

**POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
THOUGHT IN THE XIX
CENTURY, THE CASE OF LATIN
AMERICA**

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Resumen

El ensayo analiza la adaptación de las ideas del liberalismo clásico en América Latina en el siglo XIX. Dentro de una metodología historiográfica, hermenéutica y analítica de algunos casos que ejemplifican ideas políticas y económicas, se ha llegado a una conclusión general: las ideas del liberalismo clásico se convirtieron en una máscara superficial que ocultaba sistemas democráticos y endebles capitalistas. En el aspecto político, bajo la máscara se ocultaban beneficios específicos para la Iglesia católica; sin embargo, en períodos específicos, algunos ejemplos, incluso con denominaciones liberales, muestran que la persecución a los clérigos también fue oculta o subestimada. En el aspecto económico, los beneficios del libre mercado no se verán hasta la segunda mitad del siglo XIX, cuando la Revolución Industrial hizo que Europa y Estados Unidos aumentaran su demanda de materias primas.

Palabras clave: América Latina, Liberalismo Clásico, política, economía, libertad, democracia

Abstract

The essay analyzes the adjustment of the ideas of classical liberalism in Latin America in the nineteenth century. Within a historiographical, hermeneutical, and analytical methodology of some cases that exemplify political and economic ideas, a general conclusion has been reached: the ideas of classical liberalism became a superficial mask that concealed democratic systems and flimsy capitalists. On the political side, specific benefits to the Catholic Church were hidden under the mask; however, in specific periods, some examples, even with liberal denominations, show that the persecution of clerics was also hidden or underestimated. On the economic side, the benefits of free markets will not be seen until the second half of the 19th century, when the Industrial Revolution caused Europe and the United States to increase their demand for raw materials.

Keywords: Latin America, Classic Liberalism, politics, economy, freedom, democracy

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1. Introduction

The emancipation of Latin America and its subsequent path towards the creation and strengthening of new nations is not only composed as a historical fact, where political and economic events play an almost all-embracing role but, in this case, it is intended to show how these events are influenced by the most relevant political and economic theoretical advances from the old continent. Behind the birth of the new republics was an adaptation, syncretism, and even manipulation of the liberal ideas that spread on the American continent during the 19th century. The political and economic ideas of the eighteenth century, coming from various European sources, such as the Enlightenment or from the influence of Protestantism, traveled to Latin America to find a syncretism with the values of a region that lived between the colony, the Catholicism, miscegenation, and other cultural elements. This context supposes an appropriation and adaptation of ideas and concepts that arise in Western Europe, from something that has come to be called Classical Liberalism, in a sort of accommodation and practicality of ideas in an Ibero-American world marked by problems different from those of Europe (Cardoso, Marcuzzo and Romero Sotelo, 2014).

The dissemination of these ideas has become an invitation for historians of ideas, as well as theoretical academics, to trace the sources, evidence, and propagation of some political and economic assumptions as universal ideas, namely the protection of life, the religious and economic freedom, democracy, the rule of law, the division of powers, and secularism. Thus, the main objective of this paper is to carry out a theoretical-contextual analysis of the adaptation, manipulation, or syncretism of the ideas belonging to classical liberalism from the emancipation processes of Ibero-America. Thus, the writing takes political ideas and, later, economic ideas as its starting point. In principle, a brief construction of the study's conceptual framework will be carried out. Later, the ideas of political liberalism will be analyzed based on four elements: freedom, democracy, religion, slavery, and nationalism. The following section reviews the adaptation of the ideas of economic liberalism in two sections: protectionism as a prelude to Laissez-faire and then, the region's economic policies.

Framing the thought

The diffusion of political and economic ideas has been studied within the circulation of ideas; the most relevant approaches are found in the works of Colander and Coats (1989) and Cardoso (2003). The approach studies the sources and the diffusion, transmission, and circulation of elements that are drawn within the political, cultural, and social aspects and even within the cosmopolitan spirit of the inhabitants and their ability to appreciate the development of economic thought. Diffusion does not necessarily reach the population in mass, but it first reaches certain groups, few in number, that are at the forefront of education and knowledge development. Then, it spreads, adapted, or syncretized to its circle of influence. Finally, they land in a population

that does not necessarily observe the contributions' relevance but understands them within their own cultural and social context.

Politicians and public policy makers are among the first and second groups who shared these ideas, however, in an adapted, half-understood, or misunderstood form (Solow, 1989, p. 75). The flawed transmission often leads to the re-categorization of ideas, the formation of schools or currents that never existed (Cardoso, 2017). Local adaptation is always present and therefore undeniable (Ophir and Shapin, 1991, p. 5). It is crucial to stress the necessity of historical studies that aid in understanding the appropriation, adaptation, or rejection of these ideas.

The process of adaptation traverses intricate systems of creativity, ideological diversity, and cultural contexts, all of which influence transmission. Therefore, the preservation of the source within the original conceptual framework is almost inconsequential; what matters is the appropriation and adaptation of the arguments with a new significance. This process also involves translation methods, which necessitate hermeneutics and exegesis, tools that are not widely used. When viewing knowledge as a subject undergoing translation, it may lose certain elements, some crucial for analytical understanding, others irrelevant due to their formal nature (Forget, 2010). The solution lies in the interdisciplinary dialogue between history, politics, economics, and linguistic approaches (Tymoczko, 2002).

The impact of the Reformation and, later, of the Enlightenment accelerated the growth of publications on politics, economy, religion, and philosophy in Europe; most of the writings are drawn within the moral and theological influence of Christianity, as in the case of Adam Smith or Thomas Malthus, others, with a more quantitative approach to the functioning of the market, as in the case of David Ricardo. According to Oz-Salzberger (2006, p. 396), translating these texts, especially into English, led to a national self-awareness that influenced the processes of independence by generating a sense of belonging, not only cultural but also linguistics.

According to Cunha & Suprinyak (2017), several examples of political and economic thought of classical liberalism applied in Latin America can be identified. In general terms, some essential elements of liberalism are understood as the protection of life, freedom of the market, religion or speech, and democracy, which are seen within the division of powers, elections, and the empire of the law. When carrying out the analytical review, it is noted that in many cases, a coherent line of thought cannot be found; on some issues, some groups are liberal, and on others, the same groups are nationalists, conservatives, or even monarchists. Thus, these currents must be seen as a set of ideas that have been syncretized within the Latin American context. In this article, an analytical approach to liberal tendencies is made, as seen from political and economic points of view.

2. Liberalism in politics

The influence of Great Britain played an important role. The idea of Laissez-faire collided mainly with the commercial exclusivity that had been established during the colony. Trade restrictions were shown as vestiges of the colony. However, internal social divisions, plus a forged tradition of power and prohibition, cast suspicion on the ideas of Adam Smith (free market), John Locke (rule of law), Alexis de Tocqueville (checks and balances), Baron De Montesquieu (division of powers) or Benjamin Constant (freedom and the rule of law). Although the ideas of these thinkers were intertwined and repeated, they were adapted and molded into their ways of seeing politics and economics.

Democracy and its adaptation

Luis Suárez (1992, p. 12) argues that Spain was in the process of creating local monarchies within the colonies, a project that was paralyzed by the Napoleonic invasions. Francisco de Miranda, Venezuelan, precursor of the Hispano-American emancipation, presented to Great Britain the project of a monarchy, with an Inca or emperor, with chiefs for life, appointed by the Inca, as members of the Upper House; and, parliamentarians from the elections as members of the Lower House (Navas, 2011). The example of Manuel Belgrano, an Argentine politician who promoted the independence of Latin America, is representative.

Belgrano proposed a constitutional monarchy, based in Cusco, with the Inca as sovereign (Safford, 1985). This monarchy would have democratic elements, although these were not entirely clear. The main purpose was independence. Carlota Joaquina, queen of Portugal and Brazil, sister of Fernando VII of Spain, had even been designated as the legitimate heir to the kingdom, “the only person who at the moment could carry out this project, because she met almost all the conditions, was the infant Carlota Joaquina; that is why Belgrano noticed her, immediately engaging in the necessary negotiations” (Morales, 2008, p. 27).

Similar ideas arose in Mexico, Brazil, and Gran Colombia. In Mexico, General Agustín de Iturbide, who published the Plan of Iguala in 1821, stipulated that a monarchical government should be established with Fernando VII as emperor. In Brazil, the case is clearer since the establishment of a Portuguese monarchy for sixty-five years, “despite its long duration and a well-coordinated policy, the monarchy did not take root” (Morales, 2008, p. 21). In Gran Colombia, the idea of monarchy appeared in characters such as “Sucre, Urdaneta, Páez, Santander, Restrepo, Vergara, Tanco, Martín, Tovar, and others. As for the Liberator, from his first triumphant campaigns, monarchical ambitions and projects were attributed to him”. (p.30).

The examples show that the ideas pertinent to liberal democracy had not fully penetrated the southern part of the continent. A hybrid idea seemed the solution: a monarchy with certain

democratic overtones, with an Inca as monarch, even if he came from Portuguese or Spanish descent, who had certain constitutional limits. The intention also seems clear: to change the owner from a Spanish monarchy to a local one. However, after the independence processes, democracy prevailed, although it appeared to be a crude and limited copy of the Anglo-Saxon democratic systems since local interests and the influence of the Catholic Church continued to prevail.

What about religion

On the religious side, classical liberalism stipulated a clear precept of freedom, on the one hand, and the division between state and church, on the other hand. Religious freedom, as explained by Ludwig Von Mises in his book *Liberalism: The Classical Tradition*, in relation to liberalism mentions that:

the realm of religion, on the other hand, is not of this world. Therefore, liberalism and religion could coexist without their spheres touching. That they had reached the point of collision was not the fault of liberalism. It did not transgress its sphere; it did not intrude into the realm of religious faith or metaphysical doctrine. However, it found the church as a political power that claimed the right to regulate, according to its judgment, not only man's relationship with the world to come but also the affairs of this world. (2005, p. 33)

Concerning the division between state and Church, Thomas Jefferson, in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association sent in January 1802, mentioned that religion is a matter that is only between man and God, prohibiting the legitimate powers of the government from making any law that imposes a single state religion, "or that prohibits the free exercise of it, thus building a wall of separation between the Church and the States" (Library of Congress, 1998). The Anglo-Saxon conservative promoted secularism based on a legal system that protected natural rights, as seen in the diaries of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. While the liberals and conservatives in the United States promoted religious freedom without imposing an official religion, the conservatives and various liberals in Latin America promoted a single-state religion, that of the Catholic Church. The political class did not find significant problems with the privileges and power held by the Catholic Church, the rule of law, the division between Church and state, or even religious freedom.

These elements were of secondary importance. In many cases, "the Church became the main obstacle to economic, social and political modernization" (Safford, 1985, p. 385). The concordats served as a legal instrument to legalize the relationship between the Church and the state; the political and economic privileges were clear in them. The agreements that were signed with the Holy See were in Bolivia (1851), Costa Rica (1852), Guatemala (1851, 1884), Haiti (1860), Honduras (1861), Nicaragua (1861), El Salvador (1862), Venezuela (1862), Ecuador (1861,

1881), Colombia (1887, 1891). In the agreements, the governments committed “to preserve the endowment of the bishops, councils, and seminaries, and to provide the expenses of the cult and the factory of the Church, from the funds of the National Treasury” (Salinas Aranedo 216). The benefits were justified in the diminished tithes or confiscated goods. In addition, the new states were obliged to establish Catholicism as the official religion (Osuchowaska, 2014, p. 67).

The relationship between state and Church remained intertwined, for example, in political decisions, such as the right of patronage through which the proposal of priests was ceded to the governments while the states committed themselves to providing the means for the conversion of the infidels. In addition, other religions or secret societies were prohibited, while educational institutes and programs had to be approved or subscribed to the Church. As César Vidal (2002) puts it, Anglo-Saxon Protestantism promoted literacy and, later, the generation of knowledge to understand the “mind of God.” In the case of Latin America, the Church’s control over education prevented the entry of new scientific knowledge because it came from Protestant heretics. Starting in the second half of the 19th century, “many clerics made an effort to demonstrate the compatibility between Catholicism and progress, understood as the Enlightenment or science” (Blancarte, 2008, p. 154).

Although the Church found legal formulas to maintain its position in Ibero-American society, it is no less criticizable how various “liberal parties” found justification to persecute and assassinate clerics, as in the case of Ecuador during the Liberal Revolution of 1895. Ideals of freedom disappeared with anticlerical positions such as the expulsion of the Jesuits, followed by “the closure of convents or the pure and simple prohibition to enter a monastery” (Blancarte, 2008, p. 157). Many of the so-called liberals promoted religious persecution as a means of forming a secular state. The separation between state and Church occurred at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. In the case of Colombia, it happened in 1853, Mexico in 1857, Brazil in 1890, Panama in 1904, Ecuador in 1906, Uruguay in 1916, Honduras in 1924, Chile in 1925, and Cuba in 1940.

End of slavery

In the case of slavery, decision-making is accommodated to local circumstances. Abolitionist movements in Britain and later in the United States grew stronger within conservative sectors. William Wilberforce (1759-1833), an evangelical Christian since 1785, and Sir Charles Middleton and Thomas Clarkson, presented the reform for the abolition of slavery in 1791. After various vicissitudes, the reform was approved in 1807, although its application began in 1833, three days after Wilberforce’s death (Metaxes, 2007).

In the case of the United States, Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), the sixteenth president, politically active, affiliated with the Republican Party, the American conservative party, signed

the Emancipation Act on September 22nd, 1862, amid a bloody Civil War, “I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I cannot remember when I did not think or feel that way... It was in the oath I took that, to the best of my ability, I would preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States” (Lincoln, 1864).

Safford (1985, p. 387) places the case of slavery in Ibero-America as a line of agreement between conservatives and liberals. Between the 1830s and 1840s, all parties stopped the disappearance of slavery, “although conservative establishments generally presided over the attempts to maintain slavery, did not face serious criticism from liberals. Tomas Lander, Venezuela’s leading liberal ideologue of the 1830s and 1840s, was an outspoken advocate of slavery.” Under the influence of Great Britain, in later years, slavery was abolished as a consensus between liberal and conservative tendencies: New Granada in 1850, Ecuador in 1852, Argentina in 1853, and Venezuela and Peru in 1854. The last countries to abolish slavery were Cuba and Brazil in 1888.

On the idea of Nation

Liberal ideas are built within a nation-state, that is, within a jurisdiction that promotes freedom as the foundation of political, economic, and social life. Therefore, it is essential to analyze nationalism as a foundation for constructing the nascent American states as a new focal point of loyalty. The independence processes of the Ibero-American region came hand in hand with a new sense of belonging to a nation imported, as happens with liberal ideas, from the old continent. However, in this part of the world, the feeling of belonging was influenced by separate currents: some indigenous, others Creole, and others of European descent. Jackson Spielvogel (2000) argues that from the idea of cultural nationalism came that of political nationalism. Nationalism was a necessary condition for the foundation of a state with limits, “a necessary condition of free institutions is that the limits of governments must coincide in the main with those of nationalities” (pp. 750-51).

The most significant contribution to nationalism came from Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831); the Nation was seen as the agent that transcends history towards freedom; this would be possible when citizens found their freedom in conjunction with their identification and belonging to a nation. Hegel incorporates the economy within a systematic theory of the nation-state; he maintains that both capitalism and nationalism are products of the state because it ensures freedom and individual rights (Nakano, 2004). The first evidence in Latin America of writings about a sense of national belonging comes from the Peruvian Jesuit Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzmán (1748-1798), of Spanish descent, who lived in exile in Italy until the end of his days. In his document Letter to the American Spaniards, from 1791, published in Spanish in 1801, he exhorted the Creoles to obtain independence from Spain, “the New World is our country, its history is ours, and in it we must examine our present situation, to determine ourselves, by

it, to take the necessary party to preserve our rights, and those of our successors” (Gutiérrez Escudero, 2007, p. 3).

Shortly after, the first expression of indigenous nationalism was presented in the rebellion of Túpac Amaru II in the Viceroyalty of Peru, initiated by José Gabriel Condorcanqui in November 1780, against the Bourbon Reforms. After executing the corregidor Antonio de Arriaga and murdering thousands of men, women, children, and religious leaders in February 1781, his revolution won several victories against the Spanish corregidores (Siles Salinas, 2009). Of mestizo and Inca descent, a messianic aura syncretized with Christianity was generated around the figure of Túpac Amaru II, “he did not present himself only as king and legitimate sovereign, but also as redeemer, restorer of the world, savior of the Indians... Túpac Amaru II affirmed before the indigenous people who followed him that those who died in battle would be resurrected on the third day” (Fernández Pozo, 2016, p. 12).

After the independence processes, the Nation was also seen within protectionist policies, which were mixed with feelings of identity belonging and were seen as the product of a miscegenation common to the Spanish colonies. However, a few decades after emancipation, the word nationalism began to have a different connotation: a greater participation of the state as the central entity of the economy, politics, and society. This connotation moved away from the idea of a nation as an entity for the assurance of freedom. It came closer to the idea of a nation as the central agent of a country’s political, social, and economic life.

According to Cunha and Suprinyak, starting in the 1870s, political liberalism based on the idea of a nation became a myth: a set of empty slogans about freedom and individual autonomy that covered illiberal elements. Latin American nationalism at the end of the 19th century had a greater relationship with culture and societies and with a state with a central role; little by little, the relationship between the idea of Nation with the universal ideas of life, freedom, and the search for happiness disappeared. A new version of this nationalism is seen in its relation to positivist thought.

Gabino Barreda (1818-1881), Mexican philosopher and politician, the forerunner of the scientific method in education, proclaimed in 1867 that the well-being of the Nation depended on freedom, order, and progress, “let us henceforth be our motto freedom, order and progress; freedom as a means; order as a base and progress as an end” (Cardoso Vargas, 2005, p. 187). The government, the central institution, was strong and dominant, and the call to implement positivism went hand in hand with secularization. As Charles Hale (1986) explains, the centralization of political power, even in its authoritarian form, is indispensable for rational intervention in education and the Nation’s future. Herbert Spencer’s positivism and social evolution provided a theoretical foundation for ideas of progress in building the new American

nations. These ideas served the favor and impulse in creating the national bank, as in the cases of Brazil (1851, 1853) and Colombia (1880). By the end of the 19th century, positivism and nationalism had merged with the ideas of evolution and cultural determinism.

3. Liberalism in economics

Cultural adaptation, social syncretism, and political accommodation also occurred with economic liberalism. The contributions of Smith and Ricardo were adapted, changed, or ignored for several decades. In addition, in a substantial part of the theoretical adaptation, the contributions of Jeremy Bentham on economic freedom as a basis for prosperity and the possibility offered by the free market to eliminate the monopolistic colonial aristocracy converted into a burden for development (Cot, 2014).

The independences led the new nations to a general nervousness about the need to impose protectionist policies that lasted for several decades. This environment changed in the decade of the 1850s-1870s when the demand to produce Latin America increased considerably. Although Mexico maintained some protectionist policies, the growing European and North American demand for raw materials from Ibero-America allowed more countries in the region to balance their foreign trade, justifying “the liberal economic faith in free trade. Consequently, during the years 1845 to 1870, in most countries there was almost unanimity on at least aspects of economic liberalism” (Safford, 1985, p. 386).

On several occasions, the specific problems of certain sectors allowed the principles of economic liberalism to be set aside, and a resolution based on the local context sought. The case of Venezuela makes this assertion clear: coffee producers borrowed heavily during the 1830's, thinking that high prices would cover their commitments. When the market declined, producers found themselves in the throes of unpayable debt at the end of the decade. The subsequent campaign focused on repealing the legislation of 1834, which established free interest fluctuation. A state presence was requested to solve the problem; this led to the creation of the Liberal Party (Safford, 1985, pp. 386-388). Thus, the liberals advocated for the state's intervention while the conservatives remained in defense of the free market.

Political battles between Conservatives and Liberals have led to each group aligning itself with its version of economic thought. Although both agreed with the general principles based on freedom, the liberals were closer to a version of the economic and political left, and the conservatives to a version of the right. When the young Argentine politician, as well as a writer and poet, Esteban Echeverría (1805-1851), returned from his studies at the Sorbonne, he was one of the main promoters of romantic liberalism, inspired by the nationalist ideas of Giuseppe Mazzini, and the socialist Henri of Saint-Simon. La Joven Argentina, a political organization founded by Echeverría in 1838, opposed the governments of Juan Manuel de Rosas in the province of Buenos Aires-based on a liberal yet nationalist platform.

On the other hand, as Cunha and Suprinyak (2017) explain, the issue of indigenous lands was a topic in which liberal thought was adapted and extended to areas in which there was a dark cloud. For the Ibero-American liberals, communal property was in clear contradiction with the principles of liberal economics because it inhibited individual interests. The solution lies in the individual attribution of property. The consequences of the clash of visions on earth were seen several decades after independence. In Mexico, “at the beginning of the 19th century, many towns lacked the means of production, so land invasions were constant and gave rise to innumerable conflicts with the authorities, neighbors, landowners, butlers, and administrators, as well as periodic violent confrontations” (Von Wobeser, 2011, p. 304).

The problem of communal lands and individual property of the land is not produced by liberalism since expropriation within the Spanish regime arose from the colony’s beginning. However, the solutions of the 19th century took as their starting point the impossibility of returning to a communal or ancestral state and the need to proliferate private property as an economic principle. Although, in the 20th century, several governments in the region decided to apply programs of land expropriation and subsequent adjudication to peasant and indigenous communities, processes that came to be known as Agrarian Reforms: Bolivia (1953), Chile (1962 and 1973), Ecuador (1964 and 1973), Colombia (1936, 1961 and 1994), Peru (1969).

Policies in Latin America

The political emancipation of the region became a reality plagued by European and American influences, whether seen in the American Revolution or the French Revolution. Nevertheless, at the same time, they came hand in hand with the influence of British prosperity and economic thought emerging during the 18th century. Although the processes of independence have an emancipatory significance, it is no less accurate that political and economic thought adapted to a greater or lesser extent, came from Great Britain, France, Germany, and even the United States.

Prior to the independence events, we find a Bourbon Spain that tried to make changes through a reform influenced by the ideas of the Enlightenment, especially mercantilist ideas, who believed that wealth was limited, which means that, in order for one to win, the other must lose, that is, international trade must limit imports and promote exports. In addition, the mercantilists believed that the honor of the monarchy should be ensured through protectionist trade, with stricter control of the colonies to increase wealth. Monopolies and the imposition of taxes whose collection was targeted directly to the monarch were favored:

Beginning in the 1750s...royal monopolies were imposed on a growing number of commodities, including tobacco, spirits, gunpowder, salt, and other consumer goods. The government assumed direct administration of the taxes that were traditionally divided among private contractors. The dreaded alcabala, or sales tax, continued to be levied on all transactions, and now its level has been raised in some cases from 4 to 6 percent. (Lynch, 2008, p. 12)

The Bourbon reforms were erected to reinforce royal power by centralizing administration and increasing revenue. These reforms, especially those that preferred the peninsulares over the criollos in the appointment of administrative positions, produced an increase in tensions. In addition, Spain began to be seen as an obstacle to the development of the colonies based on the exclusive commercial links that the mother country demanded. Gaspar de Jovellanos, a Spanish jurist and scholar, mentioned that “colonies are useful insofar as they provide a safe market for the excess production of the metropolis” (Lynch, 2008, p. 16).

By the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, the influence of the ideas cherished in Europe can be glimpsed. During the Napoleonic era, when the troops arrived in Spain and Portugal (1807-1808), and José Bonaparte was crowned King of Spain, the instability caused in the colonies led to multiple uprisings that began in 1810 under the leadership of Simón Bolívar in the northern part of South America, and the leadership of José de San Martín in the southern part. With the processes of independence, the internal interests of local politicians were revealed, in addition to making it clear that the political and economic links with Europe were maintained.

According to Leslie Bethell (2008), the 19th century can be seen as the English and American century (p. 271) due to its immense influence on economic activity, in the first case, and the political presence through the Monroe Doctrine, in the second case. Great Britain became the great creditor of the recent republics, and one of the main trading partners, a source of investment in infrastructure, agriculture and mining (Bulmer-Thomas, 2007, pp. 33-38). In the 19th century, the region was linked to the leadership of Great Britain, possibly due to a weakness of the Spanish empire over its colonies from the beginning of the 18th century. Lynch (2008) argues that the Spanish colonies realized that they depended on an increasingly underdeveloped mother country.

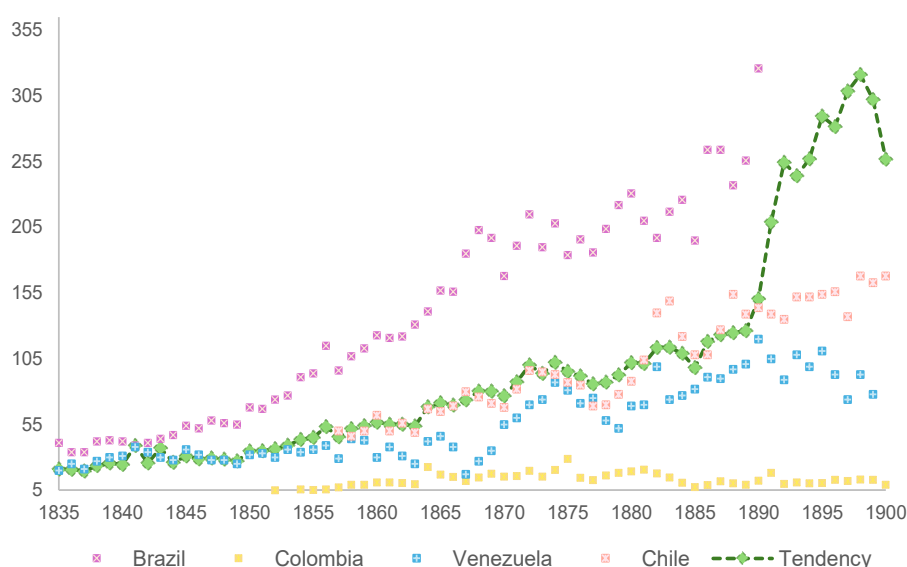
Policies on economic freedom of the market can be found in 1820 in Great Britain (Howe), considering the influence of the contributions of Adam Smith and David Ricardo on *laissez-faire*. As mentioned above, these theories influenced the Ibero-American region from the second half of the nineteenth century in a renewed recovery of prices and export quantities of essential raw materials for the growing European and North American industries. There is no doubt that before the growth of exports, protectionism was the first economic policy of the new nations.

Before the policies of economic liberation were introduced, mercantilism in Great Britain was still in force as long as protectionist barriers were part of public policy. Britain went through a period of protectionism from 1815 to 1846 with the Corn Acts, tariffs, and restrictions on wheat, oats, and barley imports. The purpose was simple: keep corn prices high to favor domestic producers. The consequences were obvious, such as high prices of life, which had an immense impact on the difficulty of finding cheap food products, producing the Great Famine

of Ireland between 1845 and 1852, with more than a million deaths. After the first months of the famine, the British Prime Minister, the Conservative Sir Robert Peel, managed to repeal the laws (Lawson-Tancred, 1960).

1846 can be dated as the year of change towards free trade based on the principle of reciprocity. According to Jacopo Timini (2021), reciprocity policies in the treatment of trade (the most favored nation) generated an increase in foreign transactions by almost 30%, simultaneously improving the well-being of the nations involved. The new policies of Great Britain also extended to Ibero-America, a region in which the nervousness about an open trading system did not allow the implementation of free trade until 1850. As can be seen in Figure 1, the demand to produce Latin American products grew considerably after 1850, making the benefits of free trade palpable and, at the same time, changing the local landscape in favor of less protectionist policies. By 1870, most Latin American countries were in favor of free trade.

Figure 1. Latin American exports in millions of local currencies



Source: Annex 1.

The increase in primary goods exports pushed Latin American politicians to favor foreign trade and put aside protectionist policies. In this way, Latin America found its piece of cake in the Belle Époque, a period that is painted as a mixture of prosperity, increased international trade, industrial advances exported to the world, and an international peace that lasted until the Great War.

Conclusions

The article analyzed several relevant elements of political and economic liberalism. On the political side, the ideas of monarchy highlighted the attempts to build new states, although, finally, a certain democracy was imposed, however always influenced by the Church or by

specific political groups. The Church found legal formulas to maintain its position of privilege, starting with an official religion that controls civil registries as well as education systems. However, it is no less criticizable, from the classic liberal approach, how several liberal parties found the justification to persecute and assassinate clerics.

On the side of human rights, these were accepted without significant problems in the construction of the constitutions of the new nations, of course, with camouflaged limitations on freedom and with spaces for the influence of the Church in the nation's political life. The case of slavery followed the same pattern of behavior, to say: an early approach to the English and North American abolitionist movements, however, at the same time, with systems that covered up the persecution of freedom of expression or religious freedom.

During the emancipation processes, the idea of a nation was related to the idea of an entity that guarantees the rights of citizens, that is, a nation that protects freedom, life and private property. A few decades later, the idea of the nation was more related to trade protectionism and the centrality of power. This version of nationalism, that is, the participation of the state as the central entity in the life of a society, moved away from liberal ideas. Cunha and Suprinyak (2017) are of the opinion that in the last decades of the 19th century, political liberalism had been disguised in a set of empty slogans about freedom and individual autonomy that covered anti-liberal elements.

On the economic side, liberal ideas had found several obstacles in the latent fear of free competition and in the possibility of protecting national industries through limitations on international trade. The increased demand for raw materials from Latin America after 1850 changed the general mood around the free market. Liberal economic faith in free trade had been justified; in most countries, there was near unanimity on at least aspects of economic liberalism. Although conservatives and liberals agreed on the general principles based on freedom, by the end of the 19th century, the liberals were closer to the socialist versions and the conservatives to the classical versions.

An issue that was growing in importance was land ownership. While some indigenous sectors proposed a return to communal property, the pragmatic impossibility of this idea gave way to the proliferation of private property as a principle of economic freedom. The problem peaked in the 20th century in attempts to return land within the Agrarian Reforms. The last decades of the 19th century are drawn with the pen of British influence on the one hand and with the pen of prosperity brought by international trade on the other. The Belle Époque also included Latin America in increasing international trade and importing the most important industrial advances from the old continent.

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Annexes

Annex 1. Latin American exports in millions of local currencies

Year	Brazil	Colombia	Venezuela	Chile	Tendency
1835	41	1.7	20		20.90
1836	34	2.8	25		20.60
1837	34	3.1	21		19.37
1838	42	1.5	27		23.50
1839	43	3.8	30		25.60
1840	42		31		24.33
1841	39	0.7	38		38.85
1842	41	1.3	34		25.43
1843	44		30		37.00
1844	47	2.9	28		25.97
1845	54	2.6	36		30.87
1846	52	2	32		28.67
1847	58	2	28		29.33
1848	56	1.4	28		28.47
1849	55	1	25		27.00
1850	68	3.9	32		34.63
1851	67	4.6	33		34.87
1852	74	5	30		36.33
1853	77	3.7	36		38.90
1854	91	5.5	34		43.50
1855	94	5.1	36		45.03
1856	115	5.6	39		53.20
1857	96	7.1	29	50	45.53
1858	107	9.1	44	46	51.53
1859	113	9.2	43	50	53.80
1860	123	10.8	30	62	56.45
1861	121	10.9	38	50	54.98
1862	122	10.5	31	56	54.88
1863	131	9.5	25	49	53.63
1864	141	22.6	42	67	68.15
1865	157	16.9	46	65	71.23
1866	156	15.1	38	69	69.53
1867	185	12	17	80	73.50
1868	203	14.7	27	76	80.18
1869	197	17.6	35	71	80.15
1870	168	15.4	55	68	76.60
1871	191	15.8	60	82	87.20
1872	215	19.8	70	96	100.20
1873	190	15.3	74	95	93.58
1874	208	20.4	87	93	102.10
1875	184	28.9	81	87	95.23
1876	196	14.5	71	85	91.63
1877	186	12.7	75	69	85.68

1878	204	16.2	58	70	87.05
1879	222	18.3	52	78	92.58
1880	231	19.4	69	88	101.85
1881	210	20.7	70	104	101.18
1882	197	17.8	99	140	113.45
1883	217	14.6	74	149	113.65
1884	226	10.6	77	122	108.90
1885	195	7.3	82	108	98.08
1886	264	8.9	91	108	117.98
1887	264	11.7	90	127	123.18
1888	237	10.2	97	154	124.55
1889	256	9.2	101	139	126.30
1890	326	12.2	120	144	150.55
1891	574	18.2	105	139	209.05
1892	784	9.7	89	135	254.43
1893	706	11	108	152	244.25
1894	767	10.3	99	152	257.08
1895	883	10.5	111	154	289.63
1896	864	13	93	156	281.50
1897	1011	12	74	137	308.50
1898	1011	13.1	93	168	321.28
1899	955	12.8	78	163	302.20
1900	850	9.1		168	256.78

Source: Mitchell 442-448