

ЛАТИНСКАЯ АМЕРИКА И ЛИНИИ МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО СОТРУДНИЧЕСТВА И КОНФЛИКТОВ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ МИРЕ

UDC 327

Latin America in search of new formats of international cooperation

V. Jeifets

St. Petersburg State University,
7–9, Universitetskaya nab., St. Petersburg, 199034, Russian Federation

For citation: Jeifets V. Latin America in search of new formats of international cooperation. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. International Relations*, 2019, vol. 12, issue 2, pp. 130–138.

<https://doi.org/10.21638/11701/spbu06.2019.201>

The rapid spread of information and communication technologies, trans-nationalization and hybridization of international actors influenced the entire system of international relations. The globalization trend is more and more often competing with the de-globalization trend, and in the 21st century the unipolar world began to give way to a polycentric world order, where regions, formerly considered the world periphery play a special role; Latin and Caribbean America (LCA) is an example of this trend. At the same time, the new centers are often lagging behind in the scientific and technical sphere, they lack foreign investment, some of them face devaluations, many of these countries are involved in regional military and/or political conflicts. From time to time, they dramatically lose the accumulated potential of influence due to large-scale economic crises (Brazil and Venezuela in recent years are good examples of this trend). The region participates actively in many world processes and they are actively involved in integration processes within their own continent and also make a significant contribution to the development of an informal dialogue along the “South” — “South” line (such as G77, BRICS, IBSA, МІКТА). Today, LCA is also experiencing a period of formation of a new regional configuration, when new territorial reorganization contributed to the emergence of various regional groups (ALBA, CELAC, Pacific Alliance, Mesoamerica project and UNASUR). However, in the past few years, a number of events and factors have had a major impact on the LCA integration process, leading to its serious reconfiguration. The endless economic crisis and noticeable political instability in Venezuela were lethal to ALBA and UNASUR and also affected (albeit to a lesser extent) MERCOSUR. CELAC, created as a platform for cooperation and consultation under the slogan “unity in diversity”, also encountered obvious difficulties in the context of the growing political heterogeneity of the region. The

LCA is about reformatting the integration process, the complementarity of the existing blocks towards each other. The purpose of this issue is to show the place of the region in the context of the system of international relations and to demonstrate the different perception of it within LCA countries, to indicate their abilities to formulate particular and common responses to new challenges, to formulate their own priorities independent from global actors' interest and to achieve them on the world stage.

Keywords: Latin and Caribbean America, multipolar world, regional integration, foreign policy, international politics, non-hemispheric actors.

The rapid spread of information and communication technologies, trans-nationalization and hybridization of international actors at the turn of the new millennium introduced fundamental changes in the lives of millions of people, influenced the internal policies of modern states, as well as the entire system of international relations [1]. Today, it is a complex mechanism, within which happens a gradual redistribution of influence among the main players, whose ranks are joined not only by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and transnational corporations, but also by global civil society [2].

The consequences of globalization, that significantly internationalized the economy and increased the inclusion of different regions in global production and trade chains, are now becoming increasingly negative, especially for developed economies: there is a slowdown in trade, a decrease in the investment flow and other financial flows and an increase in unemployment. Not surprisingly, the globalization trend is more and more often competing with the de-globalization trend.

The discontinuity and uncontrollability of globalization processes predetermined an increase in the split along the rich “North” — poor “South” line. The result of such increase in the gap is the growth of the conflict potential and the degradation of the global architecture of international relations. A short period of global dominance of the United States, formed after the geopolitical changes of the 1990s and as a result of the collapse of the bipolar world, in the 21st century began to give way to a polycentric world order, where countries and regions, formerly considered the periphery of world politics and economics [3, p.96], play a special role; Latin and Caribbean America (LCA) is an example of this trend.

These new centers of power took advantage of the global financial crisis of 2008–2009, which weakened the European Union and the United States, trying to influence the change in the power balance of the global economy. The New Development Bank of BRICS, established in 2014, can be considered as a clear attempt to lay the foundation that could eventually form an alternative to the International Monetary Fund, and such an example is not the only one. At the same time, the new centers are often lagging behind in the scientific and technical sphere, they lack foreign investment, some of them face devaluations, many of these countries are involved in regional military and/or political conflicts. From time to time, they dramatically lose the accumulated potential of influence due to large-scale economic crises (Brazil and Venezuela in recent years are good examples of this trend).

In this context, the notion of “multipolarity” has acquired particular importance. Presented in 2017 in Munich, the report “Post-truth, post-West, post-order?” stated a deep crisis of international order and liberal democracy and emphasized the tendency towards a multipolar world as an objective political reality [4]. This idea has been reflected more

than once in the speeches of Latin American officials. Thus, in 2017-2018, Foreign Affairs Minister of Ecuador María Fernanda Espinoza stated that “thinking about a multipolar world means thinking about the present and future life of humanity” [5] and creating a multipolar world “strengthens not only regional blocs, but the entire multilateral system in general, in which the sovereign voice of each country is respected” [6]. Her Mexican counterpart, Claudia Ruiz Massieu, spoke in a similar manner: “Military power reflects the world that remains unipolar, and the United States is the only superpower in it. At the middle level, economic power reflects a world that is becoming ever more multipolar, where different poles of influence have arisen; here regional integration has become an irreversible trend. <...> Finally, at the lowest level, there are transnational challenges, such as pandemics and climate change, with which no country can cope alone, which urges for a greater level of international cooperation” [7].

The “center” and “periphery” concepts in the context of the formation of a multipolar architecture has lost its common meaning, causing a retreat from “Eurocentrism” and “Western centrism”, strengthening the role of ethnic and religious factor in international relations. Aware of the new trends in the world order development, Western countries were forced to move closer to developing countries, forming so-called G20 to increase the manageability of the world economy. In the light of changes occurring within the LCA, there is a noticeably growing interest of leading actors of international relations to the region.

At the same time, the region is not exclusively an object of the global actors’ policy, at the contrary, the Latin American and Caribbean nations actively participate in many world processes. The formats of such interaction are dynamically changing, while the power balance of extra-regional and extra-hemispheric players in Latin and Caribbean America itself is constantly re-configuring. Despite a number of crisis phenomena in the economy of Latin American states that have emerged in recent years, the total regional GDP exceeds \$ 5.3 trillion, which is bigger the GDP of Japan (the third largest economy in the world) and is equivalent to 7 % of world GDP. And even Brazil, which has shown negative growth, is still among the ten largest economies in the world in terms of GDP, according to the World Bank [8]. There is noticeable growth in the potential of Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, which are gradually getting rid of the burden of past economic problems.

The 33 independent nations of the LCA constitute 17 % of the UN member states, which means tangible potential for working in multilateral formats, especially since the Latin American experience of interstate cooperation in the framework of international associations is very rich. In addition to participating in leading global institutions, they are actively involved in integration processes within their own continent and also make a significant contribution to the development of an informal dialogue along the “South” — “South” line (such as G77, BRICS, IBSA, MIKTA).

Within the emerging scientific paradigm of a multipolar world, the key issues of the theory of international relations in a dynamically changing reality are development of ties and distribution of political roles between leading and developing states, solution of the problem of natural resources distribution and energy security, and also the tendency towards regionalism when relations between countries are replaced by interregional relations, including new forms of interregional dialogue and cooperation (BRICS, ‘South-South’ and so on) [9].

Rethinking the regionalism concept in LCA [10, p.21] at the beginning of the new millennium resulted to the fact that regional integration, on the one hand, turned into a

fundamental strategy for the development of intergovernmental relations, and, on the other hand, became a tool for completing urgent tasks that national governments set for themselves in various areas. Today, Latin America is also experiencing a period of formation of a new regional configuration, involving the coexistence of various developmental models and different types of international inclusiveness. This transit takes place through the development of complex North-South and South-South relations, within those the creation of sub-regional groups and change of the US role are noticeable, who, after several years of retreat from Latin American agenda, is trying to “return” to the region, but in a new role. At the same time, they have to compete with entrenched new regional actors, middle and regional powers (China, India, Russia and in Latin America — Brazil, Mexico, Argentina), who, even if not always are ready to fight for domination in the world as a whole, still successfully do it for the purpose of new positioning in the system of hierarchy of regional power.

New territorial reorganization contributed to the emergence of various regional groups (ALBA, CELAC, Pacific Alliance, Mesoamerica project and UNASUR); many of these projects, however, proved to be short-lived. Not least, this is due to the trans-nationalization of many issues, an increase in the number of actors directly or indirectly influencing foreign policy decisions. A number of “traditional” themes have acquired a new meaning but also new ones are emerging — the role of non-state actors, the threat of international terrorism and the need to ensure global security, etc.

If the old regionalism was due to the logic of the “cold war” and was formed “from above”, then the new one appeared in the era of globalization and is voluntary. In the 21st century, regionalism in Latin America abandoned economic integration as the only goal and began to search for new models of cooperation that help implement social policy and development in the region. The interaction between economics and politics is becoming closer and deeper. Countries such as Brazil and Venezuela often use political integration not only as an instrument of their own foreign policy, but also as a condition for economic integration.

To a large extent, there is a clash of two types of multilateralism — liberal (suggesting the continuity of old traditions) and post-liberal (seeking the emergence of alternatives to American hegemony). External factors, such as globalization, complication of development patterns, role of the United States, are priorities for formation and operation of the Pacific Alliance and the Mesoamerica project, which emphasize the economic aspects of cooperation. The countries of the Pacific Alliance demonstrate a strong dependence on the United States or, at least, a constant orientation towards Washington. This reincarnation of “open regionalism” does not exclude the participation of civil society, but relies only on one non-governmental actor — the business sector. On the contrary, the rapid emergence and development of post-liberal regional groups was caused by the growing influence of the “new left” (with all the differences of these groups and parties across countries), the desire to ensure political and economic independence of LCA countries, with the important role of the state ready to activate social policy. For such blocs, the essential goals were the diversification of foreign policy and foreign economic relations of the state to ensure alternativeness in international relations.

In the past few years, a number of events and factors have had a major impact on the LCA integration process, leading to its serious reconfiguration. These are factors and events, both exogenous and directly related to the internal life of the region. The process of “re-sovereignization” observed in world politics (examples of which were the so-called

“Brexit” — Britain’s withdrawal from the European Union — and populist Republican Donald Trump’s triumph in the United States, professing the slogan “America first”) reflect on LCA, and the movement to multipolarity just repeatedly magnified this effect. Among endogenous factors are: stagnation in achieving particular results in the integration process, a second wind gained by “open regionalism” (represented by the Pacific Alliance as models of intra- and trans-regional integration), and finally the above-mentioned political changes in a number of Latin American states. As a result, as N. Comini and A. Frenkel rightly point out, there was a certain re-evaluation of “uniaxial schemes in favor of multi-axial, oriented mainly to inclusion in global markets” [11, p. 183].

The large-scale crisis of the “left turn” and the strengthening of the center-right and right-wing forces seriously harmed the regionalization model based on ideological and political affinity. The endless economic crisis and noticeable political instability in Venezuela were lethal to ALBA and UNASUR and also affected (albeit to a lesser extent) MERCOSUR. CELAC, created as a platform for cooperation and consultation under the slogan “unity in diversity”, also encountered obvious difficulties in the context of the growing political heterogeneity of the region. Nevertheless, political cycles do not mean abandoning the rate on autonomy achieved by the countries of LCA thanks to regional integration. Rather it is about reformatting the integration process, the complementarity of the existing blocks towards each other.

The purpose of this issue “Latin America and the Challenges of the New World Order” is to show the place of the region in the context of the system of international relations and to demonstrate the different perception of it within LCA countries, to indicate their abilities to formulate particular and common responses to new challenges, to formulate their own priorities independent from global actors’ interest and to achieve them on the world stage. The main features of contemporary Latin American multilateralism in the context of the formation of a multipolar world are analyzed as also the involvement of LCA in world organizations and international processes.

The issue contains six articles, two of them analyzing global features of Latin American involvement into the world affairs and four case-studies examining some particular aspects of the general theme. The first text, “Latin America and the Caribbean and a New Global Order: Facing Global and Regional Challenges”, written by Andrés Serbin (CRIES, Argentina), is devoted to thorough analysis of how Latin America is affected by regional political reconfiguration and international environment and what responses can be found in the region facing the contemporary challenges. The Latin American seek for multilateralism is weakening and the most part of the countries of the region are redefining their foreign policy and their attitudes towards extra-regional and extra-hemispheric actors as also towards some continental actors. The decline of international liberal order, the crisis of globalization and the failure of intents to construct global governance became the factors reshaping the LCA countries’ foreign policy. According to the author, the current trend “points to a serious crisis of regionalism and to the dilution of the so-called “challenging Latin American regionalism and of South-South cooperation as they were promoted in the previous decade”. The author indicates a significant feature of Latin American international and regional environment: after an Atlanticist narrative consolidated through decades has emerged a narrative of the Asia Pacific where China is taking more and more dominant role; these shifts generate new tensions within Latin America and sometimes have to do with reflections of Eurasian and Indo-Pacific narratives where the

growing proximity between China and Russia is accompanied with new kind of relation between US, India, Japan and Australia. A. Serbin argues that the “One Belt, One Road” project promoted by Beijing is attracting LCA into the Eurasian narratives and is weakening the Atlantic dominance, showing “the emergence of a new post-Western world order, increasingly multipolar and polioentric”, the world “that is not so liberal”.

Serbin indicates that since 2013 LCA is facing a more difficult and uncertain global scenario, and the crisis of hegemony in the world opens a more unpredictable period when Latin American nations would behave differently on many issues and the multilateralism wouldn't be often observed giving way to bilateral arrangements. The stage of greater politicization of pan-Latinoamericanism and anti-Americanism is obviously diminished, Serbin concludes, but this doesn't mean that LCA became unquestionable US ally. He further argues that Latin America has been able to develop a series of endogenous norms that turn it into a “*rule maker*” towards the region and that could eventually be projected towards a broader sphere if it could reach a regional consensus on initiatives aimed at global governance. Regionally LCA have managed to build a sophisticated system of institutions and international law that have regulated both its internal conduct and its international behavior. According to Serbin, “beyond some sporadic cases of “*rule brakers*”, the current global transition situation, both geo-economically and geopolitically, could open the doors for a more proactive role of the region in various multilateral mechanisms”, but from a perspective “that does not limit or reduce the autonomy that has been achieved so far”.

In his turn, Ariel González Levaggi (the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina) analyzed the Latin American reactions (regional ones as also the attitudes of some concrete countries) to a serie of the conflicts in Eurasia, such as civil war in Syria, the conflict in the Southern Caucasus and the tensions between Russia and Ukraine. Effectively, the author is placing Latin America as one of the parts of the strategic triangle in the Western Hemisphere where two others parts are the US and Russia. Following this line, A. González Levaggi argues that the escalation of the new Cold War between Washington and Moscow affects deeply the regional strategy implemented by Kremlin in Latin America, as also the strategic calculations made by Latin American chancelleries, the geopolitics is winning over economy and may lead to decrease of Russian influence in the Western hemisphere. Confronting the analysis of the Russia's strategy in Latin America with the comparative data on voting in the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council the author managed to indicate some serious challenges for future Latin-American-Russian relations. According to González Levaggi, even despite the increasing pressions, China is suffering less than Russia since the Beijing's strategy in the region relies more on economic incentives than political interests. The author argues that Russia's “regional mimic strategy had shown its limits, not because of the lack of will on the Moscow's side, but due to the changing regional scenario in which there was a transformation of the political landscape from left to right-wing governments which usually perceive the US as the major partner in the region”. Some conclusions made by González Levaggi look like a kind of concern for Russian diplomacy in the region and, at least, show necessity for Moscow to reformulate some tactical approaches in the relations with LCA.

Alexei Manukhin (the Institute for Latin American Studies of the RAS) and Areli Robles Herrera (the St. Petersburg State University for Aerospace Instrumentation) in their article “Mexico's Evolving Security Cooperation Policy in Central America” are analyz-

ing different aspects of Mexico's relations with the Central America, mostly in the area of security. For decades, the Central America was the crucial place for Mexico's strategic interests. However, the attitude taken by this country changed drastically over the last four decades. While during the Central American conflict of the 1980s Mexico won the reputation of a constructive negotiator in Latin America and beyond, later on it decided to "reset" its policy in the sub-region because of its own growing dependence upon the United States. This issue is rapidly becoming actual now, with the serious political shifts in Mexico and the triumph of leftist coalition MORENA which is appealing to the principles of Genaro Estrada Doctrine. Such attitude is leading inevitably to the growth of autonomy in Mexican foreign policy right now, when the migrants' crisis became one of the important issues in the US agenda. The authors show that Central America provides Mexico with wide opportunities not only to establish partnerships along the lines of regional cooperation, but also use the smaller republics to the south as a model for solving its own security problems, and, to implement such foreign policy which can return to the country the status of significant actor within Latin America as a whole.

Sergio Gabriel Eissa (Buenos Aires University, University for National Defense and University Institute of the National Gendarmerie) examines in the article "Åland Islands: lessons for the conflict of the Falkland Islands (Malvinas Islands)?" the particular case of the Argentinean-Britanic controversy over the issue of the Falkland (Malvinas) Islands. The researcher not only demonstrated the evolution of Argentinean governmental attitudes over the Islands during the history of the bilateral conflict, but also constructs a possible way of solution of this territorial dispute. S. Eissa takes the Åland Islands as a model for peaceful arrangement between some countries and shows how Argentine and Great Britain would come to a compromise decision without harming the sensible national interests and letting Buenos Aires to implement active foreign policy without destruction of economic relations with London.

Another case study is the article written by Bruno Mariotto Jubran (State Department of Planning, Administration and Budget of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil) and Victor Jeifets (St. Petersburg State University) "Foes, friends or indifferent players? Assessing national energy strategies and possible agenda for cooperation between Brazil and Russia". The text is devoted to examine the cooperation between Brazil and Russia in energy issues. While Brazil is the most important trade partner of Russia in Latin America, the energy issue is quite underdeveloped in the bilateral relations of these two BRICS members. The authors argue that this situation can't be explained only by the constant governmental interference in business environment and by the competition between Brazil in Russia in the global markets of energy. According to them, the role of other actors (such as private enterprises and foreign government) affect seriously Brazilian-Russian cooperation in the energy issues, and, additionally, both countries still face a necessity to define clearly the parameters of their energy and security policies to fulfill fruitful cooperation as Brazil and Russia share the common interest to sustain international oil prices due to their own considerable production costs. Jubran and Jeifets also indicate that Brazilian-Russian competition in the oil market is not direct one, and that fact doesn't obstacle the possibilities of alliance in such sector. The authors argue that the emergence BRICS in the 2000s provided with a new room for debating political perspectives and for envisaging potential projects, including in energy-related questions; and the cooperation between major petrol giants Petrobras and Rosneft became reality.

However, they point out that energy is still highly underestimated in BRICS due to the difficulty to tackle the issue in a global and holistic perspective, and the countries prefer to choose bilateral and intra-regional basis for maintaining cooperation in this area. Jubran and Jeifets conclude that on the way to construct an alliance in the area of energy Brazil and Russia should find the way to overcome their different attitudes (while the former is eager to promote environment-friendly solutions, the latter is rather tend to perceive energy security as stability in global markets and takes in account, first of all, the interests of producers and consumers).

At last, the main focus of Adriana Erthal Abdenur's (Igarapé Institute, Rio de Janeiro) article "Feeling the Ripple Effect: Brazil-China Relations in Light of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)" is to find out how does the promotion of the BRI affect Brazil's relations with China (which is now one of the biggest trade partners of the South American giant). The paper argues that, despite the geographic distances separating Brazil from the BRI, the initiative has repercussions for Brazil's bilateral and multilateral dealings with China. This finding suggests that Brazilian researchers and policymakers must think beyond bilateral channels and consider how geopolitics and geo-economics shape these two states' dynamic ties as actors embedded within a world order. This topic gains special relevance since the triumph of Jair Bolsonaro at the 2018 presidential elections in Brazil, taking into account the fierce anti-Chinese rhetoric used by the politician. Moreover, the current 2019 year is the year of Brazil's presidency in the BRICS and this would lead to a new consideration of some sensible issues of bilateral relations of these two BRICS members as also can demonstrate if Brazil is still able to insert its bilateral relations in the global policy implemented by the country.

Much of the debates presented in the articles of the current issue were previously sustained within important academic networks such as ISA, LASA, CEISAL, CRIES and CLASCO and also became the focus of discussions in the III International Forum "Russia and Iberoamerica in the Globalizing World" (held at Saint-Petersburg University in October of 2017).

References

1. Zakaria, F. (2008), *The Post-American World*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, USA.
2. Friedman, E.J., Hochstetler, K. and Clark, A.M. (2001), "Sovereign Limits and Regional Opportunities for Global Civil Society in Latin America", *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 7–35.
3. Acharya, A. (2014), *The End of American World Order*, Polity Press, Oxford, UK.
4. *Post-Truth, Post-West, Post-Order? Munchen Security Conference* (2017), available at: <https://www.securityconference.de/en/discussion/munich-security-report/munich-security-report-2017> (accessed: 01.03.2019).
5. *Intervención de la canciller de la República en la mesa de diálogo para la construcción de la agenda de política exterior 2017–2021: Ecuador en un mundo multipolar* (2017) [Speech by the Chancellor of the Republic at the Table for Dialogue for the Construction of the Foreign Policy Agenda, 2017–2021: Ecuador in the Multipolar World], Ciudad Alfaro, Montecristi, 30 de agosto.
6. *La canciller de Ecuador fija la paz como el primer objetivo de la política exterior* [The Chancellor of Ecuador marks the peace as the first goal of the foreign policy], available at: <http://www.economistaamerica.cl/politica-eAm/noticias/8877849/01/18/La-canciller-de-Ecuador-fija-la-paz-como-el-primer-objetivo-de-la-politica-exterior.html> (accessed: 01.03.2019).
7. *Discurso de la Canciller Claudia Ruiz Massieu en el 15 Encuentro Regional Anual para América del Norte. 11 de septiembre de 2016* [Speech by the Chancellor Claudia Ruiz Massieu at the 15th Annual Regional Meeting for the North America. September 11, 2016], available at: <http://www.gob.mx/sre/prensa/>

discurso-de-la-canciller-claudia-ruiz-massieu-en-el-15-encuentro-regional-anual-para-america-del-norte (accessed: 01.03.2019).

8. *World Bank Databank*, URL: <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/home.aspx> (accessed: 06.01.2018).

9. Lesage, D., Van de Graaf, T. and Westphal, K. (2010), *Global energy governance in a multipolar world*, Ashgate, London, UK and New York, USA.

10. Briceño, J. and Morales, I. (2017), *Post-Hegemonic Regionalism in the Americas. Towards a Pacific vs. Atlantic divide?* Routledge, London, UK.

11. Comini, N. and Frenkel, A. (2016), “Unasur. De proyecto refundacional al fantasma del Sudamexit” [Unasur. From a Refoundational Project to the Ghost of Sudamexit], *Anuario de la Integración Regional de América Latina y el Caribe*, no 13, pp. 181–207.

Received: February 1, 2019

Accepted: February 14, 2019

Author's information:

Jeifets Victor — Dr. of Science (Hist.), Professor; jeifets@gmail.com