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A NEW LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN NATIONALISM

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ABSTRACT: It is timely to observe how the end of the cold war is affecting the world, outside Europe, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean where there is a turn toward a positive form of nationalism. During the cold war, a defensive form of nationalism prevailed in Latin America and the Caribbean, as did a search for a "third way" between socialism and capitalism. The slump of the 1980s revealed the social and economic shortcomings of defensive nationalism and led to the end of the search for a third way.

As a consequence, a new, more positive form of nationalism is emerging which has placed Latin America and the Caribbean at a decisive and unprecedented juncture in its development choices. One path may lead to a prosperous and democratic hemisphere, while the other could result in a slide back into depression and dictatorship.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is not to sound another alarm about the perils brought on by recent explosions of nationalism, nor to predict the demise of the nation-state. Its purpose is to observe how the end of the bipolar confrontation is affecting nationalism in other parts of the world, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean.

First, a brief description will be offered of the origins of the "defensive nationalism" and of the search for a "third way," which prevailed in Latin America and the Caribbean during the years of the cold war.

Second, an attempt will be made to show how the limits of defensive nationalism became manifest as a result of the depression of the 1980s, "the lost decade" for the development of Latin America and the Caribbean. This section will highlight how the slump of the '80s revealed some of the most striking social and economic shortcomings of defensive nationalism. It will also describe how the search for a "third way" unraveled.

Third, the rise of a new nationalism in the Western Hemisphere will be analyzed by focusing on its positive manifestations, which are more congruent with present circumstances. Also, the primacy of

economics, which prevails in inter-American relations, will be described by focusing on the displacement of security objectives from the top of the agenda.

To conclude, the external and internal factors that can support or contradict these trends reveal that the region is now at a decisive juncture which may lead to strengthening this new, more positive, form of nationalism in a prosperous and democratic hemisphere or, alternatively, to the return of depression and dictatorship.

Two Faces of Nationalism

As a sequel to the end of the cold war, nationalism is again raising its ugly head in Europe. As Javier Pérez de Cuéllar said in his farewell address to the General Assembly of the United Nations, "for many years, the cold war was a reality which concealed a host of other realities that are far more ingrained in the human condition. Now that these realities are visible, we cannot pretend that we did not notice the signs of them before, nor can we defend ourselves with old prejudices and assumptions."¹

There is good reason to dedicate attention to events in Europe. This century has been one of the bloodiest in history because of national conflicts in Europe. It is also there, where

the present manifestations of outright racism and exacerbated nationalism still bring back ominous forebodings of the past conflicts. In Sir Isaiah Berlin's terms "in our modern age, nationalism is not resurgent; it never died. Neither did racism. They are the most powerful movements in the world today, cutting across many social systems."²

This leads to another concern. There are those who believe that the universalization of capitalism will inaugurate a millennium of harmony. They should be reminded that the two major conflicts experienced by mankind in this century were basically the outcome of profound contradictions among capitalist powers.

Nationalism has many faces, of which at least two have been identified by Isaiah Berlin. First, quoting Herder, the German poet and philosopher, Berlin identifies a "nonaggressive nationalism," based on the "need to belong to a group," as well as on "cultural self-determination," which denies "the superiority of one people over another." Nonetheless, a wounded aspiration for self-determination may transform itself into nationalist aggression, in Berlin's brilliant metaphor, "like a bent twig, forced down so severely that when released, it lashes back with fury."³

These two faces of nationalism represent two related dimensions of the same phenomenon. This explains why, in today's

Europe, some nationalisms are leading to disintegration, while others are the basis for building a larger unit. Or why, while the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have disintegrated, the members of the European Community (EC), which include some of the inventors of modern nationalism, are seeking closer economic, monetary and political ties, including a single currency and a framework for a common foreign and security policy.⁴

Based on these two aspects of nationalism, Eric Hobsbawm holds that the historical significance of nationalism is declining, although this is "today concealed by the visible spread of ethnic and linguistic agitations, but also by the semantic illusion which derives from the fact that all states are today officially 'nations'."

The Roots of Defensive Nationalism

The roots of the defensive form of economic nationalism that prevailed in Latin America and the Caribbean, until the beginning of the 1980s, can be found in the scars left by the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The abrupt plummeting of the prices of primary products, as well as the breakdown of the multilateral trading system and its replacement with imperial preferences and reciprocal trade

agreements, led Latin America in the '30s to the pursuit, of deliberate import substitution and protectionism.⁶

These two features of development policy were the basic components of the main line of defense against a disappointing international economic system that failed. The old structure demonstrated that it could not be relied upon to sustain the aspirations to development and growing welfare that were becoming generalized throughout the world. Even the recovery stimulated by World War II did little to contradict Latin American and Caribbean fears, because the war led to price controls and efforts to secure strategic raw materials, which confirmed the protectionist tendency, which prevailed in developed countries.

Additionally, the general acceptance of Keynesian economics consecrated full employment as the basic goal of economic policy, which in turn became one of the essential elements of the dominant paradigm of what later would be known as development economics. In Albert Hirschman's terms: "Development economics took advantage of the unprecedented discredit orthodox economics had fallen into as a result of the depression of the thirties and of the equally unprecedented success of an attack on orthodoxy from within the economics 'establishment'... the Keynesian Revolution of the thirties, which became the 'new economics' and almost a new orthodoxy in the forties and fifties."⁷

The conclusion of the hostilities led to the attempt to create a universal, multilateral trading system, based on the most favored nation principle, institutionalized in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). This also marked the beginning of a divergence of perspectives between developed and developing countries and between capitalist and socialist economies, which endured throughout the cold war. This divergence pitted what was characterized originally as "the center against the periphery," and what later became the "North-South" confrontation, to which Latin American economic thought made a decisive contribution.

Keynes himself supported some "popular and populist heresies," which contributed to this split. Among them, the "horror of horrors," which holds that "the mercantilist imposition of import duties and export subsidies can improve the trade balance and domestic employment."⁸

The experience of Raúl Prebisch, a young Argentinean economist, who was a central banker and trade negotiator during the Great Depression, illustrates the impact these events had in the outlook of Latin American economic decision-makers.⁹ After the war, as executive head of the newly created United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), Prebisch led the effort that generated a body of economic thought adapted to the new post-war world and to the peculiar circumstances of Latin America.

With the intensification of the cold war, development planning and industrialization became part of the instrumental reforms envisaged in the Alliance for Progress, which was itself born from the overwhelming U.S. security objective of halting Communist penetration in the hemisphere.

By the mid 1960s, Prebisch moved from the hemisphere to head the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which became an attempt to universalize the tenets of defensive nationalism to the rest of the developing world.¹⁰ The creation of UNCTAD institutionalized, it is tempting to say ritualized, the North-South confrontation, which coexisted uneasily with the East-West confrontation throughout the cold war. The end of the cold war has revealed how intertwined was the North-South confrontation with the East-West contradiction. In any event, the end of the cold war has profoundly affected the terms of the North-South confrontation.

The Search for a 'Third Way'

Even before the onset of the cold war, there was an intense search for a "third way" among several non-extremist, indigenous, Latin American political movements.¹¹ Thus, during the cold war years, instead of choosing the radical option of turning toward the socialist camp, the most common expressions of Latin American and

Caribbean nationalism were the defensive economic policies practiced throughout the region, as well as the search for a third way between capitalism and socialism. These two mutually supportive options - defensive nationalism and the third way - were the most common response to the cold war policies practiced by the United States in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy was the confrontation with the Soviet Union. The defensive form of nationalism that had flourished in Latin America and the Caribbean as a consequence of the depression and World War II was subordinated - at least in U.S. eyes - to what were considered higher security objectives. Thus, one of the main limits defensive nationalism had to confront was external. It could go only so far as not to imperil the overriding security objective of defeating communism.¹² During the cold war years, these security concerns dominated the agenda of inter-American relations and furnished the standard for the United States to measure the acceptability and legitimacy of the policies applied throughout the hemisphere.

By contrast, in Latin America and the Caribbean, the mirror image to the U.S. primacy of anti-communism and security as criteria of legitimacy was the effort to gain some distance from these security concerns. Standards of radicalism were set according to the degree to which they criticized or opposed the

United States, almost to the point that nationalism in Latin America and the Caribbean, became synonymous with overt or covert opposition to the United States.

First Cuba, then Nicaragua, epitomized the radical option of switching camps. However, the most common stance was to remain somewhere in the middle, searching for a proverbial third way between capitalism and socialism. This attempt at equidistance was practiced with different degrees of intensity by, among others, the Peruvian Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA), the Peronists in Argentina, and the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) in México, as well as by several other parties of a social-democratic persuasion.

The assertiveness with which the United States placed security concerns above any other consideration transformed practically any form of Latin American or Caribbean self-affirmation into overt or covert opposition to the United States. Any attempt at self-assertion was perceived as being of potential benefit to the adversary.

The Limits of Defensive Nationalism

It is common today to blame defensive nationalism for almost all the shortcomings of Latin American and Caribbean development,

particularly for the profound depression that swept the region during the 1980s. However, this judgment rests on hindsight.

For one thing, it is difficult to argue that these policies were as negative as they are depicted today, because they were applied during a period of sustained expansion. During those years, in stark contrast with what came afterwards, the economies of Latin America and the Caribbean experienced an impressive average annual rate of growth of GDP of 5 percent.

The turnaround in the favorable circumstances that supported the region's inward-looking policies arrived quite suddenly. Now, it is accepted that the drying-up of international private and official finance, rising real international interest rates, the abrupt fall in the prices of the region's export commodities and the general unfavorable shift in the terms of trade, were in effect foreordained.

It took a while for it to be generally accepted that the option of defensive economic nationalism had been exhausted. What followed, after the collapse of the favorable circumstances which sustained this option, was that many decision-makers in the region struggled desperately to continue applying the same policies as if nothing had changed. Among other consequences, this led to some spectacular cases of hyper-inflation, rarely seen before in the region.

Sooner or later, the reality of the turnaround in international circumstances led to a search for new forms of insertion in the international economy. The response has taken the form of adopting more open trade regimes, including the unilateral dismantling of tariff and non-tariff barriers, which has led to the diversification of the export sector, among other consequences.

However, the most decisive shortcomings of defensive nationalism can be found in its internal limits. More precisely, this policy did not incorporate the majority of the population in the benefits generated by three decades of sustained economic expansion.

The persistence, with few exceptions, of a regional average of more than 40 percent of all households living under the poverty line represents the most blatant shortcoming of the defensive nationalism practiced until the 1980s.¹³

This nationalism left out sizeable portions of the nation. These levels of poverty reveal that defensive nationalism was far from being inclusive. Almost everywhere in the region, it resulted in the protection of exclusive privileges, enjoyed by restricted numbers of rent-seeking elites which, allied to co-opted fractions of the middle classes, often resulted in the emergence of exclusionary political regimes.¹⁴

The Demise of the 'Third Way'

The unraveling of defensive economic nationalism, which started in the beginning of the 1980s with the onset of the debt crisis was rather abrupt. By contrast, the demise of the search for a third way took longer, almost another decade. It finally came as well, with the vanishing of the Berlin wall and of the Soviet Union, in 1989.

Seymour M. Lipset has noted that, "equally important if less dramatic shifts have been occurring in the noncommunist parties of the left. Although less noteworthy, since they do not involve revolutionary economic and political changes, they are as significant ideologically."¹⁵ In his review of how "the revolutions of 1989" have affected "the social democratic world," Lipset characterizes the trend as "a movement to the right," under which "in country after country, socialist and other left parties have taken the ideological road back to capitalism," with Latin America and the Caribbean offering no exception.¹⁶

As part of this world-wide inventory of the fate of social democratic parties, Lipset describes the Peronist rejection of the concept of the state as the motor of the economy; the acceptance by the Democratic Labor Party of Brazil of the minimal state; the support of privatization by Acción Democrática and the Movement

Toward Socialism in Venezuela; the promise by the Christian Democrats in Chile to maintain the basic features of the open economy; and the PRI in Mexico attacking the tradition of a big paternalistic government. The story is similar in Bolivia, Costa Rica, and Peru, and in the Caribbean, where the prime examples are the shifts in policy of Prime Minister Michael Manley in Jamaica and Juan Bosch in the Dominican Republic.

The Roots of the New Nationalism

How is one to account for these profound changes? What is their meaning for Latin American and Caribbean nationalism?

The primary source of these impressive changes taking place can be found in the depression of the 1980s. This profound economic contraction in the region lingered throughout the last decade and it came after almost 30 years of sustained economic expansion.¹⁷

The portrayal of this policy transformation has highlighted almost exclusively its most painful effects. However, as the new policies have become entrenched, as the indicators reveal an incipient economic reactivation,¹⁸ several positive consequences are beginning to emerge.¹⁹

The most persuasive evidence of the transformation can be found in the external economic relations of the region. Almost all Latin American and Caribbean countries, with different degrees of intensity and speed, have undertaken the unilateral dismantling of tariff and non-tariff barriers.²⁰ The region's countries have started the 1990s with trade regimes which are much more open than those which existed at the beginning of the 1980s. These reforms were carried out unilaterally and courageously in the middle of the deepest economic slump of the last 50 years.

This unilateral import opening has been accompanied by a change in the structure of the region's exports. As a consequence of the sustained fall in the prices of most traditional exports commodities, the Latin American and Caribbean countries deliberately sought a major diversification. They have succeeded. In 1990, more than half the region's exports were non-traditional products; in 1980, nontraditional products represented only one fourth of total exports (see figure 1).

With respect to imports, the most prominent feature of the eighties was their drastic curtailment, of almost 40 percent, made necessary by the need to generate the current account surplus to service external debt. Foreign exchange to import goods and services was scarce during the 1980s. Now that the regional

economies are beginning to grow again, imports are beginning to recuperate. This growth in imports is supported by the decisive measures of unilateral liberalization already mentioned, as well as by the positive transfer of resources generated by growing inflows of private capital. These flows consist of the return of flight capital to some countries, as well as of private foreign investment.

These sweeping economic reforms, aimed at dismantling some of the basic components of defensive nationalism, coincided with a return to democratic and civilian regimes. The region is also witnessing a weakening of the exclusionary political regimes that often coexisted with defensive economic nationalism.

The Primacy of Economics

The mutually reinforcing trends, toward the adoption of profound economic reforms aimed at opening the economies and the political regimes, are not mere coincidence. The diversification of export sectors has contributed to the diversification of economic elites. New groups are emerging to exploit the successful penetration of external markets by non-traditional exports. Several success stories of export diversification can be mentioned, such as frozen concentrated orange juice from Brazil, Chilean fruit, Colombian cut flowers and textiles, and Guatemalan new agricultural

exports.²¹ The fact that non-traditional products now represent more than half of all exports has punctured the tidiness and cohesiveness of the economic elites; the newcomers are more interested in penetrating foreign markets than in enjoying the exclusive benefits of closed internal markets.

Because of the absence of east-west security concerns in the hemisphere, economic issues have moved to the top of the agenda.²² Other non-economic but highly controversial matters have been displaced from the agenda, in some cases, through mutual understanding. One of the best examples of this new consensus can be found in the agreement between Brazil and Argentina to cease production of nuclear weapons.²³ This accomplishes the long sought objective of making Latin America a nuclear free zone.

This displacement from the top of the agenda of security concerns by economic objectives, is based on the perception that external economic relations, even asymmetrical interdependence, no longer fatally and inevitably leads to zero-sum outcomes.²⁴ Perhaps the most vivid example of this radical change of perspective can be found in the Mexican initiative to form a North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA).²⁵ In addition, the new outlook is exemplified by the positive Latin American and Caribbean response to the U.S. proposal for free trade with the rest of the hemisphere, from Alaska to Patagonia.

The days seem to be gone when the guiding principle of Latin American and Caribbean foreign policies was to distance their countries from the United States. Relations between the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean today are beginning to resemble the relations that prevail between Canada and the United States. Security matters have been displaced from the top of the agenda by the search for positive outcomes and mutual gain in the economic sphere.

Latin American and Caribbean nationalism has become more positive, less defensive and more outward-looking in the sense that the interest of the region lies in finding mutually beneficial outcomes by means of increased levels of economic interdependence.

Conclusion: The Hemisphere At a Crossroads

What are the main internal and external challenges that must be confronted to sustain these positive trends?

The main internal challenge is the existence of a majority of households trying to survive under the poverty line. Neither a nation nor a democracy can be said to have taken hold until these vast populations have access to the benefits of freedom and growth. This is the central message that ECLAC presented to the member governments during its last session, held in Santiago, Chile, on April 8-15, 1992.²⁶

Externally, the unilateral opening undertaken by the Latin America and the Caribbean countries must not remain unrequited by the United States and other industrial countries. The new and more positive form of nationalism that prevails in the region must not be rejected.

The emergence of a free trade area in the Western Hemisphere, as proposed in the Enterprise of the Americas Initiative (EAI), would strengthen pluralism. It would support the new exporters and the new entrepreneurs, and it would contribute to the attainment of the levels of prosperity required to overcome poverty.

The countries of Latin America and the Caribbean now find themselves at an unprecedented and challenging crossroad. One path can lead to a prosperous hemisphere in which democracies and open societies prevail. The other path can lead to "bending the twig," through a slide back into depression and dictatorship.

ENDNOTES

1. "Farewell Statement to General Assembly," United Nations, Department of Public Information, Press Release (SG/SM/4674 GA/8299) New York, December 16, 1991.
2. Nathan Gardels, "Two Concepts of Nationalism: An Interview with Isaiah Berlin," New York Review of Books, November 21, 1991, pp. 19-23.
3. Ibid. p. 19; and Isaiah Berlin, "The Bent Twig: On the Rise of Nationalism," in The Crooked Timber of Humanity (New York: Knopf, 1991, originally published in 1972) pp. 238-261.
4. Council and Commission of the European Communities, Treaty On European Union, signed in Maastricht on February 7, 1992. (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications, 1992).
5. E.J. Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism Since 1780 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.170.
6. The movement toward import substitution was not uniform. There were several latecomers, such as the Central American countries. See ECLAC, A Collection of Documents on the Economic Relations Between the United States and Central America, 1906-1956 (Santiago, Chile: ECLAC, 1991) U.N. Sales No. E.91.II.G.4, pp. 176-204.

7. "The Rise and Decline of Development Economics," in Essays in Trespassing (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) pp.1-24.

8. Albert O. Hirschman, "How the Keynesian Revolution Was Exported from the United States, and Other Comments," in The Political Power of Economic Ideas: Keynesianism Across Nations, ed. Peter A. Hall (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) p. 349.

9. An intellectual biography of Raúl Prebisch has not been published yet. Edgard Dosman and David Pollock are now working on one in Canada. They recently presented an article based on their extensive research, "Raúl Prebisch, 1901-1971: The Continuing Quest," to a seminar sponsored by the Inter-American Development Bank on "Latin American Economic Thought: Past, Present and Future," held in Washington, D.C. on November 14-15, 1991. See also the comments on the Dosman-Pollock paper presented by Hans Singer at the same seminar. In his comments, Singer describes how he was "struck by some of the similarities between Keynes and Prebisch," p. 2.

10. This time, the "manifesto" was Towards A New trade Policy for Development, see: UNCTAD, The History of UNCTAD 1964-1984 (New York: United Nations, 1985) U.N. Sales No. E.85.II.D.6, pp. 8-10.

11. In effect, "Keynesianism, with its revaluation of the proper roles of the state, the world of business, and the intellectuals

(the economists in particular), supplied an attractive "third way" that could compete with the various fascist and Marxist creeds of the time." Albert O. Hirschman, "How the Keynesian Revolution," p. 350.

12. In Latin America, this limit became evident very early in the form of the covert operation that, at a very low cost to the United States, overthrew in 1954 the moderately nationalist and communist supported Arbenz regime in Guatemala. What for many years will remain the definitive work on this episode has appeared recently, Piero Gleijeses, Shattered Hope: The United States and the Guatemalan Revolution 1944-1954 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

13. ECLAC, "Magnitud de la pobreza en América Latina en los años ochenta," Estudios e Informes de la CEPAL (No. 81), U.N. Sales Number S.91.II.G.10 Santiago de Chile, August 1991; La equidad en el panorama social de América Latina durante los años ochenta (LC/G.1686) Santiago de Chile, October 31, 1991; Panorama social de América Latina (LC/G.1688) Santiago de Chile, October 31, 1991.

14. In those years, even the hypothesis was proposed that there was "an inherent association between advanced industrialization and bureaucratic authoritarianism in Latin America." See David Collier's "Introduction" to the fascinating debate generated by this idea, contained in the collection of papers reproduced in The New Authoritarianism in Latin America, ed. David Collier (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979) p. 7.

15. Seymour Martin Lipset, "No Third Way: A Comparative Perspective on the Left," in The Crisis of Leninism and the Decline of the Left: The Revolutions of 1989 ed. Daniel Chirot (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991) pp. 183-232.
16. Ibid., p. 183. Also, in Ralf Dahrendorf's terms, "Communism has collapsed, social democracy is exhausted." Reflections on the Revolution in Europe (New York: Random House, 1990) p. 77.
17. These three decades have been characterized by Albert O. Hirschman as "les trente glorieuses" in Latin America. However, he also found that the "fairly general human trait" of a "reluctance to celebrate or even acknowledge progress while it unfolds before our eyes," has been "particularly marked" in Latin America, with the consequence that there prevailed "a conspiracy of silence about the good news as long as it was still coming." See: "The Political Economy of Latin American Development: Seven Exercises in Retrospection," Latin American Research Review 22(3): 8 (1987).
18. ECLAC, Preliminary Overview of the Latin American and Caribbean Economy 1991 (LC/G.1696) Santiago de Chile, December 18, 1991.
19. Pedro Aspe, Andrés Bianchi and Domingo Cavallo, Sea Changes in Latin America (Washington D.C.: Group of Thirty, 1992).
20. ECLAC, Latin American and Caribbean Trade and Investment Relations With the United States in the Eighties (LC.WAS/12) September 23, 1991.

21. Limitations of space make it impossible to describe in detail some of these "success stories." Several studies that describe them are available, see: ECLAC, La cadena de distribución y la competitividad de las exportaciones latinoamericanas: La exportación de jugo de naranja concentrado y congelado de Brasil (LC/R.844) December 29, 1989; La fruta de Chile (LC/G.1639) July 31, 1990; Cadenas agroexportadoras en Chile: transformación productiva e integración social (LC/L.637) July 24, 1991. Las exportaciones de manzanas y peras del Alto Valle del Río Negro, Argentina (LC/G.1683) December 24, 1991; Análisis de cadenas agroexportadoras en Guatemala: transformación productiva y diversificación comercial (LC/R.1112) December 30, 1991; Las exportaciones de confecciones de textiles de Colombia (LC/L.676) January 15, 1992.

22. Isaac Cohen, "Economic Questions," in The United States and Latin America: Redefining U.S. Purposes in the Post-Cold War Era ed. G. Pope Atkins (Austin, The University of Texas, 1992) pp. 19-34.

23. See: Foz de Iguazú Declaration on the Joint Nuclear Policy of Argentina and Brazil, signed on November 28, 1990, circulated as an official document in the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS), (CP/INF.3071/90 corr 1) January 3, 1991. Also, Eugene Robinson "S. America Steps Back From Atomic Brink," The Washington Post January 26, 1992.

24. See: Luiz Carlos Bresser Pereira, "Brasil: integración latinoamericana o americana?" América Latina/Internacional (Argentina) 8(30):460-465 (October-December 1991).
25. A brief but illustrative statement about this turn toward a more positive form of nationalism in México is by David Ibarra, "Cambio y nacionalismo," Comercio Exterior (México) January 1992, pp. 80-82.
26. ECLAC, Changing Production Patterns and Social Equity: An Integrated Approach (LC/G.1701) Santiago de Chile, 6 February 1992.

