

# Learning about the World (Order) from the Latin American experience (and vice versa)

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## Introduction

In this paper, I argue that the empirical study of the Global South in general, and of the Latin American region in particular, might serve as an empirical laboratory to test International Relations theories. Some of these theories might be general and relevant for both the Global North and the Global South (hence, they might be *global* in scope), while others might be relevant only to explain the particular and specific realities of the Global South.

A theoretical differentiation between the Global North and the Global South assumes that some of the *problématique* of the Global South is very different from that of the Global North (to the extent that we could recognize and define the ‘Global South’ as a coherent composite category, which in itself is very difficult to do). Hence, I prefer to focus on the Latin American region, though there is always some degree of comparison (and comparability) with other developing regions, including West Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, despite obvious and striking differences among them. A common denominator across these different regions, in terms of a common *problématique*, is the overall concern with issues of economic and political development (and underdevelopment), and the so-called domestic *insecurity dilemma* (see Holsti, 1996; Jackson, 1990; and Ayoob, 1995).

In the first part of the paper I briefly focus on the insufficiency of mainstream and general IR theories to explain the *problématique* of the Global South in general and of Latin America in particular, point out what that *problématique* might be, suggest which IR theories might be more relevant to study the Global South, and underline some of the problems in conducting research about the Global South.

In the second part of the paper I engage in an exercise of self-introspection, drawing on my own research experience for the last twenty-five

years about Latin America as a laboratory to formulate IR theories in a comparative perspective. Since it is difficult to disentangle theorizing from conducting research (and from teaching as well), I will suggest examples from my own work, emphasizing the limitations and advantages of using Latin America as a laboratory to test IR theories. In addition, I offer some preliminary thoughts about the role Latin America should play in the shaping of the contemporary world order.

## **I. The Insufficiency of Northern IR Theories in Explaining the *Problématique* of the Global South**

When we teach, study, and research IR, we usually do that guided by a clear Euro-centric vision of international relations, both in the realm of security studies (issues of war and peace), and in issue-areas related to international political economy (see for instance Reuveny and Thompson, 2008).

Within the *Liberal paradigm*, for instance, we study and celebrate the diffusion of the “democratic peace” argument, both as an empirical law (or as a close approximation to an empirical law), and as a theoretical argument (i.e., the normative and structural/institutional models of the “democratic peace”, see Russett, 1993). And yet, what is the relevance of the democratic peace argument to explain war and peace in the Global South in general, and in Latin America in particular (where peace preceded democracy by many decades)? After all, the theory might be limited in its application to the developing world. Thus, there might be alternative explanations for the maintenance of both democratic and non-democratic zones of peace in the developing world (see Kacowicz, 1998).

What we learn from studying the empirics (for instance, in the regional cases of South America since 1883 and in West Africa since the 1960s) is that peace can be maintained among non-democratic states, though the quality (and gradation) of peace might be influenced by the type of political regime; in other words, democratization might consolidate and lead to instances of stable peace and the development of pluralistic security communities down the road. As for clusters of weak and undemocratic states, they seem to reflect an inverse relationship between the occurrence of civil and international wars, as the cases of negative peace (lack of international wars) illustrate in South America (until the mid-1980s) and West Africa (until the 1990s).

Conversely, within the *Realist paradigm*, we learn and teach about the relevance of balances of power, hegemonic struggles, international security dilemmas and the possibility of inter-state wars. And yet, again, how many of these anachronistic (if not obsolete) patterns are relevant to study the security predicament, the true *problématique* of the Global South in general, and of Latin America in particular? After all, international wars are becoming an extinct species in international relations, though we witness the continuation of civil wars and of ‘*intermestic wars*’ (civil wars with foreign, international intervention, whether predicated on humanitarian grounds and other motivations) in the developing world, especially in the Arab Middle East. In a sense, what preoccupies most of the citizens and civil societies across the Global South is not the traditional security dilemma, but rather the *insecurity dilemma* that characterizes many of the developing countries, epitomized by issues and concepts such as ‘human security’, ‘citizen security’, ‘ontological security’, the persistence of the ‘national security state’ that acts as a predator against its own citizens, domestic violence, guerrilla and civil wars, and illicit security threats (including transnational organized crime, drugs, small arms, and human trafficking).

Of course, I am not claiming here that *all* the Northern IR theories are completely irrelevant to explore the realities of the Global South, despite of their Western bias. We can find some usage in the implementation of theories and approaches such as social Constructivism, the Grotian approach (English school), and Marxist and radical perspectives to make sense of the Global South’s *problématique*.

*Are There IR Theories from the South in general, and from Latin America in particular?*

To the question of whether there are IR theories “made in the Global South” to remedy the insufficiencies or irrelevancies of IR theories we can provide a tentative and preliminary answer. Yes, there are a few scholars, in Latin America and in other developing regions of the Global South as well, who attempted in the last fifty years or so to suggest alternative IR theories to study the developing world. Among those, first and foremost we should emphasize the significant contribution of Fernando H. Cardoso and Enzo Faletto (1979), alongside with other South American scholars, in developing a *dependency theory* (*dependencia* in Spanish) that account for an alternative and nuanced vision of North-South relations and of the international political economy as a

whole. Furthermore, in the realm of security studies, scholars such as Carlos Escudé (2016) developed theories of subordinated or *peripheral Realism* to explain the security relations between the Global North and the Global South. In addition, we could mention Roberto Russell and Juan Gabriel Tokatlian (2015)'s assessment of Latin America's "grand strategy" in two opposing but reconciling logics of "autonomy" and "acquiescence," following the steps of Juan Carlos Puig. Other relevant Latin American scholars who have speculated about world orders and Latin America include Andrés Serbin (2016), Federico Merke (2011), and Raul Bernal-Meza (2000 and 2010). Recent Handbooks dealing with the international relations of the region and its security dimension also refer to those issues (see Mares and Kacowicz, 2016; and Covarrubias and Domínguez, 2015).

Moreover, post-colonial approaches, developed by *both* scholars from the North and from the South, refer to North-South relations in neo-colonial terms.

### *Key Research Issues to Formulate Regarding the Global South*

To suggest a coherent agenda for the research and study of the Global South, I list below some of the paramount issues that should be of our concern as IR scholars and as Latin Americanists. The list of course is partial and subjective, reflecting my own research agenda in the last twenty-five years:

- The lack of political and economic development in many of the countries of the Global South;
- The presence, recurrence and maintenance of international peace (but not necessarily of domestic peace), in many regions of the Global South, populated by relatively weak states (in relation to their societies);
- With some notable exceptions such as the case of the BRICS (Brazil, China, and South Africa, since Russia does not belong to the Global South), the insufficiency and ineffectiveness in projecting power for most of the developing countries beyond their immediate neighborhood.
- The effects of globalization upon the distribution of wealth in the Global South, defined in terms of poverty and inequality (both within and across nations) (see Kacowicz, 2013).

- The relative marginalization of most of the countries in the Global South (in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa, for instance), from shaping the major events and transformations in international relations.
- The relevance of normative regional frameworks that regulate and characterize the *regional* international relations; for instance, in the cases of Latin America and the Arab Middle East (see Kacowicz, 2005 and Sela, 1998).
- The new types of security challenges, including transnational security threats and risks emerging with the intensification of globalization and regionalization processes, such as terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, transnational organized crime, money laundering, corruption, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (see Kacowicz and Mares, 2016: 25; and Kacowicz, Lacovsky and Wajner, 2018).

### *Epistemologies and Methodologies to Study the Global South, including Latin America*

It is my contention that although the *problématique* and the substantial issues that preoccupy us regarding the Global South in general and Latin America in particular are distinctively different from the Global North, the epistemologies and methodologies should not be different. What are then some of the relevant tools to study the developing world? (Again, the list might be partial and utterly subjective):

- The use of the comparative method, through comparing case-studies within a single region, or/and cross-regional comparisons (for instance, Latin America and West Africa, or Latin America and the Middle East).
- The use of tools of diplomatic history research, primary sources in the relevant languages for Global South regions (Spanish and Portuguese for Latin America). In this sense, as a rule of thumb it is essential to get sources of the different dyads (if relevant), in order to mitigate the official and contrasting narratives that create a kind of Rashomon effect.
- The study of norms in international relations, both through formal and written instruments of international law, and through actual behavior (practices) in regional terms.

### *Problems in Conducting Research about the Global South, including Latin America*

A serious and systematic scholarly research about the Global South (including Latin America) is plagued with challenges and pitfalls, which directly derive from the complexities of the subject matter and the inherent inconsistencies and incoherence that characterize human relations in general, and international relations (as a specific illustration of human relations) in particular. Here are some of the typical problems to be confronted in any serious research endeavor:

- How to overcome the relative (but objective) irrelevance of the Global South in international politics, taken from a Northern perspective of international studies? (This is the problem of *relative irrelevance* or *marginalization*, both in empirical and scholastic terms).
- Can we generalize about the Global South in general or even about a specific region in particular? For instance, is there something particularly unique about Latin America? Or the Middle East? Or West Africa? Or South Asia? (This is the problem of *finding patterns and formulating consistent generalizations*, both within regions and across them).
- How can we be serious and systematic in the study of regions in the Global South without falling into the descriptive trap and lack of theorizing? (This is the problem of *finding a balance and avoiding a trade-off between regional studies and general IR theorizing*).

Of course, it is much easier to list the problems than to suggest potential solutions. Let me turn now to the second part of the paper, drawing on my own research experience of the last twenty-five years about Latin American case-studies, examples, and illustrations.

## **II. Learning about the World from the Latin American Experience: Latin America as an Empirical Laboratory to Test IR Theories**

With the major exception of the Latin American version of the dependency theory, which has been a substantial theoretical contribution to the study of international politics, the region has occupied only a marginal place in theorizing about international relations in general and about international political economy (for instance, issues such as the

effect of globalization upon the distribution of wealth) in particular. Yet, my focal argument here is that the Latin American experience can serve as a useful and fascinating laboratory for testing theories of social sciences, not only on issues of war and peace (see Kacowicz, 1998: 2005; 2013; and Kacowicz and Mares, 2016), but also with reference to international political economy and crucial and paramount problems such as poverty and social inequality (see Filgueira, 2008: 41 and Kacowicz, 2013).

This theoretical and empirical lacuna is even more striking when contrasted to the strong tradition of the radical Latin American critique of imperialism, neo-colonialism, and nowadays of globalization, as developed by a vast literature on economic development, including the *dependencia* (dependency) approach of the late 1960s and the 1970s, which emphasized the nefarious role of international and structural factors, first and foremost the US influence, the role of the international financial institutions (IFIs), and the transnational presence of multinational corporations for the region's economics and politics (see Lopez-Alves and Johnson, 2007: 11; and Cardoso and Faletto, 1979).

According to the *dependencia* argument, which might still be relevant nowadays, the processes of economic globalization have led to the incorporation of the countries of the region into the global, world economy, even allowing for some form of “dependent development”, though domestically the bulk of the population, the poor and the disadvantaged, have not benefited from neither growth nor economic development. In this context, it is interesting to emphasize that for many Latin Americans economic globalization has provided a paramount political pretext for the enactment of domestic policies, either as an incentive to develop specific policies (such as the adoption of neo-liberalism *a outrance* in the early 1990s in countries like Argentina and Peru), or as a political manipulation not to perform reforms at all.

*Example # 1: Peace Studies: Zones of Peace in the Third World*  
(Kacowicz, 1998)

The term “zones of peace” has been used in reference to the Cold War period in Europe (1945-1989), and to the separate peace among the democracies developed progressively throughout the last two hundred years. Yet, in my 1998 book I moved beyond a European or Northern focus to consider the theoretical and historical significance of the term in the context of the Global South. In this context, I argued that there have been periods of “long peace,” so that zones of

peace, characterized by the absence of inter-state war, have developed in South America since 1883 and among the West African countries since their independence in the early 1960s.

In the book I explored how regional peace has been maintained in South America and in West Africa through the distilling of alternative explanations, including Realism, Liberalism, and satisfaction with the territorial status quo. My theoretical argument was that peace can indeed be maintained among non-democratic states, although there is a direct relationship between the quality of the regional peace and the type of political regimes sustained by the countries in any given region. The book addressed two fundamental questions: how the preservation of long-term peace at the regional level could be explained and whether regional peace could be sustained among states that are not democratic.

### The Long South American Peace, 1883-2018

Since the Pacific War's end in 1883 the South American region has been a "zone of peace," except for two international wars: the 1932-1935 Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay, and the 1941 border war between Ecuador and Peru (with two brief sequels in 1981 and 1995). Several long-standing territorial disputes existed and persisted, some eventually escalating into international crises, such as the "tug of war" between Argentina and Chile over their Patagonian border in 1902 and over the Beagle Channel Islands in 1978. Yet, most border disputes in the region have been peacefully resolved. This has occurred under the principle of *uti possidetis*, whereby the South American nations accepted their previous colonial borders as their post-independence frontiers.

Peaceful relations among the South American countries have contrasted starkly with the violent relations within their own borders, at least until the trend towards democratization in the late 1970s and 1980s. Since then, military governments in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile, and Paraguay have been replaced by democratically elected regimes. Let us briefly examine the alternative explanations for this regional peace.

International regional peace, at least in its primitive, negative phase, predated the stable peace of the mid-1980s, and the incipient pluralistic security community that emerged in the mid-1990s. The South American zone of negative peace has been maintained because

most states in the region - with the notable exceptions of Bolivia and Ecuador until 1998 - have been relatively satisfied with the territorial status quo. Negative peace was also promoted by a common cultural framework that preferred peaceful resolution of international disputes over war. Brazil, the aspiring regional hegemon also provided a pacifying presence, preferring the regional status quo since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The South American states also had relatively little interaction with each other until the 1960s, partly due to their geographical isolation.

With the spread of democracy in the region since the late 1970s, the South American countries have been moving toward stable peace, enhancing their economic interdependence, and furthering the economic and political integration. The improved relationships among Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and even Chile have now made an international war in the region implausible, if not impossible. With the territorial disputes between Argentina and Chile now resolved, and with the rivalry between Argentina and Brazil now subsiding, all the South American countries except for Bolivia have become satisfied with the territorial status quo in the region.

*Example # 2: The Normative Dimension of International Relations: The Impact of Norms in International Society (Kacowicz, 2005)*

This book explored the study of international norms by suggesting several different perspectives and foundations for a much-needed dialogue on the normative dimension of international politics. In the book I examined alternative approaches to international relations that partially overlap with Constructivism and might be equally effective in the *empirical* study of international norms, such as international law and the Grotian approach to international relations (the so-called English school of international relations).

The book addressed the problem of identifying international norms and assessing their impact on the behavior of states in the international society within a regional context. The research traced several international norms of peace and security and their impact in Latin America in the last 130 years. I identified international norms through their formal development in terms of international law, and their translation into actual state behavior and regional institutionalization in Latin America, including the interaction among states and other non-state international actors.

The main argument of the book was that norms can be considered as an independent and dynamic factor that affects the quality of international society. This thesis stems from three basic assumptions: (1) The existence and persistence of international norms assumes the reality of an international (or regional) society; (2) These international norms are expressed, empirically, through social practices and institutions, such as instruments of international law; and (3) International norms of peace and security do make a difference in the foreign and domestic policies of the member-states of that society.

### Latin America as a Regional International Society:

To illustrate the impact of international norms in a regional setting, the empirical research focused on the example of the Latin American international society. Kalevi Holsti (1993: 19) argues that the Latin American countries, through a long historical and learning process, have managed to establish a unique normative system of a Latin “diplomatic culture” that has helped their governments to resolve many of their international conflicts short of war. Since gaining independence in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Latin American countries have gradually built up a sophisticated and highly developed system of regional international law and institutions, including a series of regional norms that have regulated their international and domestic behavior. The Latin American nations, especially in South America, have succeeded in developing a theory and practice of Latin American exceptionalism regarding their recourse to international law - through arbitration of disputes, mediation, bilateral negotiations, and other techniques for the peaceful settlement of international disputes, rather than the use of force. It should be pointed out, however, that this normative and legal reluctance to engage in war against fellow Latin American nations never implied the lack of serious interstate disputes throughout the entire region. Moreover, the contrast between great internal violence and instability in Latin American politics and its relatively benign and civilized international relations discloses a puzzling paradox that has to be addressed as well.

The norms and principles of international law adopted by this regional society since independence include sovereignty, equality of states, and nonintervention; *uti possidetis* (recognition of the former colonial borders) and territorial integrity; peaceful settlement of international disputes, including the principles of peaceful international coexistence (*convivencia*) and consensus-seeking (*concertación*); arms control,

disarmament, and collective security; and political legalism and commitment to democracy and the protection of human rights.

In more specific terms, three clear influences can be traced from these common norms on the international relations of the region: (1) Regional norms and institutions have contributed to the maintenance of the “long peace” in South America since 1883; (2) They have reshaped the definition of state interests in terms of their foreign relations; and (3) In some cases they have moved and upgraded already existing peaceful relations in Latin America in the direction of a pluralistic security community.

*Example # 3: Globalization and the Distribution of Wealth (Kacowicz, 2013)*

The effect of globalization on poverty and inequality is a key issue in contemporary international politics, yet it has been quite neglected in the international relations and comparative politics literature. In this forthcoming book I explore the complex relationship between globalization and the distribution of wealth as a political problem in international relations, analyzing it through the prism of poverty and inequality. I develop a political framework (an “intermestic model”) that captures the interaction between the international and the domestic domains and explains those effects with a particular emphasis upon the state and its relations with society. I also specify the different hypotheses regarding the possible links between globalization and the distribution of wealth and test them in the context of Latin America during the years 1982-2008, with a particular focus on Argentina and the deep crisis it experienced in 2001-2002.

The main argument of this book is that politics plays a crucial role in our effort to make sense of the problematic effects of globalization upon domestic societies, as well as a vital part of the effort to tame globalization and to find proper solutions to its potential negative externalities, including poverty and inequality. Thus, I argue in this book that national governments act as “transmission belts,” mediating the impact of globalization upon their societies and citizenry. The stronger the states (in relation to their societies), the more effective they will be in providing “good governance” and adequate solutions to cope with poverty and inequality. Consequently, variations in the effects of globalization upon poverty and inequality are best understood by examining the interplay of domestic politics and of international relations.

### Globalization, Poverty, and Inequality in Latin America:

In empirical terms, I examine the links among globalization, poverty, and inequality in the context of the economic and social realities of Latin America in general, and of Argentina in particular, with some further reference to the cases of Chile and Brazil, all during the period between 1982 and 2008. Much of the political economy debate in Latin America at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has revolved around the effects of economic globalization and of structural reform upon economic growth, poverty, and inequality. Thus, poverty and inequality remain the major socio-economic problems of the region, with pernicious political implications and connotations, despite the impressive opening of the Latin American markets to the global economy and the encouraging trends of the early 2000s in terms of reduction of both poverty and inequality.

Why is that the case? To what extent can we blame economic globalization for the persistence of poverty and the exacerbation of inequality in the region? In general terms, one can argue that from Christopher Columbus to our days, Latin America has been strongly influenced by external and international processes, including that of economic globalization, although the region as a whole (with some particular successful exceptions, such as Chile, Costa Rica, Panama, and most recently Brazil) has failed to take full advantage of the opportunities and challenges offered by globalization, and had not been able to moderate the negative impact of these external factors (see Ferrer, 1999: 9-10). What are then the explanations for this relative failure?

Structural and *dependencista* arguments might point out to the effects of global capitalism in general, and to the financial and commercial vulnerability of the Latin American economies in particular as a possible culprit for the exacerbation of poverty, the deepening of inequality, the domestic social violence, and the chronic deficit of political legitimacy of the political systems in the region (see Romero, 2002; Filgueira, 2008; and Harris and Nef, 2008: 273-274). Conversely, an alternative domestic politics argument might suggest that the causes of poverty and inequality in Latin America are not necessarily related to economic globalization, but rather stem from the structural domestic characteristics of the Latin American societies and politics, first and foremost the relative weakness of their political institutions (see for instance Hoffman and Centeno, 2003).

A third category of explanations for poverty and inequality in the region attempts to combine both domestic and international factors,

in a kind of *inter-mestic* dynamics. Hence, I argue that the sources of poverty and inequality in Latin America are intrinsically related to the role of the state and other political actors that partly determinate the menu of choice available for their possible actions. A vicious cycle of poverty and economic inequality handicaps most Latin American countries, undermining their ability and capacity effectively to finance and deliver essential government services, including the provision of public security. The domestic and international results are homeland insecurity and crime, waves of migration, lack of political stability, the adoption of populist policies, and the reluctance of international investors to invest in unstable polities and societies.

In conclusion, in prescriptive rather than in descriptive or real terms, the state in Latin America should play a crucial role in re-creating a process of economic growth to be compatible with a gradual elimination of poverty, the reduction of inequality, and the management of economic globalization. As a matter of fact, the need to foster good governance and political and economic transparency has to be translated from the trendy political slogans of the World Bank into effective and progressive social policies to be pursued by the state. Yet, the policies necessary for the reduction of poverty and inequality cannot be expected to prosper and develop if the state's social basis remains a narrow one - as a result of implementing neoliberal economic reforms in the 1980s and the 1990s that shrunk the Latin American state in the first place (Teichman, 2002: 5).

*Example # 4: Unintended Consequences of Peace: Peaceful Borders and the Incursion of Transnational Malign Non-State Actors (Criminals and Terrorists) (Kacowicz, Lacovsky, and Wajner, 2018)*

Traditional international norms that regulate border disputes and interstate relations are ill prepared to address the new security threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which are often framed as criminal transnational flows. It is precisely the movement toward regional integration and the outbreak of regional peace across borders that make the traditional military function of borders as an external boundary delimiting territorial sovereignty irrelevant, at least in conventional geopolitical terms. Borders therefore become economic and meeting spaces for a variety of actors, public and private, to engage in significant transactions, both licit and illicit. These private and public actors might be legitimate, but they might also be illegal and criminal.

Thus, there seems to be a puzzling correlation between the existence of peaceful borders and the proliferation of transnational criminal activities, resulting from the “softening,” “loosening,” liberalization, and de-militarization of borders that become more porous and open. In this research we address then an unexplored linkage between the existence of peaceful borders and the presence of security threats posed by transnational ‘malign’ non-state actors. Criminals tend to exploit the looseness and demilitarization of the borderland, by taking advantage of the jurisdictional arbitrage created by sovereign borders to engage in transnational illicit activities across borders. Thus, a potential consequence of the coincidence between international peace and cross-border transnational flows may be the rise of variegated security challenges in the borderlands, posed by the presence and proliferation of transnational criminal organizations.

Hence, the main question we address in this research is the following: *Under which conditions peaceful borders might encourage and increase the presence of transnational malign non-state actors?* The answer should examine the following variables:

- (1) The degree of peace and integration in the borderland and between the bordering countries, which is expressed in the form of different border regimes, ranging from closed and alienated borders (under conditions of passive or active conflict), through coexisting (under conditions of negative peace or absence of war), and all the way to interdependent and integrated borders, under conditions of stable peace;
- (2) The degree of governance and institutional strength of the border states, with a special focus on border control and level of corruption, as a measure for the fragility (or alternatively, strength) of state institutions; and
- (3) The prevalent socio-economic conditions of the bordering states and the borderland, which might provide an economic rationale for or against the proliferation of transnational criminal activity.

### The Reality of Peaceful Borders in the Americas:

The relative lack of international wars in the Western Hemisphere has affected border relations in general terms. One of the principal ironies of the border disputation in the Americas is the almost complete absence of wars about the demarcation of national borders, in contrast

to cases such as Kashmir, Sudan, Kosovo, or the Arab-Israeli conflict (see Briscoe, 2008: 1; Jaskoski, Sotomayor and Trinkunas, 2015: 7; and Williams, 2016: 268). While this has been a blessing in comparison to the bloody history of Europe until 1945 and much of the Third World since then, it had affected the development of the Latin American state by negatively affecting its legitimacy and institutionalization (see Centeno, 2002). While international borders are usually recognized, they are also penetrated by the presence of transnational non-state actors, including armed criminal networks (see Domínguez, 2016).

Once peaceful international borders have become soft, open, and loose, de-militarized and “civilized,” then paradoxically transnational crime has emerged to pose new challenges to Latin America’s security and prospects of cooperation due to the vulnerability and looseness of its borders (see Pion Berlin, 2015: 214 and 216, with specific reference to the Tri-Border-Area). Hence, some borders in the Western Hemisphere are particularly prone to the presence of transnational ‘malign’ non-state actors, including Mexico’s borders with the United States, Colombia’s borders, Brazil’s Amazon frontiers, the Central American “Northern Triangle” of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, and the Tri-border-area among Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil (see Briscoe, 2008).

#### **Four issue-areas and the *Problématique* of Latin America in the Contemporary World Order**

These four different subjects and issue-areas that occupied and pre-occupied me in the last twenty five years (regional peace; norms of peace and security; globalization and the distribution of wealth; and the relationship between borders and transnational ‘malign actors’) are somehow related to the broader question of this special issue: *What role should Latin America play in the shaping of world order(s) if at all?*

This is a normative question, not a practical one, although the distinction here between the normative and analytical dimensions is mooted. As Merke (2011) and Smith (2008) suggest, the different role(s) that Latin America could or should play in shaping the world order(s) are a function of: (1) the distribution of power in the international system in general, and in the Western Hemisphere in particular; (2) the normative framework, identities, and ideologies sustained by the Latin American nations, with a particular emphasis upon their strong adherence to the norm of sovereignty and its corollaries of noninter-

vention and territorial integrity; and (3) the structure of the international political economic system, through the effects of economic globalization and the traditional relations of dependency in terms of North-South relations (Kacowicz, 2005 and 2013).

An enhanced role for Latin America in the design of alternative and relevant world orders will be dependent not only on external factors to the region (such as the global distribution of power and the rules of the game), but first and foremost upon the willingness and capabilities of Latin American countries to embark on a significant integration project that will increase their bargaining power vis-à-vis the rest of the world, beyond their rhetorical utterances of good Bolivarian intentions. As Lowenthal and Baron (2015: 36) argue, “Latin America is no longer off the international radar screen.” Brazil and Mexico are significant international if not global players, as well as some famous (or infamous) Latin American non-state actors, whether they are regional multinationals (*multilatinas*) or transnational drug cartels.

## Conclusions and Extrapolations

In the four examples from different (though related) issue-areas mentioned above (zones of peace, regional society, globalization and the distribution of wealth, and transnational security threats) I have used the empirical examination of the Latin American region as a laboratory to test my theoretical arguments and hypotheses. To what extent can we derive some conclusions and extrapolations, including a healthy dose of self-criticism in this regard? Here is a partial list, in lieu of conclusions, so the reader might deduct her own extrapolations and speculations:

- It is obvious from the four examples that in order to grasp the political dynamics of the Global South there is a clear need to link and relate comparative politics to international relations in the study of the developing world in general and of Latin America in particular. Thus, there is a need to link international and domestic politics, including the domestic structures of state and the state-society nexus (hence, the need to develop *inter-mestic* arguments).
- A *regional analytical perspective* is of paramount importance in the post-Cold War era to understand the Global South, since regions are likely to have substantially more autonomy and leverage (but not necessarily relevance) from major powers in the international system in our contemporary age.

- It is possible and even imperative, to theorize about the Global South across different issue-areas in search of common patterns, ranging from the international security realm (peace and security) to the realm of international political economy (i.e., the impact of economic globalization upon the distribution of wealth). And yet, the possibility to generalize across different issue-areas remains very limited, since power does not travel freely (in other words, it is not easily fungible) from one issue-area to another.
- It is probably easier to focus upon a particular region in the Global South (for instance, South America within Latin America) rather than to try to generalize across the twelve or so “regions” of the developing world (South America, Central America and the Caribbean, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, West Africa, North Africa, East Africa, Central Africa, Southern Africa, and the Middle East). Hence, the possibility to compare and draw generalizations and extrapolations about the Global South as a whole remains a very difficult if not impossible intellectual exercise, so we should act with caution and prudence in that regard.
- Even while disaggregating “Latin America” into two different sub-regions (South America vs. Central America and the Caribbean), the possibility of generalizing and finding common patterns remains very limited, due to the large regional variance in the distribution of power and different national policies adopted by the member states of a specific sub-region (for instance, Brazil is very different from Bolivia, and Costa Rica from Haiti). We then face the dilemma and the trade-off between an attempt to generalize and extrapolate vs. the intention to be as accurate and precise as possible.
- Latin American security and political-economic issues remain at a paramount place in order to understand Latin American politics, economics, and societies, both in international relations and in domestic terms. Moreover, Latin America serves as an empirical laboratory to explore and suggest hypotheses and theories to make sense of this complex reality. In addition, Latin American security and political economy can serve as a source of inspiration to offer genuine contributions to the general discipline of international relations, well beyond the Western Hemisphere.
- In our quest for theorizing and conducting research in international relations, the challenge remains to refer to the different regions of the Global South (in my case, I used Latin America across different issue-areas) not just as an empirical laboratory to test IR theories,

but in itself as providing puzzles and generating theoretical queries that might be relevant not just for any specific region, but for the (academic?) world as a whole. This remains, by definition and substantially, a very incomplete and unfulfilled quest. But this intellectual journey goes on.

- As for the broader issue of this volume, regarding the insertion of Latin America in the world order, we might suggest that world order scenarios affect unevenly different regions of the world. Thus, in coping with different world orders, the view from the Global South in general, and from Latin America in particular, remains relevant. In practice, world orders are translated, adapted, and distorted by the views from the South. Hence, the design of global architecture through world orders should be channeled through specific regional perspectives, like in the Latin American case.

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