

UNITED STATES, LATIN AMERICA AND THE XXI CENTURY WORLD: FORGING A NEW GEOPOLITICAL SPACE

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In order to efficiency of action, whether in personal or in corporate life, we have to recognize the coincident necessities of taking long views and of confining ourselves to short ones. (Mahan 1990)

Both Americas, these two races, these two souls head to head and in permanente conflict inside a new world: this is the international life in the Americas. In the North, a powerful industrial republic, rich, abundant and in the height of its international triumphs. At the South, twenty States in the making, lagging behind, uneven and turbulent, drained by anarchy and undermined by disagreement. (Malagrida 1919)

Around the American Mediterranean and on the continent to the sound lies the world of Latin America. If the word “America” suggests similarity, the word “Latin” should underline a difference. The other America is expected somehow to be live our own because it is a part of this hemisphere, but the actual differences between the Anglo-Saxon and the Latin sections of the New World far outweigh the similarities suggested by the common term American. (Spykman 1942)

(...) Brazil is opening the Amazon, with its road of thousands of kilometers that will cross from end to end and will link the Atlantic to the Pacific and tear their borders with Guyana, Venezuela, Colombia, Peru and Bolivia, for the first time opening the possibility of holding that Panibéria who walked, it seems, in the dreams of Alexandre de Gusmão (...). (Silva 2009)

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We must seize the opportunity to develop ourselves; and the key lies in economic development. (Xiaoping 1994)

Currently, the Chinese people are struggling to make true the Chinese dream to rejuvenate the Chinese nation, while the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean are also striving for materialization of Latin American and Caribbean dream, which is unity, cooperation, development and revitalization. I hope our dreams add shine and strength to each other and are realized together. (Jinping 2014b)

United States and Cuba Relations and the International Post-Cold War Context

In the end of 2014, the world was surprised by the announcement of the re-establishment of relations between the United States and Cuba and the opening of dialogue between President Raul Castro and Barack Obama. A historical event and future carrier was pointed out by the two countries throughout Latin America and the rest of the world during the second decade of this century.

Since the beginning of the sixties, the Cuban revolution led by the Castro brothers and Che Guevara, Cuba and the United States ruptured their relations and brought up one of the most serious confrontations of the Cold War: in 1962 the serious crisis caused by the rockets installed in Cuba led the USSR and the US to the brink of nuclear war.

The conflict between Cuba and the United States happened in the double context of the North-South and East-West axis. As the Cuban revolution was proclaimed a socialist one, it inserted itself in the heart of the political and ideological amongst two political systems that divided the international scene: the socialist system, led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the capitalist system, led worldwide by the United States of America. But on the other hand, the fact that Cuba belonged to Latin American inserted the country in the field of developing countries. Also, Cuba already had been one of the founders of the non-aligned movement. Therefore, this triple insertion made Cuba an important part of the international political game throughout the Cold War.

The Cuban factor and its revolution influenced the political development in Latin America ever since. The Conference of the Organization of American States (OAS), held in Punta del Este, in January 1962, by express invitation of the US government, had resulted in the removal of Cuba from the inter-American system. A significant fact that should be noted was that

the three largest countries in the Latin American region (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico) abstained or in the case of Mexico, opposed the radical measure of exclusion of a member country of the Iberian community of nations (in this case Cuba) because the Cuban Marxist-Leninist regime was considered contrary to the prevailing liberal democratic regime.

Frozen for a long time, the Cuban issue began to change when the Ibero-American Summit meeting of the heads of state in Guadalajara / Mexico 1982, which included the participation of Spain and Portugal, brought Cuba's return to participate in the group of Latin American countries. Due to the end of Cold War, a solution for the Cuba situation was expected such as the lifting of the blockade and its re-entry into the Latin American community. However, this did not happen: the continuity of the segregation policy towards Cuba, became a source of friction between Latin and North Americans.

The Historical Background of the US and Latin American States Relations

The relationship of Latin American countries with the United States has a long history dating back to the beginnings of colonization and settlement of the New World.

The success of the "Reconquista" of the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula led to the formation of the two kingdoms of Spain and Portugal. They began the cycle of naval expeditions and discoveries. The history of the Western Hemisphere begins with Columbus voyage. A history that was focused in its beginnings in two main actors Spain and Portugal, with the symbolic mark of the Treaty of Tordesillas. This agreement, which succeeded the papal bull *Inter Cetera*, that divided the world into two halves, North and South, and established that Spain had almost all the lands of the New World and Portugal the Atlantic and Indian domain. The beginning of the occupation of the New World lands took place around 1500 in the wake of the great naval expeditions that opened the world's oceanic routes, shaping the outline of the Cape in the south of Africa by Vasco da Gama, and the arrival in India by the Portuguese; while under the Hispanic flag, Ferdinand Magellan started the circumnavigation of the southern part of America.

Once they were occupied, the new lands of America aroused the greed and the interest of Britain and France, that started a dispute with Portugal and Spain for the richness of the New World. Later, the United Provinces parted with the Spanish Empire and the Netherlands would also enter the fight for

the possession of these lands and its huge wealth. Also, in the second century of colonization of new lands it was the turn of the English presence to become known in the North of the Americas: with the Puritans of New England and the colonies of the South from the North American subcontinent. This event marked the beginning of the occupation of the Western Hemisphere, as well as its real split into three parts: Spanish America, Portuguese America and the English America (Travassos 1947).

The English, American and French revolutions put an end to the feudal world and created the conditions for the emergence of a new urban-industrial society based on modern science and machinery. The impact generated by the revolution in the economy had an impact on the power distribution inside these societies and pressed for the end of absolutism due to the introduction of liberalism- dominant in industrialized countries. These revolutions also changed the system of power generated by Tordesillas, creating, as its replacement, another system based on the concentration and centralization of the European powers, the so-called "Euro-world". The reach of the urban and industrial revolution expanded to the New World with the independence of former colonies (turned into Republics) following the American model, with the sole exception of Brazil that was declared as United Kingdom of Portugal and the Algarve, and held for most of the nineteenth century the monarchical form of government.

Throughout the nineteenth century the industrialization process initiated by Britain, which praised for the first time in history the preponderance of machinery over the strength of man or animal, has caused labor productivity to rise, making the trade of manufactures, the most elevated form of wealth creation. This process focused on England and soon, the English colony of America, after becoming independent from the metropolis, would initiate the cycle of industrial expansion in the nation that would become the greatest power of the 20th century.

At the end of the *Ottocento* former European colonies of the Americas were politically independent but economically subordinate to financial and technological mechanisms created by industrialized countries. They were able to escape the fate of African and Asian countries of being European powers colonies' but were unable to escape the dependence of the countries that were preparing to enter the second great revolution on capital and technological resources. Therefore at the end of the 19th century the political-strategic concertation amongst Latin American nations developed in order to answer the challenge of confronting their level of industrial development with major US power. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that the US went to war against Spain, seized the Caribbean, turning it in its Mediterranean. Thus, in

the beginning of the 20th century it inaugurated a new position in the world: as a great power, able to intervene in Europe, Africa, Asia as well as in the Western Hemisphere.

The Present and Future of US Relations with Cuba and Latin America

The surprising rapprochement between Cuba and the United States after months of secret talks that even mobilized Pope Francis produced a strong impact on the world's public opinion and brought up the expectation that one of Cold War remnants would eventually end and the so-called "Pearl of the Caribbean" would return to the familiarity of the Latin American community and be reintegrated into the Inter-American system structure.

However, throughout the Latin American region the positive impact was moderate due to some distrust of the real nature of the new US policy toward Cuba. For many analysts and observers the new position of the US government must be located within the grand strategy announced since the time of the presidential candidacy of then-Senator Barack Obama, as a "New Strategy for a New World". At the time (July 15, 2008), Obama defined the objectives to be pursued by his future presidency:

As President, I will pursue a tough, smart and principled national security strategy – one that recognizes that we have interests not just in Baghdad, but in Kandahar and Karachi, in Tokyo and London, in Beijing and Berlin. I will focus this strategy on five goals essential to making America safer: ending the war in Iraq responsibly; finishing the fight against al Qaeda and the Taliban; securing all nuclear weapons and materials from terrorists and rogue states; achieving true energy security; and rebuilding our alliances to meet the challenges of the 21st century. (Obama 2008)

As he advocated the creation of a new paradigm to deal with energy dependence, the future president Obama waved U\$ 150 billion to put an end to what he called the tyranny of oil in our time. In his words:

One of the most dangerous weapons in the world today is the price of oil. We ship nearly \$700 million a day to unstable or hostile nations for their oil. It pays for terrorist bombs going off from Baghdad and Beirut. It funds petro-diplomacy in Caracas and radical madrassas from Karachi to Khar-toum. It takes leverage away from America and shifts it to dictators. (Obama 2008)

Regarding the establishment of new alliances to face the challenges of the twenty-first century, Obama presented nothing else than the renewal of the cooperation agreement with Europe and the strengthening of its partnership with Japan, South Korea, Australia and India. In a way its proposal did not clash with the strategy outlined by Ms. Condoleezza Rice for the second term of George Bush Jr., of an innovative diplomacy, in order to generate a new framework of world power that included the new emerging nations of the international scenario (Kissinger 2011 and 2014).

However, as his second mandate comes to an end, President Obama is stuck with the internal problems of domestic politics, with a hostile Republican Congress majority to its democratic government. In this situation in which his government remains limited to world market problems of fossil fuel and renewable energy, as well as far to stabilize the Middle East, Obama has turned to the Latin American region and encouraged the creation of the Pacific Alliance involving Mexico, Colombia, Peru and Chile. This maneuver, which complements the Trans-Pacific Partnership (Trans-Pacific Partnership - TPP), the United States seek to contain a Chinese influence in the Western Hemisphere. In order to achieve this goal they insert themselves amongst Latin American and Caribbean countries, especially in the South American subcontinent, where they face resistance to a greater or lesser extent, in Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela.

The intended effect of this double maneuver seems to be the creation of a new context and chart new strategies to maintain the presence and the American leadership in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, the real effect sought by this maneuver is to counter the several collective bodies recently built by Latin American countries such as the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

For the ones who analyze this situation it is not an easy task to break the shield that was built around this key issue of development in Latin America and the Caribbean. This development, however, is vital to the success of the region and the world economy beset by the wide financial crisis that began in 2008 and which is still in progress, limiting trade and constraining the economies of both industrialized and developing countries (Cabral 2004).

Therefore, the Cuban issue is inserted, in part, in this broader movement of regional integration and cooperation among the countries of Central and South America. In this area are located oil giants like Mexico and Venezuela and further through the south Brazil, which can become a mega energy power due to the discovery of huge oil and gas deposits on the continental

shelf in the so-called “pre-salt” area. Clearly, the strategic observer, there is the elevation of a Southern pole of power, down south the United States with significant projected growth over the next few decades.

It is in this context that one can understand the efforts of the US government to begin a new phase of its relation with Latin America and the Caribbean. After the era of “speak softly and carry a big stick” of Theodore Roosevelt and the “good neighbor policy” of Franklin Roosevelt, there was the East-West confrontation represented by Cuba and the guerrillas in Latin America facing the armies and special forces of the Latin American regimes. This era reached its climax with the dissolution of the USSR, which brought an end to almost half a century of East-West conflict.

The end of the Cold War, however, did not eliminate power politics or the gap in terms of national power that exists between large and small countries within the international system. The reality of world power always favors the major powers in relation to the exercise of autonomy and sovereignty. The relevant geostrategic data in the global world is that the distribution of power - be it economic, scientific, technical and / or political and strategic - suffers today of a greater displacement than in the past and almost redraws the map of world power. And the remarkable thing is the emergency of the new headquarters of global power in the southern fringe of the planet. In this context, one can notice *in crescendo*, in both parts of the planet, significant changes in space and positioning (Brzezinski 1997, 2004, 2007 and 2012; Huntington 1996; Gruzinski 2004).

In the Asian space, due to the structural influence of the sino and Indo-Persian world, the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and “21st Century Maritime Silk Road” began to be built. Those are the two pillars that should sustain the global economy over the next decades. But across the western hemisphere, the integration of South America with the African southern cone - linking the Pacific to the South Atlantic and the Indian and thus forming the “Great Ocean” - when established will create a new baseline for the rise of trade and global finance (Jinping 2014 and 2014b).

In this new set that is projected for the coming years and decades, a nourished observer of historical information can and should reach the conclusion that a structural emergency is to be constituted, from the revival due to the globalization process, of the Iberian world, which joined the Western route of the Indian and Pacific regions under the dual monarchy of Philip II, King of Spain, who was also Philip I, King of Portugal.

This is the reason that explains why there is a comeback of Geopolitical and classic geostrategic studies. They mold a set of theoretical and practical subjects highly relevant for the understanding of the world power system

today. In a classic text of Geopolitics, written by Sir Halford Mackinder, “The Round World and the Winning of the Peace,” published during the course of World War II, in *Foreign Affairs* (July 1943), for example, there is a particular conceptual proposal for a new multipolar world order:

The fourth of my concepts embraces on either side of the South Atlantic the tropical rain-forests of South America and Africa. If these were subdued to agriculture and inhabited with the present density of tropical Java, they might sustain a thousand million people, always provided that medicine had rendered the tropics the tropics as productive of human energy as the temperate zones. Fifthly, and lastly, a thousand million people of ancient oriental civilization inhabit the Monsoon lands of India and China. They must grow to prosperity in the same years in which Germany and Japan are being tamed to civilization. They will then balance that other thousand million who live between the Missouri and the Yenisei. A balanced globe of human beings. And happy, because balanced and thus free. (Mackinder 1943)

This geopolitical platform of a global order outlined by Mackinder, even before the end of the war, in which new powers emerge, below the Equator, still plays a decisive role nowadays, exponential in the struggle for the dominance of the so-called world market. When analyzed in detail, one cannot help to wonder if the speculation about the realities of power in the world, either maritime as well land power that absorbed the minds of Alfred Mahan, Halford Mackinder and Nicholas Spykman (the main builders of Anglo American geopolitical thought) - were solidly based on the structure of oceanic routes in the world opened by Iberian discoverers in the early modern times (Mahan 1990; Mackinder 1943 and 2000; Spykman 1944).

This is the reason why the strategy of American leadership for the control of the Pacific and the Western Hemisphere (the Pacific Alliance and the Transpacific Partnership) is built in order to answer to the South American and Latin American processes of integration. In this agenda, the maneuver to recover the American Mediterranean, in which the famous Caribbean island has a strategic position, fits precisely.

In a moment in which the extraordinary development of China puts into question the monopolistic control of world trade played by “the protesters of Tordesillas” it seems clear that the advent of a new “role” by the descendants of the “heirs of Tordesillas” - the Luso-Hispanic children of sunny Iberia - will be seen, preemptively, as a threat to US global power hegemony (Costa 2005).

One can conclude the analysis of US-Cuban rapprochement with the perception that the Cuban problem is not a matter of bilateral interest, or that

it only affects the Central American community, but that it also has an impact all over the Americas and worldwide.

Final Thoughts

The “Cuban issue”, understood as a part of the Latin-American issue (and of its geopolitical, geohistorical and geostrategic relation with Anglo-America), presents us an exercise of the international conjuncture from the standpoint of the emergence of new centers of world power and of the construction of the new world order of the 21st century.

By studying the basic structural logic of the present international system - its mechanisms, devices and changing features- we can detect what we call “determinants” of ongoing complex processes that will shape the world’s power system. Its main designs follow below.

The first one points out to a new era of global economy, the era of “globalization”, which is reshaping the whole system and generating great political structures capable of surviving the challenge of the present and of building the future: the “mega-States”. Only a few political active units hold their territorial space, population and natural resources to be able to elevate to this position. So the ongoing integration processes in the world are creating new giants, of which the most significant one was the creation of the European Union. However, the most significant for the world order in the making in the 21st century is really South American integration. With Brazil at its the heartland, South American integration approaches the southern African cone, anticipating what will be in the future the southern pole of global power (Cabral 2004 e 2013).

The second determinant becomes progressively apparent in a new multipolar world order that is built from the same movement of the creation of “mega-States” in the 21st century (Maisonneuve 2005). The multipolar order, therefore, will be created from the emergence of the new global centers of power. Today, the rise of these new centers is in particular present in the construction of new financial power institutes, scientific and technical. The BRICS is the greatest, most consistent and symptomatic expression of this new phase of the global world.

The third and visible determination of the ongoing globalization process results of the modernization and integration of China into the world economic system. A system that was created by the industrial and urban revolution based on science and technology, and universalized from the 19th century onwards, when it unified the market and the global financial system in

the Anglo-American tutelage. China, due its size, “scale” and degree of productivity achieved, has become the giant of this new era, and its geographical area (Asia-Pacific) is the center of gravity of the entire global economy now (Kissinger 2011 and 2014).

The fourth determinant is the wave that the world watches since the end of the last century with the resurgence and the insurgency of the Arabic Islamic world, Indo-Persian and Turkish. A global phenomenon in itself, it is a relevant factor on the international scene at the beginning of the third millennium, but also a major challenge in the way of the construction of the multipolar world order of the 21st century (Murawiec 2000, 2002, 2003 and 2008).

The fifth and already mentioned determinant is the emergence of the Latin world - with Brazil as its central State due to its size and structural weight - which will bring together all of South America, plus the southern cone of Africa, and will position itself as a future mega-state and the southern headquarter of global power. It is the revival of the Iberian Union on a new basis, truly establishinh a “Panregion”, brilliantly described by Agostinho da Silva (2009) as a “Panibéria”. Taking into account such issues one can anticipate that Cuba and the Caribbean region will certainly be a point of friction between the Latin American community and its northern neighbors until the huge changes taking place in the economy and in world politics will determine a new multipolar world order – hopefully!- able to absorb the shocks of an old and always renewed rivalry between the two Americas.

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to analyze the relationship of the United States and Cuba considering the post-Cold War international environment, characterized by the rise of a multipolar order and Chinese influence, and the emergence of the Latin world and other relevant regional actors in a new era of global economy.

KEYWORDS

Latin America; Post-Cold War; United States of America.

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