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## 27 THE LIBERALIZATION OF THE SPANISH DICTATORSHIP

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**This final selection deals with the liberalization of the Spanish dictatorship, but provides some questions and hypotheses relevant to the study of Latin American politics. Moreno's purpose here is to challenge the most common assumptions held by students of Spanish politics. Discussing the failure of democracy in Spain, Moreno not only assumes that failure is intimately related to the culture of that country, but also calls attention to the universality of coercive means. In a way, similarities as well as differences between Spain and democratic nations are emphasized.**

This is not a research paper. The writing of such a work would presuppose, in my opinion, the acceptance of a theoretical frame

that would give it an objective and direction. It is the contention of this essay that we, at present, lack the necessary theoretical foundations upon which to engage in fruitful research in the area of Spanish politics. Under these circumstances, data could be collected but their selection, arrangement, and interpretation would leave much to be desired. Following this assumption, it becomes necessary in dealing with the subject under study to begin with the postulation of the theoretical principles to be used in future analyses.

In dealing with "the liberalization of the Spanish dictatorship" we are immediately faced with three major unknown elements: *liberalization*, *Spanish*, and *dictatorship*. Furthermore, we are faced with some implied unknowns: the possible relations that may exist between the three explicit elements. Any of the three explicit elements could be defined either by itself, in a "pure" form, or as affected by the other two. A "pure" definition of each element in question could retain logical consistency but would not explain behavior. *Liberalization*, *Spanish*, and *dictatorship*, once defined in an abstract way, would have to be mixed, that is, their relationships determined, to be of any descriptive or analytical use. The main analytical handicap in pursuing this road is that a great many elements that affect the relationships between the given ones would be left out of the picture or would only be indirectly included.

Another alternative would be to interpret the situation under consideration as a whole and to describe the explicit elements as indicative of the overall situation. This approach should have at least an advantage over the other—it would focus our attention immediately on the subject of study instead of taking us there after a major detour.

The effect of the approach over the analysis is always quite considerable. The approach I have tried to describe first is commonly used when dealing with Spain or any other country. The terminology used and the mental attitude it generates tend to bias the study. The title of this paper (not chosen by me) is a proof of this. If we approach the analysis of contemporary political developments in Spain in terms of the "liberalization of a dictatorship," taking for granted that consciously or subconsciously we all have ideas concerning both terms, we are assuming a great many things about a situation of which we are ignorant. If we were not willing to admit our ignorance there would be no reason for the analysis. We are already accepting that Spain is a dictatorship, or a Spanish dictatorship since we also have ideas about what *Spanish* means, and that it is going through a process of *liberali-*

zation. Since in their common use both terms are far from being value-free and have, therefore, a questionable descriptive usefulness, they can be of little help in any attempt to study and classify Spanish political behavior.

We can only observe Spanish political development intelligently if we are willing to make an effort to put aside our most obvious prejudices. This is not easy to do in any case, but in reference to Spain it seems to present added difficulties. We, as researchers and analysts, are not immune to the propaganda barrage that affects all our fellow citizens. Irrespective of where we were born and educated we have been bombarded with propaganda concerning Spain. Words and phrases filled with moral and partisan connotations have reached us concerning Spain more often than almost any other country. A special effort would thus be required to allow us an unprejudiced view.

Since this paper has to be developed in accordance with the prescribed title, I shall begin by redefining the given terms. These definitions will not attempt abstract purity but will tend to reflect their respective interconnections.

*Definition 1* Dictatorship is an illegitimate government whose power rests on coercion or the fear of coercion.

*Definition 2* Liberalization is a structural change in the governmental machinery tending toward its pluralization. It connotes a change from a monistic system of government to a pluralistic one.

*Definition 3* Spanish refers to things from Spain, but within a political context tends to be descriptive of institutions originated in Castile.

As defined above the terms in use tend to reflect a certain understanding of Spanish political culture. There is no pretending that they are so defined only through abstract logic or through comparative techniques. They symbolize *my* interpretation of Spanish politics and as they stand now can be neither right nor wrong. They can only be useful or useless, and their value can only be demonstrated, in this case, by how accurately they would allow me to predict future political behavior in Spain.

The true test of any knowledge is its ability to predict events. An erroneous interpretation could, by mere chance, predict events correctly although the statistical probabilities of this being so are always low; but a correct interpretation could not fail this test. If it fails to account for elements that come to alter the original prediction, it is a sign that it was not correct enough.

In our profession we are used to evading the predicting test. It is a lot easier to refer to past events, explaining them in such a way that they conform to our theoretical speculations, whatever they may be. Consciously or subconsciously there is a certain lack of candor in not being willing to use the future rather than the past as the test ground for our hypotheses. A historian has a good excuse for using the past for the validation of his theories, a political scientist has not.

This paper will not concern itself with explaining why Spain is the way it is, but with explaining how it is going to be, and to the limits of my knowledge, why. The explanations of behavior here presented will not attempt to have finality. The fact that we do not know why something is the way it is, does not stop us from observing its behavior and, based upon such behavior, making accurate predictions.

On the basis of past Spanish behavior some postulates can be enunciated. Before doing this, though, some additional definitions will have to be introduced.

*Definition 4* Democracy is a legitimate pluralistic system of government that provides for effective civilian control and legal continuity.

*Definition 5* Authoritism is a legitimate monistic system of government that provides for civilian control and legal continuity.

*Postulate 1* Spain, since constituted as a nation, has never had a democratic system of government.

From the time of Fernando and Isabel to the Napoleonic invasion, Spain had an authoritistic form of government. The development of such a system went together with the predominance of Castile and its institutions over the rest of the peninsula. This is not to say that authoritism is in any way a peculiar Castilian phenomenon, but that its institutional form and impulse in Spain came from Castile. After the downfall of authoritism Spain fluctuated between dictatorship and unsuccessful attempts to institute democracy.

*Postulate 2* The Spanish failure to develop democracy and its prior adherence for over three hundred years to authoritism must be the result of forces, human, cultural, or environmental, hitherto unidentified.

*Postulate 3* Unless the forces mentioned in Postulate 2 are identified and changes in them corroborated, it has to be assumed that they continue in operation.

*Proposition 1* Within the foreseeable future Spain will not develop a democratic system of government.

Democracy will not flourish in Spain unless basic elements operating in the Spanish nation are to be radically altered. It could be argued that my definition of democracy is arbitrary. I would be the first to accept such criticism, but from a logical point of view *all* definitions are arbitrary. What I am trying to state is that Spain will not develop a civilian-controlled pluralistic system of government that could enjoy a stable life. Whatever name may be given to such a system is not, analytically speaking, very relevant.

It has been also necessary to define the form of government enjoyed by Spain during her colonial heyday as *authoritistic*. The usual dichotomy between dictatorship and democracy does not provide adequate understanding of certain factors. Under the dictatorship-democracy equation, attention is paid primarily to the structural and procedural devices of the system. The issue of legitimacy cannot be observed in its proper proportions. A system may fail to divide its authority and power among different units while enjoying the acceptance and allegiance of the population it rules. Inversely, a system may have its authority and power distributed among different governmental units and not enjoy popular acceptance and recognition. Furthermore, civil rights and freedoms do not have to be guaranteed by a pluralistic structure. Popular participation is equally not the prerogative of pluralism.

If it is accepted (a) that democracy seems to have no roots in Spain; and (b) that many of the properties that are commonly identified with democracy can be present in other types of government, this analysis of Spain can now proceed.

*Postulate 4* Political stability can only be obtained through a system of government that is in accord with the psychological, social, and cultural characteristics of the community in question.

*Postulate 5* Any attempt to impose upon a given community a system of government that is not in tune with its psychological, social, and cultural character would tend to increase political instability.

*Definition 6* Anarchy is the absence of effective government. Under anarchical rule the governmental machinery fails to perform the functions ascribed to it, implicitly or explicitly, by the community in which it operates.

*Definition 7* Caudillism is the legitimate rule of one man based upon charisma and devoid of institutional basis. A *caudillo* does not rely on violence or coercion, or the fear of either, but on allegiance to his person. His rule

tends to be stable as long as he is able to elicit allegiance and keeps in control of the military.

*Proposition 2* Any attempt to liberalize the Spanish system of government will be conducive to anarchy or caudillism and, eventually, to military rule.

It is necessary to distinguish between allegiance to the office and allegiance to the person. This is a most important aspect of leadership selection. The rule of a person may be accepted and allegiance rendered to it because he occupies a position that has been identified with a certain role. Such form of leadership selection tends potentially toward the continuity of the established legal order. On the other hand, leadership identification may take place apart from the institutional governmental structure. The individual qualities believed to be present in a person may elicit allegiance to him and give birth to the expectancy that he ought to rule. Caudillism falls within the latter category.

*Proposition 3* The effective alternatives open to Spain are authoritarianism, caudillism, dictatorship, and anarchy. The only one with any chances of providing for stable civilian rule, control of the military, legal continuity, and popular participation for an extended period of time is authoritarianism.

It is easy to confuse rationalizations with facts. If we were to listen to the great majority of Spaniards we would hear how much they desire to live under this or that political system. Furthermore, they would rationalize their political behavior, past and present, in terms of contemporary ideas and philosophies. To ignore such rationalizations would be unwarranted since they provide clues to certain aspects of their culture, but to accept them as the causative agents of behavior would be totally inappropriate in the light of our knowledge of basic psychological mechanisms. Thus, politically, what Spaniards say and write is important, but not nearly as important as what Spaniards do.

Any attempt to liberalize Spain would of necessity take the form of a system of government alien to Spaniards. That is, the basic mechanisms required for the proper operation of a pluralistic system are not present within the Spanish nation. A democratic system would thus lack the basis for continuous success. To ascribe any value judgments to Spain's inability for democracy would only show our analytical partiality. After all, the form a system takes should not take precedence over the substance of what it contains.

It could be argued that Spain's democratic inability is due to some temporary malfunctions that once removed would give way to the development of democracy. Such an argument is usually underlined by a philosophical commitment to social Darwinism and tends to ignore the power of Spanish cultural characteristics. Moreover, this line of thought is usually held by those who equate the institutional forms of some type of government with universal moral principles of political behavior.

*Postulate 6* None of the above described systems of government is usually present in a pure form. Their classification is to be based, thus, on the determination of which elements are preponderant.

*Proposition 4* The Spanish regime, as presently constituted, is primarily a dictatorship although it presents some strong caudillistic elements.

The lines between different systems of government are sometimes quite difficult to draw, and any final conclusion should rely on detailed research and analysis. Notwithstanding this, however, an educated guess would point to some of the general aspects exhibited by a certain system. Such an observation would lead us to believe that the Franco regime in Spain relies primarily on force or the threat of it to stay in power. In spite of his title of *caudillo* and his charismatic appeal among some segments of the population, not enough allegiance seems to be rendered to his person to make his rule caudillistic

But whether the Franco government is dictatorial or caudillistic should make no major differences in predicting future political developments. Both systems are basically unable to provide for legal continuity—the dictatorial more so than the caudillistic. In both instances, allegiance to institutions, as separate from persons, is lacking. Under a dictatorship fear is the motivating force behind acceptance (which is not to be confused with allegiance); and under caudillistic rule loyalty is rendered to the person of the ruler, not to his office. In the former case, allegiance does not exist at all. In the latter, it is directed toward a person whose rule, by nature, is finite. When the *caudillo* is out of power, or when he dies, allegiance is not usually transferred from him to institutions.

Unless authoritarianism is developed, the present effort to liberalize the Spanish system of government will, if continued, lead the country to political chaos and disorder. Such a situation will be highly conducive to direct military intervention.

It is most unlikely that authoritarianism will be reestablished in Spain in the near future. Although there are powerful cultural

forces oriented in this direction, other forces militate against it. It is quite improbable that the Spanish intellectual elite would now cease importing foreign political ideas. Some of those ideas, and the value attached to them, are and will be used to advocate the liberalization of the regime. The reaction to such an effort will tend to take, as postulated, a dictatorial form, or perhaps a caudilistic one.

Since the Spanish authoritistic system disappeared there have been, within the Hispanic world, only two cases of authoritistic reestablishment—Chile and Mexico. Authoritism was reestablished in Chile in the early part of the nineteenth century, and once again after 1932. In Mexico authoritism was reestablished during and after the Calles administration. It is very interesting that in two cases the reestablishment of authoritism was preceded by the sudden disappearance (by assassination) of *caudillos*. Portales in Chile and Obregón in Mexico consolidated power in their persons and accomplished a governmental reorganization that facilitated the transferring of loyalty from their persons to the executive office. The roles of Arturo Alessandri in Chile and Calles in Mexico are more difficult to determine. They both seem to have contributed to the reestablishment of authoritistic rule. How their charismatic appeal helped to prepare the basis for allegiance to the office they occupied should be analyzed in considerable detail. It could help in altering some of the postulates presented in this paper.

The low probability rate of authoritism in Spain must be explained in terms of internal conflicts within the Spanish culture. Some behavioral forces that can be detected in various other aspects of Spanish life (for example, family structure, educational philosophy, and inter-group dynamics) tend toward the development of authoritism. The monistic conception of authority is still quite powerful within the Spanish national psyche. The great obstacle is the difficulty in finding an acceptable way of institutionalizing this tendency in governmental form.

Authoritism is largely precluded by the Spanish intellectual tendency to try to be what they are not. The custom of copying foreign political models is not unique to Spain. Today all different kinds of cultural entities are engaged in an effort to give up some of their traditions and replace them with Western European values and institutions. Spain has been at this game for quite a long time and perhaps in her case the effects of such a course of action are easier to detect than in the case of other countries. There is no doubt that communities have always influenced one another. Such cultural intercourse is but normal and even inevitable. The phenomenon referred to here is not this broad type of

inter-cultural influence (acculturation or transculturation) but the transplanting of institutions developed in one country to another where there are, at least for the time being, no bases for their functioning in the same manner they do in their country of origin.

One of the striking characteristics of the political development of Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon countries is how their political systems develop from within. The high degree of stability achieved by these communities is related to their political creativity. Their political institutions responded to the needs, traditions, and customs of their societies rather than to any intellectually derived scheme of political organization. Political forms developed in this manner were accepted and understood. The lesson to be learned from their example is that a stable political life must respond to adequate coordination between political ideas and institutions, and cultural reality.

*Definition 8* A culture is the sum total of means by which a given community gives expression to the universal elements in its constitution.

Accepting basic biological and psychological similarity among all human beings, cultural distinctions have to be interpreted as different ways of doing the same things. The distinction between basic universal elements and different cultural modes of expression is quite important. Any attempt to explain cultural differences apart from human equality implies a racial determinant that would be unwarranted in the light of contemporary knowledge. Therefore, the peculiar aspects that are to be found in Spanish political culture are to be evaluated as modes of style rather than as constituting different behavior.

The Spanish proclivity toward some forms of government has to be explained in terms of arrangements of elements rather than on assumptions concerning the absence or presence of certain human qualities. Any analysis of the motivating elements in Spanish politics would have to delve into many different aspects of Spanish life. Political behavior cannot be explained in terms of itself, not even in terms of closely related non-political factors. To have a good understanding of how a partial aspect of society functions it is necessary to be aware of many other aspects. That is, if the integrative quality of the human mind is accepted.

*Postulate 7* The Spanish tendency toward monistic government responds to a low degree of social cohesion in the Spanish society.

*Proposition 5* Without an increase in its degree of social cohesion, Spanish society will retain its needs for monistic rule.

Many functions that in Anglo-Saxon societies, for example, are performed through non-political means are in Spain assigned to the government, largely to the executive branch. A society with a high degree of social cohesion is likely to handle a series of problems before there is a need for governmental action. For example, a potential communist in American society is subjected to a complex of psychological and social pressures from family, friends, and neighbors. There are also economic opportunities he may forfeit if he were to openly follow the communist creed. Potential communists, or extreme radicals in general, are checked at a non-governmental level. In Spanish society the same degree of social articulation is absent. If someone desired to follow a radical path, he would perhaps feel some family pressure, but beyond that society would command no effective tools to deal with this problem. Friends would not stop talking to him and neighbors would not forbid their children to play with his. The task of keeping radical militancy from spreading and taking action becomes a problem for the government. The government has to deal with it by stopping dissension before it flourishes (through allegiance) or by controlling it after it has developed (coercion). The basic difference between a democratic system and the Spanish system is that in the former, repression of dissension is primarily performed by non-governmental mechanisms whereas in the latter, the task is ascribed to the government.

Common to every society is repression of dissension. Every society has to find ways of keeping its members together; otherwise, the society, as an articulate community, will disintegrate. This applies to societies that proclaim their belief in freedom as well as those that do not. To believe in freedom is not to be confused with being free. The widespread acceptance of any belief in a society, freedom included, is symptomatic of effective controls that in fact repress alternative choices. Such repression is commonly rationalized in terms of the universal validity of the accepted ideas. That is, the members of the community believe that they all agree on certain issues because they have been so predisposed by cultural mechanisms but not because the ideas in question are objectively valid. As a result of this process of rationalization, they become certain that members of other communities would see the true value of their beliefs if they were in a

position to take a dispassionate (culturally unbiased) look at them. By seeing in the opinions of different societies a culturally influenced outlook that they are not willing to accept in their own case, they are able to use the lack of universal acceptance of their values for reasserting their faith in their universal validity.

Should the Spanish government cease to perform the tasks ascribed to it, the Spanish society itself would be in danger of collapsing. It is not by chance that all liberalizing attempts are followed in Spain by the increase of separatist activities by all the different regions. Catalonians, Basques, Asturians, and Galicians gave ample examples of how far they were willing to go during the last republican regime. Liberalization tends in Spain toward national disintegration.

What is true for regional feelings and interests is also true for economic and social groups. The whole history of Spain points to heavy reliance upon governmental mechanisms and the lack of success in the attempts to overcome this tendency. One of the key functional cultural elements responsible for this situation is the lack of compromising grounds.

If it is assumed that all men have potentially the same approximate degree of compromising capacity and approximately the same degree of desire to work, or not to work, with others, the causes for the presence, or absence, of a compromising tendency in a society would have to be searched for in its internal organization.

*Postulate 8* Compromise can only result from shared interests. Disagreement is bridged when the disagreeing feel that the continuation of their disagreement may jeopardize something they value higher than the object of disagreement.

*Proposition 6* Political compromise is only possible when shared values are more powerful than the unshared ones.

*Proposition 7* The higher the social control, the higher the degree of uniformity in values, the greater the basis for compromising.

Compromising does not spring from disagreement but from agreement. It presupposes the existence of shared values, ideas, and interests that would take priority over the areas of disagreement. Such consensus of opinion and feeling cannot be attained unless there is a high degree of uniformity present among the members of the society. The British and American political parties (the dominant ones, that is) may clash upon specific

policies but essentially uphold the same views about the most important aspects of British and American social organization and belief systems. Therefore, they, as well as the great majority of the active political groups in those countries, easily find grounds for compromise. Every time the continuation of a disagreement tends to endanger values held higher by the disputing parties, it is time to compromise.

In Spain, a low degree of social cohesion has resulted in a low degree of value uniformity (or perhaps the other way around). The grounds for compromising have never been provided to a degree that would make possible the coexistence of apparently antagonistic elements. Their disagreeing factions find no common grounds upon which to meet. The radicalization of their political positions is a concomitant factor of this situation.

*Proposition 8* Liberalization of Spanish politics will be conducive to the radicalization and multiplication of militant political groups. No equivalent to the British and American two-party system shall develop out of an attempt to divide effective political power among various governmental institutions.

Present developments in Spain can now be observed in their true perspective. The liberalization of the Franco regime, whether a gimmick of those in power or an honest desire to change, cannot but fail to bring about a real and durable pluralization, or democratization, of the country. This attempt, if pursued, will lead to the rapid fragmentation and radicalization of political militancy. As a matter of fact, such a phenomenon is already detectable.

Communists, anarchists, neo-fascists, and all other radical groupings will become important political elements. Furthermore, no united front among middle-of-the-roaders will hold together for long. The development of this situation will, sooner or later, make it clear to the military that the country needs to be saved (a conception toward which the Spanish military has been historically inclined), and unless a charismatic *caudillo* steps in and unites the country (the military included) behind him, dictatorship will return. Whether a civilian or a military man heads the dictatorial system, its basic ingredient will be coercion applied through the military.

The political developments here contemplated will, of course, cast a heavy influence over other areas of Spanish life, but not necessarily in a fatalistic fashion. Although authoritarianism, and to a lesser degree, caudillism, would be more conducive to

economic development than dictatorship, due to the political stability they provide, the Franco regime has shown that economic growth can take place under a dictatorship. The evaluation of the relationship between the economy and politics becomes quite complicated when influential external forces are also considered. It could very well be that American or European influence is actually responsible for the present state of the Spanish economy. However interesting this subject may be, its proper treatment falls outside the focus of this paper.

It could be argued that this theoretical presentation has failed to account for the possible influence that external (non-Spanish) forces may have upon the political future of Spain. Such forces are no doubt in operation. Spain's relative unwillingness to return to an authoritistic system may very well respond to some of them. Nevertheless, it is the contention of this paper that they are not going to alter, for the time being, anyhow, the sequence of events here described.

The theoretical models put forward in this paper are only intended as research guidelines. There is much research to be done concerning Spain and its political behavior. If the prejudices that have until now prevailed are permitted to cast a determinant effect over future investigations, there is little chance of increasing the present degree of predictability concerning that country's political development. The main purpose of this analysis is, therefore, to challenge some of the most common implicit assumptions held by the students of Spanish politics. An unprejudiced attempt at analyzing the political life of Spain will not be forthcoming unless the cultural limitations of the researchers are overcome.

There is no doubt that the ideas and conceptions put forward in this paper could be severely criticized from many different points of view. I could do it myself with great ease; but deficiencies in the presentation should not distract attention from its goal and potential usefulness. If the events here predicted do not take place, this paper and the effort that went into it will be proven worthless. If the sequence of events here predicted take place, it will then be obvious that the effort was not without some merit.