

## Editorial

### Liberal Democracy and Rights: Challenges and Outlooks

Liberal democracy is currently facing critical challenges as a fundamental basis for the political participation of society in public decisions. The discontent of a significant share of individuals, populist ideas, the pandemic, increasingly sophisticated technological advances, and international and non-international armed conflicts are the reasons behind the ongoing questioning of this political organization model.

The world was paralyzed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Being a respiratory virus that spreads quickly, central governments and international organizations were faced with a situation unprecedented in history. Although humanity suffered a pandemic in 1918<sup>1</sup>, global interconnections were not as developed as today; for example, flying between America and Europe in a few hours is possible and affordable for a higher percentage of the population. What happened in 1918 could not be considered a point of reference to make decisions for a world as different as the one we live in now, and thus, the measures adopted by decision-makers were complex.

This pandemic caused the loss of many human lives; its social and economic effects persist in society. Due to the health crisis and the measures taken to tackle it, problems such as economic inflation and job losses that have not been recovered have arisen. This situation, which predominantly affects people in vulnerable conditions, has had direct political consequences. Candidates for highly relevant political positions, such as the presidency of a State, have won the elections based on the formulation of popular, mindless proposals that are hard to materialize in practice.

In this context, populist discourses that seek to discredit democratic institutions within the public are gaining strength. The growing discredit of governments and their efforts call into question their existence among critics and individuals who have

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Francis Fujimura, "La muerte púrpura: La gran gripe de 1918," *Perspectivas de Salud. La Revista de la Organización Panamericana de la Salud* 8, no. 3 (2003). [https://www3.paho.org/Spanish/DD/PIN/Numero18\\_article5.htm](https://www3.paho.org/Spanish/DD/PIN/Numero18_article5.htm)

benefited little from government policies and plans<sup>2</sup>. This also implies discontent among some social sectors concerning the liberal model<sup>3</sup>, whose narrative has allowed the construction of regulatory frameworks in international and national organizations. Consequently, the domestic or national policies of many States are influenced by this liberal idea.

In addition to the aforementioned, corruption and implementation of public policies have made democratic institutions the target of society's criticism. This can negatively affect human rights because it hinders the operation of such institutions, which some stakeholders even propose eliminating. Others advocate dogmatic and radical ideas, including those aimed at ignoring or limiting human rights.

Moreover, armed conflicts have occurred worldwide, including Ukraine versus Russia, Israel versus Palestine, and the internal Colombian conflict, and there is tension around potential confrontations. This reflects a complex world where the economic model and political leadership of some powers, such as the United States, are questioned. New players have emerged with a high level of influence and are increasingly becoming more relevant on the global stage; for example, China intends to invade Taiwan despite the warnings of the US government. These tensions may result in a conflict, which has an elevated risk of escalating into a world war, even more so when these two States have nuclear weapons.

Another challenge liberal democracy is facing is the profound unprecedented change in humanity's way of life brought about by technological advances—the creation of weapons using artificial intelligence, the development of tools that replace human beings in some jobs, devices that imitate the voice of real people and can be used as disinformation mechanisms, and the manipulation of the electorate through digital mechanisms, among many other risks. These issues require a comprehensive approach by decision-makers that protects democratic institutions and human rights.

In the current context, it is relevant to address problems associated with democracy, human rights, and their protection systems, the governance of international institutions, international trade and its dynamics, the evaluation of the scenarios in

<sup>2</sup> Harlan Grant Cohen, *What is International Trade Law For?* (The American Society of International Law, 2019), 326. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/services/aop-cambridge-core/content/view/F8C98A6B-262B92A3C97632E402D01EDC/S0002930019000046a.pdf/what-is-international-trade-law-for.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

which armed conflicts exist, the geopolitical shaping and reshaping of the world, and the new emerging stakeholders such as military or economic powers, among others.

This issue of *Novum Jus* contributes to the discussion on liberal democracy, rights, and challenges from various perspectives. The articles are expected to awaken the academic community's interest in these matters. Lastly, we would like to thank everyone who made this publication possible.

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