de las llamadas historias regional e historia nacional, pretendiendo contribuir al conocimiento de lo que hoy somos como nación.

Palabras Claves

Jóvenes, izquierda, guerrilla, contracultura, Guerra Sucia

Abstract

At the end of the 1960s, Mexican society suffered from the overwhelming weight of an authoritarian and repressive system over their lives, which on many occasions drowned in blood the legitimate desires of its population for political participation. This situation caused countless demonstrations ranging from peaceful protest to taking up arms, especially after acts of extreme cruelty, such as the Tlatelolco Massacre in 1968, with which the regime clearly showed its nature.

Throughout the country, young people, at a time when youth worldwide were promoting a countercultural and values revolution, were petrified of fear or assumed radical practices of violent struggle to confront extreme institutional violence, in tune with the ideals of the time, who considered utopia possible. Many lost their lives, but contributed significantly, alongside those who with peaceful methods stoically confronted institutional barbarism, and ended up transforming the political life of the nation towards more civilized forms of expression.

This political history work analyzes the relationship and mutual determination between the actors of the so-called regional histories and national history, intending to contribute to the knowledge of what we are today as a nation.

Keywords

Youth, left, guerrilla, counterculture, Dirty War.

Introducción

Dentro de la diversidad social y económica de un país de medianas dimensiones territoriales y muy antigua formación cultural, como lo es México, destaca por su modernidad y características singulares el septentrional estado de Baja California, ubicado en el noroeste del país, fronterizo con los Estados Unidos de América, ya que al tratarse de un territorio incomunicado durante siglos

del resto de la república, forjó un carácter e idiosincrasia propia, en su relación permanente con el vecino estado de California, por parte de una población constituida prácticamente por migrantes que fueron llegando por oleadas hasta que construyeron grandes y progresistas ciudades en territorios desérticos y semidesérticos que habían permanecido despoblados hasta fechas recientes.

Esta población por su origen histórico y cultural desarrolló un fuerte nacionalismo al encontrarse cara a cara con el país vecino, lo que no le impidió contagiarse del espíritu de ciudadanía independiente y exigente de sus derechos, más acorde con el sistema político estadounidense que con el rígido y autoritario sistema político mexicano, que derivó en la conformación de agrupaciones políticas que presionaron primero, a mediados del siglo pasado, por el reconocimiento de estado constitucional de la república mexicana del hasta entonces territorio, para la formación de legislación propia y elección de autoridades locales, que hasta entonces llegaban designadas desde el centro del país.

Una vez conseguido este anhelo los bajacalifornianos llevaron a cabo elecciones locales en las que el partido oficial, a diferencia del resto de la república en que las se imponía con solo algunos sobresaltos regionales, era permanentemente derrotado, lo que provocó en Baja California durante décadas la represión y el fraude electoral constante, apoyado incluso con la participación del ejército federal, para imponer la voluntad de quienes desde el centro del país controlaban el poder político.

Las principales formaciones políticas del estado se alinearon con los esquemas liberales y democráticos predominantes en los Estados Unidos, pero en los años sesenta el estado vio surgir una generación de jóvenes, que imbuidos por el pensamiento y las corrientes de izquierda que crecían con vigor en diferentes partes del mundo, y en especial en Latinoamérica, empezó a confrontar al régimen autoritario y corrupto vigente desde una óptica distinta.
La sociedad mexicana padecía a finales de los años sesenta del siglo pasado el agobiante peso sobre sus vidas de un sistema autoritario y represivo, que en no pocas ocasiones ahogó en sangre los legítimos anhelos de participación política de su población. Tal situación provocó un sinnúmero de manifestaciones situadas entre la protesta pacífica hasta la toma de las armas, especialmente luego de hechos de extrema crueldad, como la Matanza de Tlatelolco en 1968, con la que el régimen mostró de manera nítida su naturaleza.

En todo el país los jóvenes, en una época en que a nivel mundial la juventud impulsaba una revolución contracultural y de valores, se petrificaron del miedo o asumieron prácticas radicales de lucha violenta para enfrentar la violencia institucional extrema, en sintonía con los ideales de la época, que consideraban posible la utopía. Muchos perdieron la vida, pero contribuyeron significativamente, al lado de quienes con métodos pacíficos enfrentaron estoicos la barbarie institucional, y terminaron por transformar la vida política de la nación hacia formas de expresión más civilizadas.

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El contexto

Luego del triunfo de la revolución socialista en Cuba, en México, como en buena parte de América Latina, ocurrió un importante crecimiento de la oposición política de izquierda. Este hecho sirvió como motivación para la reorganización de las antiguas formaciones comunistas y para la creación, en varias regiones del país, de nuevas agrupaciones de esta tendencia política, algunas de las cuales optaron por la lucha armada, en las que predominaba la incorporación de jóvenes. A esta tendencia no escapó el norteño estado de Baja California, el más septentrional de los estados de la república mexicana, ubicado en el noroeste de la nación, fronterizo con los Estados Unidos.

En este contexto, tras el derrotado intento de invasión que mercenarios apoyados por los Estados Unidos realizaron en Cuba del 15 al 19 de Abril de 1961, que tuvo como escenario la Bahía de Cochinos, en los puntos denominados Playa Girón y Playa Larga, se organizó entre universitarios de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) y el Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN), en la ciudad de México, el Frente Estudiantil en Defensa de la Revolución Cubana, que el 17 de abril llevaría a cabo una marcha, que congregó a más de 60 mil personas, que arribaron al Zócalo de la Ciudad de México en apoyo al gobierno de Fidel Castro y el "Che" Guevara entre otros revolucionarios. Al mitin llegó el General Lázaro Cárdenas, quién pronunció sobre el toldo de un automóvil un discurso en el que protestó porque él y un grupo de jóvenes mexicanos habían sido impedidos para

viajar el día de la invasión para sumarse a los combates. Cárdenas aseguró que la suspensión del vuelo por "mal tiempo" se debió en realidad a una orden del presidente Adolfo López Mateos para impedirles el viaje. (Ojeda, 2007)

En agosto de 1961 se funda el Movimiento de Liberación Nacional (MLN), una organización de izquierda moderada, que aglutinó a políticos, intelectuales y artistas destacados. Entre ellos figuraban los generales Lázaro Cárdenas y Heriberto Jara, los líderes campesinos Jacinto López y Rubén Jaramillo, el ex gobernador de Baja California Braulio Maldonado, Ignacio García Téllez, José Chávez Morado, Carlos Fuentes, Manuel Marcué Pardiñas, Pablo González Casanova, Francisco López Cámara, Cuahtémoc Cárdenas, Enrique González Pedrero, Heberto Catillo, Eli de Gortari, Clementina Bassols Batalla, Adelina Zendejas, Enrique González Pedrero y Víctor Flores Olea, entre otros. (Servín, 2021)

Esta organización, así como la constitución de otras agrupaciones de izquierda más radicales, colocaron en estado de alerta al régimen de López Mateos, quién luego de nacionalizar el 27 de Septiembre de 1960 la industria eléctrica, definiría políticamente a su gobierno "De extrema izquierda dentro de la constitución" o de "atinada izquierda", lo que provocaría la inconformidad de los organizamos empresariales que en desplegado público protestaron señalando que tales definiciones se convertían en elementos de "inseguridad económica y trastorno social." López Mateos – quién disfrutaba alentando su imagen carismática en los primeros años de gobierno hasta que sus continuos viajes y después sus malestares físicos lo hicieron depender cada vez más de los secretarios de Gobernación y Hacienda – pronto los convencería sin embargo de que tales pronunciamientos sólo formaban parte del discurso revolucionario con el que el régimen priista se legitimaba y que, en los hechos, el desarrollo capitalista seguiría siendo estrictamente garantizado.

De este modo el gobierno federal, a través del principal conductor de la política nacional, el secretario de Gobernación Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, continuó la política de represión y encarcelamiento de los dirigentes de los movimientos obreros que llevaban a cabo por esos días amplios movimientos de reivindicación salarial, principalmente los trabajadores ferrocarrileros, petroleros, telefonistas, telegrafistas y maestros, y consolidó las condiciones para que las ganancias, fruto del crecimiento que registraba la

economía, se siguieran concentrando y se empezarán a crear oligopolios en México, al tiempo que el reparto agrario continuaba disminuyendo notablemente y los latifundios se fortalecían.

En este contexto de represión política, el 23 de mayo de 1962, en las cercanías de la zona arqueológica de Xochicalco, en el estado de Morelos, contiguo a la Ciudad de México, fue asesinado por miembros del ejército federal el dirigente campesino Rubén Jaramillo junto con su esposa embarazada, dos de sus hijos y un sobrino. Unas horas antes Jaramillo, dirigente del partido Obrero Agrario de Morelos, había sido secuestrado con su familia en su casa del pueblo de Tlaquiltenango y subido a punta de ametralladora a vehículos militares para ser conducido, en ese momento, con rumbo desconocido. A Rubén Jaramillo, quien había sido guerrillero en 1943 en defensa del ingenio de Zacatepec y puntal campesino en la campaña presidencial del General Henríquez Guzmán en 1952, la Agencia Central de Inteligencia (CIA) de los Estados Unidos lo consideraba un peligroso agitador comunista que crecía políticamente de manera muy inconveniente, junto con las organizaciones campesinas de las que formaba parte. (Macías, 2016)

Debe señalarse, sin embargo, que, a pesar de estos nubarrones producidos por la organización de los comunistas, la situación política nacional en general en la primera mitad de los años sesenta se encontraba bastante controlada por parte del gobierno. Las centrales obreras y campesinas vivían su mejor época, la membresía no dejaba de crecer al tiempo que el control de sus bases, se hacía cada vez más efectivo. En Baja California, que había recibido el reconocimiento como entidad federativa de México apenas en 1952, los dirigentes de las centrales obreras y campesinas oficialistas adquirían cada vez mayor poder político. Tal era el caso de Evangelino Luévano Aguayo, dirigente de la Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM), de Tijuana, quién crecía en poderío en la medida en que las empresas maquiladoras, cuyos administradores preferían sindicatos cetemistas para evitar sobresaltos laborales, seguían instalándose en la ciudad. La CTM competía en Tijuana frente a la también oficialista Confederación Revolucionaria de Obreros y Campesinos (CROC), que tenía en esta ciudad una de sus delegaciones más poderosas en el País, concentrando a taxistas, cantineros, meseros, trabajadores de centros nocturnos y empleados de hipódromo. (Morales, 2002)

El control y poder de manipulación política que las centrales obreras y campesinas ejercían por entonces colaboraba de manera efectiva para que PRI ganara todas las elecciones en el país con la formula conocida como "carro completo". Cuando este control no era suficiente para contener el posible triunfo electoral de algún partido de oposición, como en el caso de la elección para gobernador de Baja California, en 1959, se recurría al fraude electoral.

La izquierda bajacaliforniana por estos años, acorde con la reorganización y crecimiento por todo el país, creaba nuevas agrupaciones y aumentaba en número de militantes, aunque su influencia política era, y siguió siendo por décadas, muy escasa. La entidad federativa fronteriza con Estados Unidos había estado durante mucho tiempo por falta de carreteras y medios de comunicación ligada mayormente a la vida económica y social de California, Estados Unidos, que al resto de la república mexicana, y tenía una formación política distinta a la que predominaba en amplias zonas del país. Prácticamente ninguna de estas organizaciones de izquierda en la entidad fronteriza, a pesar de que descalificaban la vía electoral como medio de lucha para obtener el poder político, considerando peyorativamente a este sistema como "democracia burguesa", reivindicaba la vía armada.

La guerrilla

El 23 de septiembre de 1965 una noticia sorprendió a toda la nación. En el pequeño y rural poblado de Madera, Chihuahua, un grupo guerrillero atacó el cuartel militar ubicado en esa localidad. El comando armado, compuesto por quince guerrilleros, era encabezado por el profesor Arturo Gámiz y el doctor Pablo Gómez. En el ataque al cuartel en el que había 125 soldados, murieron seis militares y trece guerrilleros, entre ellos los jefes de grupo. La finalidad del ataque, expresaron, era iniciar un movimiento revolucionario destinado a derrocar un gobierno que calificaban de:

> *Antidemocrático, represivo y generador de la pobreza… empuñamos las armas para hacer frente a cacicazgos que agobian al Estado, una vez que agotamos los medios legales sin fruto alguno…Empuñamos las armas para hacer por nuestra propia mano la justicia que se niega a los pobres… Nuestra lucha no va dirigida contra el ejército, sino contra los caciques. (De Mora, 1974)*

Este ataque encuadrado dentro de las tesis guevaristas muy en boga en aquellos años, que sostenían que solo era necesario crear un foco guerrillero para que se levantará un pueblo empobrecido en armas, así como las guerrillas rurales del estado de Guerrero, que surgirían por esa misma época, dirigidas por Genaro Vázquez Rojas y Lucio Cabañas Barrientos, sirvieron de inspiración para la creación en los años siguientes de una infinidad de grupos guerrilleros que surgieron por todo el país, conformados principalmente por estudiantes y profesores, principalmente como consecuencia de la violenta represión al movimiento estudiantil de 1968. En estos grupos guerrilleros participarían una importante cantidad de jóvenes bajacalifornianos y varios de ellos se integrarían con notoria influencia a la dirección nacional de sus organizaciones.

Baja California

En Baja California por esos años – en los que se desarrollaba por casi todo el mundo una revolución contracultural impulsada esencialmente por jóvenes que cuestionaban los valores y esquemas de una sociedad que consideraban corrompida, autoritaria y deshumanizada- varias corrientes estudiantiles de izquierda creaban la Federación de Estudiantes de Baja California (FEBC), organización que se ligaría a la Central Nacional de Estudiantes Democráticos (CNED), la cual tomaría fuerza en escuelas secundarias y preparatorias de Mexicali, Tijuana y Ensenada, así como en distintos planteles de la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC), que por aquellos años tenía todavía un desarrollo muy incipiente. A pesar de tratarse de una organización encabezada por dirigentes de la Juventud Comunista, ligados al Partido Comunista Mexicano (PCM), La FEBC estableció relaciones y trabajos conjuntos con algunos sectores juveniles de izquierda del PRI. Esta coexistencia pacífica entraría en crisis en 1968. (Morales, 2002)

La FEBC fue una de la primeras de las muchas organizaciones estudiantiles que se organizaron en Baja California en los años sesenta y setenta que desarrollarían sus movimientos y luchas principalmente en la consecución de terrenos para la construcción de los distintos planteles de la UABC en el estado, el descuento en el transporte para el sector estudiantil, el pago oportuno del subsidio de la universidad por parte del Gobierno del Estado, subsidio que por estos años llegaba con mucho retraso y durante largas temporadas se suspendía casi por completo, así como por deman-

das de corte académico como la destitución de profesores faltistas o mal preparados, demandas combinadas con objetivos de corte político, como lo fue el cambio de algunos directores de escuela, así como del rector Santos Silva Cota, en los primeros meses de 1966, movimiento en la cúpula universitaria que ya se preparaba con antelación a la demanda estudiantil pero que fue acelerado por la demanda en tal sentido de algunas organizaciones estudiantiles ligadas al PCM, a través de la Juventud Comunista, dirigida principalmente por los hermanos Gustavo y Sergio "El Pachi" Hirales Morán, después guerrilleros. El doctor Silva Cota, primer rector de la UABC, fue sustituido el 29 de junio de 1966 por el biólogo Pedro Mercado Sánchez.

Estas organizaciones, que llegaron a tener presencia desde las escuelas secundarias hasta las instituciones de educación superior, que por entonces, y hasta la llegada del Centro de Enseñanza Técnica y Superior (Cetys) y el Instituto Tecnológico Regional de Tijuana,[1] se reducían a la UABC, tendrían importante influencia política en todas las escuelas preparatorias en el estado, y en una escala un poco menor en casi todas las unidades académicas de la universidad en Ensenada, así como en Economía en Tijuana y en Pedagogía y Ciencias Sociales y Políticas en Mexicali. También desarrollarían fuertes vínculos, en la segunda mitad de los años sesenta, con obreros y campesinos, fundamentalmente en el medio campesino del Valle de Mexicali, en algunas cooperativas pesqueras de Ensenada y con trabajadores de la recién instalada industria maquiladora de Tijuana.

De algunas de estas organizaciones, que no pasaban de conformar un nuevo grupo de presión en Baja California pues su influencia política era escasa, surgirían – en muchos sentidos como consecuencia de la violenta represión al movimiento estudiantil de 1968, aunque hubo un grupo de guerrilleros bajacalifornianos que se enrolaron poco antes de la gesta estudiantil – los jóvenes que decidirían abandonar la tranquilidad de sus vidas para participar, impulsados por ideales marxistas, en la formación de movimientos armados, principalmente de corte urbano, por casi todo el país.

La decisión fue muy complicada para muchos de ellos porque no sólo implicaba sumergirse en la vida clandestina, y romper casi todos sus vínculos anteriores, sino también porque algunos de estos jóvenes tuvieron antes que romper con la organización

[1)] El Cetys se funda en la ciudad de Mexicali en 1961, pero es en los años sesenta, misma época en que se establece en Tijuana y Ensenada, que adquiere su consolidación definitiva y el ITR de Tijuana naca en 1971

política a la que habían pertenecido desde la adolescencia, en la mayoría de los casos, principalmente el PCM, que no solo no compartía la opción de la lucha armada, sino que se demostraba en muchos sentidos incapaz de comprender la manera de expresar las inquietudes, tan especiales, de los jóvenes de aquella época. Así lo recuerda el mexicalense Rodolfo Echeverría Martínez, "El Chicali", quien por aquellos años, radicado en la ciudad de México, fungía como enlace de la Juventud Comunista de México, de la zona norte del Pacifico mexicano, con el Consejo Ejecutivo Nacional del PMC:

> *En relación con los jóvenes, en el seno de nuestro movimiento había criterios muy autoritarios. Acordémonos, el rock and roll, la Revolución Cubana empezaba apenas, las broncas de la guerra en Vietnam, acababa de pasar el asesinato de Kennedy , una serie de factores que hacían que los jóvenes tuvieran sus propios criterios, y yo recuerdo que llegué en una ocasión a Mexicali y entré a una reunión de la dirección del partido y tenían en juicio al " Chelis", José Luis Alonso, y lo estaban acusando porque se habían ido a emborrachar con sus amigos, y había formado un grupo de rock, y le estaban haciendo una crítica y acordando expulsarlo, y entonces yo recuerdo que textual les dice: "si ustedes me van a correr, me quieren expulsar, yo, antes de que lo hagan, los mando a chingar a su madre, y se levantó y se fue". (Entrevista del autor a Rodolfo Echeverría Martínez, 2000)*

1968

A pesar de la distancia geográfica del movimiento estudiantil de 1968, que se desarrolló principalmente en la Ciudad de México, el evento tuvo repercusiones, sobre todo entre los jóvenes, de la entidad bajacaliforniana. De este modo lo refiere José Luis Pérez Canchola, en ese entonces miembro de la Juventud Comunista en Baja California:

> *Yo creo que uno de los personajes que influyó en que se conociera bien lo que estaba sucediendo en el centro del país fue Heberto Castillo, quien previo al movimiento, y después en sus primeras etapas, estuvo asistiendo al estado*

a brindar conferencias para explicar todo el proceso social, político, que se estaba dando. De tal manera que había información, conocimiento de lo que pasaba, lo que provocó una identificación solidaria y empezó a generar un movimiento propio, que se manifestó en marchas. Además, se supo de inmediato que algunos bajacalifornianos habían sido detenidos con motivo de la matanza del 2 de octubre, recuerdo que se formaron comisiones para reunir fondos para esos presos bajacalifornianos. También se dio la circunstancia de que la policía local, seguramente con intervención federal, empezó a vigilar los movimientos, los domicilios de los principales dirigentes de izquierda en Baja California. Yo estimo que el movimiento estudiantil tuvo un impacto que afectó la vida política de la entidad en los años siguientes. (Entrevista del autor a José Luis Pérez Canchola, 2000)

Además de la detención en la Ciudad de México de Rodolfo Echeverría "El Chicali", en la cárcel de Lecumberri, otros bajacalifornianos, como Leopoldo Angulo Luken, quien estudiaba en la Escuela Superior de Arquitectura del IPN y Alfonso Pérez Rayón, inscrito en la Vocacional 5 de la misma institución educativa, así como el profesor rural David López Valenzuela, participaron de manera activa en el movimiento estudiantil y tras la masacre en Tlatelolco, considerando que la opción pacífica para la democracia estaba cerrada, decidieron unirse a grupos guerrilleros urbanos. El mismo destino, la guerrilla, sería el de Jorge Alberto Sánchez Hirales, quien llegó a ser uno de los más destacados dirigentes estudiantiles de Baja California y quien se integró a la luchas juveniles tras de que una brigada del Consejo Nacional de Huelga (CNH), que era el organismo que aglutinaba a la dirigencia del movimiento estudiantil de 1968, llegó hasta la Escuela Preparatoria de la UABC, en Mexicali, cuando Jorge Alberto se encontraba en el primer año, para hablar con los estudiantes, salón por salón, repartir volantes y fijar propaganda del movimiento en los muros del plantel. (Morales, 2002)

Luego de la matanza de Tlatelolco alumnos de secundaria de la ciudad de Tijuana, en un número aproximado a los 300, realizaron una marcha de apoyo a los estudiantes del IPN y la UNAM que aún no habían decidido regresar a clases. Con sus libros bajo

el brazo los jóvenes estudiantes, que coreaban consignas en apoyo al Consejo General de Huelga e invitaban al pueblo a unirse a su protesta, marcharon de la esquina de la avenida Revolución y calle Cuarta al Palacio Municipal situado en la avenida Constituyentes y calle Segunda.

Ante los acontecimientos represivos cometidos en la Ciudad de México, el ala más radical de izquierda del movimiento estudiantil bajacaliforniano decidió en 1969 formar el Bloque de Estudiantes Democráticos (BED). En el BED figuraron como dirigentes, además del propio Jorge Alberto Sánchez Hilares, quién resultó electo presidente de la Sociedad de Alumnos de la Preparatoria de Mexicali en ese mismo año, sus primos Sergio Hilares Morán y Gustavo Hilares Morán (quién regresaba de la República Democrática Alemana, donde recibió algunos cursos en la llamada " Escuela de Cuadros" de la Juventud Libre Alemana), Dionisio González, Lino Meza, José Luis Vargas, José Negrete Mata, Gilberto Covarrubias, Jorge Conde Zambada, Martha Galindo, Violeta Ovando y Jorge Moreno Berry. (Morales, 2002)

La movilización estudiantil creció en el año de 1969, cuando los estudiantes decidieron invadir en el mes de marzo un amplio terreno cercano al mar en el puerto de Ensenada para la Construcción de la Escuela de Ciencias Marinas y el Instituto de Investigaciones Oceanográficas y el 23 de diciembre, en esa misma ciudad, realizaron protestas ante la visita a la universidad del candidato presidencial priista, Luis Echeverría Álvarez, por el disgusto que provocó en el sector estudiantil que en la universidad se identificaba con el liderazgo del Bloque de Estudiantes Democráticos, a causa de que consideraban al ex secretario de Gobernación uno de los responsables directos de la matanza de Tlatelolco.

Con este motivo decenas de estudiantes participaron llegando en camiones desde Mexicali, Tecate y Tijuana para boicotear la presencia del candidato; alegaban que se estaba violando la autonomía de a UABC, Así como su Ley Orgánica, que prohibía el proselitismo político al interior de la universidad y calificaron de asesino al candidato priista. Finalmente tomaron por asalto la tribuna, generándose un caos ente la arremetida de los miembros del Estado Mayor Presidencial. Sergio Hirales, subiéndose de un brinco al estrado gritó:

¡Protesto, compañeros, dentro de la universidad no se debe hacer política a favor de ningún partido!... El candidato, rojo de furia, gritaba "subversivos", mientras que Sergio Hilares, "El Pachi", le espetaba machacón: "asesino, asesino". El Estado Mayor y los porros cargaron contra el tijuanense, mientras que el Jorgito (Jorge Alberto Sánchez Hirales) se abalanzó sobre el candidato exigiéndole diálogo y consecuencia entre actos y discurso de la "apertura democrática" que prometía el candidato. Ya llevaban a "El Pachi" en vilo, cuando un gesto de su mano augusta calmó a los guardianes del orden: déjenlo, dijo, vamos a dialogar… (Hirales, 1996)

Los estudiantes del BED accedieron imponiendo como condición que sólo universitarios formaran parte del presídium, por lo que el gobernador Raúl Sánchez Díaz Martell tuvo que bajar. A continuación, ambos reiteraron sus posiciones, Echeverría conminando a los estudiantes a que depusieran su actitud beligerante y se avinieran a manifestar su inconformidad política a través del marco institucional, mientras que los estudiantes del BED lo acusaron de ser uno de los autores intelectuales de la masacre y representante de un gobierno represivo y antidemocrático. El único de ese grupo que no lo hizo así fue el estudiante de Economía, Guillermo Lee Ontiveros, hasta ese momento también miembro del BED y convertido después en priista. Por su parte Jorge Alberto Sánchez Hirales en su última intervención propuso se guardará un minuto de silencio por los estudiantes asesinados a lo que se sumó Luis Echeverría agregando que también lo hacía por los "soldados muertos".

Las acciones

El año de 1971, en el que varios cientos de estudiantes dirigidos principalmente por el BED se posesionaron en Tijuana de las instalaciones del exclusivo Club Deportivo Campestre, en donde exigieron se construyeran las instalaciones de la UABC en esta ciudad, y en el que también se desarrollaron elecciones locales que culminaron con el triunfo para la gubernatura del candidato priista Milton Castellanos frente a Salvador Rosas Magallón del PAN, por primera vez la población de Baja California se enteraría de las acciones de los jóvenes locales que habían decidido tomar el camino de las armas.

El 1 de abril de 1971, diversos diarios de Baja California desmentirían que Martha Maldonado Sosa, hija del ex gobernador Braulio Maldonado Sández, primer gobernador constitucional del estado de Baja California de 1952 a 1958, hubiera sido detenida días atrás en el Hotel Galindo, de la población El Rosario, al sur de Culiacán, Sinaloa, como parte del comando del grupo guerrillero del Movimiento de Acción Revolucionaria (MAR), que cayó preso. Esta era la primera vez que la mayoría de la población del estado se enteraba que Martha Maldonado Sosa estaba relacionada con el MAR, cuyos miembros fueron entrenados en Corea del Norte para regresar a México a integrarse a los grupos guerrilleros que a principios de los setenta empezaron a actuar en casi todo el país. Martha Maldonado había estudiado Economía en la Universidad de los Pueblos "Patricio Lumumba", en la URSS, durante la década de los sesenta.

Tres meses después, estando aún reciente la matanza de estudiantes perpetrada en la ciudad de México el 10 de junio de 1971 por el grupo paramilitar llamado "Los Halcones", que cobró la vida de aproximadamente 40 estudiantes y dejó heridos a varios cientos más, un comando guerrillero llevaría a cabo en Baja California la acción más importante, y desafortunada, que un grupo de este tipo haya intentado llevar a cabo en la entidad. Este hecho ocurrió el 9 de julio de 1971 cuando unos individuos hasta entonces desconocidos asaltaron a punta de pistola la empresa gubernamental "Almacenes de Azúcar, S.A.", perteneciente a la Unión Nacional de Productores de Almacenes de Azúcar, UNPASA, ubicada en la calle Once esquina con el Boulevard Agua Caliente, llevándose como botín una caja fuerte. Días después la policía determinó que los autores del asalto eran miembros de un grupo guerrillero comandado por el profesor mexicalense Carlos Ceballos Loya, egresado de la Escuela Normal Fronteriza, que laboró como profesor rural en Los Algodones, en el extremo noreste del valle de Mexicali, cuyo nombre clandestino era "Julián"

El grupo guerrillero de ideología marxista que hasta ese momento no tenía nombre, era el mismo que tres meses atrás, el 14 de abril, había asaltado la casa de cambio ubicada en el boulevard Díaz Ordaz 1351, del centro comercial Limón, ubicado en la Mesa. Después de este asalto los guerrilleros dirigidos por Carlos Ceballos Loya, que en total sumaban cuatro y cubrían sus rostros

con pasamontañas de lana, tomaron como rehén para cubrir la fuga al señor Hilario Lara Ozuna, copropietario del negocio, al que abandonaron cuadras adelante. En esta acción los guerrilleros expropiaron, como le llamaban a los recursos que obtenían para financiar sus movimientos armado, un poco más de 2 mil 500 dólares. (Alonso, 1994)

Pero así como la acción de abril les había resultado exitosa, la perpetrada el 9 de julio se convirtió en un profundo fracaso. Los problemas empezaron desde que arribaron al lugar, a las nueve de mañana, hora en que abrían el local, cuando el comando de guerrilleros, esta vez integrado por cinco hombres, entre los que se contaba además de Ceballos Loya a los también profesores Gilberto Lozano Díaz y Ramón Alapisco Ayala, así como José Luis Alfonso Vargas, "El Chelis" y Gustavo Hirales Morán, confundió a un empleado que llegaba con el gerente de la empresa, al suceder la confusión los guerrilleros bajaron de la vagoneta que había robado momentos antes y procedieron a colocarse un juego de anteojos, nariz y bigote de plástico, que hizo que los niños que se encontraban en frente del local, pensaran que se trataba de un grupo de payasos y se acercaron a donde permanecía Ceballos Loya con la camioneta encendida esperando a sus compañeros. Los niños no se retiraban por más que el profesos Ceballos se los pedía, creyendo que la pistola era parte del disfraz, por lo que decidió hacer un disparo al aire para espantarlos. Esto presionó aún más a sus compañeros que descubrían que quien creyeron era el gerente no lo era, pues éste había salido de vacaciones el día anterior, y nadie en la empresa conocía la combinación de la enorme caja fuerte, de un metro cúbico de espesor, que tuvo finalmente que ser cargada por cuatro estibadores de la compañía que a punta de pistola la depositaron en la parte posterior de la vagoneta. (Alonso, 1994) (El Mexicano, 1971)

Los guerrilleros tomaron rumbo a Playas de Tijuana, pero para completar el cuadro en la Avenida Internacional, que no tiene salidas laterales por estar a un lado de la valla fronteriza, apareció un retén de la policía y el comando quedó sin vías de escape. Carlos Ceballos les dijo a sus compañeros que no se preocuparan, considerando que probablemente el retén era una acción de rutina y no porque los estuvieran localizando, y al tocarles su turno sin bajarse del auto saludo de mano a la policía depositándole un billete en la misma, resultando que efectivamente no habían sido

aún avisados del asalto y de las características del vehículo, por lo que recibió discretamente el dinero y procedió a darles el paso.

Por el rumbo de Playas de Tijuana, en una cañada cerca del fraccionamiento Los Altos, donde habían dejado un vehículo Ford 1959, que en la guantera tenía una tarjeta de circulación a nombre de Carlos Ceballos, dejaron la vagoneta y abordaron el automóvil, trasladando con esfuerzo entre los cinco la caja fuerte, para regresar al centro de la ciudad donde tenían una de casa de seguridad en la Calle Quinta, número 347, departamento 2, donde los esperaba otro compañero que quedó comisionado, luego que los guerrilleros se dispersaron, para abrir la caja fuerte, que solo tendría seis mil pesos, así como desaparecer el auto del profesor Ceballos. Esto último lo hizo de manera incorrecta, dejando en la guantera la tarjeta de circulación, así como un giro telegráfico a nombre del profesor Alapisco Ayala, quien fue el primero en ser detenido, el 13 de julio, en Mexicali, para después ser torturado durante diez días en las instalaciones de la policía judicial del estado en Playas de Tijuana, donde sufrió un intento de ahogamiento y finalmente ser trasladado a la cárcel municipal de esta ciudad.

El 20 de julio, cuando se encontraba en una aula de La Escuela Normal Superior de Tepic, Nayarit, donde tomaba unos cursos de verano de actualización magisterial, Carlos Ceballos Loya fue alertado de que en las oficinas administrativas preguntaban por él agentes de la policía judicial, logrando escapar, para posteriormente, con la autorización del también mexicalense, Leopoldo Angulo Luken, quien lo había reclutado años atrás en Mexicali, y era ya uno de los principales organizadores de la unificación de grupos armados dispersos y organizaciones estudiantiles que conformarían la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre, integrarse en la Costa Grande del estado de Guerrero a la guerrilla rural, agrupada en el Partido de los Pobres, liderada por el también profesor Lucio Cabañas Barrientos, donde Ceballos llegaría a ser de los elementos más destacados.

Casi un año después, Carlos Ceballos, quien en la guerrilla campesina era conocido como "Julián", y era muy apreciado por los guerrerenses, cayó prisionero por las fuerzas militares junto con Carmelo Cortés, lugarteniente de Lucio Cabañas.

Días y noches interminables vivieron sometidos a las crueles torturas. Ellos no tenían otras alternativas que

aguantar hasta morir. Y como los torturadores no recibieron órdenes de liquidarlos, fueron entregados hechos aun piltrafas a los carceleros de la capital del estado Chilpancingo. (Alonso, 1994)

En el verano de 1972, Carlos Caballos recibió en la cárcel de Chilpancingo a un grupo de estudiantes mexicalenses de la Escuela de Pedagogía de la UABC, que de viaje por el sur del país aprovecharon para ir a saludarlo. Con algunos de ellos, que consideró de absoluta confianza, rompió las normas de seguridad de la vida clandestina anunciándoles que su fuga estaba próxima. Y efectivamente, el 20 de agosto de este año, Carlos Ceballos y Carmelo Cortes escaparon por un hueco que habían construido pacientemente en la pared con una cuchara, el cual habían cubierto durante el tiempo de la excavación con un poster del Che Guevara.

Ceballos y Cortés regresaron a la guerrilla de Lucio Cabañas, pero a los pocos meses el mexicalense tomó la decisión abandonar al Partido de los Pobres en solidaridad con los miembros de la recientemente integrada Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre, que participaban en apoyo de la guerrilla guerrerense, y que fueron expulsados por la actitud soberbia que tenían ante los campesinos que desconocían el marxismo, por indisciplinados y flojos como guerrilleros y por diferencias ideológicas con Cabañas. El profesor Lucio Cabañas aceptó con pesar la decisión de Carlos Ceballos y lo despidió con un amplio reconocimiento por su actividad revolucionaria. Ceballos fundó entonces, otra vez en unión con Carmelo Cortés, las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR). Cortés muere en un enfrentamiento con el gobierno a las pocas semanas. Lucio Cabañas por su parte caería bajo las balas del ejército, que lo perseguía guiado por fotografías satelitales proporcionadas por los Estados Unidos, en un paraje conocido como el Otatal, en el municipio de Tecpan de Galena, el 2 de diciembre de 1974.

Carlos Ceballos se retira entonces de la vida armada, consternado por la muerte de sus camaradas y por el ambiente de delaciones, descomposición y luchas internas que se da al interior de los grupos guerrilleros, integrándose con nueva identidad a la sociedad como un tranquilo profesionista recientemente casado. Sin embargo, en 1977 decide regresar a la lucha guerrillera para fallecer a las pocas semanas, el 2 de marzo de eses año, cuando es

descubierto, junto con el también importante dirigente guerrillero Tomás Lizárraga Tirado, conocido como Tom de Analco, y un puñado de guerrilleros más, en una casa de seguridad en Guadalajara, Jalisco, donde Ceballos muere tras un enfrentamiento con la policía que duraría dos horas.

Por su parte, Leopoldo Angulo Luken, conocido como "Melchor" entre los guerrilleros, nacido en Sinaloa y llegado a Mexicali a los diez años de edad, seguía desarrollando la mayor parte de sus actividades guerrilleras en la Ciudad de México, entonces llamada Distrito Federal. Una vez convertido en guerrillero, la acción más importante que efectúa en Baja California, al frente de lo que por entonces llamaban el Grupo "N", había sido precisamente el reclutamiento del profesor Carlos Ceballos y su grupo. Angulo Luken, quien apoyó y financió a Lucio Cabañas Barrientos y promovió la unión de los distintos grupos guerrilleros, defendiendo la tesis de la necesidad de pasar de la etapa de las "expropiaciones" a la acción armada directa contra el ejército, se convirtió en uno de los dirigentes más importantes de la Liga Comunista 23 de septiembre, en donde llegó a dirigir un grupo de misiones especiales llamado la "Brigada Roja". Al interior de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre se le conocería desde entonces como "El General".

> *"Angulo Luken rechazo rechazó acogerse a la amnistía decretada en 1977 durante el gobierno de José López Portillo y posiblemente falleció en un enfrentamiento con la policía en 1980, pero su destino final todavía se desconoce." (Alonso, 1994)*

Otros guerrilleros bajacalifornianos fueron Alfonso Pérez Rayón, conocido entre sus compañeros como "Ángel", quien llegaría también a ser un cuadro de dirección de la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre. Su destino final también es un misterio. Jorge Alberto Sánchez Hirales, en cambio, quien se integró al grupo conocido como "Los Procesos", falleció víctima de leucemia el 14 de abril de 1981. A pesar de los consejos de los médicos de Cuba – en donde residió tras ser uno de los treinta guerrilleros excarcelados y enviados a la isla en canje por el cónsul estadounidense Torrance León Hardy, secuestrado en Guadalajara por las Fuerzas Revolucionarias Armadas del Pueblo (FRAP) – Jorge Alberto regresó a México en 1979 para integrarse a la dirección nacional

de la Corriente Socialista, grupo constituido por algunos sobrevivientes de la Liga y del grupo de estudiantes radicalizados de la Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios Sinaloenses (FEUS), de la Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa, conocido como "Los Enfermos" de Sinaloa.

Otro caso es el David López Valenzuela, conocido en la guerrilla como "Jotavich" y más adelante como "Sebastián", quien se integrara a las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias del Pueblo (FRAP) en Jalisco y participó precisamente en el secuestro del cónsul estadounidense mediante el cual se logró la liberación de Jorge Alberto Sánchez Hilares y 29 más de sus compañeros, así como también en el secuestro del suegro del presidente Luis Echeverría, José Guadalupe Zuno, ocurrido en Guadalajara el 28 de agosto de 1974. Por esta última acción López Valenzuela es aprehendido y encarcelado en el penal de Oblatos, en donde en 1976 concede una entrevista a la revista Contenido en la que se manifiesta decepcionado de la lucha armada. Al año siguiente sería asesinado a puñaladas en el interior penal, al parecer por miembros de la Liga que lo consideraban un traidor.

Juan Gilberto Sánchez Díaz fue un exmilitar y poeta que residió en Mexicali y Ensenada, procedente de su natal Sonora. "Gaspar", como sería conocido por sus compañeros de lucha se destacó, por su antiguo entrenamiento, como instructor militar que entrenó a diferentes grupos guerrilleros en la ciudad de México y en el estado de Chihuahua, En este último estado falleció asesinado por la policía que le aplicó la "Ley fuga" el 22 de enero de 1972.

El profesor Ramón Ruiz Sánchez fue un guerrillero ensenadense, contagiado desde joven por el entusiasmo revolucionario de un guerrillero rural nicaragüense, que no dudo en incorporarse a la "célula central" de las FAR, de la que llegó a ser tesorero. Exterminado el grupo guerrillero Ramón Ruiz, quien usaba el sobrenombre de "Gabriel", impulsó el co-gobierno en la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, fundó la escuela Pública de Educación Especial y se dedicó a la asesoría de diferentes grupos indígenas.

Entre los guerrilleros bajacalifornianos también hubo mujeres, entre otras, la profesora Martha Galindo Betancourt, detenida tras estrellar su auto al ponerse nerviosa, pues traía armas en la cajuela, después de toparse con un retén de la policía en Tijuana. Martha Galindo fue llevada a unos separos de la Policía Judicial

Federal donde fue torturada para posteriormente ser encarcelada en el penal de la Mesa. La profesora Galindo fue liberada con la amnistía de 1977 pero murió de cáncer a los pocos meses de salir de prisión.

Rosa Albina Garavito Elías, mexicalense, hija de un connotado político priista, estudió Economía en la Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, donde se enroló en la guerrilla. Rosa Albina Garavito fue detenida con una herida de bala en el abdomen en enero de 1972 en Monterrey, durante un tiroteo con la policía en los Condominios Constitución. Beneficiada por la amnistía regresó a México en 1980 del exilio que mantenía en Italia. Rosa Albina Garavito tuvo posteriormente una destacada carrera política formando parte del Consejo Político Nacional del Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD), por el cual llegó a ocupar una diputación federal y una senaduría.

Finalmente se encuentra Martha Maldonado Sosa, la hija del primer gobernador constitucional de Baja California Braulio Maldonado Sández, quien lograría evadir la persecución luego de que la mayoría de sus compañeros del MAR fueron apresados en el Rosario, Sinaloa, y se unió a la Liga Comunista 23 de Septiembre, de la cual desertaría por el ambiente de descomposición, delaciones y ajusticiamientos internos que se dieron al interior del grupo. Maldonado logró huir a Los Ángeles, California, y después de la amnistía de 1977 regresó a Tijuana.

Cuando llegó a la gubernatura Xicoténcatl Leyva Mortera en 1983, Martha Maldonado fue nombrada delegada de la Secretaría de Desarrollo Económico en Tecate y ahí se integró al PRI como presidenta de divulgación ideológica y directora del Centro de Estudios Políticos y Sociales (CEPES) de Tecate. En 1987 formó parte de la corriente Democrática del PRI, dirigida por Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano, y salió de ese partido para ser candidata a senadora por el Frente Democrático Nacional (FDN) en 1988 y candidata a gobernadora por el PRD en 1989. De 1991 a 1994 fue diputada federal por el PRD y en el 2000 coordinó en Baja California la campaña de Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, candidato presidencial del PARM, y luego de la declinación de éste hizo alianza con "Los amigos de Fox" en el estado.

Otros guerrilleros bajacalifornianos, por nacimiento o adopción, sin que la lista pretenda ser definitiva, fueron los ya men-

cionados hermanos Sergio y Gustavo Hirales Morán, que cayeron presos en las cárceles de Hermosillo y Monterrey, respectivamente, Lino Meza, Dionisio González, Ignacio González y el también mencionado José Luis Alonso Vargas. Una parte de los guerrilleros bajacalifornianos que no murieron en enfrentamientos, enfermedad o suicidios se unieron, de un modo u otro, al gobierno que en juventud combatieron. Un caso paradigmático es el de Gustavo Hirales Morán, quien fue acusado por familiares de desaparecidos políticos de convertirse en delator para la Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) de sus antiguos compañeros y fue asesor del presidente Ernesto Zedillo en temas de contrainsurgencia frente al levantamiento armado de la guerrilla zapatista del Ejercito Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN). (Laguna, 2007) La gran mayoría de los sobrevivientes viven fuera de Baja California y su relación política con el estado es escasa.

Finalmente, en el contexto de las guerrillas y las actividades subversivas en Baja California en los años setenta, Rodolfo Echeverría Martínez, "El Chicali", que no fue guerrillero aunque confiesa que alguna vez buscó a los hermanos Hirales para contactarlos, sin poderlos encontrar, quien estuvo varias veces encarcelado por su actividad política y trabajó para el gobierno de Carlos Salinas de Gortari en el Programa "Solidaridad", revela en entrevista una acción clandestina realizada, a través de Baja California, en apoyo al gobierno de Corea del Norte, por miembros de la Juventud Comunista de México (JCM) y que constituyó un secreto celosamente guardado por varias décadas:

"Nosotros éramos parte del movimiento comunista internacional y teníamos relación con Corea del Norte y nos pidieron apoyo para traer unos coreanos a México, se trajeron no sé cuántos coreanos. Los casábamos aquí con alguna compañera, les conseguíamos papeles falsos y los llevábamos a Tijuana y los metíamos a Estados Unidos, yo no sé si eso vaya a costarme algo, pero esto es un hecho y llevamos varios, más de diez.

_ ¿A Estados Unidos?, ¿Coreanos?

-Los pasábamos. Venían de Corea del Norte.

- ¿Y eran agentes gubernamentales? ¿Espías? ¿A qué iban…?

- No sé, no lo puedo decir porque no me consta. Lo que si me consta es que los pasábamos allá.

-Pero no sabe específicamente las labores que hicieron allá.
-No, No lo sé, pero no creo que hayan ido a construir la iglesia católica coreana, ni que hayan sido misioneros cristianos. (Entrevista del autor a Rodolfo Echeverría Martínez, 2000)

Colofón

Una vez destruida la guerrilla rural en el estado de Guerrero, siguiendo las pautas diseñadas por los asesores estadounidenses del Pentágono y la CIA, culminando con la muerte de sus principales dirigentes Lucio Cabañas y Genaro Vázquez Rojas, el gobierno mexicano se concentró en desarticular por completo la guerrilla urbana representada por más de una veintena de grupos diferentes. Durante esta lucha el gobierno recurrió, como sucedió con las dictaduras militares del Cono Sur y Centroamérica, al expediente de la "Guerra Sucia", mediante la cual varios supuestos o verdades guerrilleros, junto con muchos de sus familiares, así como personas que supuesta o realmente los ayudaban, fueron torturados para obligarlos a la delación y posteriormente asesinados y sus cuerpos desaparecidos.

Tales operaciones se hacían en los estados donde eran atrapados, sobre todo en Guerrero, pero se tenía un punto de central de operaciones en el campo Militar Número 1 de la Secretaría de la Defensa Nacional. Bajo la dirección del general Hermenegildo Cuenca Díaz, uno de los ejecutores directos de la Matanza de Tlatelolco, secretario de la Defensa Nacional en el gobierno de Luis Echeverría y de asesores estadounidenses, en coordinación con la Dirección Federal de Seguridad, en tales operaciones irregulares participaron entro otros policías y militares que conformaban la llamada "Brigada Blanca", Miguel Nazar Haro, Fernando Gutiérrez Barrios, Salomón Tanús, Mario Arturo Acosta Chaparro, Francisco Humberto Quirós Hermosillo, Francisco Sahagún Baca, Arturo Durazo Moreno, Carlos Fabián Reyes, Dámaso Tostado, Eliseo Jiménez Ruiz, Jesús Miyasawa Álvarez, Florentino Ventura y Jorge Obregón Lima, entre los más conocidos. (La Jornada, 1996) (Proceso, 2001) Principalmente, en función de tales servicios, el presidente Echeverría consideró adecuado premiar al general Cuenca con la candidatura para gobernador de Baja California, la cual no pudo llegar a ocupar por haber fallecido durante su campaña electoral.

En el año de 1977, el gobierno de López Portillo decretaría la amnistía para todos aquellos que abandonaran la lucha armada, y el 10 de julio el Congreso de la Unión aprobó la Ley de Organizaciones Políticas y Procesos Electorales (LOPPE), iniciativa diseñada por el secretario de Gobernación, Jesús Reyes Heroles, y enviada al poder legislativo por el presidente López Portillo que establecía la posibilidad de registro condicionado para nuevos partidos políticos, la incorporación de los diputados plurinominales, el acceso de los partidos a tiempos oficiales en los medios de comunicación electrónica y otorgaba prerrogativas en efectivo para propaganda electoral. Tales medidas, conocidas como la Reforma Política, fueron interpretadas como la respuesta del gobierno para mitigar la gran presión social que pugnaba por todos los rincones del país por una verdadera democratización de la vida política de México. Con la Reforma Política la gran mayoría de guerrilleros de esta época retomaron a la vida pública, aunque un puñado de ellos continuó alzado en armas. Los que no fallecieron en enfrentamientos o no fueron desaparecidos en el transcurso de los siguientes años continuaron en la organización de grupos clandestinos que, entre otros, darían nacimiento, en la década de los noventa, al Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) y al Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR).

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PERIÓDICOS Y REVISTAS

El Heraldo de Baja California
El Mexicano
La Jornada
Proceso
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L'evoluzione del conflitto in Ucraina e le proposte di risoluzione

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The evolution of the conflict in Ukraine and the proposals for resolutions.

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Riassunto

Il conflitto tra gli Ucraini filo-europei dell'ovest e i filo-russi dell'est è iniziato negli anni '90 ed è rimasto non violento per 25 anni. I presidenti occidentali ed orientali vincevano le elezioni ogni 4-5 anni. Nel 2004, c'è stata la rivoluzione 'arancione' e l'Ucraina occidentale ha prevalso sull'est filo russo, e l'Ucraina è rimasta uno stato centralizzato. Nel 2014, la guerra è iniziata, e la Crimea e il Donbass hanno dichiarato un'indipendenza de facto. La Crimea fu annessa alla Russia senza violenza; la guerra è continuata (ma a un livello più basso di intensità) in Donbass. Nel febbraio 2022 la Russia ha invaso l'Ucraina dell'est, e una guerra è iniziata tra i due paesi. Sono morte 50 mila persone e vi sono stati 3 milioni e mezzo di rifugiati. Qualsiasi progetto di risoluzione è stato rifiutato da Putin e Zelensky, come uno scambio (tra Crimea russa e Donbass ucraino), un'integrazione simmetrica (il federalismo in Ucraina), una separazione mono-nazionale (di Crimea e Donbass, attraverso un referendum).

Parole chiave

Risoluzione dei conflitti, Guerra, Crisi, Ucraina, Russia.

Abstract

Conflict between pro-Europe western and pro-Russia eastern Ukrainians started at the beginning of the 1990s and remained non-violent for 25 years. Western or eastern presidents usually won elections every 4-5 years. In 2004 there was the electoral 'orange' revolution and western Ukraine prevailed over pro Russia east, as Ukraine had remained a centralized state. In 2014 war started and both Crimea and Donbass declared a de facto independence. Crimea was annexed to Russia without any violence; war continued (even if at a lower intensity) in Donbass. In February 2022, Russia invaded eastern Ukraine and a war started between the two countries. 50,000 people died and there were 3 million and a half refugees. Any conflict resolution project was rejected by Putin and Zelensky, like an exchange (between Russian Crimea and Ukrainian Donbass), symmetric integration (federalism in Ukraine), single-nation separation (of both Crimea and Donbass, though a referendum)

Keywords

Conflict resolution, War, Crisis, Ukraine, Russia.

Lo studio dei conflitti è finalizzato non solo a migliorare l'analisi descrittiva degli stessi, ma soprattutto a dare ai politici dei suggerimenti per risolvere quei conflitti. Il maggiore esperto di Conflict Resolution è il sociologo della politica norvegese Johan Galtung, un novantenne che negli anni 60 ha fondato la Peace research. Dopo, l'89 Galtung ha dato vita a un sito internet (transcend.org) in cui pubblica diversi articoli: suoi e di altri studiosi come il sottoscritto (Fossati, 2020). Nel corso di laurea in Scienze internazionali e diplomatiche di Gorizia (della università di Trieste), io tengo da diversi anni un corso in Conflict resolution and peace building, in cui sto tentando di mettere in pratica gli insegnamenti del mio 'maestro'. Nel 2008 ho pubblicato un volume (con la prefazione di Galtung) 'I conflitti armati contemporanei. Quali soluzioni', che è stato riconvertito in una banca dati on line sul sito dell'Istituto di Sociologia Internazionale di Gorizia, che aggiorno periodicamente sul sito internet dell'Isig (ISIG, n.d.).

Qual è il punto di partenza nello studio dei conflitti? Bisogna chiarire la sfasatura tra livello societario e livello istituzionale. Si deve partire dalla sociologia, ricostruendo la mappa delle identità a livello sociale. Gli individui percepiscono di avere dei sentimenti di appartenenza collettivi, che possono essere riferiti a criteri oggettivi (la lingua la religione, l'etnia cioè il fattore biologico) o solo soggettivi (con una contrapposizione tra un 'noi' e un 'loro'); si tratta di tutto ciò che è legato all'ideologia nazionalista. Nel corso della storia, si formano degli stati, cioè delle entità giuridicamente riconosciute. Il problema sta proprio nel fatto che l'effetto finale è quasi sempre quello della 'diplopia', vale a dire le entità sociologiche non corrispondono a quelle giuridiche. E di conseguenza, si sviluppano conflitti, cioè delle incompatibilità tra gli attori sociali e politici: tra le strategie delle 'nazioni' e quelle degli stati. E spesso, tali conflitti si convertono in guerre. Ciò è sempre avvenuto nella storia. Grazie al processo di democratizzazione, i paesi occidentali stanno vivendo un lungo periodo pacifico. Ma dopo il 1989, molti conflitti sono degenerati in guerre soprattutto in est Europa, Africa e Asia, dove il suddetto rapporto tra entità sociologiche e giuridiche è parecchio 'disordinato'. Esistono ancora nazioni senza stato, come i palestinesi, i curdi, i tamil dello Sri lanka. Gli stati in Europa sono prevalentemente mono-nazionali, come l'Italia o la Francia, ma vi sono anche alcuni stati pluri-nazionali (Belgio, Spagna, Svizzera). Al di fuori dell'Europa gli stati sono quasi sempre pluri-nazionali. In Asia il Giappone e la Corea sono mono-nazionali.

Come mai si sono verificati tanti conflitti armati in Europa orientale? La forte diffusione delle guerre fra diversi gruppi nazionalisti dell'est non è stata solo il risultato di una crisi da "scongelamento", dopo l'89. I governi comunisti dell'Urss, hanno intenzionalmente accentuato i conflitti, attuando molte decisioni artificiali, che si fondavano sulla violenza culturale, con frequenti operazioni di pulizia etnica (cittadini russi che colonizzavano altri stati, cittadini locali deportati in Siberia…). In altri casi, territori abitati da cittadini di una certa nazionalità (come la Crimea, la Transnistria, la regione di Prigorodny in Inguscezia, il Nagorno Karabakh…), venivano addirittura regalati ad altri stati. L'ideologia alla base di tali scelte era quella comunista, che voleva sopprimere tutte le identità nazionaliste (e religiose), che erano considerate (secondo la filosofia marxista) delle sovra-strut-

ture. L'esito finale è stato l'accentuazione del disordine politico. Il motivo per cui in occidente le frontiere sono più stabili è legato soprattutto all'alto livello di sviluppo economico. Le nostre società sono entrate in una fase post-modernità matura e noi viviamo una fase di post-nazionalismo, per cui le identità locali (basche, catalane, dell'ulster) sono considerate meno urgenti per la diffusione del benessere economico.

Va poi aggiunto dopo l'89 era stato siglato una sorta di patto tacito tra i paesi della Nato e il governo di Eltsin, che riconosceva alla Russia una sua zona di influenza geo-politica, che comprendeva gran parte dell'ex Unione sovietica, mentre i paesi baltici e l'ex Yugoslavia sarebbero stati gestiti dall'Unione Europea. Negli anni '90, la Russia non si era opposta alle guerre della Nato in Bosnia e Kossovo, e i governi europei non si erano opposti agli interventi russi in Transnistria, Georgia (Abkhazia e Ossezia del sud), Nagorno-Karabakh, Tagikistan, e alla repressione della Cecenia.

Vediamo adesso di focalizzare l'attenzione sull'Ucraina. Dal punto di vista sociologico, gli ucraini si differenziano per la lingua e per la religione. I cittadini che parlano ucraino rappresentano circa il 70% della popolazione e i russofoni sono circa il 30%, ma ci sono molti matrimoni misti. Poi, gli abitanti della zona orientale seguono in gran parte la religione ortodossa sotto il patriarcato di Mosca, mentre la maggioranza degli ucraini della zona occidentale riconoscono il patriarcato di Kiev. In sintesi, i sentimenti di identità in Ucraina hanno incarnato soprattutto un criterio soggettivo, che ha portato a consolidare due schieramenti politici diversi fra cittadini dell'est (filo russi) e dell'ovest (filo europei). Non a caso, nelle elezioni politiche i candidati dell'est e dell'ovest hanno ricevuto delle preferenze che oscillavano quasi sempre attorno al 50%. In Crimea, invece, la maggioranza della popolazione è russa (80%), con una minoranza di ucraini (10%) e di tartari (10%). In seguito alla collaborazione dei tartari con la Germania nazista, Kruscev regalò artificialmente la **Crimea** all'Ucraina nel '54. Tra il '92 e il '94 si sono mobilitati in Crimea gruppi politici russi nazionalisti, e l'Ucraina ha subito delle pressioni dalla Russia affinché concedesse alla Crimea lo statuto dell'autonomia amministrativa (integrazione asimmetrica). In cambio l'Ucraina ha ceduto in affitto per vent'anni alla Russia il porto di Sebastopoli; la flotta russa è servita quindi come strumento di coercizione nei confronti del governo ucraino.

Nell'agosto 1991, era stata dichiarata l'indipendenza dell'Ucraina, che però non ha portato a un conflitto con la Russia, perché l'Urss era una confederazione e prevedeva la possibilità delle secessioni. Per qualche anno governava un presidente (che era di solito più democratico) filo europeo, e poi uno (che era quasi sempre più autoritario) filo russo. Le prime elezioni presidenziali si erano tenute nel dicembre 1991 e c'era stata la vittoria di Kravchuk, votato soprattutto dagli elettori dell'Ucraina occidentale. Nel 1994, Kravchuck fu sconfitto da Kuchma, esponente dell'Ucraina orientale. Nelle elezioni dell'autunno 2004, il successore di Kuchma, Yanukovych, risultò vincitore dopo il secondo turno del 22 novembre. Ciò dette origini alle proteste popolari, note come "rivoluzione arancione", con la forte mobilitazione della popolazione occidentale del paese, che sosteneva che le elezioni erano state viziate da brogli. Il 3 dicembre la corte suprema stabilì che bisognava tornare a votare. Il 26 dicembre, il candidato occidentale Yuschenko vinse con il 52% dei voti. Il 24 gennaio la Tymoshenko fu nominata primo ministro, ma l'8 settembre fu costretta alle dimissioni, e formò un suo partito, diverso dalla "Nostra Ucraina" di Yushenko, e venne sostituita da Yehanurov. Nel marzo 2006, si tennero le elezioni parlamentari (con il voto proporzionale), che furono vinte dalla coalizione della zona orientale, grazie al sostegno del Partito socialista, che nel 2004 aveva appoggiato Yuschenko. Yanukovych fu nominato primo ministro; il *leader* dei socialisti divenne presidente del parlamento. Nella primavera 2007, Yushenko sciolse il parlamento e nuove elezioni furono organizzate in maggio. Il partito delle regioni orientali di Yanukovych ha avuto il 34% dei voti, quello della Tymoshenko il 30%, la nuova Ucraina di Yuschenko il 14%, i neo-comunisti il 5%. A dicembre si è formato il governo di coalizione formato dai due partiti occidentali, con la Tymoshenko primo ministro. Nel settembre del 2008 c'è stato un conflitto tra Yuschenko e la Tymoshenko, che aveva fatto approvare delle leggi che limitavano i poteri presidenziali. Il governo è stato sciolto e si è aperta una crisi terminata nel dicembre. Nel febbraio 2010 il candidato dell'est Yanukovych ha vinto le elezioni presidenziali e ha nominato Azarov (esponente del suo partito) primo ministro. Nell'estate del 2011 la Tymoshenko è stata arrestata, condannata per corruzione e incarcerata; nel 2014 è stata liberata.

Sin dai primi anni 90 c'era stato un conflitto (di tipo politico, quindi senza episodi di violenza) in **Ucraina** tra un ovest filo occidentale e un est filo russo. La zona ovest più vasta è abitata da cittadini che parlano ucraino, quella ad est più ridotta è abitata da cittadini che parlano russo, e poi ci sono altre zone centrali dove vi sono cittadini che parlano tutte e due le lingue, con molte famiglie miste. L'Ucraina era uno dei pochi conflitti dell'est che non era degenerato in guerra. In quell'epoca si sperava che la democrazia potesse rappresentare una forma di trascendenza di quel conflitto. Secondo Galtung, nella trascendenza gli obiettivi degli attori vengono tutti soddisfatti. Ma era abbastanza evidente che le istituzioni democratiche coesistevano faticosamente con il conflitto tra la zona ovest e quella est del paese.

Nel novembre 2013, sono iniziate delle proteste popolari a Kiev e nella zona occidentale dell'Ucraina, al fine di richiedere la firma dell'accordo di associazione con l'UE e le dimissioni del presidente (orientale) Yanukovych. In seguito alle rivolte, Yanukovich fuggì da Kiev il 21 febbraio 2014 e venne nominato l'occidentale Turchynov come presidente ad interim. Come conseguenza di tali eventi, si sono sviluppate altre rivolte nelle regioni a maggioranza russa, nel sud-est dell'Ucraina. Nelle regioni del Donbass (Donetsk e Luhansk) è iniziata una guerra nel marzo, e la Russia è intervenuta a sostegno dei ribelli. Il 23 febbraio 2014 sono iniziate le proteste dei russi anche in Crimea. Il 16 marzo è stato indetto un referendum, boicottato dalla popolazione tartara, che ha portato alla proclamazione dell'annessione alla Russia. Il 18 un trattato bilaterale ha confermato tale esito, con il congelamento del conflitto tra Russia e Ucraina e la separazione *de facto* della **Crimea**, ma senza il riconoscimento del diritto internazionale, e il dominio dei russi su ucraini e tartari nel conflitto interno. L'UE e l'Onu hanno condannato tali episodi. La presenza militare russa in Crimea, prima limitata alla regione di Sebastopoli, è aumentata dopo il 2014. Tremila tartari sono migrati in Ucraina dopo l'annessione russa. Nel 2021, la Crimea russa è considerata dalla Freedom House come non libera (con una pagella di 7 su 100).

In parallelo, a Donetsk si sono formate delle milizie filo-russe (Donbass people's militia) e i combattimenti si sono estesi anche alla regione di Luhansk in aprile. L'11 maggio è stato organizzato un referendum a Donetsk che ha votato (quasi all'unanimità) per l'indipendenza del Donbass. Il 22 è stata proclamata la confederazione della Novorossiya (Donetsk e Luhansk insieme). Nell'a-

prile le proteste si erano allargate alla regione di Kharkiv Oblast, e il 7 aprile era stata proclamata l'indipendenza anche di quella regione; poi, si sono mobilitati pure i filo-occidentali, e le truppe ucraine hanno assunto il controllo militare del Kharkiv Oblast. Nel marzo, le proteste si sono estese anche alla regione di Odessa, e ai primi di maggio si sono verificati degli scontri armati con circa 40 morti. Nel settembre è stato siglato il protocollo di Minsk, tra Ucraina, Russia e ribelli dell'est, per consolidare la tregua e favorire la pace (dominio dei russi sugli ucraini nel conflitto del Donbass). Gli scontri armati sono ripresi e nel febbraio 2015 è stata siglata la tregua Minsk II. Subito dopo, i ribelli hanno conquistato la città di Debaltseve; i combattimenti sono proseguiti, nonostante i tentativi di siglare delle tregue. Dal 2016 in poi, i separatisti non hanno conquistato nuovi territori (separazione *de facto* di gran parte del **Donbass** e congelamento del conflitto tra Russia e Ucraina). Nell'aprile 2019 l'occidentale Zelensky (un ex presentatore televisivo) è stato eletto presidente dell'Ucraina. Nell'ottobre del 2019 vi è stata un tentativo (fallito) di mediazione del presidente dell'Osce Steinmeier; nonostante molte tregue, i combattimenti sono continuati. Nel 2021, i ribelli controllavano circa la metà del territorio del Donetsk e del Luhansk: soprattutto la zona a sud-est, più vicina alla Russia.

La guerra in Ucraina dal 2014 al 2021 ha provocato circa 10000 morti, che erano poi calati a circa un centinaio l'anno. Nel 2021, il Donbass ha ricevuto una pagella di 4 su 100 dalla Freedom House.

Figura 1. Regioni separatiste nell'Ucraina dell'est (2014)

Fonte: Wikipedia contributors, n.d.

Dalla primavera del 2021, la Russia ha stanziato numerose truppe alle frontiere con l'Ucraina, dopo la richiesta di Zelensky di entrare nella Nato. Il 24 febbraio del 2022, l'esercito della Russia ha invaso l'Ucraina, attaccando Kiev, e le zone di confine (con combattimenti in città come Kharkiv e Mariupol) con la Russia: non solo in Donbass. La Russia ha lanciato attacchi anche verso Odessa, ma sinora sono falliti. È iniziata una guerra tra i due paesi. Zelensky ha chiesto anche l'adesione all'Unione Europa. Nel mese di marzo il governo di Kiev ha accettato l'idea che l'Ucraina possa diventare neutrale, ma ha negato la possibilità di fare concessioni territoriali (Donbass e Crimea) alla Russia. I governi occidentali (gli Stati uniti e quelli dell'Unione Europea) hanno attuato sanzioni economiche contro la Russia e hanno venduto armi a Zelensky. Nel giugno del 2022 i morti erano arrivati a circa 50 mila, e i rifugiati a 3 milioni e mezzo.

Figura 2. Conquiste territoriali della Russia (9 giugno 2022)

Fonte: GlobalSecurity.org, n.d.

La risoluzione del conflitto in Crimea, Ucraina e Transinistria

Negli fase precedente all'inizio della guerra nel 2014, la risoluzione più efficace del conflitto sembrava essere il federalismo (progetto di integrazione simmetrica). Il federalismo era stato proposto dalla Russia, ma era stato rifiutato dall'Ucraina, dai governi

europei e dagli Usa. Al governo centrale di Kiev doveva restare molto poco: la politica economica e la moneta comune. L'Ucraina appariva un mosaico complesso, e il federalismo sembrava l'unica istituzione capace di modulare in modo flessibile il rapporto di poteri fra centro e periferia. Così, l'Ucraina sarebbe forse restata unita, democratica e in pace. Il federalismo potrebbe però essere applicato unilateralmente dall'Ucraina nel 2022.

Dopo il 2014, e le secessioni *de facto* di Crimea e Donbass, sembrava che il conflitto potesse essere risolto da uno scambio. Il governo ucraino avrebbe dovuto rinunciare alla Crimea, che era abitata perlopiù da russi ed era stata russa per secoli, in cambio della rinuncia di Putin al Donbass ucraino. Ma la Russia avrebbe potuto accettare tale scambio solo se in Ucraina si fosse attuato un federalismo profondo, con un Donbass quasi indipendente.

Il corollario di tale soluzione (lo scambio insieme al federalismo) era che l'Ucraina stesse fuori sia dall'Unione Europea che dalla Nato. Il suddetto patto tacito tra governi europei e Russia di Eltsin era stato confermato con Putin, come quando l'UE non si era opposta all'intervento russo in Ossezia del sud nel 2008, e la Nato non aveva obiettato alle secessioni *de facto* della Crimea e del Donbass nel 2014.

Ma dal 2014 al 2022 sono passati otto anni e i presidenti occidentali dell'Ucraina non hanno fatto niente di simile. E né gli Usa, né i governi europei hanno fatto pressioni sull'Ucraina per tentare di risolvere il conflitto con i filo russi. Recentemente, il nuovo presidente Zelensky ha addirittura chiesto l'ingresso dell'Ucraina della Nato, e anche nell'UE. E (di nuovo) nessun leader occidentale ha chiaramente invitato il presidente ucraino a mettere da parte simili progetti, che hanno avuto l'effetto di accentuare il conflitto con la Russia di Putin, sempre più autoritaria e repressiva.

Va poi aggiunto che gli Usa e i governi europei stanno vivendo una profonda crisi collettiva, in cui sono state indebolite sia la *real-politik* della guerra fredda (il conservatorismo alla Kissinger), che il progetto liberale dell'ordine mondiale degli anni '90. Le diplomazie occidentali attuali sono diventate 'post-moderne', e non sembrano più spinte né dalla logica degli interessi, né da quella dai valori. Se Biden fosse stato conservatore, avrebbe imposto a Zelensky di rinunciare alla Nato; se fosse stato liberale, avrebbe promosso il federalismo in Ucraina; il liberalismo 'a parole' rivela solo il sentimento di frustrazione di una ex grande potenza,

che alimenta il conflitto senza poterlo risolvere. In sintesi, prevale l'incertezza in tutti i governi occidentali, nell'ambito di un inconcludente '*wait and see*', e si è consolidata una riluttanza a ricorrere alla violenza, diventata tabù. Lo snodo cruciale è stato l'abbandono dell'Afghanistan da parte degli Usa nell'agosto del 2021, sconfessando gli sforzi precedenti di promuovere l'ordine mondiale (liberale) e i tentativi di portare avanti la *real-politik* (conservatrice), estromettendo dal potere gruppi fondamentalisti radicali come i Talebani, che rappresentano una forte minaccia alla sicurezza in Medio oriente. Probabilmente, è stato soprattutto in seguito a tale decisione di Biden, che Putin ha maturato il progetto (attuato con una brutalità imprevista) di invadere l'Ucraina.

Ma l'intervento russo sta azzerando tutte le possibilità ipotizzate prima per la soluzione del conflitto, come il federalismo e lo scambio. A questo punto, sembrano più probabili altri scenari più asimmetrici di risoluzione del conflitto. Putin sta tentando di occupare la metà orientale dell'Ucraina, a est del fiume Don, che è abitata soprattutto da cittadini ucraini filo russi. In parallelo, le forze armate russe stanno attuando una pulizia etnica ai danni degli ucraini filo occidentali; sembra che la Russia voglia conquistare anche il sud dell'Ucraina per ricongiungersi con la Transnistria (*de iure* moldava, ma *de facto* russa dai primi anni '90); le truppe di Putin dovrebbero però conquistare Odessa. La divisione dell'Ucraina in due stati porrebbe le premesse per una risoluzione del conflitto fondata su forme differenziate di compromesso, e resterebbe da definire il collocamento esatto del confine con l'Ucraina occidentale. In alternativa, Putin potrebbe addirittura tentare di instaurare un rapporto di dominio contro l'Ucraina, facendo cadere Zelensky e riportando al potere a Kiev un politico filo russo, come Yanukovich (presidente prima del 2014), o qualcun altro: una specie di Lukashenko ucraino. Una sconfitta totale russa, con il dominio dell'Ucraina, sembra meno probabile.

Gli esiti del conflitto sono incerti; le scienze umane (come la politologia) non sono capaci di prevedere il futuro. I vari leader hanno rilasciato dichiarazioni ultra-nazionaliste che ipotizzano improbabili vittorie. Sembra una guerra molto simile a quella tra Iran e Iraq degli anni 80 che finì con un nulla di fatto e produsse solo mezzo milioni di morti. Poi, sono sempre possibili colpi di stato (sovversione), e qualcuno potrebbe far cadere Zelensky, che non è un politico di carriera e non sembra capace di gestire questo

conflitto, o Putin, che però ha consolidato un regime personalistico che appare saldo (fino a prova contraria). La Russia avrà sicuramente una crisi economica profonda, come risultato delle sanzioni occidentali. Putin ha messo al primo posto la difesa dei suoi alleati in Ucraina, anteponendo la tutela dei valori al perseguimento degli interessi economici della Russia, che potevano essere meglio garantiti dalla pace. Gli effetti delle sanzioni saranno molto più negativi di eventuali (e non assicurati) effetti positivi del controllo di improbabili (proprio perché sono scarse) risorse 'strategiche' del Donbass o dell'Ucraina, che è uno dei paesi più poveri dell'est Europa.

E non serve a molto tentare di interpretare la diplomazia di Putin come neo-zarista o neo-comunista. La guerra attuale mostra che Putin si sta comportando in modo simile a ciò che stava facendo Milosevic in Croazia, Bosnia e Kossovo negli anni '90. Milosevic rivendicò il principio che ovunque ci fosse stato un serbo, quello sarebbe dovuto diventare territorio della Serbia grazie alla guerra e alla pulizia etnica. Ora Putin sta attaccando l'Ucraina, difendendo russi e filo russi nello stesso modo violento e con la stessa ideologia nazionalista radicale di Milosevic.

Nelle prossime settimane, riusciremo forse a capire se in Ucraina Putin applicherà una diplomazia tradizionalista o moderna. Nel primo caso, il ricorso alla violenza rappresenterebbe l'unica opzione, come si faceva nel passato 'remoto' (cioè prima del 1945) in cui le diplomazie erano elaborate nel contesto di società tradizionali, quando la guerra era l'unico strumento (o quasi) di risoluzione dei conflitti. Nel secondo caso, la modernizzazione sociale avrebbe spinto i governi a usare la guerra in parallelo alla diplomazia, alternando razionalmente i due strumenti, e sapendo capire quando usare l'uno o l'altro. Nel 2020 Putin ed Erdogan hanno applicato i principi razionali di una diplomazia 'moderna' al conflitto tra armeni ed azeri, e alla fine hanno siglato un compromesso sul Nagorno-Karabakh.

Occorre domandarsi che cosa possono fare i governi occidentali. Dichiarare la guerra a Putin sarebbe una scelta suicida, che porterebbe a una terza guerra mondiale con il probabile uso delle armi nucleari. Alcuni leader occidentali (come Biden e Boris Johnson) sembrano soddisfatti del fatto che la guerra continui, sperando che possa portare alla caduta di Putin. Alcuni governi della Nato stanno programmando di inviare armi all'Ucraina di

Zelensky. Si sa che l'Ucraina è stata aggredita, ma sono in pochi a capire che anche Zelensky è un nazionalista radicale e che i politici occidentali del paese avevano realizzato un dominio politico contro la zona orientale filo russa. Armare Zelensky sembra una scelta inadeguata. I governi occidentali dovrebbero credere maggiormente nella forza dei propri valori e delle proprie istituzioni, come la democrazia e il federalismo. Essi dovrebbero promuovere cioè un referendum sull'auto-determinazione nazionale nelle zone ucraine contese con la Russia. Zelensky e Putin dovrebbero solo firmare una tregua, favorendo il rientro dei rifugiati scappati dopo l'attacco russo del 2022. Poi, sarebbe l'Onu ad organizzare un referendum, e i cittadini ucraini dovrebbero esprimere la loro preferenza in una scheda, in cui essi potranno scegliere tra la sovranità di Mosca o di Kiev. Il referendum, in cui '*people have the power*', è l'unico strumento che può rendere meno probabile il ricorso ad una guerra in futuro; andrebbe evitata una Dayton 2, in cui i governi decidono al posto dei cittadini. L'opzione referendaria conviene a Zelensky e a Putin. Il primo mostrerebbe di essere democratico nei fatti e non solo a parole, contando sul fatto che forse anche i filo russi dopo questa guerra potrebbero non desiderare più stare sotto il 'giogo' di Mosca. Putin potrebbe ottenere gran parte dei suoi obiettivi in modo meno costoso, mostrando al mondo che molti cittadini ucraini preferiscono la sovranità di Mosca; magari molti ucraini non torneranno nelle zone controllate dai russi. Inoltre le sanzioni economiche cadrebbero automaticamente se gli stati (Russia inclusa) aderissero all'iniziativa dell'Onu. Tutti i governi dovrebbero impegnarsi a rispettare gli esiti della consultazione, con alcuni territori che chiederanno la secessione e l'annessione alla Russia (separazione mono-nazionale). Magari solo il Donbass (o una parte o qualche altro territorio limitrofo) chiederà l'unificazione con la Russia, che lo controlla dal 2014. Ma al contrario del referendum del 2014, stavolta la consultazione popolare sarebbe organizzata dall'Onu, e le secessioni sarebbero legittimate a livello internazionale. Se la Russia rifiutasse il referendum, si porrebbero le premesse per indirizzare gli aiuti militari degli altri paesi all'Ucraina. Si potrebbero realizzare scambi di popolazione come fecero Grecia e Turchia o India e Pakistan. L'esito della consultazione popolare sarà un trattato di pace in cui la Russia si ritiri dai territori occupati e si impegni a riconoscere quel territorio ucraino, i cui cittadini avranno scelto

di restare sotto l'autorità di Kiev. Lo stesso dovrà fare l'Ucraina verso chi sceglie Mosca, e il governo di Kiev dovrà applicare il federalismo in tutto il paese, impegnandosi a non aderire alla Nato. La Crimea potrà tornare alla Russia anche senza referendum, dato che è quasi sempre stata russa in passato. La zona orientale che sceglierà il governo di Mosca aderirà poi alla federazione russa.

E un referendum potrebbe essere organizzato anche in Transnistria. In tal caso, i cittadini di quel territorio dovrebbero scegliere fra tre opzioni: sovranità della Moldavia, dell'Ucraina o della Russia. Il governo della Moldavia ha tutto da guadagnare accettando il referendum, perché dovrebbe capire che l'alternativa è che la Russia prima o poi potrebbe occupare tale territorio e non è difficile capire che i moldavi in tal caso potrebbero fare una brutta fine. In questo referendum, l'esito più probabile potrebbe essere la scelta per la sovranità dell'Ucraina, che dovrebbe garantire una forte autonomia ai cittadini moldavi e a quelli russi nell'ambito del federalismo. Così, l'Ucraina potrebbe essere compensata con la Transnistria, in caso di perdita del Donbass e di qualche altro territorio ad est (scambio).

Mettendo insieme tali strategie si potrebbero realizzare la secessione di Crimea, Donbass, Transnistria, e applicare il federalismo in Ucraina. I governi dell'Unione europea, Draghi, gli Usa, Israele dovrebbero spingere Zelensky ad accettare il referendum e a fare concessioni territoriali. Turchia e Cina dovrebbero convincere Putin a fermare la guerra e a dare voce a quei cittadini che sta difendendo con le armi. I movimenti per la pace in occidente potrebbero spingere in tale direzione, perché organizzare mobilitazioni per la 'pace' rappresenta solo un'iniziativa fine a se stessa.

Nel mio volume sui conflitti, sin dal 2008, io avevo auspicato che l'Unione Europea organizzasse una conferenza (multilateralizzazione), una sorta di Helsinki II, in cui si tentasse di trovare una soluzione omogenea ai conflitti causati dalle decisioni artificiali dei governi comunisti sovietici durante la guerra fredda. La soluzione auspicabile è sempre sembrata la restituzione dei territori ai 'vecchi (e legittimi) proprietari', e così la Transnistria potrebbe tornare all'Ucraina, la Crimea alla Russia, il Nagorno-Karabakh all'Armenia… Tale procedura potrebbe essere attivata anche in un secondo momento, dopo cioè l'inizio dei negoziati per risolvere l'attuale conflitto ucraino.

La soluzione più equa del conflitto in Ucraina sembra quella liberale del referendum. Ma per favorire una risoluzione duratura del conflitto, bisogna che si verifichino alcuni mutamenti di tipo cognitivo nei paesi occidentali: sia nei politici di destra che di sinistra. Da un lato, i promotori dei valori della destra conservatrice occidentale dovrebbero abbandonare la 'sindrome di Westphalia', smettendo di considerare intoccabili le frontiere dell'est Europa, che sono quasi tutte fasulle, perché risultato degli errori dei governi comunisti prima dell'89. I conservatori temono che se venisse 'spacchettato' un paese, immediatamente lo vorrebbero fare mille altre minoranze in tutto l'est Europa. Dall'altro, la sinistra europea dovrebbe mettere da parte la 'sindrome del Re Salomone', e cioè il conformismo dei paladini del *politicaly correct*' collegato al dogma degli stati pluri/nazionali e l'avversione multi-culturalista ai referendum e agli stati mono-nazionali, indesiderabili perché basati su un 'nuovo apartheid'. Questa ossessione per gli stati pluri-nazionali si è consolidata dopo l'accordo di Dayton del 1995, che aveva fermato la violenza, senza però risolvere definitivamente quel conflitto. Adesso, l'organizzazione di un referendum 'liberale' anche in Bosnia non rappresenterebbe la fine del mondo.

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Reseñas y Recensiones

La democracia a prueba: Los años que votamos en pandemia en las Américas

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Reseña de: La democracia a prueba: los años que votamos en pandemia en las Américas, compilado por Cintia Pinillos, Esteban Iglesias, Juan Bautista Lucca y Osvaldo Iazzetta

Esta obra compilada por Cintia Pinillos, Esteban Iglesias, Juan Bautista Lucca y Osvaldo Iazzetta (Investigadores/a de FCPolit UNR y miembros del Centro de Estudios Comparados -CEC- UNR) y editada por CLACSO[1] y UNR Editora, cuenta con autores y autoras que provienen de diferentes centros académicos de Argentina, Brasil, Bolivia, Chile, EE.UU, España, México, Paraguay y Uruguay. Algunas de estas producciones son la síntesis de presentaciones realizadas en el ciclo de conferencias virtuales "Elecciones en Pandemia" organizado por el CEC en el segundo semestre de 2020.

El libro está compuesto de 16 capítulos que recorren de forma reflexiva y analítica diversos actos eleccionarios realizados en América Latina y EE.UU. durante el 2020 y el 2021. Enmarcados en los estudios sobre las democracias buscan agudizar la mirada sobre el modo en que la pandemia afectó el ritmo y la dinámica de las mismas y, en particular, de una de sus instituciones y rutinas decisivas: las elecciones (Iazzetta, 2022:12).

Nos acerca a una problematización sobre los principales componentes en torno a las definiciones conceptuales de la democracia: por un lado, las posturas que ponderan lo popular y, por el otro, las que dan centralidad a lo constitucional. La obra propone ir más allá de estas miradas excluyentes y pensar en un constante equilibrio entre ambas, donde el proceso electoral es un pilar decisivo para la libre expresión de la ciudadanía, pero no la única forma posible.

[1] Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales.

Si bien, como menciona Iazzetta (2022), el foco de cada una de estas propuestas está puesto en el impacto de la COVID-19 en éstos procesos a partir de problematizar "¿qué es lo singular que la pandemia pudo haber añadido a los procesos electorales?" (Iazzetta, 2022:15); las mismas no desconocen el incremento del malestar social de las últimas décadas para con la democracia, la desconfianza en sus instituciones representativas y la crisis de representación política (Alcántara Sáez, 2022) que derrama sobre "la utilidad" del acto eleccionario y la existencia de factores preexistentes que determinan el comportamiento electoral.

Estas complejidades aparecen a lo largo de la obra de forma transversal. Así como también las miradas transicionales en las democracias de América Latina para entender el marco de conflictos, rupturas y continuidades desde el largo plazo.

La lectura se convierte, así, en un encuentro dialógico y de contrapuntos. La estructura del libro está organizada de forma tal que sumerge al lector en un constante debate, en la búsqueda de convergencias, tensiones o disidencias entre las experiencias de cada país.

Mayorga (2022) indaga sobre los riesgos de una posible crisis de representación política del sistema democrático boliviano ante el panorama previo a los comicios. Sin embargo, éstos pusieron de manifiesto, para el autor, una serie de mutaciones o metamorfosis en el lazo representativo que provocó una reconfiguración, segmentación, del espacio político producto de las transformaciones dentro del campo nacional popular y en el oligárquico liberal; evidenciando un cambio en los vínculos entre oficialismo y oposición que pasan de una relación bipolar a una lógica multipolar. En este caso, las elecciones resultaron ser un indicador de la fortaleza del sistema aún con sus transformaciones. Iglesias y Argento (2022), desde una mirada sociopolítica se preguntan acerca de cómo se explica la desconexión entre el escaso apoyo social en los días de las protestas y el triunfo electoral del MAS un año después. En su respuesta encuentran puntos en común con Mayorga en cuanto a la segmentación de los campos en el espacio político. Sin embargo, agregan en línea a su pregunta de investigación que las debilidades de la oposición, sumado, a las transformaciones sociopolíticas desde el aparato del Estado y la eficacia organizativa de las estructuras sociales obreras e indígenas-campesinas que apoyan al MAS explican las razones de la holgada victoria de éste en las elecciones generales del 2020.

Brasil fue escenario de elecciones municipales en el 2020. Las dos investigaciones que abordan el caso brasilero coinciden que la reticencia a combatir la pandemia, la inexistencia de barreras sanitarias efectivas y la construcción de relatos en torno a ésta fueron factores relevantes en las definiciones locales. Ahora bien, Amaral y Catelano (2022) suman a este contexto la incorporación de nuevas reglas institucionales -el fin de las coaliciones interpartidistas para las elecciones proporcionales y la nueva determinación sobre la distribución de recursos- como factores que alteraron el cálculo de las élites políticas e incidieron en el comportamiento electoral. Doval y Ordoñez (2022), apuntan a la importancia de las elecciones municipales como elemento de equilibrio político en un marco en el cual Bolsonaro es una fuente de desequilibrio político, así como también, identifican a la pandemia como aceleradora de procesos que mostraron las debilidades intrínsecas del bolsonarismo. Ambas propuestas, coinciden en que las fuerzas de derecha tradicionales son las victoriosas en las elecciones municipales aunque esto no redunde en una victoria para el oficialismo nacional. Quienes salieron fortalecidos del proceso electoral fueron las gestiones locales que han sabido gestionar de manera responsable la pandemia y la coalición -conformación de acuerdo políticos y alianzas electorales- como propuesta de superación de la crisis política pre-pandemia.

Heiss (2022) y Pinillos (2022), cada una en sus propuestas, articulan miradas acerca del proceso político chileno a partir del estallido social del 2019. En este caso ambas propuestas asumen una mirada de largo plazo, no se puede comprender este proceso sin entender la historia contemporánea del país desde 1990 hasta el momento en el que escriben. Sin embargo, Pinillos, retoma de forma más protagónica los aportes de la teórica de las transiciones y muestra su vigencia para abordar la conflictividad social y la baja participación electoral como indicadores de la débil confianza ciudadana en las elecciones y el sistema tradicional de partidos canalizando su descontento en las calles a partir de la participación en movimientos sociales diversos. Para la autora, el proceso electoral constitucional iniciado en el plebiscito de octubre del 2020 y sus resultados clausuró la posibilidad de que la clase política tradicional recurriera a formas del pasado para definir el proceso. En este punto, el texto de Heiss aporta elementos para profundizar el escenario ya que realiza un análisis detallado de las

elecciones y plebiscitos, la incorporación de los pueblos originarios, las mujeres y la participación de ciudadanos por fuera de los partidos tradicionales. También resalta, la resolución pragmática y la incorporación de innovaciones en los comicios para poder resolver el tenso debate entre el respeto a los derechos políticos y el cuidado a la salud.

De la Torre (2022) propone en su artículo analizar a partir de los lentes del concepto de populismo la victoria de Trump en Estados Unidos y su forma de gobernar. A partir de ello señala que a diferencia de los estudios que redujeron al populismo a la irracionalidad de sus seguidores en la adoración al líder carismático y los intercambios instrumentales entre ellos es importante analizar los mecanismos que construyen esa vinculación. Es así que combinará el estudio de las emociones e interacciones estratégicas, los diferentes nexos en las organizaciones, el carisma y el uso novedoso de los medios de comunicación. En esta línea la pandemia generó elementos, símbolos, que definieron identidades políticas y contribuyeron a la polarización. Sin embargo, las elecciones a primera fase no fueron una fuente única de legitimidad y la representación del pueblo en su figura. En diálogo, Souroujon y Lucca (2022), se preguntan por qué, a pesar de ser derrotado por Joe Biden en 2020 para las presidenciales, Trump no solo recibió más votos que en 2016, sino que también logró articular y dotar de identidad a una "mayoría ignorada" americana. Los autores expresan que, más allá de la derrota electoral de Trump en 2020, la victoria es del trumpismo como movimiento condensado en su figura; ya que deja a una sociedad que se ha volcado abiertamente hacia una radicalidad de derecha predispuesta a aceptar soluciones iliberales o autoritarias. El COVID-19 influyó de manera negativa en la figura presidencial y a la vez, a diferencia de otros procesos electorales descriptos en este libro, arrojó un alto grado de participación ciudadana en los comicios.

En el caso mexicano, Gilas y Hernández Cruz (2022), se preguntan por los cambios en las dinámicas de participación y de organización electoral que derivaron de las alteraciones por la pandemia, fundamentalmente en las adecuaciones de los procedimientos de votación y las estrategias de campaña. Las autoras no evidencian grandes modificaciones en el proceso. Remarcan que la participación ciudadana no fue afectada y que sus números fueron similares a los pre-pandémicos y, también, resaltan que los

discursos y programas políticos partidarios continuaron ajustados a temáticas o agendas anteriores a la crisis. Falomir (2022), desde la perspectiva de los partidos políticos, toma como elementos el proceso electoral subnacional y la crisis sanitaria para preguntarse acerca del desempeño de la organización política MORENA más allá del liderazgo de AMLO[2]. Según las encuestas, el año pandémico redujo la aprobación del presidente un 16%, sin embargo, revela que MORENA encabeza rotundamente las preferencias en la campaña. Tendencia que el texto anterior confirma con el análisis de los resultados electorales.

[2] Andrés Manuel López Obrador

En el caso de Paraguay la COVID-19, según Pérez Talia (2022), provoca una doble crisis. Por un lado, la gestión de la pandemia deja al descubierto la desinversión en el sistema de salud paraguayo. El autor marca que esto se evidenció de manera tardía en relación a otros países latinoamericanos producto de las fuertes restricciones iniciales. Sin embargo, las consecuencias de esta mala gestión fueron muy profundas tanto para la figura del Presidente a partir de la ejecución de un juicio político y de las múltiples manifestaciones ciudadanas que ponen en duda la hegemonía del Partido Colorado. En este marco, la crisis política se sintetizó en la definición de posponer un año las elecciones municipales. Según el autor, los fundamentos radican en el cuidado de la salud pero también sobrevoló el argumento de pasar la tormenta para cambiar el impacto de este contexto sobre el partido gobernante. La investigación de Gómez Romero (2022) se pregunta acerca de cómo se desarrolla el contexto que dio pie a la reforma electoral y las principales líneas argumentativas en torno a la postergación de las elecciones municipales, que buscaron salvaguardar la salud pública y la introducción de innovaciones en el sistema electoral paraguayo. Evalúa como oportuna y acertada la decisión ya que logró cumplir con el objetivo de poner en marcha el uso de tecnología en los procesos de votación, aunque remarca que el proceso dejó algunos desafíos en torno a la generación de mayor confianza en el mecanismo de votación.

En el caso uruguayo, Cardarello (2022), observa la fortaleza o debilidad de las elecciones departamentales y municipales de septiembre de 2020, tras el triunfo de la oposición en el balotaje de 2019, como consecuencia de la alternancia. A su vez, suma la pregunta sobre el impacto de la pandemia en ellas a partir de las distorsiones provocadas en el calendario y las actividades de cam-

paña. Como resultado de una exhaustiva descripción del proceso, el autor, aporta que la pandemia en el caso uruguayo no afectó al partido que gobierna el Estado Nacional y menciona elementos para leer el claro retroceso de la izquierda en cuanto a sus apoyos en el interior, tanto en lo nacional como en lo subnacional. Los aportes de Acosta y Lara y Luján (2022) complementan el análisis precedente. Se preguntan acerca del impacto de la pandemia de COVID-19 sobre los niveles de participación electoral en aquellas elecciones. En base a la formulación de tres hipótesis: la pandemia redujo la participación, afectó a los departamentos donde había mayor circulación de la enfermedad y que donde hay mayor envejecimiento de la población los números se vieron más afectados. Concluye que, pese a que el nivel general de participación no tuvo grandes cambios en cuanto a procesos anteriores, sí encuentra una diferencia en torno a la participación por departamentos con mayor número de contagios y aquellos que tenían una población mayor a 60 años.

Esta compilación nos proporciona elementos para abordar una lectura crítica de los procesos políticos latinoamericanos y en EE.UU. Además, se convierte en un aporte académico sobre las discusiones disciplinares en la Ciencia Política sobre los sistemas democráticos.

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A marchas forzadas

Reseña de: A marchas forzadas, editado por Juan Russo

A marchas forzadas, libro compilado por el politólogo Juan Russo (Departamento de Gestión Pública y Desarrollo, Universidad de Guanajuato) tiene por objetivo dar cuenta de las diferentes maneras en que la crisis sanitaria producida por la pandemia del COVID-19 afectaron tanto política como socialmente los países latinoamericanos. A diferencia de otros textos inspirados en el fatídico momento que nos ha tocado vivir en nuestro planeta, como es el caso del libro desafortunadamente llamado *Sopa de Wuhan* donde escriben numerosos filósofos y teóricos políticos reconocidos, este texto busca mostrar las formas en que los sistemas políticos han sufrido (y seguirán sufriendo, como indica el compilador durante la introducción) cambios más o menos profundos en sus estructuras. Esto se logra a partir principalmente de la exploración de estudios de caso de los países que componen la región, y de sectores particulares de la población que han sufrido las consecuencias de manera también particular. De igual manera, el libro busca ofrecer una explicación a los desafíos que esto implica para las democracias más o menos fortalecidas en el continente, producto de la afectación puesta sobre las libertades y el aumento de las desigualdades.

Para lograr este objetivo, en la introducción del libro Juan Russo propone cuatro mecanismos sociales de cambio que, sin ser necesariamente exhaustivos ni excluyentes, ofrecen un marco general donde podrían insertarse cada uno de los casos que se presentan a lo largo de las páginas: la destrucción creadora, la catálisis, la erosión, y la resiliencia-adaptación. Muy someramente

explicado, la destrucción creadora refiere a un proceso que revoluciona una estructura de manera incesante al punto de destruir ininterrumpidamente lo viejo para crear elementos nuevos; la catálisis, refiere a un proceso de aceleración-retardo de procesos políticos ya en curso (uno de los mecanismos predominantes durante la pandemia); la erosión, hace referencia a un deterioro en las bases del orden político; y, finalmente, la resiliencia-adaptación, que opera como mecanismo de aprendizaje respecto de crisis anteriores. Este será el marco por el que transitarán la mayoría de los capítulos, que servirán para ubicar al lector o lectora dentro de un paraguas teórico que dará sustento a los análisis hechos en los textos.

De manera a mi juicio provocativa, el libro inicia con un ensayo titulado *Los mecanismos sociales de la pandemia y sus consecuencias*, escrito por Leonardo Morlino. Digo provocativa porque el texto comienza con una pregunta que pone al lector inmediatamente frente a una incertidumbre: "¿Podemos al menos entender *quello che bolle in pentola* o indicar cuáles son *los* 'mecanismos prevalecientes' que se desencadenan por la profunda crisis que estamos experimentando, una crisis que varios comentaristas ahora llaman 'catastrófica'?" (2022:15). Desde el mundo de los estudios del riesgo y la catástrofe, área en la que he estado trabajando últimamente, esta pregunta parecer ser muy pertinente; los efectos de las amenazas biofísicas pueden ser explicados (a través de múltiples disciplinas) tanto desde el momento mismo de una catástrofe, como desde sus consecuencias a causa de vulnerabilidades anteriores y sus efectos a largo plazo a raíz de los procesos de reubicación, trauma, resiliencia y adaptación. En ese sentido, y retomando la pregunta de Morlino, sugiero que es precisamente donde él apunta que radica la principal originalidad y pertinencia de este libro.

A través de sus capítulos, lo que se despliega no es tan solo una radiografía de las incontables crisis que el COVID-19 causó en Latinoamérica, sino que también de los países latinoamericanos en sí mismos. Los textos que integran el volumen dejan ver una y otra vez que fueron necesarios tanto la exposición al virus como las vulnerabilidades previas (ambos elementos fundamentales del concepto de desastre socio-natural) las que produjeron que la situación se volviese catastrófica. Es por ello por lo cual varios de los textos no refieren únicamente a un hito temporal enmarcado

en el inicio de la propagación del virus y su llegada al continente, hecho bien documentado en el capítulo 9 escrito por Rafael Archondo, sino que también a circunstancias políticas y sociales pre e incluso post pandemia (si es que estamos en algo así como un "post") que fueron tan decidoras como el virus en sí mismo.

Dos ejemplos interesantes de esto se comentan en los capítulos 4 y 5 escritos por Javier Saldaña Almazán y Alejandro Klein, respectivamente. En el primero, el autor se concentra en un tópico que revolucionó obligadamente la manera que conocíamos de aprender en contextos escolares: la clausura de actividades educativas presenciales en 190 países del mundo. Específicamente, Saldaña explica que las consecuencias aún no completamente vislumbradas de dichas medidas afectaron más a los países con menores niveles de desarrollo y, por ende, con mayores niveles de desigualdad que "se acrecentaban aun antes de la pandemia" (2022:44). Como señala el autor, la distribución desigual de la conectividad fue un obstáculo tangible para acercar a la comunidad educativa ahora disgregada en las casas de sus estudiantes, muchos de quienes no contaban con niveles mínimos de acceso a dispositivos electrónicos e internet. En cambio, quienes habían desarrollado estrategias anteriores que buscaban aproximar a estudiantes de sectores vulnerables con la tecnología, tuvieron más herramientas para sortear este aspecto de la pandemia. En el segundo capítulo señalado, Klein da cuenta de uno de los grupos quizás más postergados en las sociedades contemporáneas: los adultos mayores. A partir de su análisis, el autor explica cómo la exclusión previa de este grupo etario llevó a medidas de aún mayor exclusión, a partir de políticas muy estrictas de confinamiento (a veces más drásticas que para el resto de la población) donde sus voces simplemente no eran consideradas en la toma de decisiones sobre sus propias vidas.

Por su parte, los estudios de caso sobre países ayudan a entender procesos de nivel más macrosocial, que también se vinculan a situaciones prepandemia. Al respecto quisiera destacar dos. El primero de ellos es el titulado *Colombia: peligros y pandemia* escrito por Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín. En este texto, el autor explica los efectos erosionantes de la pandemia que tuvieron lugar en el deterioro democrático, el incremento de la violencia y las políticas excluyentes. Durante este período, los pesos y contrapesos se vieron altamente debilitados en la medida que las prácticas autoritarias del gobierno nacional se iban incrementando y la oposición

comenzó a perder fuerza producto, entre otros elementos, de las políticas de confinamiento severo y el aumento en la popularidad del presidente de turno a causa de la operación sanitaria que llevaba a cabo. Si bien el autor comenta que estas formas de deterioro democrático se desarrollaron de manera indirecta a causa de la pandemia, también es claro en afirmar que incluso al hablar de una lógica de erosión, los problemas en la democracia colombiana se vienen acumulando hace años y se habrían visto reforzados (de manera indirecta) por la crisis.

El segundo caso es el de Chile. En el capítulo 10 titulado *Chile en pandemia: ¿la crisis de una cultura institucional singular?,* escrito por Stéphanie Alenda, Antonie Faure y Damien Larrouqué, es posible encontrar algo similar, pero en un contexto sociopolítico diferente. En este capítulo, los autores se proponen demostrar que las crisis del COVID-19 no solo fragilizaron al gobierno conservador de Sebastián Piñera, sino que remecieron la cultura institucional misma del país. A partir de una narración rigurosa de la manera en que el gobierno gestionó la pandemia, los autores señalan cómo la cultura institucional heredada desde la dictadura quedó al descubierto y dejó ver una intervención militar con prerrogativas que fueron más allá de la defensa nacional; una política fuertemente tecnocrática; y una concepción marcadamente neoliberal de la acción pública que redujo los horizontes de las acciones posibles, especialmente en lo referente a la salud.

Así, los doce capítulos que componen *A marchas forzadas* y que van desde la teoría hasta la sociología y la ciencia política con casos de estudios que también incluyen análisis sobre Brasil, Argentina, Bolivia y México, expresan un realidad incómoda: que los *mecanismos sociales* de los que se da cuenta no son únicamente el resultado de un momento puntual de la historia de la humanidad por el que atravesamos, sino que también de un continuo que la precede y prosigue, sale a la luz y se hace evidente incluso para aquellos que no quieren o no pueden verlo, a causa de una crisis sanitaria sin precedentes para nuestras generaciones.

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Un análisis efectivamente global de las derechas

Reseña de: Global Resurgence of the Right: Conceptual and Regional Perspectives, editado por Gisela Pereyra Doval y Gastón Souroujon

En los últimos años, la derecha ha vuelto al centro del campo político a través de un nuevo ciclo. Más concretamente, el fortalecimiento de la ultraderecha se ha convertido en un campo de investigación palpitante, así como en un fenómeno de importancia central en el ámbito de las relaciones internacionales y en los análisis de las crisis de las democracias. No es desproporcionado afirmar que el aumento de la importancia en los estudios de la derecha está ligado a algunos acontecimientos clave, como la elección de líderes como Donald Trump y Narendra Modi, el fortalecimiento de Viktor Orbán y la victoriosa campaña presidencial de Jair Bolsonaro.

Pero este fenómeno es aún más complejo y diverso si miramos más allá de los marcos electorales de los que han sido comúnmente caracterizados como líderes populistas de derecha radical. En el continente europeo, países como España y Portugal han experimentado el crecimiento de la derecha. En América Latina, la elección de líderes en Argentina y Uruguay, así como el fortalecimiento en países como Ecuador y Colombia muestran que el resurgimiento de la derecha es un fenómeno complejo y global. Pero, ¿cómo de complejo y global?

En primer lugar, dada la percepción de que se trata de un fenómeno plural, que eventualmente puede leerse a través de fases y/u olas de desarrollo de procesos como la radicalización, la

fascistización y la desfascistización. Pero, a pesar de la existencia de olas más o menos definidas, la globalización de la derecha incorpora una gran diversidad de orígenes políticos, variedades de problemáticas regionales y claves para el desarrollo de programas políticos ligeramente autónomos. En este sentido, si tomamos (acertadamente) el resurgimiento de la derecha como un fenómeno global y relacionado con la crisis de la globalización y de las democracias, esto construye, como imperativo, la necesidad de mirar el fenómeno a través de múltiples categorías de análisis, eliminando las eventuales centralidades continentales como modelos cerrados de análisis.

Este es el reto que recoge la obra "Global Resurgence of the Right: Conceptual and Regional Perspectives", organizada por Gisela Pereyra Doval y Gastón Souroujon, publicada en la serie "Studies in Fascism and the Far Right" de Routledge. Un desafío que se cumplió satisfactoriamente, hay que subrayar. En primer lugar, por la comprensión de lo que implica efectivamente lo global, aportando reflexiones sobre estudios de caso en América Latina, América del Norte y Europa, además de discusiones sobre categorías de análisis que ciertamente pueden servir de referencia para casos no contemplados en la obra, como Rusia, India y Turquía.

Compuesto por trece capítulos escritos por autores jóvenes y consagrados en los estudios de las derechas, la lectura de los textos muestra cuestiones cruciales desde el punto de vista del análisis. Dos de ellas me parecen las más importantes. La primera se refiere a las formas en que la derecha (desde la liberal hasta la reaccionaria) construye sus proyectos políticos en función de las respuestas a las agendas globales, pero también a las cuestiones locales y regionales. Este es uno de los objetivos cumplidos del libro, basado en estudios de casos nacionales.

El segundo aspecto se refiere a las fases de desarrollo de las oleadas de movimientos de derecha entre América Latina y Europa, que ciertamente no siguen los mismos ritos y modelos de integración y formas de organización. Esta cuestión se pone de manifiesto no sólo en los textos centrados en las coyunturas nacionales y/o regionales, sino también en los capítulos en los que se discuten categorías y conceptos como populismo, ultraderecha, posfascismo, neofascismo y derechas neopatriotas. Una vez más, el libro es de gran utilidad para reflexionar sobre las categorías de análisis de estos fenómenos.

Al considerar este doble reto de analizar la derecha global desde múltiples categorías y vicisitudes regionales, queda claro cómo el desarrollo de la "nueva derecha" responde a incentivos y demandas políticas que son simultáneamente globales y locales, y esto conlleva algunas problemáticas de investigación importantes de considerar. Porque si hay interlocución y transnacionalismo de la derecha, y especialmente de la ultraderecha, no todas las características son fundamentales y ecuánimes en sus diversas localidades y expresiones políticas organizadas.

Un aspecto ilustrativo de esta problemática es el nativismo. Si, de acuerdo con la tipología propuesta por Cas Mudde (2019), el nativismo es uno de los elementos centrales del discurso y la ideología de la ultraderecha, cabe preguntarse: ¿esta característica aparece por igual, en términos de intensidad, en todo el mundo o presenta una mayor centralidad allí donde la cuestión de la inmigración y la blancura son fenómenos de referencia para esta matriz? Además de la cuestión de las intensidades, es posible reflexionar a partir de cuestiones como las propiedades de estos nativismos. El análisis del caso brasileño es bastante ilustrativo, donde un cierto nativismo no se construye sobre cuestiones como la etnia/inmigración/raza, sino principalmente sobre valores conservadores y matices religiosos.

De hecho, esto ilustra algunas cuestiones importantes para los análisis que no se centran exclusivamente en los casos europeos, ni piensan los modelos y categorías de análisis globales desde una lectura eurocéntrica. En otras palabras, la lectura de los textos muestra la necesidad de poner en juego lo global no sólo como moda académica explicativa, sino de comprender que los modelos de análisis no se proyectan fácilmente a las realidades y contextos históricos distintos. Sobre todo porque las "olas" de democratización y sus reflejos se manifiestan de forma muy diversa en los distintos continentes, incluso en la derecha. Otro concepto/categoría que ilustra esta complejidad de la derecha es el populismo, sobre todo por su elasticidad y multiplicidad de definiciones.

Al fin y al cabo, cuando se habla de la ultraderecha, ¿el populismo adquiere un sentido más instrumental -como estrategia política y de comunicación- o es esencialmente ideológico, fruto de una "ideología tenue"? Sin duda, una de las aportaciones de la obra es situar la historia del populismo no sólo en torno a sus batallas interpretativas (es decir, las definiciones enfrentadas), sino

considerar que América Latina es el laboratorio inicial de lo que puede entenderse como populismo y derecha (radical o no).

Del mismo modo, los debates sobre el neofascismo y el posfascismo ayudan a clarificar mejor estas tensiones entre los nuevos y viejos extremismos (y radicalismos) de derecha, pero también los puntos de diálogo y colaboración. Y esto presenta una diversidad no sólo entre los contextos continentales, sino también en los análisis dentro del marco europeo, como queda claro en el enfoque sobre el caso español.

En términos generales, la colección contribuye en gran medida a descentralizar los análisis y sus categorías. No comete el desliz (desafortunadamente muy común) de moldear la realidad extraeuropea sobre la base de modelos y marcos explicativos diseñados para Europa y Norteamérica. Así, lejos de caer en la tentación de universalizar modelos originalmente pensados para la realidad del viejo continente, las contribuciones presentes en la colección dejan claro que, para entender a la derecha global, es necesario considerar aspectos de las relaciones que van más allá de cualquier análisis basado en términos como centro-periferia. Al fin y al cabo, las derechas no son sólo un fenómeno de incorporación y apropiación de las agencias e intelectuales productores, sino una respuesta global a problemas globales.

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