

THE RISE OF LATIN AMERICA'S
FOREIGN POLICY:
Between Hegemony and Autonomy

Gerhard Drekonja-Kornat
University of Vienna

- ARAB-LATIN AMERICAN RELATIONS: ENERGY, TRADE, AND INVESTMENT.* Edited by FEHMY SADDY. (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Books, 1983. Pp. 173. \$29.95.)
- FOREIGN POLICY ON LATIN AMERICA, 1970-1980.* Edited by THE STAFF OF FOREIGN POLICY. (Boulder, Colo., and Washington, D.C.: Westview Press and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1983. Pp. 184. \$20.00 cloth, \$9.95 paper.)
- LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICIES: GLOBAL AND REGIONAL DIMENSIONS.* Edited by ELIZABETH G. FERRIS and JENNIE K. LINCOLN. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1981. Pp. 300. \$26.50 cloth, \$14.00 paper.)
- POLITICAL CHANGE IN CENTRAL AMERICA: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DIMENSIONS.* Edited by WOLF GRABENDORFF, HEINRICH W. KRUMWIEDE, and JOERG TODT. (Boulder, Colo., and London: Westview Press, 1984. Pp. 312. \$16.50 paper.)
- THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND LATIN AMERICA: A CASE STUDY IN GLOBAL ROLE EXPANSION.* By GLENN MOWER, JR. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1982. Pp. 180. \$27.50.)
- THE FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES OF THIRD WORLD STATES.* Edited by JOHN J. STREMLAU. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982. Pp. 174. \$15.00 cloth, \$8.00 paper.)

During the past few decades, Latin America has been the preferred object of development studies. Penetrated by transnational companies, foreign capital, and hegemonic powers, the continent has been unable to become a major actor in the international system. Consequently, studies of the foreign policy behavior of Latin American states have been exiguous and largely formalistic.¹

This statement does not mean to imply that Latin America has pursued no foreign policy; however, while Latin American foreign ministries developed a number of activities, most of them constituted a mimetic reflex of the behavior of the classical great powers rather than

an alternative foreign policy. Moreover, Latin America's having imported the "modern" academic discipline of geopolitics following World War I encouraged foreign ministries to pursue what occasionally appeared to be rather peculiar geostrategic aims, such as border disputes and debates on resources.

After World War II, the issue of foreign policy lost considerable ground. Between 1944 and 1948, the Pan-Americanism practiced for decades led to a "new" international order, the correction of which has become the central issue of the debate on the New International Economic Order today. With the establishment of the military Rio Pact in 1947, as well as the Organization of American States in 1948, Latin America was firmly integrated as a regional subsystem of the U.S. imperial order. The region then assumed a role within this order that anticipated positions assumed by the Western European countries and Japan. In this sense, Constantino Vaitsos is right when he talks about the "Latin-Americanization" of the world.² It is therefore remarkable that structural similarities between the position of Latin America in the American system and that of the Eastern European states in the Soviet-Russian sphere of influence can be occasionally perceived without being considered more than an oddity in the international debate.³

Simultaneously, Latin America has functioned as part of the Third World. Indeed, thanks to the creative drive of *Cepalismo*, the developmental doctrine of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL), Latin America has shared its perceptions of developmental problems with Africa and Asia since the early 1960s. Through this doctrinal relationship, the premises of classical foreign policy, particularly as developed by the United States in an effort to maintain the status quo after World War II, lost their validity for the Latin American states. The use in Latin American universities of Spanish translations of classics in international relations, particularly the works of Hans Morgenthau and Raymond Aron, proved inappropriate. "Underdeveloped" in the international system since World War II, and thus a third-class power or a nonactor, Latin America found it necessary in attempting to pursue its own interests to seek change rather than the perpetuation of the status quo. This outlook required Latin Americans to develop a foreign policy school of their own. As a result, the past two decades have been marked by a learning process vis-à-vis foreign policy that has given birth to a "new" Latin American foreign policy and growing status for the region within the international system. Today the texts on Latin American foreign policy are multiplying—a notable phenomenon considering the premise of dependency doctrine, which classifies Latin America as incapable of acting on its own.

Various individuals and institutions have led the way in developing a new foreign policy outlook for Latin America. Its beginnings can

be traced to El Colegio de México, where in the wake of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, a program of study in international politics was established and the trendsetting journal *Foro Internacional* was founded. Twenty-four volumes of *Foro Internacional* present a clear picture of the development of the Mexican version of the new Latin American foreign policy, and issue number 94 attempts to summarize the results.⁴

Before 1964 in Brazil, father figure Hélio Jaguaribe adeptly laid the foundations of the Brazilian variant of a Latin American foreign policy. A large portion of Jaguaribe's work was abandoned after the military coup of 1964. But when the crisis of the Brazilian model loomed in the mid-1970s, Jaguaribe's ideas were resuscitated and implemented by the military technocracy. The Brazilian regime shrewdly drew on Brazil's dual character as both an industrialized country and a Third World state to lay the foundations for its Black African and Arab foreign policy, which was completely novel for Latin America. The Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos, which is headquartered in Rio de Janeiro, exemplifies the progress Brazil has made in its relations with Black Africa.⁵ The relationship between Brazil and the Arab states is also expanding rapidly. *Arab-Latin American Relations: Energy, Trade, and Investment*, edited by Fehmy Saddy, provides a succinct and useful introduction to this phenomenon, despite its limitations. With regard to the Arab states, Latin American studies transgress traditional geographic categorizations, implying multidisciplinary perspectives that may require some future Latin Americanists to learn Arabic. The Arab-Latin American Bank (ARLABANK) in Lima is impressive evidence of the fact that a constructive dialogue is well underway. Some theoreticians of North-South relations cannot or will not accept this development, especially because Brazil adheres to the traditional pattern of bartering technology (especially military technology) for oil and raw materials. In this case, we must adjust theory to practice and not vice versa.

In Chile the generation of Gabriel Valdés welded individual initiatives together to form a Latin American foreign policy doctrine. Valdés, the most prominent figure of the anti-Pinochet opposition today, served as foreign minister under the Christian Democratic President Eduardo Frei (1964–70). Much of the credit for the formation of Chile's foreign policy goes to Claudio Véliz, who inaugurated the first phase of the Instituto de Estudios Internacionales de la Universidad de Chile in Santiago, and to his journal *Estudios Internacionales*, the second pillar of the new Latin American foreign policy.

What are the central features of the "new" Latin American foreign policy? In my opinion, they are threefold: the policy must be oriented toward the Third World; it must work toward a New International Economic Order; and because of Latin America's singular geographic position, it must develop a specific attitude toward the United States. In

other words, because Latin America and the Caribbean in particular are highly sensitive security zones for the United States, Latin America does not have complete freedom in its foreign policy despite its formal sovereignty. It must always limit its actions to fit within the bounds of U.S. tolerance. Hélio Jaguaribe coined the term "autonomía periférica" to describe this phenomenon. "Autonomía periférica" must be clearly differentiated from the "autonomía secesionista" of Juan Carlos Puig, Argentina's master of foreign policy thinking and Peronist foreign minister in 1973. Within the definition of "autonomía periférica," anything is permissible as long as it does not affect the security interests of the United States, or more important, as long as the United States believes its security interests to be unaffected. "Autonomía secesionista," on the other hand, implies an overt challenge to U.S. policy by means of internal revolution, socialism, or orientation toward Moscow. Given this constellation, direct or indirect U.S. intervention in Latin America is inevitable. The invasion of Grenada in 1983 is merely the latest link in a chain of such painful events.

Because the new Latin American foreign policy has had to cope with specific issues, it has not had time to develop a high degree of sophistication or mathematization. Descriptive works of the situation prevail, especially because this kind of analysis accords with Latin American educational traditions. The young Chilean Heraldo Muñoz, probably Latin America's most brilliant foreign policy analyst, consequently refers to the "semiartisanal character" of foreign policy studies in the Southern Hemisphere.⁶ At the same time, the increasing degree of sophistication is striking, and in defiance of all the political setbacks of the seventies, Latin American foreign policy has reached a considerable standard in terms of both analysis and practice. Today its organizational mentor is Chile's Luciano Tomassini, who succeeded in merging all the important institutions of foreign policy research and teaching under the umbrella organization of RIAL (Relaciones Internacionales de América Latina).⁷

After two decades of such efforts, it is now possible to speak of a Latin American foreign policy theory and to discern the first traces of a comparative element in Latin America's foreign policy. Indeed, any future analysis should begin by considering this element. The publication of the edited volume *Latin American Foreign Policies* was a milestone in this regard. This work constitutes the first basis for a comparative framework in which the foreign policies of individual Latin American states can be viewed within a continental pattern. The editors, Elizabeth G. Ferris and Jennie K. Lincoln, already have a sequel in print.⁸ Juan Carlos Puig's collection, *América Latina: políticas exteriores comparadas*, presents a Latin American point of view that sets a high standard for the foreign policy series published by the RIAL Grupo Editor Lati-

noamericano in Buenos Aires.⁹ Although Ferris and Lincoln fail to take this Latin American pattern into consideration, it should eventually be applicable even to Cuba, which has an autonomy problem of its own in its relationship with the Soviet Union.¹⁰

The existence of a continentwide Latin American foreign policy, which Ferris and Lincoln effectively demonstrate, raises three fundamental questions: What are the objectives of Latin American foreign policy? What is its content? Who conducts it?

In discussing the first question, it is useful to consider the 160 years of formal sovereignty in Latin America, which have created a considerable tradition in diplomatic history and geopolitical tinkering. Since the 1960s, this tradition has been fused with the concept of "seguridad nacional." From these perspectives, the thirty-odd Latin American and Caribbean nation-states are viewed as additional actors with full autonomy in the international system, and it is in this spirit that the weighty volumes of "historias diplomáticas" were and still are being written.

As soon as one considers Latin America as part of the Third World, however, questions of sovereignty and intrazonal disputes lose importance, and the objectives of the New International Economic Order come to the fore. For this reason, it is particularly rewarding to read John J. Stremlau's *Foreign Policy Priorities of Third World States*, which shows the connection between the foreign policy priorities of the Third World states and those of Latin America. The underlying factor in both areas is the demand for the creation of an alternative order that would give Third World countries more justice, more participation, and more equality in exchange relations. Such a new order would follow from the moral demand to rectify or even replace the "old" order that has existed since the end of World War II. The foreign policy objectives generated by this outlook do not include establishing a status quo or attaining the premises of equilibrium as in the foreign policy of industrialized countries; rather, it seeks to develop an anti-status quo policy in which every Latin American country participates in one form or another. Thus one could paraphrase Stremlau by saying that the foreign policy priorities of Latin America are the foreign policy priorities of the Third World.

The complex relationship between the multitude of Latin American and Caribbean states makes it difficult to discuss the specific content of Latin American foreign policy; yet the thesis of the existence of an overall Latin American foreign policy suggests that the international behavior of the subcontinent can be reduced to a fundamental pattern from which individual states may deviate from time to time (as in Chile after 1973), but from which they can never completely detach themselves. Regarding the relationship to the United States, the concept of

"autonomia periférica" implies both the dilution of Latin America's relationship with the United States and the intensification of its relationship with Western and Eastern Europe, Japan, and most recently Black Africa and the Arab states. As the nucleus of the practice of Latin American foreign policy, this trend implies that foreign policy is, above all, foreign trade policy. As such, it seeks geographical diversification, diplomatic multilaterality, ideological pluralism, rapprochement with nonaligned countries, agreements on raw materials, specific technology policy, the establishment of Latin American multinational companies as a frontline defense against transnational corporations, and similar goals.

Finally, we come to the question of who conducts Latin America's foreign policy. With few exceptions (notably Brazil), Latin America's foreign ministries are old-fashioned, inefficient bureaucracies. The alternative foreign trade policy launched in the mid-1960s was consequently placed in the hands of a young, yet capable, development technocracy with its own state or state-linked foreign trade organizations, which had been created by the respective presidencies. The success of Latin America's policy of trade diversification can be attributed to these groups. This development also explains the uniformity of the foreign policy behavior of the Latin Americans. This technocracy can act as a state class irrespective of sociopolitical conditions in the country in question and can maximize profits via foreign trade. Moreover, in this way, the technocracy can legitimize itself internally by employing a radical Third World vocabulary, as has been well done in Mexico. This technocracy may well be the common denominator of the foreign policy behavior of Third World countries and will certainly require the attention of Latin Americanists and Third World researchers in the years ahead.¹¹ It is surprising that Harold K. Jacobson's provocative essay concerning the "revolutionaries" or the "bargainers" in Third World foreign policy did not trigger a general discussion of this phenomenon.¹²

The overall development was obviously not as straightforward as it appears in retrospect. But the collection of essays on Latin America from the journal *Foreign Policy* allows one to retrace the meanderings of such an evolution. Experts will have to admit that they have made terrible blunders in some of their forecasts. At the beginning of the 1970s, *Foreign Policy* was captivated by Latin America's left-wing nationalism; Panama was regarded as a crucial problem of inter-American relations; in the mid-1970s, a Cuban détente seemed close at hand; Mexico's oil boom, ignored for some time, was subsequently overestimated; and Central America simply was not noticed until 1978. When the events of 1979 shook the traditional homogeneity and stability of

the Caribbean Basin, specialists had to reorient themselves and shift the emphasis of their research from South to Central America. From 1982 on, most published texts have dealt exclusively with this zone.

Political Change in Central America, written by a team of West German authors and coordinated by the tireless Wolf Grabendorff, reflects aptly the virtues and vices of the current Central American analysis. The historical perspective is not accorded its due, and changes are sketched rapidly. But the current analysis of the crisis, which has been determined by the intervention of both Western and Eastern European actors in a zone that before 1979 was the uncontested monopoly of the United States, is excellent. Such analysis indicates a new dimension in comparative Latin American foreign policy, which because of its concentration on the disputes with industrialized countries had likewise forgotten Central America until 1979. The Contadora group, in attempting to introduce a Pax Latina into the crisis area, is translating the theoretical discussions on autonomy into practice in Central America.

One further comment on the role of Western Europe: partly because of the theory of "regional subsystems," the possibility of preferential partnership between Latin America and Western Europe has been discussed over and over again. Indeed, if one assumes that Latin America, like Western Europe, was subordinated into the Pax Americana, then closer cooperation between the two geographic regions ought to strengthen the semiautonomy of both. Yet although Latin America has often called for this dialogue, the European Community has conceded only the level of trade. Glenn Mower's thorough and sober study, *The European Community and Latin America*, deserves credit for revealing the improbability of cooperation: "The question is not whether both the EC and Latin America could benefit from closer ties in a number of economic areas for, as the preceding pages have shown, they obviously could. Rather, the question is whether the EC will decide that it can move closer to Latin America without risking political or economic losses in other geographic areas which are perceived to be of greater importance to the Community" (p. 170).

The South Atlantic War of 1982 destroyed all illusions of this sort, including the hope of building an "Atlantic Triangle," as discussed in the early 1980s.¹³ How quickly the debris can be cleared away will depend on new initiatives of the Europeans.

The coming years should bring an increasing number of improving theories concerning Latin America's foreign policy.¹⁴ Reality, however, is lagging behind, for contrary to all assumptions, Latin America's progress toward an increasingly comprehensive "autonomia periférica" is not devoid of pitfalls and setbacks. It took Abe Lowenthal a long time to convince readers of the imminent end of U.S. hegemonic presumption in Latin America.¹⁵ Then, however, the false idea gained ground

that the United States would grow more flexible while Latin America would grow more and more potent. During Reagan's presidency, the opposite has been observed. Today Latin America is retrogressing because the United States has partially regained its position of hegemony. Latin America's debt crisis has further eradicated many tactical gains of "autonomía periférica." The reactions of Latin America's foreign policy-makers as well as analysts of Latin American foreign policy should provide a fascinating chapter in the years to come.

NOTES

1. *Latin American Foreign Policies: An Analysis*, edited by Harold Eugene Davis and Larman C. Wilson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).
2. Constantino V. Vaitsos, "From a Colonial Past to Asymmetrical Interdependencies: The Role of Europe in North-South Relations," in *Europe's Role in World Development*, edited by A. Mauri (Milan: Finafrica-Capriolo, 1981).
3. See, for example, Iris M. Laredo, *Problemática de la solución de conflictos intrabloques: casos Guatemala, Hungría, Cuba, Santo Domingo, Checoslovaquia* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Depalma, 1970).
4. "Las relaciones internacionales de América Latina," *Foro Internacional* 94 (Oct.–Dec. 1983).
5. See the journal *Estudios Afro-Asiáticos*, edited by Cândido José Mendes de Almeida and José María Nuñez Pereira, published by the Centro de Estudios Afro-Asiáticos at the Conjunto Universitario Cândido Mendes in Rio de Janeiro.
6. Heraldo Muñoz, "Los estudios internacionales en América Latina: problemas fundamentales," *Estudios Internacionales* (Santiago de Chile) 13, no. 51 (1981):328–44.
7. Since 1984 RIAL has also published a journal entitled *Semestres del RIAL* in Buenos Aires under the aegis of the Grupo Editor Latinoamericano.
8. *The Dynamics of Latin American Foreign Policies: Challenges for the 1980s*, edited by Jennie K. Lincoln and Elizabeth G. Ferris (Boulder, Colo., and London: Westview, 1984).
9. *América Latina: políticas exteriores comparadas*, edited by Juan Carlos Puig (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1984). An Argentine colleague and I coedited a similar volume concentrating on theory as well as on the policies of individual countries (Cuba included). See *Teoría y práctica de la política exterior latinoamericana*, edited by Gerhard Drekonja and Juan G. Tokatlian (Bogotá: Centro de Estudios Internacionales and Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Colombiana, 1983).
10. See *Cuba y Estados Unidos: un debate para la convivencia*, compiled by Juan G. Tokatlian (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1984).
11. I ventured such a case study for Colombia. See Gerhard Drekonja-Kornat, *Retos de la política exterior colombiana* (Bogotá: Fondo Editorial Cerec, 1983). See especially the chapter "Un poco de teoría," 197–210.
12. Harold K. Jacobson, Dusan Sidjanski, Jeffrey Rodamar, and Alice Hougassian-Rudovich, "Revolutionaries or Bargainers? Negotiators for a New International Order," *World Politics* 35, no. 3 (1983):335–67.
13. *América Latina, Europa Occidental y Estados Unidos: un nuevo Triángulo Atlántico?* Compiled by Wolf Grabendorff and Riordan Roett (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1984).
14. See *Entre la autonomía y la subordinación: política exterior de los países latinoamericanos*, compiled by Heraldo Muñoz and Joseph Tulchin (Buenos Aires: Grupo Editor Latinoamericano, 1984).
15. Abraham F. Lowenthal, "The United States and Latin America: Ending the Hegemonic Presumption," *Foreign Affairs* 55, no. 1 (1976):199–213.