

## The risks of statism

After decades marked by witty debates on the inevitable decline of the nation-state and then on the advent of a golden age characterized by the primacy of plethoric international organizations and by unspecified supranational subjects, the crisis from Covid-19 has reaffirmed the centrality and supremacy of the public institutions legitimized by popular consensus. In a single word, precisely, of the States. And while our country is preparing with utmost difficulty to recover a semblance of normality pending to face the socio-economic flood that awaits it in autumn, this is a favorable moment to reflect on what are the consequences of a public decision-maker once again able to spend on debt, all the more so when he can draw on nominally infinite European funds. With all due respect to the followers of the liberal and progressive schools of thought – both naked and fatally defenseless in the face of the economic crisis ignited by the pandemic, nowadays state power has managed to regain possession for better or for worse of its primal dimension, that is to protect and dispose of the life of its citizens-subjects, as well as presenting itself as the only actor capable of creating wealth from the rubble of the emergency. This is demonstrated by the many financial aid requests to politics from airlines, energy companies and automakers, which are suddenly forgetting the virtuosity of the market's “invisible hand” or of being able to boast the furry title of “citizens of the world”. Same reasoning applies to plans to transform the CDP public lender, a bank that participates in the capital of several national strategic companies, into a new, update and enhanced version of Mussolini's IRI. The re-discovery of

the State's entrepreneurial role naturally lends itself to several considerations. What remains, for example, of the private sector – or the driving force behind GDP growth – in the face of a State that expands its competences enormously, by setting up specific funds, companies and even boards of directors? And what importance must be given to the alarms of the many Cassandras associating the statist return in Italy with a one-way ticket towards a radiant future of Mediterranean Venezuela? If it is true that the virus trauma obliges us to rethink the national development model at its roots, it would be a serious mistake to think that we can restart a new growth cycle by just relying on the revival of state intervention in the economy. Consider, for example, the essential role played by the bureaucratic apparatuses of the great Western democracies (and not only them) in the management and allocation of public resources, or their ability to act as the state's balancing tool against the erratic nature of politics. In recent decades, our country has instead chosen to dismantle the weight of its public administration, compressing its autonomy and ending up subordinating it to the ruling political class. With the result of reducing its competences and prestige, when not of freeing it of any responsibility, at the same time in which we have returned to invoke the intervention of public powers to get out of the crisis. The chronicle of the clash between regions and the central state that would like to return to command without knowing what to do – also thanks to the absence of a competent ruling class – is the story of these days. In short, the risk of being trapped in a cumbersome statism is just around the corner.