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THE RISE CHINA AND THE POST-WESTERN WORLD IN LATIN AMERICA

What Is in Store?

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Latin America's Defensive Posture

When the Cold War ended and a tense bipolar standoff gave way to unipolarity, the general mood in Latin America was not one of celebration but of wariness. At first sight, this may seem surprising. After all, the region was in the midst of a historic process of redemocratization since the 1980s, so the victory of liberal democracy and capitalism over a socialist dictatorship should have been welcomed (Farer, 1996). Yet while few Latin Americans felt nostalgia for the Soviet Union, there was concern about the consequences of a global hegemon unrestrained by other great powers. Unipolarity, many feared, could produce a return to the days of the Monroe Doctrine, the guiding principle behind a long and traumatic history of US interventions in Latin America, policy makers feared– reviving long-standing fears that contributed to the emergence of sophisticated normative principles articulated through the Calvo Doctrine of 1896 and the Drago Doctrine of 1902 among others (see Chapter 3).[1] It was therefore no surprise that most US initiatives for the region were not embraced whole-heartedly by governments in Latin America, even by leaders often seen as friendly toward the United States, such as Brazil's President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The most ambitious economic initiative, the Free Trade Areas of the Americas (FTAA), presented at the Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994, was given a polite but lukewarm reception in the region and was ultimately mothballed due to Latin American resistance; part of a strategy Tussie refers to as "defensive regionalism" (Tussie, 2009).[2] The most important US-led security initiative in Latin America, *Plan Colombia*, was widely rejected in the region and contributed to Colombia's isolation in the region (Spektor, 2012). Despite the United States' remarkable soft power and cultural

attraction across Latin America, the policy makers in Latin America generally considered Washington as the biggest threat to international peace and security. While many Latin American scholars and diplomats largely viewed a rules- and norms-based order positively, the United States was often seen not only as an important promoter but also as the main violator of those very rules (see Chapter 4) producing a cautious ambiguity typical for the region that often has been on the hard end of liberal order. After all, the history of US–Latin American relations has been, above all, shaped by the vast power asymmetry between the two, US–American dominance over its weaker neighbors in the South and attempts by Latin American leaders to reduce the influence of the "Colossus of the North" (Long, 2015).

That explains why, for example, Latin American notions of the US-led order often diverge strongly from those in Western Europe, which was one of the greatest beneficiaries of global US leadership. One of Latin America's greatest frustrations in the post-war years was that even after Brazil's President Juscelino Kubitschek (1955–1961) worked together with other South American heads of state to obtain more development aid from the United States under Eisenhower – a remarkable and often overlooked example of regional cooperation at a time when ties between Brazil and its neighbors were still incipient – the US government decided against a "Marshall Plan" for the Western Hemisphere. President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress was helpful but did not change the overall perception that the United States had been ungrateful after South American troops had fought against fascism in Europe during World War II.

Views still common among numerous Western academics that emerging powers can be described as "irresponsible stakeholders" that need to be "integrated" into global order did not, according to Latin American scholars, take into consideration that the United States broke international rules and norms far more often than countries such as Brazil or South Africa (Patrick, 2010).[3] The debate about humanitarian intervention in Libya provides a useful example about such concerns. When the Brazilian government, after much hesitation, decided to abstain from Resolution 1973 as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, thus allowing for the NATO intervention in Libya to go ahead, critics worried that Western powers had been given a carte blanche to do whatever they pleased. And indeed, less than a month after military operations began, the leaders of France, the UK and the United States argued in an op-ed that real and lasting protection of civilians could not be adequately protected as long as Gaddafi remained in power (Obama et al., 2011). What had begun as an operation to protect the citizens of Benghazi had quickly morphed into a mission for regime change. Non-Western powers, including Brazil, felt cheated.

> several other members of the Security Council suggested NATO had deliberately stretched the UN's mandate for the purposes of regime change, and at times worked effectively as an air force for Libyan rebels.

> They recalled that peace negotiations had been halted as military operations began and emphasised the great human costs that large-scale military operations inevitably entail. For them, in addition to refusing to share information with the rest of the UN Security Council, NATO went beyond the mandate to enforce a no-fly zone and protect civilians and instead engaged in open warfare, including through the transfer of arms to rebel groups in the country, a violation of the arms embargo.
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> *(Tourinho et al., 2016)*

This episode reflects the disjuncture between the Western template and standard narrative about the US-led liberal order and Latin America's experience in that order, which has been at the heart of frequent misunderstandings between the United States and Latin American policy makers. It thus comes as no surprise that the concern and pessimism in the United States about end of unipolarity and the transition to a more complex and multipolar "Post-Western World" have not resonated broadly across Latin America; quite to the contrary, the emergence of a new major power – or several new major powers – could help reduce the United States' capacity to reshape the world in its image, generating instability.[4] China's growing influence in Latin America is thus often seen, somewhat simplistically – given the complexity of the phenomenon – as a positive development that can help reduce the region's vulnerability to US interference. Latin American governments may have little interest in deepening ties to a geopolitically resurgent Moscow, but policy makers across the region privately recognize that while Russia's engagement as a great power patron of the Maduro government left the country in a dangerous limbo, it at least reduced the probability of a US military intervention, a scenario even stalwarts such as Jair Bolsonaro rejected for fear of creating a precedent and a permanent presence of US troops in South America. At the same time, developments over the most recent years suggest that the opposite may be true. China's growing economic influence may lead to more, instead of less, US engagement in Latin America to defend its traditional sphere of influence. In the same way, growing Russian influence in Venezuela may end up provoking the United States to take a more confrontational approach vis-à-vis the oil-rich country.

Perhaps more importantly, the differences described above also reveal some of the reasons for Latin America's marginalization in IR theory: the region's countries never possessed the power – economic or military – to impose their agenda on others (Deciancio, 2016). When concepts emerged, they were mostly defensive (See Quiliconi and Rivera; Chapter 11) and did not leave a mark on mainstream theory building. Politicians and scholars around the world traditionally had no other choice but to carefully study ideas and norms articulated in the United States – after all, understanding the academic debate there and how it influenced policy was a matter of survival for numerous countries in the developing world. The West, on the other hand, was rarely forced to consider contributions made elsewhere – for a long time, it could have its way,

if necessary through coercion. Ideas in the Global South were thus often reduced to a binary universe: either they supported previously made observations in the Global North or they contradicted them. Genuine dialogue, however, was rarely seen as necessary or was limited to debates about regional dynamics without any serious systemic impact. This may explain why instances such as Brazil's engagement on sensitive security-related issues such as nuclear proliferation in Iran or humanitarian intervention in Libya were seen as highly unusual and often received a frosty reaction in the United States. For example, the "Global Brazil and U.S.-Brazil Relations" by the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) suggested in 2011 that "Brazil [should] not be involved in security affairs in the Middle East" (Council of Foreign Relations, 2011).[5]

Yet precisely because of the diverging perspectives described above – perhaps unique due to the combination of Latin America's geographic proximity, traditional exposure to US power and ambiguous relationship to the entire idea of the "West" – contributions made in the region are crucial, particularly when discussing how to construct a Global IR. Indeed, this example of "situated knowledge" – intellectual contributions which reveal the context within which they emerged and allow a greater understanding of authors' conditions – may be a key element of what to look for as we are seeking to overcome the limiting Western-centeredness of the discipline. Several authors based in Latin America are already making significant contributions in this regard. Deciancio and Tussie describe what they call a "distinctly Latin American way of understanding global governance", a topic of relevance beyond the region given the transformation international institutions experience on a global scale (Deciancio & Tussie, 2019). Tussie also points to "the distinctive features of Latin American regionalism from a political economy perspective, pointing at the interaction between states and markets and the re-drawing of their mutual boundaries in the contemporary regional order" (Tussie, 2009). While Latin American theoretical contributions have generally received limited attention on a global scale, there are important exceptions, such as theories about center–periphery political economy, pointing to important obstacles peripheral economies face (See Chapters 9 and 11).

As power shifts away from the West toward Asia, the emergence of Global IR is no longer a matter of choice but much rather one of necessity. Even a cursory look at syllabi of IR theory courses at universities from around the world reveals that non-Western perspectives are far too rarely considered – and if so, in the "regionalism section" or to discuss "alternative perspectives". The same is true vis-à-vis the discipline's major journals, where great power debates are largely dominated by scholars based in the United States and the United Kingdom. Thinkers embracing different theoretical approaches, including postcolonialism and constructivism, have already helped "globalize" the discipline considerably. And yet, it remains true that the longer the discipline holds on to Western-centrism, the greater its incapacity will be to make sense of global

events in a world where the West will remain relevant, but much less so than over the past decades. In the next section I aim to analyze how the emergence of a more Asia-centric, multipolar and multiplex world order (Acharya, 2014) offers strategic opportunities for Latin America.

The Rise of China in Latin America

Latin America as a whole certainly stands to gain economically from the rise of China in particular, given its compatibility with the Asian country's massive demand for commodities Latin America can provide. At the same time, it is not lost on policy makers and scholars in the region that the balance of trade with Asia's largest economy is highly uneven. While countries such as Brazil have a massive trade surplus with China, they tend to export very few value-added goods while importing industrialized and high-tech products from China. In this context, it is also important to point to the continued importance of Chinese loans and investment, which have been crucial to Latin America particularly since the financial crisis of 2008/2009. In 2019, Chinese companies invested US$12.8 billion in the region, up 16.5% on 2018. While lending from the China Development Bank (CBD) and the Import-Export Bank of China (China Exim) decreased to US$1.1 billion in 2019, down from $2.1 in 2018, Chinese overall lending is still larger than that of the World Bank and the IDB taken together (Soutar, 2020).

Still, as we assess the data about China's economic rise in Brazil and elsewhere in the region, we must consider the improbable success of China's soft power strategy – not establishing a positive reputation but successfully avoiding the emergence of a negative reputation despite its growing footprint across the region. After all, what is perhaps most remarkable – and proof of how sophisticated Beijing's diplomacy has become – is how China has been able to extend its economic influence without causing any significant reaction or relevant political actors prior to the rise of Bolsonaro, the first Latin American head of state who was elected on an explicitly anti-Chinese platform. When Chinese investors bought, in 2018, a third of Brazil's electricity sector – a sector of tremendous strategic importance – the news barely made it to the front page of Brazilian newspapers. When the Argentine government signed a deal that established a space observatory station in Patagonia, the Latin American public, or policy analysts, barely noticed. Any comparable agreement with the US armed forces would have caused an outcry. As Benjamin Creutzfeldt pointed out,

> There could not be a more striking contrast between the anti-China rhetoric prevalent in Washington and the enthusiasm for China that prevails among Latin American governments (…).
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> *(Creutzfeldt et al., 2018)*

One possible explanation is that, paradoxically, China's lack of soft power and visibility in everyday life in Latin America may have long been an advantage in this particular instance, and its under-the-radar approach has helped Beijing avoid or delay the rise of sinophobia witnessed in African or Asian countries that have seen trade ties to China deepen. Contrary to the United States, which inevitably evokes love or hate (or both), the majority of Latin Americans are largely still indifferent when it comes to China or think of it as an abstract phenomenon – a situation that even the emergence of an anti-globalist, anti-Chinese faction within some right-wing governments, such as in Brazil, may only slowly change. During the 2020 pandemic, China intensified its soft power strategy in Latin America by offering financial support to assure access to a future vaccine and by providing medical equipment to numerous national and subnational governments. As the *Financial Times* observed in August that year,

> Home to almost half of the world's new cases of coronavirus, Latin America is a long way from winning the war against Covid-19. But there is already one victor in the region: China.
>
> *(Stott, 2020)*

Yet what drives China's engagement in Latin America? Two issues stand out. First of all, China hopes to diversify its energy imports and access new markets for Chinese products. Dussel Peters has found that Chinese investment is correlated positively with the natural resource wealth of destination countries (Peters & Armony, 2015). For example, China is the world's largest consumer of iron ore and niobium, both of which are vitally important for the country's urban development. Latin America is one of the world's largest sources of iron ore. Similarly, China needs Latin American soybeans and protein to feed its ever-growing population. Consequently, China National Cereals, Oils and Foodstuffs Corporation (COFCO), a state-owned Chinese food-processing company, has been highly active in the soybean trade with Brazil and Argentina.

Second, though less explicit and less visible, China seeks to rally support for international norms of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Latin America, traumatized by their experiences with US unilateral interventionism, is generally inclined to ascribe similar importance and meaning to these norms. China's charm offensive, evidenced by President Xi's 2014 Latin America visit, has also aimed to increase support for China's preferred model of multilateral internet governance (Swaine, 2014). Brazil, along with Argentina, has in recent years joined China in its criticism of US leadership in the global internet governance regime embodied by ICANN (Trinkunas & Wallace, 2015). More broadly speaking, US attempts to generate concern in Latin America about the rise of China do not resonate across the region.

Mindful of deep-seated skepticism in Latin America of alliances and a strong interest in maintaining strategic autonomy, China has opted for a very limited

military engagement in the region, involving consultations, cooperation between military schools in the form of exchanges and short-term visits. Given the region's geographical proximity to the United States, Chinese policy makers consider Latin America to be part of the United States' broader sphere of influence, and establishing a military presence in the region at this stage could unnecessarily anticipate a great power conflict. Beijing is well aware that several Latin American governments are facing growing pressure on Washington against projects with security implications, and therefore seek to advance more quietly (Myers, 2019).

China is the number one trading partner not only of Brazil but also of Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay. In 2017, 21.8% of Brazilian exports went to China, compared to only 12.5% to the United States. Similarly, Chile (27.5%) and Peru (26.3%) exported well over a quarter of their products to China. Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Mexico had a negative trade balance with China, while Brazil, Chile, Peru and Uruguay had a positive one. Most notably, Brazil had a massive trade surplus of US$ 20.2 billion. Just like most of Latin America, Brazil's economy is dependent on the export of agricultural and extractive commodities, and since China is the global leading buyer of both, Brazil is structurally compatible with the Middle Kingdom. Particularly given how unlikely it is that Brazil's economy and its exporters will be able to move up the international value chain the coming years, China is certain to remain Brazil's key trade partner for years to come; in 2018, bilateral trade between the two countries hit yet another record – as was the case for all of Latin America (Myers, 2019). As a consequence, Chinese demand for Latin American products has been regarded as a boom for the region by policy makers across the ideological spectrum, and building the infrastructure necessary to facilitate the transport of commodities to China is seen as a sine qua non to develop Latin American economies (Creutzfeldt et al., 2018). This explains the relatively widespread support for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and almost no concern for its potential downsides, such as growing Chinese pressure on Latin America's voting behavior at multilateral institutions.

Chinese diplomatic initiatives in the developing world have been long underestimated by Western observers. Many US analysts questioned to what extent China would be able to project soft power, pointing to its authoritarian nature and numerous domestic problems, ranging from pollution to corruption to systematic repression of its minorities (Nye, 2015). Yet a closer analysis reveals that Chinese diplomatic initiatives do not aim to make Latin Americans seek to live in China or replicate China's political system. Rather, their goal is more limited yet remarkably effective – Beijing merely seeks to make sure that its engagement in Latin America is seen in a neutral way. In the same way, China understands that the easiest way to project itself positively in Latin America is by emphasizing its policy of non-interference to mark a sharp contrast to the United States.

Considering the evidence, the strategy is working, and initiatives such as the China–Latin America think tank forum (launched in 2010), the China–CELAC Forum (launched in 2014) and the World Political Parties Dialogue (launched in 2016) are low-cost affairs but give the Chinese government a platform to project its message (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 2015).[6] The second China–CELAC Forum took place in 2018, during which participants agreed to deepen cooperation, as well as issuing a declaration supporting the Belt and Road Initiative (Martina & Lawder, 2019). BRI is quickly gaining visibility in Latin America, and several countries have recently signed bilateral agreements to participate in the initiative.

Latin America in the Post-Western World

How, then, do Latin American International Relations scholars think about the rise of the multiplex world order, or "Post-Western World", and how do policy makers think about strategic options for the continent in a more multipolar, less Western-centric international system? What are the implications for Global IR? These questions are all the more interesting because, as Diana Tussie and Amitav Acharya point out in Chapter 1, Latin America is neither clearly Western nor non-Western, in principle allowing it to articulate a unique perspective or course of action. Indeed, countries such as Brazil are in a rare position in that they can, in theory, play a relevant role within non-Western outfits such as the BRICS grouping or the G77, or Western-led groups such as the OECD, of which it seeks membership. In the same way, leaders such as Chile's Sebastián Piñera have, so far quite successfully, sought to maintain strong ties with both the United States and China, despite growing tensions between Donald Trump and Xi Jinping. Latin America's role also stands apart from other regions as it has been far less affected from great power competition than the rest of the world. It is, as Michael Reid points out, "the forgotten continent" – with all the advantages and problems this position implies (Reid, 2009).

Yet at the same time, a relevant limitation is, until recently, the region's limited knowledge of and access to Asia and the non-Western world more generally, which has, in the past, hindered the development of a more sophisticated debate across the region. There used to be a near-complete absence of sinologists in Latin America, and so-called country specialists often face strong incentives to produce non-academic analyses to inform the public debate, governments or the private sector. With the private sector offering more competitive salaries than academia, scholars with specialized knowledge often face incentives to migrate to other professions which do not allow them to publish academically. Traditionally, those who sought to train as sinologists almost inevitably pursued their graduate education in the United States, Asia or Europe, and were unlikely to return as they seek professional opportunities

in institutions that provide a fertile intellectual environment for Asia specialists. The sheer geographic distance between Latin America and China still plays an obvious, though often overlooked, role: no other country in the world is farther away from China than are Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Paraguay and Brazil. The chances for young scholars to conduct research in Asia often remain limited, and it is common even for graduate students at Latin American universities to write about Asia-related topics without having had the chance to conduct on-the-ground research there. Austerity measures adopted by governments across the region – particularly in Argentina, Ecuador, Brazil, Peru – and the severe economic crisis in Venezuela further limited options for scholars in those countries to learn about Asia.

Important changes, however, are taking place in this regard; there are now numerous groups and publications organized by Latin American scholars studying Asia. Chinese institutions have been granting a growing number of scholarships to Latin Americans, and there is a growing community of former China grantees who have created networks of their own that are highly active. What is more, a younger generation of scholars based in Latin America focusing on China and Asia more generally can be expected to not only make significant intellectual contributions but also engage in the institution building necessary to provide a fertile environment that encourages future scholars to specialize in studying Asia, including the creation of specialized centers for Asian Studies, university chairs to allow scholars to conduct long-term work on Asia, and the identification of institutions willing to financially support such endeavors across the region.

And yet, Latin America's ties to Asia, Africa and the Middle East have been very limited during most of the past two centuries, even though migration from Asia picked up after slave labor was outlawed in the Caribbean in 1834, offering opportunities for migrants from China and other Asian countries. Today, Latin America is home to about 5 million people of Asian descent, more than 2 million living in Brazil alone (Duarte & Freire, 2011). In Peru, the number of Asian Latin Americans reaches 5% of the total population (Government of Taiwan, 2013). In the early 20th century, the focus of Latin American diplomacy began to shift toward the United States, by then the emerging global power – yet Latin American elites continued to entertain close ties to European elites. Brazil, for example, only in the second half of the 20th century decided to stop supporting Portugal diplomatically, and switched sides to support its African colonies' quest for independence. Despite Latin American countries' participation in outfits such as the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement, economic and political ties between Asia and Latin America remained sporadic and played virtually no role in Latin American public debates. Throughout the 20th century, the United States' cultural influence in Latin America was dominant, even though other regions have had a significant influence on Latin America as well. Both in the political and the cultural contexts, Latin America's Arab

diaspora has been highly visible, as Arab names of numerous political leaders such as Michel Temer, Geraldo Alckmin, Carlos Menem, Paulo Maluf reflect.

Toward the end of the 20th century, global power was yet again shifting, this time toward Asia, which began to reclaim its central role in the global economy it had lost several centuries before. Starting in the early 2000s, this has led to a massive inflow of Chinese investments in Latin America. At the same time, Latin America–China trade has skyrocketed. China became Brazil's largest trading partner in 2009, and its economic importance for all of Latin America is set to increase in the coming years. In 2018, nearly half of Brazil's commodity exports and more than one quarter of its total exports went to the Middle Kingdom. The United States, by comparison, buys about half as much as China. After initially focusing on investments in agriculture, China's economic presence now spans Latin America's entire economy, with key investments in transport, energy, manufacturing and banking. Starting in the early 2000s, Latin American governments adapted to changing circumstances. Presidents and foreign ministers visited Asia more frequently and hosted Asian heads of state. Brazil embraced both the IBSA grouping, consisting of India, Brazil and South Africa, and, more notably, the BRICS grouping, which also includes China and Russia. In 2012, Brazil's Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota argued that Brazil's rapprochement to the BRICS countries was a strategic adjustment just like the one led by Brazil's former top diplomat the Baron of Rio Branco roughly a century earlier, when he shifted the country's diplomatic focus from Europe to the United States (Spektor, 2012).

And yet, such deep economic ties have only slowly translated into greater cultural ties or greater Latin American public interest in Asia. Despite Asia's rise in Latin America, US cultural influence stands unchallenged in the region. Paradoxically, this may be in China's interest and bring important advantages, some of which may be of greater strategic relevance in the long term. That is because, in a region traditionally concerned about US intervention, strong cultural influence tends to inflate the perceived political and economic influence.

While Latin American governments have, for the past years, attempted to maintain friendly ties to both Washington and Beijing, such a passive and neutral strategy will be increasingly difficult to implement. There is already clear evidence that tensions between China and the United States generate profound uncertainty for Latin America, given how the United States and Latin America directly compete for access to the Chinese market (Canuto, 2019). Yet while most observers focus on the ongoing trade war between the United States and China, it is the incipient tech war and the emergence of separate geopolitical tech spheres of influence that have far broader consequences for the future of global order and pose a difficult challenge for Latin America. Rapid technological change, symbolized by the arrival of 5G mobile technology, artificial intelligence and quantum computing, is likely to be the defining element in the emerging great power standoff, marked by the battle for supremacy in

cyberspace between the United States and China. This coming era will most likely be shaped no longer of trade liberalization and open competition, but by the "geopoliticization" of the world economy and the race toward technological self-reliance.

This new dynamic is already shaping contemporary politics in Latin America, where governments are subject to US pressure to refrain from embracing the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei as the provider of 5G technology – a step that policy makers in Washington regard as a first and as potentially irreversible in Beijing's efforts to establish political influence around the world. In response, the Trump administration has taken active steps to exclude China from US–American technological know-how, a move that is set to change the basic rules of globalization (Waters et al., 2019). A significant part of the global economy will be intimately tied to new technologies – ranging from autonomous cars and drones used for transport and warfare, to communication and global finance – and all of them will be subject to the new geopolitical logic of the emerging tech cold war. Whoever controls these new technologies is expected to have a massive strategic advantage in global affairs over the next 10–15 years. 5G technology, as *The Economist* puts it, has become "become a proxy for superpowerdom" (The Economist, 2019).

While the global tech industry will be most exposed – which plays only a very limited role in Latin America – the coming tech-split will most likely accelerate and deepen the overall trend of "decoupling", the declining economic interdependence between the world's two largest economies, and Western companies' growing aversion to being exposed to geopolitical risk that operating in China implies. This development risks the emergence of two separate economic camps, reverting the tremendous economic globalization that has been the hallmark global order over the past decades. Cooperation between China and the United States is already declining in many other areas, such as academia, and obtaining Chinese student and conference visas for US scholars and vice versa has become far more difficult. In regions such as Latin America, such a cold war–like dynamic risks becoming the organizing principle of domestic politics, a situation with risks introducing a degree of paranoia almost certainty unhelpful when seeking to articulate a foreign policy strategy.

While Latin American governments will all seek to maintain strong ties with both Washington and Beijing, the technological split between the two countries (and their respective blocs) will reduce overall interoperability and make maintaining a neutral stance more difficult. For example, when Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro visited Donald Trump in February 2019, the US President made clear that a strong partnership would depend on Brazil's efforts to limit Chinese influence in Latin America, specifically asking the Brazilian leader not to allow Huawei to be part of the 5G network's rollout. US officials have threatened to suspend intelligence sharing if the Brazilian government does not exclude the Chinese company from the bidding process, even though

there has been no evidence of Chinese state cyber activity through Huawei so far (Campos Mello, 2019).[7] Washington employs a similar strategy when dealing with its key allies around the world.

The crisis in Venezuela, one of the world's most oil-rich countries, provides an interesting – and alarming – case study of how Latin America has struggled to address the new dynamics the return of geopolitics and the emergence of genuine multipolarity is producing – and clear evidence that, as Deciancio writes, "there is a perceptible decline in the ability of the United States to shape re-gional orders and institutions" (Deciancio, 2016). The Venezuelan crisis is largely the product of a regional vacuum of power, and the incapacity by any Latin American actor to play a constructive role over the past two decades, a time during which Venezuela's collapse was slowly progressing yet entirely predictable and, at least in its early stages, preventable. Despite some regional coordination over the past years, such as the Lima Group, which recognized Juan Guaidó as president, South America has long stopped playing a significant role in the Venezuelan crisis. Maduro and Guaidó both know that the only external actors that really matter are the United States, China and Russia. Any relevant political change in Venezuela will be the product of decisions made in Washington, Beijing and Moscow, generating complex dynamics that Latin American policy makers are struggling to comprehend or anticipate. This is a profoundly humiliating turn of events for most Latin American governments, which since the region's transition to democracy in the 1980s made reducing interference from outside the region a paramount foreign policy goal (see Chapter 13). For Brazil, in particular, such impotence in the face of a geopolitical crisis at its border symbolizes the unmitigated failure of decades of Brazilian foreign policy, in which Brasília sought to position itself into the region's diplomatic and political leader and arbiter, projecting stability in the neighborhood. As the crisis in Venezuela shows, Latin America has once more become vulnerable to foreign major powers. Yet while a combination of strategic short-sightedness and diplomatic mistakes is responsible for the region's inability to mitigate the crisis in Venezuela, that alone does not fully explain the constellation in the Caribbean country. After all, if a similar situation had occurred in the unipolar context of the 1990s, the United States alone would have filled the vacuum of power in Latin America. In today's multipolar system, however, three major powers – the United States, China and Russia – are all playing a crucial role in the country, making overcoming the crisis far more complex.

Three major outside powers vying for influence in a Latin American country is indeed unprecedented since the era of state formation in the 19th century. Since the region's transition to democracy in the 1980s, governments have sought to protect both their sovereignty and democracy by developing intra-regional mechanisms to address one of South America's major historical challenges: democratic backsliding and the political crises that often derived from it. These mechanisms have included democracy clauses (such as the Organization of American States' Inter-American Democratic Charter (IADC)

or Mercosur's Ushuaia Protocol), or joint commitments to punish those who violate democratic norms, as well as the use of concrete measures, such as suspension from regional organizations such as the Southern Common Market (or Mercosur), in response to democratic ruptures. Governments in the region have failed to prevent certain instances of democratic backsliding – Honduran President Manuel Zelaya, for example, was removed in a coup in 2009, and Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo was ousted in a controversial impeachment in 2012. In both cases, however, these countries suffered temporary diplomatic isolation in response to what regional leaders considered to be a break from normal constitutional practice.

Between the 1990s and 2000, governments in Brasília played a key role in setting and enforcing these norms – part of a conscious attempt by the country's democratic rulers to position Brazil as the major diplomatic player in South America and actively engage in moments of crisis. In 1996, Brazil helped convince a coup-plotting Paraguayan general, Lino Oviedo, not to stage a coup against President Juan Carlos Wasmosy, the country's first democratically elected civilian in decades. Three years later, it again helped solve a political crisis in Paraguay by granting asylum and organizing the swift departure of the beleaguered President Raúl Cubas Grau after the assassination of Vice President Luis Maria Argaña. In the aftermath of a failed coup against Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in 2002, Brazil coordinated the "Friends of Venezuela" group, which included the United States, Portugal and Spain alongside several Latin American governments, to mediate between the embattled president and the Venezuelan opposition.

Yet by embracing a slow, long-term strategy to undermine democracy from within, Hugo Chávez was able to avoid falling foul of the region's network of rules and norms. In addition, oil subsidies to ideologically friendly governments allowed the government in Caracas to delay the emergence of a united front against Venezuela in the region for many years. Yet more importantly, domestic political and economic crises in countries such as Brazil and Argentina complicated any attempts to coordinate regional action. The lack of regional leadership created a power vacuum in the region that not only allowed the situation in Venezuela to fester, but it opened a space for outside powers, such as China and Russia, to play a far more important political role in the region – above all as power-brokers in the oil-rich state. This new scenario will remain valid even if Maduro left power prior to the end of his second presidential term, in 2025. After all, irrespective of the ideological orientation of the next government, Venezuela's strong dependence on Chinese credits, investments and demand for oil will persist, and shape Latin American politics for a long time to come.

The challenges listed above point, above all, to the crisis of "post-hegemonic" regionalism that saw the rise and fall of organizations such as ALBA and UNASUR, which disintegrated after the hegemony of center-left governments in the region ended (Deciancio, 2016). After several waves of regionalism, what is the next chapter for regional integration in Latin America in the context of

a Post-Western World? That question may be of even greater urgency given the multiple set of crises that are set to shape the early period of the 2020s, aggravated by a profound economic crisis caused by the pandemic, a migration crisis in Venezuela and Central America, and a severe environmental crisis in Brazil. Adding the complex challenge of transnational crime, which can only be solved by better regional cooperation, one perceives the urgent need to embrace new regional approaches in the context of a global shift of power – yet given the profound ideological fragmentation that can shape the region, it is unlikely that the main impulses from come from governments.

Having said that, however, there are several reasons to believe that Latin America's long search for geography and strategic autonomy in the context of the arrival of a Post-Western World may also help provide important contributions to the making of Global IR. First of all, as shown above, Latin America's reaction to the rise of China and the end of a Western-centric international system is unique, and despite having taken a while to adapt, a new generation of IR scholars in the region is more knowledgeable about Asia that at any previous moment. While growing tensions between Washington and Beijing are likely to make academic cooperation more difficult all over the world, the negative consequences in Latin America may be less severe than in the United States, where the government is seeing the presence of Chinese scholars through the prism of geopolitics, thus disincentivizing academic cooperation between US and Chinese institutions. The closure of Confucius Institutes at US universities and the US government's decision to block a growing number of Chinese companies or force their sale – such as, most recently, the US operation of Bytedance's app TikTok – are merely first steps that will strongly affect the bilateral relationship.

Compared to the Cold War, Latin American scholars today possess far more global networks and better access to debates both in the US and in China, but also to those in other academic centers around the world. While Latin American universities will surely suffer pressure as geopolitical tensions between the United States and China increase, they are unlikely to be as exposed as Chinese or US institutions, offering an opportunity to provide highly relevant analyses.

In the same way, despite the tendences described above and the growing difficulty to maintain a neutral stance as the so-called new tech war, Latin America is unlikely to be fully absorbed into a sphere of influence, continuously seeking to hedge its bets and actively participating in institutions dominated by Western institutions and those led by China.

Finally, despite the severe crisis of regional cooperation on the governmental level, there is evidence to believe that regional cooperation between IR scholars has not been negatively affected. Indeed, joint publications such as this one, involving scholars from across the region who think about Latin America and its theoretical contributions, are an important step to promoting the debate to deepen joint discussions about Global IR and the region's role in it.

Conclusion

The rise of China in Latin America and the emergence of a multiplex world order, or "Post-Western World" produces a series of unprecedented challenges for Latin America. A key factor that limits Latin American agency and increases its vulnerability in this moment is a toxic combination of economic crisis – no other region has shown such a lackluster economic performance even prior to the pandemic – and domestic political instability, which forces the region to take a more defensive posture and focus on domestic challenges, a situation which has limited the region's contributions to Global IR. Given domestic instability across the region, debates about how to react to the rise of China in Latin America and the return of great power politics in a Post-Western World have struggled to gain the visibility they deserve. And yet, as mentioned above, particularly the growing number of scholars across Latin America studying China and Asia more broadly, better regional coordination among scholars as well as Latin America's unique geographic position in 21st-century geopolitics undoubtedly contribute to generating a fertile academic discussion that has the potential to strengthen the region's role in the construction of a Global IR.

Notes

1 It is telling that, nearly three decades later, the Trump administration would indeed express their fondness for the Monroe Doctrine.
2 In this context, Tussie describes the origins of regionalism in Latin America as "multiple; Bolivarian solidarisitic instincts; US drive and the fear of US drive", and that "a strategic competition between these regional projects, a competition which is at times adversarial and at other times mere sidelining of US interests" (Tussie, 2009).
3 See also, for example "Humanitarian interventionism, Brazilian style" (Spektor, 2012).
4 The term "Post-Western World" here refers to a world in which the West is no longer economically and politically dominant, and where non-Western actors such as China possess system-shaping capacity and significant agenda-setting power, transforming the Western-led liberal order into a less Western-centric, more multipolar international system. "Post-Western", thus, does not refer to the total subversion of the values, rules and norms commonly – if erroneously – associated exclusively with the West, but with a situation in which the system will no longer be centered solely on Western actors. While "Post-Western World" focuses largely on a shift of power away from the West, it is closely related to Amitav Acharya's concept of the "multiplex world order" in which elements of the liberal order survive, but where order is produced by a much larger number of actors, including great powers, emerging powers and non-state actors, who can use both material and ideational resources, and who establish different kinds of partnerships with each other (Acharya, 2014).
5 In the report's annex, some authors of the report described this suggestion for Brazil not to engage in the Middle East as "inappropriate".
6 See also "Working together key to shared future" (AnBaijie, 2017).
7 See also "Who's afraid of Huawei? Understanding the 5G security concerns" (Taylor, 2019).

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