

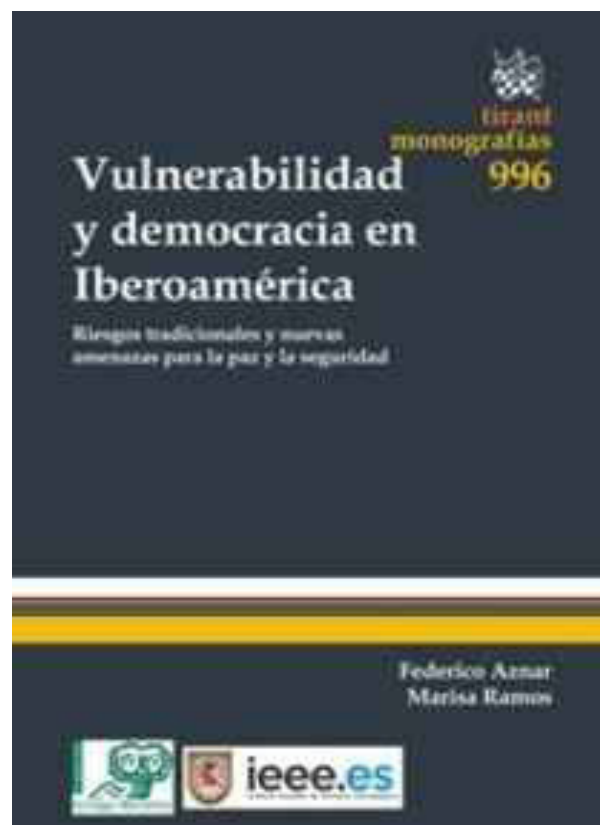
Spanish Institute for Strategic Studies

REVIEW

VULNERABILITY AND DEMOCRACY IN IBERO-AMERICA

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Which is the world that matters? The Mediterranean is the sea at the centre of the earth, while China literally means the middle kingdom. There was a time in which the world that mattered even wore ruffs. You can still see these collars in the pictures in museums. The failure of 1648 was the failure of a Spanish proposition to the world; what is interesting is that it existed. This is exactly where our pessimism originates, our Spanish pessimism that leads us to focus more on our own limitations and failures instead of on our potential and successes.

Today, the centre of the world has shifted; it speaks English and does not occupy a geographical space but instead an imaginary one. Spain is now nothing more than a colony of itself and belongs to the world that matters, as it stands here on the periphery and even its history, its story, has been written with keywords and references that are not its own and even by authors of other nationalities. This may have been the price to pay for its inclusion.

Yet there is really no getting away from the facts. There is a place that some call Ibero-America, which, just like Africa and unlike Europe, possesses a tremendous amount of natural resources and unlike Africa, but like Europe, it has a cultural base and the means to exploit them. As a result, objectively, it is being called to take up a higher position within the realm of international relations. The future is its to shape.

How has it been possible that the bicentenary celebrations marking independence in Ibero-America have gone so unnoticed in our society? This is because there are still those who do not include it in the world that matters. Spain extended itself across the New World whilst it looked towards other places. And this seems to still be the case. Our presence in these parts is greater than what we generally believe in our country, whether this be in historical, economic or political terms, we belong, *nolens volens*, to their collective imagination.

Many Spanish thinkers, in one way or another, have taken care to include Ibero-America in the world. Ramiro de Maeztu and his concept of *Hispanidad*; Gaos, who defines it as a “multi-ethnic and multi-cultural region”; Ortega and his organicist and diverse approximation of hispanicity.

Speaking English does not mean you know how the British parliament functions or to grasp the wealth of nuances found within a culture like the British one. This is, although to a greater degree, what happens with Ibero-America.

Moreover, reflection on security and defence necessitates a variety of viewpoints, intellectual constructs and references in order to exploit synergies from the plurality of approaches, cultures and methodologies pertaining to different corners and institutions within the analysis of a social subject matter.

In the 21st Century, even the most straightforward is complex. In order to comprehend a problem it is necessary to first of all to know that it exists and then to try to define it. This becomes even more pressing when the title (which serves to pose

the question) includes a proactive word such as vulnerability. Its name is not static, and its title alone calls for action and correction.

Their problems are uniquely theirs and not entirely ours. It is for this reason that they must be heard and the nuances of their singularity grasped, because they affect us, despite the fact that Spain has not been entirely present on the continent inasmuch as would be expected given its history, which conversely allows it to now present itself as an example.

This is the reason that binds two first-rate organisations such as the Spanish Institute of Strategic Studies (IEEE) and the Ortega-Marañón Foundation and, under their auspices, a dozen well-renowned researchers from a variety of fields (law, the military, politics, etc.) and nationalities in order to attain the multi-focal and multi-referential nature that the analysis of this situation necessitates.

The book in question endeavours to address the transformations that the security and defence sector has experienced in Ibero-America with the dawn of a new century and a paradigm shift within international relations that took place following the end of the Cold War. All of this on a regional and global scale.

In this way, the corners of the puzzle in the region are subject to gross underestimation of their geopolitical weight in the context of globalisation. Ibero-America, as stated above and reiterated here, lies on the geopolitical semiperiphery, despite the significant resources it possesses. It is a region within which relatively peaceful relations have been established between its members, who have been able to ease tensions and build a framework of mutual trust and prosperity. With the dawn of the new century, the United States has reduced its presence and new actors have appeared on the scene. There exists a change in the perception of the threat that has led to a change in the doctrine used to confront them.

All this has generated a crisis in the mission that has forced a redefinition of the role of the armed forces, which have adopted a new role, so that they may be employed in the fight against crime and terrorism. In parallel, civil-military relations in the states of Ibero-America have experienced a world-shaking transformation process over the last 20 years, which particularly gained speed over the last decade and whose analysis merits in-depth academic reflection.

At the same time, they have subjected their role to democratic scrutiny whilst progress is being made towards a new framework that entails a redefinition of civil-military relations. What is more, one cannot understand the Ibero-American reality without analysing the role of the armed forces in the social and political context of its separate countries, regions and even the continent as a whole, since either in terms of their significance or their prevalence, they have played a major part in the political lives of their respective countries.

Ibero-America suffers from centrifugal and centripetal geopolitical tensions. The centrifuges exert pressure so that they will withdraw into themselves and not fully join in with globalisation. In fact, according to Barnett, there is an area that remains disconnected from this process, mainly the Andean region. The other two tensions are those of the Atlantic and the Pacific. The world of the Pacific is far too diverse and distant, both culturally and geographically to transcend the free trade agreements that have recently been ratified and even with a generic or bilateral formulation of the same. Without this, cooperation is not able to get past good intentions or rhetoric.

It is costly to be an empire, this requires sacrifice and effort. Brazil is a contradictory state of affairs, as was also the case for the United Kingdom when it amassed its empire; for example, as it did this, famine plagued Ireland and some parts of England. Being an empire is a matter of will, resources and organisation. Will is not measured so much by rhetoric but by tolerance in the face of sacrifice; and this requires the involvement of the population.

Brazil is rich in resources, a vast territory and population (for both of those criteria it comes in fifth in the world), it has grown and is an economic power, but it suffers a from cultural burden and organisational shortcomings that limit its good results.

Meanwhile, old conflicts, though not resolved, have developed in a satisfactory manner. Over the course of time, agents from outside the continent, some of them new ones, have burst on the scene. All of this has had unequivocal consequences on the field of security and defence, which, in broad brush strokes, has made headway along the path to democracy.

Simultaneously, relations between the armed forces of different countries have intensified on a par with the general interests concerned, creating a further point of contact and contributing to the generation of trust and mutual awareness whose outpouring makes new ways of collaborating possible.

This situation is not pretending to be a merry Arcadia: many problems remain to be resolved in the region -both at internal level (poverty, inequality, exclusion, etc.) and in the geopolitical sphere (emergencies, rivalries, indigenous geopolitics, populism, etc.)- that converge and feed off one another. Furthermore, this begs unavoidable questions such as how to make progress as part of the reform of the security sector and the role that armed forces should play in stronger and better-structured societies.

Unfortunately, the fragility of some states and shortcomings in their functioning spirals into situations of impunity in the face of violence and crime, which forms the basis of the majority of the vulnerabilities and risks that the region faces and which are related to many others -including environmental issues- which in turn become public problems and even transnational challenges.

The risks that arise along these lines are those posed to the region by organised crimes, the various types of illicit trade and political corruption. These all bull-doze

and pervert public institutions, which are then held to ransom by private interests. The trend of organised crime has seen the activity transform and constantly refine itself. This makes it necessary to differentiate between methods, as well as to tackle the issue in a decisive yet also rational, harmonious and systematic manner in all spheres of political, social, economic and judicial life of the region.

This text has no qualms about tackling what are seen to be fledgling challenges such as problems relating to energy that call for necessary and essential energy integration as the sole way to overcome the vulnerability of the countries in the region within this specific field.

Likewise, cybercrime appears in order to bring to light the difficulties entailed when fighting problems connected to online crime, but also the need to combine national responses with regional approaches, chiefly as regards international cooperation as the only sensible way in which to face up to this challenge.

The responses afforded by governments are probably proving to be insufficient since the challenges posed are huge and require not only national resources based on technically adequate, comprehensive and coordinated policies, but also cross-border activities necessitate consensus and coordination of responses. We must delve deeper into the cooperation between countries; if problems are regional, responses must also be regional.

Faced with such a situation, the international community has once again started to pay heed to the region with a view to encouraging and supporting processes for the improvement justice and security policies, with an as yet uncertain outcome for now. In addition, coordination between these two areas of the defence field requires an optimal balance to be struck in order to tackle challenges such as the one embodied by organised crime. It is one that is too great for a unilateral response by a civil power and one which has led certain governments to deploy their armed forces, with all the risks that this entails. It is also necessary to implement social policies that give rise to participation and serve to legitimatise the path taken.

In the same vein, there is analysis of aspects relating to the international variable: that security has become an essential topic for the purposes of cooperation. In its time, the link between security policies and development policies bore fruit in the form of a happy consensus as to the concept of human security.

Nevertheless, this can prove to be a pitfall given its ambiguity and imprecision, making this concept only marginally operational as clearly evidenced by the mission currently deployed in Haiti.

MINUSTAH, as it is called, is a mission that is essentially a police operation, which does not prove complex from a purely military perspective. Nonetheless, for this to be effective it is necessary to improve coordination and, above all, to dispose of adequate information channels in situ. To link to situation in Haiti to the accomplishment

of the mission (a military one) is a serious mistake in terms of the perception of the problem.

In sum, what we have here is an indispensable text if we wish to undertake thorough study of the complex relationships that have emerged in Ibero-America between justice, security and defence. The book aims to provide the first multidimensional approximation of the difficulties, risks and threats experienced by the region, as well as of the importance that national and transnational actors must accept and try to resolve in cooperation with one another.