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Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges for the Left

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The justified optimism of the left in Latin America and the Caribbean for the recent electoral triumphs should not lead to ignoring the challenges imposed not only by the current social order but also by its own internal weaknesses, both in terms of the program

and the very nature of its organization. The social order of these countries constitutes the greatest obstacle, since in the best of cases it corresponds to a moderate capitalist development (production of consumer goods) and in the worst, to economies limited to being simple exporters of raw materials. For various reasons, almost all of them are also exporters of cheap labour to metropolitan markets. None of them record any significant attempt to produce production goods or relevant projects to access the new technologies that occupy the very center of the current Technological Revolution.



At the internal level, the Creole bourgeoisie controls the main levers of the economy, enjoys sufficient support from the civil service - in particular the armed forces and police - and has sufficient electoral support from popular sectors and the middle classes that allows it an advantageous correlation of forces in the legislative power. All this intensifies with the application of the neoliberal model still in force in most countries of the region. To this control of almost all forms of effective power, which on so many occasions allows the Creole bourgeoisie to torpedo any significant reform of progressive governments, must be added the decisive support it receives from international capitalism. Fortunately, this negative factor can be improved with proper management of international relations by

establishing links of all kinds with the emerging powers (the BRICS, in particular) to gain maneuverability in defense of national interests.



Overcoming the current neoliberal model (in all its spheres, from the economic to the cultural) imposes as an objective not only to return to the State its key functions in the management of public affairs but as an essential producer in each and every one of the sectors of the economy. The idea of promoting a certain state capitalism implies not only obtaining broad popular support but also consolidating alliances with sectors of medium and small property. The first is achieved by reducing the enormous social and economic inequalities that affect the majority of the population as well as by promoting their broad political participation to consolidate democratic forms; The second, although it is not easy, is not impossible either because deep down that local middle and petty bourgeoisie is not favored by the neoliberal model that gives priority to the so-called "extractivism" and diminishes in very drastic terms the local market. Promoting adequate forms of protectionism is a way to achieve political support from these sectors of national production, so affected by free trade that it only benefits metropolitan economies.



Protecting the national economy does not in any way mean that exports are renounced, only in a different way. The case of lithium can show well what this protectionism consists of: lithium is not exported as a raw material; Instead, its industrial processing in the country is promoted, something that can well be carried out in association with foreign companies and in a way that satisfies national interests. The protection of national production is complemented by regional integration, another of the flags of the current progressive governments of the region. The case of the pharmaceutical industry that has gained great prominence with the covid-19 pandemic would be another example to overcome the current disadvantageous dependence on the large drug monopolies.

The dismantling of the current neoliberal model will be the result, once again, of the advantageous correlation of forces that is generated by the left. The nature of the social order that replaces the current one undoubtedly depends on an immediate program that allows progress in the modernization and democratization of these societies. From this perspective, forms of state capitalism seem a decisive step in that direction with the particularity of being a state capitalism under the political and social hegemony of the popular sectors since here there is no classical national bourgeoisie that modernized its countries by imposing itself on backward sectors and in search of advantageous ways to participate in the world market.

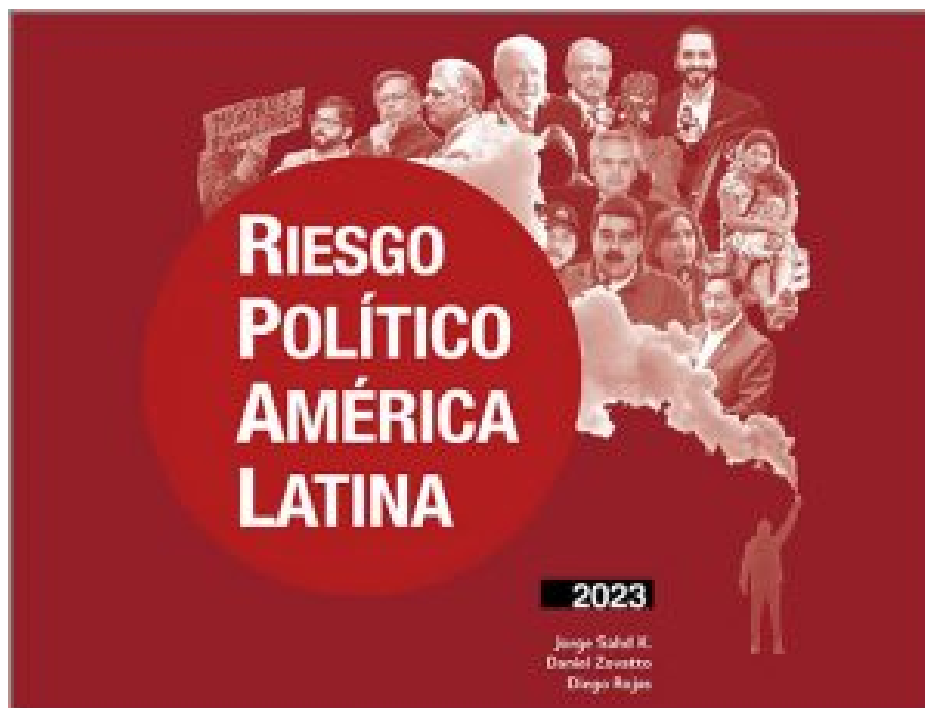


In this region there are undoubtedly sectors that can be understood as "national bourgeoisie" but are not decisive within a ruling class that fundamentally identifies with the metropolitan bourgeoisie and does not feel uncomfortable in its condition as administrators of modern forms of neocolonialism. The nature of the new, modern and democratic social order is up for debate and is one of the greatest challenges for the Latin American and Caribbean left. In this regard, a critical reading of one's own experiences and those of popular forces throughout the world seems indispensable in order to shape this idea of the future. Urgent tasks should not impede such a debate on the future world to which one aspires. The necessary link between immediate and long-term tasks is the only thing that makes it possible to clearly define the very nature of the left within the popular and reformist movement.

The divisions, differences and even conflicts between the parties of the left and between the various forms of the popular movement are inevitable manifestations and their proper management allows them to emerge victorious and strengthened. Consolidating the organization of the left (its parties) and that of popular movements (trade unions, associations, citizens' movements, etc.) is one of the most important challenges for both. It is essential to find the appropriate solution to the necessary link between the spontaneity of the social movements of protest and the bureaucratic forms of the parties (in the best

sense of the term); That is, to harmonize direct democracy and delegated forms, which have always been a challenge in the processes of change.

The objective sought has always been to maintain the continuity of the spontaneous movement by consolidating its organization and raising its political consciousness. But it is equally essential to achieve high degrees of organization, continuity in the management of affairs and the necessary professionalism imposed by the complexity of the modern world. There is always the risk of neglecting one or another task: downplaying the importance of permanent and professional organization to the point of demonizing it as a new form of oppression – bureaucratism and elitism – or ignoring the value of spontaneity, with its enthusiasm, creativity and freshness, simply identifying it with chaos and the inability to maintain its strength. Achieving the necessary harmony between the political organizations of the left and the many forms of popular mobilization is, in many respects, one of the most urgent and necessary tasks that the present imposes on the left.



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