

Latin American foreign policy beyond the United States

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Since the 1990s, the world has experienced the end of the Cold War logic with what Krauthammer has subsequently called the ‘unipolar moment’ (1990) and then the ‘unipolar era’ (2002). He refers to the times where the United States was the only superpower on earth — Huntington (1999) called it the ‘lonely superpower’—, a condition this country lost after 2001. At the same time, Latin American governments have successively changed their patterns of foreign affairs. In most of the 1990s, they aligned their interests with Washington’s (Raymont, 2005), but after the 2000s the world allowed for a new approach, especially with the emergence of China (Domínguez 2010; Ellis, 2009). Subsequently, leaders, political parties and different organisations in Latin America diversified their international relations objectives. At least, the multilateralisation of foreign affairs has been the discourse highlighted by these actors in the last decade (Lagos, 2008).

Is multilateralisation the same as fighting hegemony? Balancing against hegemonic powers is something already known in the literature (Waltz, 1994). As a matter of fact, the shift experienced by Latin American foreign policies responds, in part, to the historical way to rebalance power against the American hegemony (Domínguez, 1997; McPherson, 2003). Nonetheless, especially in the 21st century, Latin American governments have redistributed their diplomatic efforts to privilege regional networks, in a first order level, but also to prioritise more extra-regional South to South understandings, as a second order level. The foreign policy-making cannot be understood as a mere American-centred logic. That is, the diversification of the Latin American international relations is coherent with a more complex and changing world, where emerging economies are playing a more important role. This new paradigm changes the idea of ‘all against a particular superpower’ to ‘all in favour of being empowered’.

Since the end of the 1990s, different Latin American governments began looking for new diplomatic features to feel more empowered. Venezuela’s Chávez stood up mainly against the American hegemony (Shifter, 2006), but only with Brazil’s Lula did the discourse go beyond the U.S. to bring about a multilateral agenda (Cason and Power, 2009). The government of Kirchner in Argentina followed Lula’s in that respect, whilst dealing with the huge external debt that shaped its objectives (Castañeda, 2006; Harris, 2005). In Chile, the governments of Lagos and

Bachelet made explicit efforts to diversify its diplomatic network through trade agreements with countries in the Asia Pacific (Castañeda, 2006; Portales, 2011). Mexican governments from Zedillo to Calderón attempted a similar approach: to multiply the destinations of Mexican goods and services (Starr, 2006) by establishing the second largest free trade agreements network in the world, after Chile (Villarreal, 2012). Indeed, trade diplomacy has shaped contemporary foreign policies in many countries of the region.

The implosion after the Cold War

During most of the twentieth century, Latin American foreign policy was dominated by the relations with the North: either by cooperation or dependency, or by confrontation. In the first case, Latin American countries strengthened their foreign trade with the dominant Western societies; elites were usually educated in France and England, and commerce was fuelled by the United States. After the World War II, the region was disputed by the U.S. and Soviets Union's ideological forces. In most of the region, democracy was not the game in town, thus their regimes were not necessarily legitimated representatives of either side. Whilst most of the governing regimes lined up behind Washington's zone of influence, either by internal cooperation (Haas and Schmitter, 1964) or by dependency (Dos Santos, 1970), others turned their regimes towards socialism—with mixed results scattered in the region: a failure in Chile, but a relative success in the Sandinista's Nicaragua. At the same time, many developing country leaders, especially in Brazil and Argentina, aimed to open a new path for a South to South cooperation that would be known as the Third World (Neuman, 1998). But even these South-South interactions were also subject to the influence of the superpowers (Brands, 2010). In the end and to different degrees, in the 1990s all Latin American regimes but Cuba consolidated their links to the United States, in line with the Washington Consensus (Kuczynski and Williamson, 2003).

After the end of the Cold War, governments in Latin America initiated or consolidated a process of democratisation. Efforts were put on the restoration or instauration of political institutions and the implementation of liberal-driven political economy. The collapse of the Soviet Union left Cuba as the only socialist-oriented regime in the region. The United States provided economic aid to most of the countries in the region.

In the 1990s the consensus around the neoliberal paradigm rocketed and Latin American countries aligned themselves with the economic and political agenda of the renewed and powerful United States. The influence of American foreign policy over the Latin American countries was apparent. Nevertheless in the 2000s, this tendency was suddenly broken due to the rapidly changing context influenced by the rise of new actors and strategies in the international arena, and the arrival in power of left governments in countries such as Venezuela, Brazil, Nicaragua, Ecuador, and Argentina. Since then, governments in the region have followed

different patterns of foreign policy development: on one hand, those that have engaged more with the US; on the other hand, those that have promoted a better understanding with big developing countries. Latin America was trying to reassert its autonomy with respect to the past, finding its own place in an everyday more globalised world where new developing states were trying to peep out and insert in the international debate new exigencies and models in order to modify the pre-constituted international order and its hegemonic patterns (Gardini and Lambert, 2011).

The link between economy and political ideology and its re-setting with respect to the 1990s became clearer, marking the difference from the past and influencing Latin American states' foreign policy attitude, not uniquely oriented towards the United States. The new international scenario and the rule imposed by the globalisation process led to a re-interpretation of how Latin American countries can improve their presence and power in the global arena. The creation of economic agreements such as ALBA and MERCOSUR are significant and represents the counterbalance to agreements established among developed countries and the NAFTA signed among the North American countries. It is impossible to deny the existence of similar process of economic and political development in the entire Latin American region, starting from the Spanish and Portuguese colonisation, to the presence of political regimes characterised by strong dictatorships that changed their status within the third wave of democratisation (Huntington, 1991).

Latin American countries experienced during many years a common agenda that allows to analysts and researchers to take into account its heterogeneous complexity relating to it as an articulated unity. These common points are often responsible to think about Latin American foreign policy as naturally directed towards the United States, because of both its influence on Latin American governments during the Cold War and its role in the spreading of the neoliberal economic model in the area. During the 1990s, processes of economic openness, state reforms and the wave of privatisations diffused in the region brought fundamental foreign policy changes directly connected to the domestic transformations Latin American countries were experiencing. The end of the Cold War was an important moment for the change of Latin American international affairs but, a decade later, links established between the U.S. influence on political and economic regimes and foreign policy in the region underwent further changes.

The changing paradigm

The new century brought about a new paradigm. The U.S. political influence has declined, China has emerged as a superpower, Latin American economies have flourished, and regional and interregional institutions have fostered multilateral dialogue (Domínguez, 2010; Hakim, 2006; Zakaria, 2008). There is no longer a unipolar world led by the U.S. (Krauthammer, 1990; 2002). Today's international relations are depicted with more cross-country, -regional, and -institutional

interests than ever. Latin America deepened its efforts to consolidate relations with other states, at least as a way to rebalance its own political and economic assets. Since 2001 onwards, the foreign policy of the democratic countries in Latin America has extended beyond the United States more than ever before in modern history.

The role modern ideologies plays in the formation process of Latin American foreign policies is evident in many cases. Similar international goals and the individuation of common adversaries strengthened the tie linking many Latin American states in name of the Bolivarian Revolution. After more than half a century of U.S. domination and influence in the region, Bolivarian states act around a common left-wing project ideally looking for independence from the Spanish and North American rule, seeking economic independence and popular democracy free of “imposed” international constraints. The aim is to implement a social Bolivarian perspective also in the foreign policy field. Day by day, this vision is creating stronger links between Latin American countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and some Caribbean states, which conception of international relations is largely correlated with Chavez’s Venezuela foreign policy. Mutual economic incentives and trade agreements describe the pattern of Bolivarianism. Natural resources, of which Latin American region is plentiful, empower this type of interstate collaboration among modern Bolivarian Latin American states, allowing the isolation of non-aligned countries as international strategy and progressively dispelling U.S. economic and political presence in the region (Buxton, 2005).

Foreign policies for a new century

In this special issue of *Political Perspectives*, we intend to show how governments in Latin America have addressed their interests in this more complex world. Despite some commonalities, Latin America is a mosaic of different foreign policies (Tokatlian, 2008).

Authors collaborating for this issue have underlined how, especially in this contemporary historical moment, Latin American perspectives and opportunities in the global arena have been not only re-addressed through new directions where the United States is not the only interlocutor, but have been projected through new objectives. New Latin American foreign policy strategies are being developed engaging with other types of partners as Europe, emergent countries and countries present in the Latin American region. This new set of rules and practices responds to a quite wide and heterogeneous spectrum of goals that encompass reasons such as trade opportunities in other continents, ideological motivations and regional economic and trade plans linking them to the Latin American fraternity. The presence in the region of a country such as Brazil, already cutting edge in many trade and financial sectors and which is on the top list of developing countries, helps the region to benefit of these achievements. For all these reasons, during the last years Latin American countries re-discovered themselves, re-directing their own look within their continent, through a regionalisation process that is becoming ever more

dynamic, from both a political and economic point of view, allowing the development of more variegated foreign policy strategies and opening new possibilities to developing countries.

Due to its size and undeniable political influence, Brazil is studied the most as a paramount case of diplomatic diversity. Brazil has been able to spread its own voice into the world as emerging power. Its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, usually call by the name of its headquarters building in Brasilia, Itamaraty, has set a distinguished foreign policy. More recently, especially since the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the presidential diplomacy has become prominent in the foreign policy making-process. According to the paper by Ekström and Alles, published in this journal, Lula's government was particularly interested in giving Brazil a new endeavour: to pass from being a more passive and reactive sub-regional power, to become a more proactive and dynamic engine of global international relations. As they recall, Brazilian foreign policy had historically pursued the principle of non-intervention, whereas under Lula the foreign policy began seeking a more relevant participation in multilateral issues. They study the role of Brazil in the UN peace operation in Haiti to illustrate the Lula's priorities and also the inconsistencies that his foreign policy faced. This new role that Brazil is attempting to play internationally has influenced its relations not only with developing countries, but also with developed actors. Here, the paper presented by Lazarou and Edler illuminates well the logic behind the European Union-Brazil Strategic Partnership, set in 2007. As the authors say, in the series of EU-Brazil summits, Brazil has been moving upward from "lower politics" to "high politics" issues, in accordance to the new objectives that Brazilian governments of Lula and Rouseff seem to be called to assume. Yet, not always are Brazilian foreign policy re-orientations mirrored by the EU, and the financial crisis within Europe casts doubt on the future of the driving force of these EU-Brazil privileged relations.

Cooperation among different Latin American countries has been developed in many sectors looking to move forward in terms of political dialogue, institutional collaboration and trade agreements. The domestic development of state institutions, and relative democratic limitations have been considered an important element not only by states implementing them but also other states in the region due to the impact these changes could have on the evolution of regional agreements. According to Gardini (2010: 224-227), the peculiarity of Argentinian and Brazilian democracies, where executives of both countries are predominant with respect to their parliaments, allowed these countries to pursue a prompt and an effective foreign policy that facilitated and sped up the creation of the MERCOSUR. Taking into account regional, political and cooperation advances, the example of Unasur has been considered successful in the matter of political dialogue, institutional, security and defence development (Prieto, 2012: 3). The author considers these achievements as highly positive in order to obtain a coming realization of Unasur goals. Unasur aims reflect the wish to achieve political coordination among participating states, and the achievement of a peace area placed in South America. The issue of regional integration has been analysed in this special number by Barboza in her paper on Argentina. The author examines how this topic achieved a relevant role in Argentina's foreign policy during Kirchner's

governments after 2003. Whereas, the influence of labour movements on Argentinian foreign trade policy during the same period are examined in Dobrusin's paper, underlining the importance of domestic pressures in contrast to the spread of the neoliberal wave in Latin America and the promotion of a new neo-developmental economic model.

According to the authors of this special issue of *Political Perspectives*, conceptual, ideological and economic changes are the fuel driving Latin American foreign policy in the contemporary period, which is quickly developing new visions of international affairs. For these reasons, as editors of this issue, we believe that the time has come for a focus on Latin America's international interests beyond the classic historical international relations with the United States.

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