
ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL PRECONDITIONS OF MILITARY AUTHORITARIANISM IN SOUTH AMERICA

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През шейсетте и седемдесетте години на XX век в Южна Америка се установяват военни режими, носители на по-дългосрочен структурен проект за национално развитие. Суспендират се граждански права, законни норми, партии с оглед на провеждането на предварително набелязаната политика и реализирането на поставените от военната институция задачи.

Факторите, които обуславят посочената тенденция, са многопластови и взаимно свързани. Между тях са неблагоприятните за държавите от Латинска Америка промени в икономически план, и особено обезценяването на основните им експортни продукти след Втората световна война, необходимостта от закриване или реструктуриране на нерентабилни държавни предприятия и провеждането на непопулярни в социално отношение стъпки, липсата на национално отговорен политически елит, силно развита и проникнала в институциите корупция. Към икономическите фактори могат да се добавят и външнополитически.

Кубинската революция през 1959 и обвързването ѝ със Съветския блок е една от причините да бъде преосмислена външната политика на САЩ към целия латиноамерикански регион. По времето на президента Кенеди е приета стратегическата доктрина „Алианс за прогрес“, където се обръща сериозно внимание на новите предизвикателства, както и на начините на тяхното преодоляване. Идеологическата база на военните режими е доктрината за национална сигурност. Именно взаимовръзката между болезнените социално-икономически реформи и репресивната същност на военните диктатури е част от настоящото изследване.

Due to the effects of the social and economic structure that has been imposed in Bulgaria over the last 20 years, many researchers and

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political observers have begun to make comparisons of the situation to the relevant phenomena in the Latin American region. The strong social contrasts in the latter, the lack of a significant middle class, the huge external debts and the transformation of the countries into net exporters of capital, the establishment of small comprador classes that actually work against the interests of the masses and the widespread corruption, are well-known features of the Latin American societies. In the times prior to and immediately after the World War II, because of their geographical and economic characteristics and because of being able to use the advantages of the international situation, some of the Latin American countries, in particular Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Chile, managed to turn their main agricultural goods into a major source of capital from abroad. This source of profit had such a significant impact that it changed the previously established economic and political realities for a relatively short period. Quite often, the participants (especially Europeans) in the Second World War were forced to pay the high monopoly prices in gold. The wealth which has been accumulated in this way empowered the state to have an enhanced economic and social activity. A powerful industrial sector was emerging, a policy known in the economic literature as „an industrialization through substitution of the import“. This industrialization has often been regarded by some supporters of „national“ and „independent“ developments as one of the most significant achievements of Argentina's „Peronism“, of the „Vargasism“ in Brazil, or of the „Batllismo“ in Uruguay. All the terms are derived from the names (and imbedding therein the charisma and popularity) of three historical figures, who were heads of state of respectively Argentine, Brazil and Uruguay: Juan Perón, Getúlio **Vargas** and José Batlle.

The industrialization succeeded in making the Southern Cone economically the most advanced region of Latin America. However, the extent to which this industrialization is a result of „nationally responsible“ political decisions and strategic projections or simply a result of the absence of an industrial import of the traditional economic partners of these countries because of these partners being exclusively engaged in military production, is not the subject of our research. Anyway – a powerful and strongly funded state sector has been created. This is particularly typical for Argentine, for example, where the share of the state sector in the national GDP is more than 40%. Although these numbers don't cover the respective values which are characteristic for the so-called „developed“ or „mature“ socialism, the similarity of the latter with

this kind of a state-dominated economy is obvious. Actually, General Perón has repeatedly emphasized the „anti-capitalist“ character of his regime and the policy of the so-called „third way“ of development as well, that „is neither capitalism nor socialism“. Free education and free healthcare, the higher payment for the workforce and the guarantee of many social benefits, including the right to a thirteenth salary, are a truly unprecedented case in Latin American history. Before its painful collapse, the „state of prosperity“ appeared to be close to accomplishment and very real with its apparent socio-economic dimensions and concrete projects.

In the case of Latin America we are witnessing a wide-scaled redistributive policy, characterized by its social focus. These redistributed resources are essentially „external“ in character. The scheme here is deliberately simplified, but more importantly, there was a painful socio-economic collapse after the termination of the flow of the „external“ revenue. The significant role of populism as a policy that is inconsistent with the economic realities is a particularly important feature of the analyzed societies. Here is also the place to express our essential point: Populism as an economic and political approach enjoys enormous support until the state is able to reallocate a significant public wealth. It collapses when this scheme is deprived of its economic base. The forms which this collapse takes in Argentina and Brazil – the unreliability of the political structures, the need for painful structural reforms, the economic and political anarchy and the unbridled crime are quite similar to what we see in Southeast Europe after the collapse of the socialist economic models. The political formulas that were imposed alongside the essentially structural neoliberal ones are very interesting as well.

In this study, I have attempted to determine the historical place of the military dictatorships and the role of the subsequent democratization in the Southern Cone of Latin America. Were the political consequences unavoidable after the collapse of the formally democratic and populist regimes? What really did determine their misfortune? Why did the military circles occupy the political scene and after a certain period – more or less long – leave it? How did they ideologically legitimize their intervening in matters of politics? What did their governments change? Despite the specificity of each of them, all of these countries demonstrated development of similar economic and political processes. In the seventies, in all of them, the military was at the top of the governments.

In the eighties, namely the military circles organized their withdrawal from power, restoring parliamentary democracy.

In the sixties and seventies of the 20-th century, several military regimes in South America were established, carrying out long-term structural projects for the national development. Initially the presence of the military in politics has been institutionalized through the parliamentary democracy mechanisms, but afterwards, the military itself, on the basis of its long-term and strategic project, began to change the institutional framework of society. Legal norms, parties, or even the constitution were suspended in order to conduct the pre-determined policy of the military. The factors that determine this tendency are multi-layered and interconnected and could therefore be separated only implying certain simplifications. The main ones are the economic changes unfavorable to the Latin American countries, especially the devaluation of their main export products, the need to close down or restructure unprofitable state-owned enterprises, the implemented unpopular policies, the lack of a nationally responsible political elite, the institutionalized corruption and so on.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the engagement of Cuba with the Soviet bloc is one of the reasons for rethinking the US foreign policy towards the entire Latin American region. At the time of President Kennedy, the Strategic Doctrine „Alliance for Progress“ was adopted, where the new social challenges and the ways to overcome them were taken seriously. The doctrine of continental security from a point of view of foreign policy is a continuation of the Monroe doctrine formulated by the American President James Monroe in 1823, whose main thesis was that America must be only for the Americans. Furthermore, according to him, „the American continent... can no longer be considered a subject of a future colonization by any European force“ (Castro 1972: 339).

In the 60-70s of the 20th century, the Doctrine of the Homeland Security aimed at overcoming the subversive and anti-state activity of the world communism and its supporters. This doctrine took the leadership within the surveyed countries. Its major difference from the Monroe Doctrine is, that, according to the latter, the world is now generally divided not on a geopolitical but on an ideological basis, borrowed from the basic principles, established during the Cold War. The military dictatorships in the Southern Cone were a reaction to a certain historical conjuncture, both external and internal. The new international division of labor clearly obliged national elites to carry out painful economic re-

forms. The present paper is not intended to return to the old discussion of the decisiveness or insignificance of the so-called. external factors. We mention only that the official report of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNECLAC) for 1987 emphasises „the decisive burden that the external factors have on the economic evolution of the region“ (CEPAL 1987).

Were the military dictatorships the only way out of the situation or other decisions would also have been possible? How realistic were the alternatives in those times and could we anyway state another special ones – populism, socialism, or just some kind of a more democratic development? From an economic point of view, the postulates of neoliberalism related to the rationalization of the economy on the basis of comparative advantages seem to be unshakable. The closure of unprofitable enterprises seems inevitable but this is so mainly due to the state's inability to continue its redistributive functions. This raises the question of whether it is possible for a government to conduct market reforms in the frame of a parliamentary-representative system. And whether the authoritarian rule is not, in fact, the only way to impose the social price of reforms on the population. Quite often the paying of this price is associated by some researchers with the objective impossibility for the government to use milder forms of political coercion.

After using all of the economic mechanisms of policy, the government is compelled to implement non-economic or power tools as well. Authoritarian governments in Latin American countries are initially attuned to significant reduction of the real incomes of the population and to suppression of the various forms of organized resistance of the laborers. The more one have to take away from the already existing standard of living, the more authoritarian pressure is applied. It seems therefore reasonable that in Argentina the repression of the syndicate leaders is many times greater than that of the Communists. By dramatically reducing the consumption of the population and transferring the accumulated share to the sphere of capital, the macroeconomic stabilization characteristic for most of the authoritarian regimes in the region is reached. Could this stabilization have a more humane image in the social sphere? In our opinion, this is hardly possible for purely economic reasons. Huntington noticed that in the poor countries democracy is always an exception, not a rule (ХЪНТИНГЪН 1994: 36).

Typically and according to the common sense, the notions of „dictatorship“ and „democracy“ are opposed to each other as absolutely in-

compatible. Dictatorship is identified as reactionary and even inhumane, while democracy is considered progressive, a symbol of justice and even of prosperity. Similar is the case of the „revolution“. It is possible for all sorts of socialized and „antisocial“ regimes, so it can hardly be a criterion for this analysis. In fact, almost all military governments in South America identify themselves as „revolutionary“ and „nationally oriented“. Almost all of them are perceived as rescuers of the state and of the traditional national values. In many cases, they are regarded as saviours by a significant number of people. „The military saved Chile and all of us“, the former Chilean President Eduardo Frey said, shortly after the success of the military coup d'état against Allende in 1973. When a government acts like this, the right to uprising is becoming an obligation, he adds (Frei 1973).

It is a fact that the military was making significant changes. It is also true, however, that these changes have been made together with gross violations of human rights, repressions often even accompanied by torture and murder. „We are not insensitive to what is happening,“ a Deputy Minister of Economy of a Latin American country explains. „But we are in front of the most beautiful revolution that we could have“ (Weigert, Sanchez 1977: 419). The context of this utterance appears to be clear: the goal justifies the means. Such statements let a number of researchers to believe that the military dictatorships have a negative impact, both in political and economic terms, on societies. The question of the essence of the changes made by the military is in fact very much debatable. If one argues that we should consider the processes of concentration and centralization of capital and the explosive growth of the financial capital, typical for the development of any economy, as negative, the actual argumentation of this would be quite difficult. From a moral point of view, the changes are negative because they lead to a growing social inequality, and hence to an increase of the contradictions in society. Do the two points of view actually contradict? According to Samuel Huntington, for example, the economic liberalization can be carried out more easily by an authoritarian regime (ХЪНТИНГТЪН 1994: 53-68). Although this evaluation refers especially to the reforms in Eastern Europe, this can be equally applicable to the military reformers in Latin America.

The constant replacement of the military dictatorships with parliamentary-democratic and populist regimes is a common phenomenon in Latin American history. Many even consider dictatorships a normal

political regime in the region. According to them, dictatorships are so prevalent in the Third World that they should be considered as „a normal type of government“ (Roy, Carranza 1978: 117-129). The supporters of such a view believe that if up to two decades ago the military had intervened temporarily and flexibly in the political affairs, retaining the outline of the political structure and handing over the power after a relatively short period to civilian politicians, often elected by them, now, the military intervention is characterized by a relatively longer period of direct control, and more importantly, it is bound to a structural project of economic and political reform. This trend is becoming increasingly apparent in the 1960s and 1970s, when President Kennedy's administration declared their strategic concept of a Continental Alliance of Progress, where the outdated concept of continental defense from external opponents was replaced by the idea of joint action against the revolutionary and subversive movements and elements. The new concept was developed after the Cuban revolution and aims at avoiding the repetition of certain analogous processes in other parts of the subcontinent. Along with the aspects of purely military co-operation, then, for the first time, elements of intentional economic and technological assistance from the United States were foreseen in order to eradicate or at least to soften some social contrasts.

The newly emerging authoritarian regimes in Latin America in the sixties without exception received ideological support according to the so-called Doctrine of national security, regardless of their specificity. Its essence is concentrated in two key words – security and development. In any case, the ideologies of the above-mentioned regimes remind us of what is the real purpose of the new authoritarian power – the return of democracy. Indeed, some of them are talking about a „new“ democracy, different from what they believe has led the society to collapse. This tendency is reflected in a rather successful way by the professor of geopolitics at Santiago's Higher Military School Augusto Pinochet. For example, in 1975 he declared: „There can be no liberal-democratic government. It must be democratic, but at the same time very authoritarian“ (Vasconi 1978: 55).

The anti-inflationary and the restrictive policy are some of the first steps that the new military rulers make in the economic sphere. It is true that inflation is one of the main mechanisms for redistributing public wealth, diminishing the savings of the population, and reducing real incomes. After a certain limit, however, it hinders the formation of the

profit or the accumulation of capital. But there is another point as well. Inflation is convenient as a redistributive economic mechanism as long as there are accumulations of public wealth that can be redistributed through it. Once the bank savings and the economic accumulations disappear, inflation ceases to be a real redistribution mechanism. Then a restrictive and deflationary economic policy is imposed, often having a much more painful social dimension than the inflationary process itself. Inflation is treated by the new economic teams of the military governments as an effect of excessive demand versus limited supply. It is also seen as a result of the „artificial“ increase in real wages, a legacy of populism. Artificial in their opinion is the disproportion between the real wages and the overall social productivity. The Argentinian Minister of Economy of the Military Junta, declared, in July 1976, when real wages were cut about 40 percent compared to the first years of the same decade, that „the desired balance had been reached, and hence the real wage must grow according to the overall productivity of the economy“ (Shvaizer, Oz 1980: 205-234).

The statement above is a part of the economic justification for the existence of the dictatorships. The decrease in real wages according to different sources varied between 30-40%. Considering the specific economic realities in the region, it would hardly be possible to balance supply and demand in one of the societies with the traditionally strongest social policy otherwise than forcefully. In Southern Latin America, laborers, especially in the industrial sector, are well-organized and enjoy significant social privileges. It is noteworthy that where the level of organization of laborers and the standard of living are higher (such as in Argentina, for example), the activity of the repressive system is also higher. During the dictatorship in Argentina, the number of missing persons, according to the data of human rights organizations, exceeds 25 000, while in Brazil, Uruguay and even Chile, countries with a relatively lower standard of living, this figure is significantly lower. This fact has much significance. In spite of the variety of ideological and political analyzes of it, it alone poses the question of whether it would be possible to reduce the living standards of big groups of society without repression and without cruel authoritarian regimes, able to suppress the reaction of these groups of preserving their social, economic and political rights.

The „Dependency Theory“, launched by many Latin American economists (so-called dezauroism), was created by a number of Latin American economists and sociologists grouped around the Argentinian

economist Raul Prebisch from the Economic Commission for Latin America to the United Nations (CEPAL) and gained special popularity and influence in the sixties. In their view, economically developed countries are imposing a certain kind of dependent development on developing countries and, in particular, on Latin America. Overall, according to supporters of this theory, Latin America has become the „economic application“ of the industrialized countries by providing them with raw materials and some supportive productions. According to them, this dependent development can only be overcome through structural reforms and economic modernization imposed by the state itself.

Particular attention is paid in this respect to the so-called industrialization through import substitution. The intention of this type of industrialization is to reduce the import of industrial goods and especially the means of production from the developed countries and to lay the foundations for a more balanced economic development. Therefore they look for ways in which to overcome the dependence of Latin America (the periphery) of the industrialized countries (the center). The purpose of their strategy is the creation of social capitalism developed through active government intervention. Some „deserters“ do not exclude the help of the United States and the developed European countries in this direction.

Analysts of military dictatorships in Latin America quite often address the issue of the decisive influence of the United States on the economic, political and military development of Latin America. Among the arguments in support of this are the strong American presence, as well as the tens of thousands of Latin American officers who have passed courses through special American schools and trained in anti-terrorist and anti-superstitious techniques. Without denying this connection, it would be exaggerated to bind the actions of the armed forces with external influences or ideological persuasions. The doctrine of „continental protection“, under the auspices of the United States, has been characteristic for a fairly long period – from the proclamation of the Monroe doctrine in 1823 to the 1950s. In the sixties, it quickly transformed itself into the Doctrine of Homeland Security, in relation to the new rebellious realities of Latin America. Robert McNamara, one of the architects of this US doctrine and secretary of defense, stated in 1967: „The lack of a significant external threat to our continent allows us to concentrate the energies of the Rio Treaty member states (a treaty involving most Latin American states and the United States, aimed at protecting the US

mainland) on the common problem of guerrilla warfare. Another important change in our politics is a consequence of the need to counter the threat of guerrilla actions inspired from outside. This danger is quite serious for some of our Latin American allies and we are trying to help them materially, with counselors, equipment and anti-subversive techniques“ (McNamara 1968: 29).

Although the US policy towards Latin America is similar, it is striking that not everywhere the effect of their ideological impact is the same. In some countries, such as Peru, Panama, Bolivia, the military hold an anti-American and anti-imperialist position. Velasco Alvarado, for example, is one of the thousands of Latin American officers trained by the United States in Anti-Partisan combat techniques. This does not prevent him to lead the proclaimed by himself „Peruvian anti-imperialist revolution“ in 1968 and to establish close ties with the Soviet Union, by buying a huge amount of Soviet weapons and inviting hundreds of Soviet military instructors. It becomes clear that in some countries the Doctrine of National Security acquires strictly domestic and anti-subversive dimensions, while in others it is rather economic and foreign-political. The key to this question could be found in the degree of development of public relations, the productive forces, the specific problems facing the respective national economies and the correlation of political forces nationwide. The policy pursued by some military regimes in the 1960s and 1970s has some resemblance to populist rhetoric. Many researchers, therefore, speak of a national „military de-arrhythmism“ which, at certain times, solves immediate tasks related to the modernization of the national economy. These researchers have not accidentally noted that Latin American military feel like „the true liberators of the state by the bourgeoisie“ (Carranza 1978: 38).

In fact, no war in general and in principle. They always fit into a specific time and space, into a specific historical, political, social and economic problem. Too often, the military can be the authors of unbelievable atrocities firmly convinced that they are doing the best for the country and its people. This is clearly proved by the investigations of human right violations throughout the military dictatorships at question. We should also not forget the serious political support that the military receive in their actions. Shortly after the Chilean coup, the president of the National Party said bluntly in an interview: „It's a pity indeed that so many Chileans were killed, but many more do die in an earthquake“ (Harpa 1973: 10). It is noteworthy that in the Latin Ameri-

can region, sometimes the national project of the armed forces and the project of some international financial groups are almost identical. In this case, the military can hardly be accused of being an elemental instrument of foreign financial and economic interests. Given the economic realities, both internationally and nationally, opportunities for political maneuver are often very limited.

Besides the economic aspect, the Doctrine of National Security has another significant element – the national security itself. This is the power of the state to subordinate all enemy forces and thus to achieve national goals (Gomblin 1977: 41). The rule is in full force – the purpose justifies the means. According to military developments, the methods for achieving national goals, whether they are democratic or not, are not particularly important. What is important is the result. As General Augusto Pinochet explains briefly the essence of the government, led by him in 1973 – „the situation of the internal war is introduced to restore peace and order“ (Pinochet 1973). But what are the enemy forces referred to in the Doctrine of National Security? They are well-defined by General Bruno Borges Fortes, chief of the Brazilian Army General Staff in 1973. „The enemy is indefinite, uses mimicry, adapts to any environment, and uses all means legitimate or not to achieve his goals. He may attire to be a priest, a student or a peasant, a defender of democracy, or an elite intellectual, using uniforms or civilian robes if necessary, assuming any role that allows him to deceive and deceive the naive Western nations“ (Fortes 1973: 10). The enemy in this case is the „international communism“ and its internal agents who attack Western and Christian values. And of course – democracy itself. What is impressive in this case is the deep penetration of this enemy into different social groups and the difficulty for them to be identified. This is hardly accidental.

With such an appearance, the degree of its control over society can be practically unlimited. Every social group, and more importantly, every citizen could be an „enemy“, and could be neutralized if needed, for the sake of national security. This unpleasant, yet – according to them – very patriotic task lies with the armed forces. Here lies the explanation of the rather complex conceptual apparatus of the doctors of the National Security Doctrine. The aim is to explain that there is a particular war – „total“, „psychological“, „absolute“, „permanent“, etc. The idea is that there is no physical boundary here to separate the two battlefields and that the undetermined opponent is far more dangerous than the one in conventional war. According to Gen. Pinochet, for exam-

ple, „Marxism is a constant aggression that serves Soviet imperialism. This new form of aggression gives way to an unconventional war in which the conquest of territories is replaced by the attempt to control the country from within“ (Pinochet 1976: 9-11). How do the military legitimize their actions before society, and in front of themselves? According to Regimiento. Roger Trinkie, a prominent theorist of partisan struggle „the pilot is disposed of by the air defense, the marshal- by the shrapnel. The terrorist should be liquidated through torture. This is the main weapon against the guerrilla war“ (Trinquier 1964: 58-70). It is particularly important that in this war, the aggressors are revolutionary rebels, and the military response is seen as lawful and legitimate. So it shouldn't be strange that the majority of the officers indeed do consider authoritarianism, torture and murder to be legitimate means of self-defense and protection of the general public. For them, this is the only way to save the country and to restore the democracy. In this war of life and death, there are only two possible positions. As one of the representatives of the Chilean military junta before the UN raises the issue unequivocally, the problem is whether „with Chile and its government, or with Soviet Communism. No middle ground. We are either on one side or on the other“ (Jarpa 1974: 3-11; 129).

In the anti-Partisan war, however, military operations and terror are not the only means. So-called „civilian“ shares of economic and social nature are widely covered. Not surprisingly, Robert McNamara, one of the ideologists of the National Security Doctrine argues that „security is development and without development there can be no security“ (Veneroni 1973: 206-228). Perhaps this definition largely synthesises the complex and non-linear relationship between the military dictatorships in Latin America and the economic development of the area under study. Certainly development here is not only perceived to be a mechanical economic one without taking into account the social element. The Brazilian strategist, General Golbery do Couto e Silva, says that the dilemma between prosperity and security has been noted by Göring in his famous phrase: „more cannons – less oil“. In fact, he continues, there is no way to avoid the need to sacrifice prosperity in the name of security, provided this prosperity is indeed threatened. But there is, on the other hand, a „minimal“ prosperity that must be ensured in every possible way (Couto e Silva 1978: 32).

Whether and to what extent the military governments in Latin America fail to provide this minimum welfare is a complex issue that

must be considered on a case-by-case basis. Either way, however, their least sympathy for this problem explains the considerable sometimes support they receive from the society when changing the qualified as infinitely corrupt civilian politicians. Regardless of how well they manage to deal with the problems of „dependent capitalism“, mid-term and long-term development strategies are present in most military governments. In this sense, the so-called „civilian“ actions are at least a structural attempt to diminish social problems in society, and not just pure anti-Partisan tactics, which seek to find support from the population in certain areas, and thus limit the influence of the guerrilla movement itself. In many cases, civilian actions are not limited to drilling a well or building a bridge. These can often be national campaigns for literacy, vaccination, the introduction of new regional economic mechanisms, and so on. In this sense, the National Security Doctrine aims to legitimize the ideological intervention of the military in the political life of the society and serves as a kind of internal soldering of the military structures. Last but not least, this doctrine also serves as an economic legitimacy for the society.

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