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The International Role of Latin America  
After September 11: Tying the Giant

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## Abstract

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*After the end of the "cold war", most of the academic discussion has been concentrated on the United States hegemony and its limits as well as the role of the rest of the world in the so-called "new international order". This discussion has reappeared after the September 11 attacks, that allowed the resurgence of an interventionist and unilateral policy developed by Washington. In this context, the question that remains is about the capacity of Latin America to influence international politics and U.S. policies. This paper analyzes the role of Latin America in the world scenario after the September 11 attacks. In the first part, it makes a revision of the discussion about the role of the Third World in the international order at the end of the "cold war" and the growing irrelevance of this group of countries. In the second part, it studies the war against terrorism developed by the US after year 2001 and the limits of this strategy. In the third part, the paper discusses the possibilities of Latin America to influence U.S. foreign policy. Finally, the paper suggests in the conclusions that the region has a limited capacity to affect U.S. hegemony but it can, eventually, limit the Washington's margin for maneuver. That is, it can occasionally, "tie the giant".*

## Resumen

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*Después del fin de la "guerra fría", buena parte de la discusión académica ha girado en torno a la hegemonía de Estados Unidos y sus límites, así como el papel del resto del mundo en el llamado "nuevo orden internacional". Esta discusión ha revivido a raíz de los atentados del 11 de septiembre que han permitido el resurgimiento de una política de corte intervencionista y unilateral por parte de Washington. En este contexto, la gran interrogante que persiste es acerca de la capacidad de América Latina para influir en la política internacional y en las políticas estadounidenses. Este documento analiza el papel de América Latina en el escenario internacional después de los atentados del 11 de septiembre. En la primera parte revisa la discusión sobre el papel del Tercer Mundo en el orden internacional al final de la "guerra fría" y la creciente irrelevancia de este grupo de países. En la segunda parte se estudia la guerra contra el terrorismo desarrollada por Estados Unidos después de 2001 y las limitaciones de esta estrategia. En la tercera parte se discuten las posibilidades de América Latina de influir en la política exterior estadounidense. Finalmente, en las conclusiones se sugiere que la región tiene una capacidad limitada de afectar la hegemonía estadounidense aunque puede, eventualmente, limitar el margen de maniobra de Washington. Esto es, puede ocasionalmente "atar al gigante".*



## *Introduction*

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There has been a long discussion about the state of the world after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. The prospects of a “new world order” have been analyzed extensively during the 1990s. However, the initial optimism evaporated quickly when the old world order proved to be resilient enough to show any significant change. The discussion about the post-cold war world contemplated also that about the role of peripheral states and the possibilities they had to change their position in the world system. Even when the scenario was not very optimistic, there were some minor changes in the 1990s like the signing of some free trade agreements between developed and peripheral countries that promised to bring prosperity to some of the poor areas of the world. However, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 complicated everything in a substantial way. The emergence of terrorism as a serious threat affected in a negative way the process of globalization that was accelerated by the end of socialism, and put some shadows on the possibility of a prominent role of Third World countries in the world. As a result of the U.S. war on terrorism, anti-American feelings spread out all over the Third World (as well as in some other regions like Europe), what made much more difficult the collaboration between the United States and the rest of the world. In this context, one inevitable question was to ask about the role of Latin American countries in the post-September 11 world. Latin America played an important, though subordinated, role during the cold war. Geographical proximity to the United States and the possibility that communism could “infect” some countries of the Western Hemisphere made the region an important piece of the world chess. Some countries, like Cuba, perfectly understood the nature of the game at that time and took advantage of it, by blackmailing the U.S. with a military alliance with the Soviet Union. Some others received huge amounts of money for domestic reforms to prevent the spread of the communist “virus”. Certainly there was no room for revolutions in the Continent (Cuba was the only exception) and those who defied the U.S. hegemony suffered the consequences. However, Latin America was important because the region was perceived by the U.S. as its backyard. That is why the American diplomacy put a big emphasis in the development of a collective security mechanism in the Hemisphere, the Rio Pact. Of course there was no country in the Continent that defied the military hegemony of the United States and those who attempted to develop nuclear capabilities were dissuaded to do so. But the region mattered to the U.S., not because of its direct ability to threaten American interests but because of its geographical proximity in a zero-sum game between the United States and the Soviet Union.

What is the importance of Latin America in the post-cold war and post-September 11 world? What is at stake for the U.S. in the region? Most important: what is the ability of the region to affect U.S. hegemony? What is the role, if any, of Latin American countries in the war on terrorism? What does the spreading of leftist governments mean for the U.S., some of them with a strong anti-U.S. rhetoric? What is the role of Latin American economic pacts, like Mercosur? I will address these questions in the paper. In the first part I will refer to the discussion about the role of the third world after the end of the cold war and the risk of becoming irrelevant. In the second part I will analyze the U.S. war on terrorism developed after the attacks of September 11. In the third part I will review the role of Latin America in the U.S. strategy. Finally, I will outline some conclusions.

### *The end of the cold war and the role of the Third World*

During the cold war, most of the discussion about the international system was centered on the number of poles that determined it and how it affected the international stability. There were arguments of many kinds. Some authors sustained that bipolarity was a determinant factor for the absence of a major military conflict, while others argued that a bipolar system was very unstable. Even when there was some literature about the role of the Third World, most of the scholars did not contemplate it as a main actor in international politics. Actually, the most important theoretical approach about the Third World developed in Third World countries, the dependency theory, acknowledged the irrelevance of peripheral countries. Notwithstanding, there were few examples of situations in which underdeveloped countries have played a role in international affairs, like the 1973 oil embargo. But in general, the basic assumption was that the Third World had no margin for maneuver in a bipolar system. Consequently, when the cold war ended, a discussion that arose along with the number of poles,<sup>1</sup> and the impact of the breakdown of socialism, was that of the role of the Third World. Even when there was no total agreement about the nature of the post-cold war system, there was a consensus that at least in military terms, the only superpower left was the United States. This idea was reinforced by the leading role played by the U.S. in the First Gulf war in 1991. Another discussion was that about the nature of the changes propelled by the fall of the Soviet Union. John Lewis Gaddis identified three "tectonic" tendencies

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<sup>1</sup> The works about the post-cold war, from this perspective, are abundant. See, among others, John J. Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future. Instability in Europe after the Cold War", in Sean M. Lynn-Jones (ed.), *The cold war and after. Prospects for peace*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: the MIT Press, 1991, pp. 141-192; Charles Krauthammer, "The unipolar moment", in Graham Allison and Gregory F. Treverton, *Rethinking America's Security*, New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1992, pp. 295-306; Christopher Layne, "The unipolar illusion: why new great powers will rise", *International Security* vol. 17, No. 4, spring 1993, pp. 5-51.

which converged to provoke the changes in 1989: the emergence of new criteria of world power, basically an increase in the importance of economic capacity of States; the collapse of authoritarian alternatives to liberalism; and the decline of brutality in State's domestic and international affairs. Gaddis argumentation also emphasizes the importance of the issues of the "new international agenda", like democracy and human rights.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding, it would be a mistake to think that these tectonic movements were regular and uniform. Actually, coexisting with these tendencies—which give substance to the argumentation about a "new" world order—some characteristics of the "old" international agenda reappeared rejuvenated: nationalism, dictatorships, ethnic and religious conflicts, and hegemonic ambitions of some Third World countries, what imply the use of physical violence.<sup>3</sup> The self-evident contradiction between these tendencies and the characteristics of the "new" world order allowed the speculation about a world broken in two parts: an industrialized and interdependent core, ruled by universal regimes, where negotiation—and not violence—is the mechanism for conflict resolution and where the values of democracy and the market prevail, coexisting with an underdeveloped periphery, poorly interconnected with the core, where the rule for domestic and international conflict resolution is physical violence.<sup>4</sup> This perspective was interpreted by some authors as the result of a cultural differentiation between the West and the "rest".<sup>5</sup> The perception of the world as a "clash of civilizations" put the accent in the gap between the First and the Third World from a perspective beyond the degree of economic development. However, independently of the defining criteria of this gap, it is evident that the "new world order" was new and ordered only for some countries. The nationalistic explosions and ethnic conflicts that aroused after the end of the cold war suggest indeed that the use of military force was not deterred from the international arena and that the "whole" world could not be explained through theories of interdependence and cooperation.

Notwithstanding, the fact that there was a gap between the rich and non-violent developed countries does not tell us too much about the conditions under which the Third World countries could have some leverage in international politics. The post-cold war literature does not show an absolute

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<sup>2</sup> In this regard, see Fred Halliday, "International Relations: is there a new agenda?", *Millenium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 20, No. 1, 1991, pp. 57-72.

<sup>3</sup> The bibliography about nationalistic movements and ethnic conflicts in the post-cold war era is large. See, for example, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Pandemonium. Ethnicity in International Politics*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993. Steven L. Burg, "Nationalism Redux: Through the glass of the post-communist states darkly" *Current History*, April, 1993, pp. 162-168. John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, *The politics of ethnic conflict regulation*, New York: Routledge, 1993, 321 pp. Ted Robert Gurr, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1994, 206 pp. Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner, *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994 146 pp. See also, the journal *Survival*, vol. 35, No. 1, spring, 1993, dedicated to "Ethnic Conflict and International Security".

<sup>4</sup> James L. Goldgeier and Michael McFaul, "A tale of two worlds: core and periphery in the post-cold war era", *International Organization*, vol. 46, No. 2, spring, 1992, pp. 467-491.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The clash of civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, No. 3, Summer, 1993, pp. 22-49.

consensus about the importance of the Third World,<sup>6</sup> but the perception that the periphery had few and decreasing possibilities of influencing the decisions taken by the "core" seems to be confirmed by the lack of interest of the industrialized countries in solving conflicts like that of the former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Sudan, Ethiopia or Rwanda.<sup>7</sup> The reason for this indifference would lie in three factors: a) the inability of Third World states to eradicate domestic conflict, what actually accelerates the excluding tendencies from the industrialized core; b) the inability of Third World countries to transmit this conflict to the world power centers what would facilitate the help of industrialized countries;<sup>8</sup> and c) the inability (and lack of interest) of the core countries to solve the conflicts in Third World countries, in the cases in which these could be transmitted to them.<sup>9</sup>

However, there are some cases in the 1990s that suggest that peripheral countries can have a limited impact in international affairs and attract the attention of the big powers. The approval of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1993, between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, is a proof of that. The reason for that concession given to a Third World country is probably the geographical proximity of Mexico to the United States, what gave that country a bargaining power that only some peripheral countries possess. In the end, geographical proximity facilitates the transmission of instability from peripheral to core countries and supports negotiations among them. However, proximity is not the only bargaining tool that Third World countries had in the post-cold war era. It seems that ability to negotiate with developed countries and have in that way some impact in international affairs derives from a

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<sup>6</sup> There are many authors who think that the Third World represents little or none threat to the "core", specially the United States. See, for example, Charles William Maynes, "America without the cold war", *Foreign Policy*, Spring, 1990, pp. 3-26 and David Hendrickson, "The renovation of American foreign policy", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 71, No. 2, Spring 1992, pp. 48-63.

<sup>7</sup> On the war in Bosnia, see Dusko Doder, "Yugoslavia: New war, old hatreds", *Foreign Policy*, No. 91, summer, 1993 and James Mayall (ed.), *The new interventionism 1991-1994*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 238 pp. On the lack of interest of the First world on what happens in the periphery, see Golgeier and McFaul, *O. Cit.*, p. 487 and Kishore Mahbubani, "The west and the rest", *The National Interest*, No. 28, Summer, 1992, pp. 3-12. For a good overview of the peacekeeping efforts, see William J. Durch (ed) *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. 502 pp. For the failure in the Rwanda's genocide, see Alan J. Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda*, Washington. D.C.: Brookins Institution Press, 2000, 154 pp.

<sup>8</sup> Lake and Rothchild suggested that ethnic conflicts tend to spread in the international arena. However, they admit that the involvement of the United States and other countries has been limited. David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, *The international Spread of Ethnic Conflict*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998.

<sup>9</sup> In this regard, Deibel argues that this lack of interest originates in that the U.S. government strategists did not see the existence of American strategic interests all over the world, that justify humanitarian interventions. The policy of confining the Third World to the hobessian "state of war" has a strong influence from political realism, for which the domestic ideology of a regime is less important than its behavior. Terry L. Deibel, "Internal affairs and international relations in the post-cold war world", *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer, 1993, pp. 13-43. See also, John Mueller, "Quiet cataclysm; some afterthoughts on World War III", in Michael J. Hogan, *The end of the cold war*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. See also Stephen John Stedman, "The new interventionism", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, No. 1, 1993, pp. 1-16.



combination of factors, some of them related to traditional basis of power and some related to the "new" agenda. Andrew Hurrell suggested that, in the case of Latin America, there were three issues, generated in the South, that generate the attention of the big powers: migration, ecology and drug trafficking.<sup>10</sup> Steven R. David has insisted in the threat that represented the possibility that some Third World countries could develop nuclear or chemical and biological weapons. He has also mentioned the importance, for Middle East countries, of possessing oil.<sup>11</sup> Stanley Hoffman agreed with both diagnosis and mentioned the following sources of world insecurity: a) poverty, overpopulation and migrations; b) ecological disasters; c) fight for the access to natural resources, like oil; d) the threat of drug trafficking and weapon smuggling; e) the ideology of nationalism that materializes in advanced weapons or massive means of destruction.<sup>12</sup> Gaddis saw massive migrations, for example from Eastern Europe to Europe, as one of the most dangerous disintegrating tendencies for world security.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, we can conclude that the factors that gave peripheral countries some leverage in the post cold war years were: a) geographic proximity with "core" countries; b) possession of strategic natural resources; c) possession of nuclear weapons; d) capacity of producing massive migrations to the "core" countries; e) ability to produce or transport illegal drugs to "core" countries, f) possession of ecological resources, whose deterioration affects "core" countries.

Based on these criteria, the only Latin American countries that had in the 1990s some possibilities of influencing world politics were Mexico and the Central American and Caribbean countries and maybe Colombia and Peru, because of their ability to produce illegal drugs. The different treatment given by the U.S. to Mexico and Argentina during the crisis of 1995 and 2001 confirms this perception. In 1995 President Clinton implemented a 50 billion package of financial aid for Mexico, while in 2001-2002 the U.S. did not move a finger when Argentina's economy collapsed. But, how the events of September 11 affected the limited international relevance of Latin America?

### ***September 11 and the Bush Revolution in foreign policy***

Even when some disagree about the depth of the changes in U.S. foreign policy during the Bush Administration, there is a consensus that the traditional parameters were modified. Some authors talked about a revolution in U.S. foreign policy. According to Daalder and Lindsay, the Bush revolution

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Hurrell, "Latin America in the New World Order: a regional bloc of the Americas?", *International Affairs*, vol. 68, No. 1, January, 1992, pp. 129-130.

<sup>11</sup> Steven R. David, "Why the Third World...", *Op. Cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Stanley Hoffman, "Delusions of World Order", *The New York Review of Books*, April 9, 1992, pp. 37-43.

<sup>13</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, "The Cold War, the Long Peace and the Future", in Michael J. Hogan, *The End of the Cold War. Its Meaning and Implications*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 36-37.

rested on two beliefs: a) the best ways to ensure U.S. security is by maximizing America's freedom to act, without depending on others for protection; and b) an America unbound should use its strength to change the status quo in the world.<sup>14</sup> Based on these beliefs, American foreign policy has three characteristics: a) a decided preference for unilateral action, even when multilateralism is not excluded; b) a preference for the use of preemptive measures to attack possible enemies; and c) the U.S. should use its unprecedented power to produce regime change in rogue states.<sup>15</sup> Jervis coincides with this characterization, and adds that Bush foreign policy rests on the assumption that "peace and stability require that the United States to assert its primacy in world politics".<sup>16</sup>

A common assumption is that Bush foreign policy was developed as a response to the September 11 attacks. Even when these events had a very important impact in the Bush's revolution, the truth is that the beliefs that support the change in foreign policy were present in Bush's team since the beginning. The presence of an important group of neoconservatives in Bush's inner circle substantiates this assertion. This group had a "deep skepticism of traditional Wilsonianism's commitment to the rule of law and its belief in the relevance of international institutions".<sup>17</sup> Neoconservatives believe that the defense of national interest rests in power and resolve, not in diplomacy and treaties. This belief had as a natural consequence the preference of Bush Administration for acting alone. It does not mean that the U.S. rejects international institutions as a norm. It only means that when they do not fit American needs, it is perfectly admissible to act unilaterally. Also, this policy does not exclude alliances with other countries, buy they are not open and institutional: they are "coalitions of the willing". As it is very easy to infer, it does not mean isolationism at all. Actually, this perspective of the world is totally compatible with a very active involvement in world affairs. However, this involvement does not present any concern for legitimizing American actions. This unilateralism has provoked a "crisis of legitimacy" that is collapsing U.S. traditional alliances with Europe.<sup>18</sup> Notwithstanding, this weakness could, in theory, be counterbalanced by the third pillar of the Bush revolution: getting rid of rogue states. This characteristic made difficult to define Bush strategy as simply conservative. Probably the best definition of the U.S. foreign policy under Bush is that of "democratic imperialism".<sup>19</sup> Actually, this is a liberal belief that presupposes that the "main source of a

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<sup>14</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James M Lindsay, *America Unbound*, Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2003, p. 13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14. Fukuyama coincides with this characterization. See Francis Fukuyama, "The Bush Doctrine, before and after", *Financial Times*, October 11, 2005, p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era*, New York: Routledge, 2005, p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> Ivo Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *Op. Cit.* p. 15.

<sup>18</sup> Robert Kagan, "America's Crisis of Legitimacy", *Foreign Affairs*, March-April 2004. See also, Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, "The Sources of American Legitimacy", *Foreign Affairs*, November-December, 2004.

<sup>19</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay, *Op. Cit.*, p. 15.

states' foreign policy is its domestic regime" and that the "only route to lasting peace is through regime change, and once democratic regimes are established, they will live at peace and cooperate with one another".<sup>20</sup> However, it is amazing how this alternative source of legitimacy—the most important in the post-cold war era—has been substantially eroded because of the human rights abuses performed by the U.S. Army in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo.

As a consequence of the terrorist attacks to New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration modified its priorities, putting the fight on terrorism in the first place. This fight contemplated the building of alliances with other countries but it did not focus on international organizations. The strategy was to work with "allies and friends".<sup>21</sup> However, in 2003—when it was clear that the United Nations Security Council was not going to endorse the U.S. war against Iraq—"allies and friends" were really "coalitions of the willing". The preemptive war was a logical consequence of the way in which Bush defined the war on terrorism. Given the nature of terrorism, in the sense that it is an illegal behavior that cannot be dissuaded by the fear of punishment, the only way to impede it, is preventing it before it attacks. That's why preemption is a cornerstone in the fight on terrorism. That was the assumption made by Bush. One purpose of the National Security Strategy was to defend "the United States, the American people, and our interests at home and abroad by identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders".<sup>22</sup> There was another element of the antiterrorist strategy that was inevitably a source of conflict with other countries. The Bush Administration established as part of its strategy the denial of "further sponsorship, support and sanctuary to terrorists by convincing or compelling states to accept their sovereign responsibilities".<sup>23</sup> Finally, another element that was present in the Bush strategy was the support of democracy abroad. One of the goals of the U.S. National Security Strategy was also to "expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy".<sup>24</sup> Even when this goal was part of a liberal tradition in U.S. foreign policy, with a high moral content,—which has not always produced liberal results—there was also a political logic in it. The purpose was to support "moderate and modern government, especially in the Muslim world, to ensure that the conditions and ideologies that promote terrorism do not find fertile ground in any nation".<sup>25</sup>

As I have mentioned above, the revolutionary ideas in Bush's foreign policy were present in his inner circle since the beginning, however, it was

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Jervis, *Op. Cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>21</sup> The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, September 2002 (mimeo), p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

September 11 which gave them a political support and helped him to get rid of inhibitions: “just as September 11 galvanized Bush to pursue his foreign policy revolution, so it also swept away any inhibition he might have felt about speaking publicly about evil”.<sup>26</sup> As a direct consequence of September 11, the American foreign policy adopted a strong moral language that resembled the Reagan’s 1982 “evil empire”. And this strategy worked very well for getting public support. Bush’s popularity climbed and the Congress was unable to stop him. Three days after the September 11 attacks, congressmen gave Bush the authorization to retaliate against those responsible for the attacks and seven weeks later it was approved the Patriot Act, which expanded federal law enforcement powers, especially electronic surveillance.<sup>27</sup>

### *The Iraq adventure*

It is difficult to know the final reason why Bush decided to invade Iraq. It is probably related to many factors: bringing democracy and stability to the Middle East, completing the unfinished work of his father, George Bush, discouraging tyrants throughout the world, assuring oil supply, demonstrating the American willingness to provide world order and demonstrate American power in the Middle East.<sup>28</sup> Whatever the reasons for this war, it had a disastrous effect on the relations with most of the Europeans and Latin American countries. The differences with some European governments were quite evident, and weakened in a significant way the post World War II alliances. The reasons for Europe’s disagreement are probably more related to the U.S. hegemony than to the use of force.<sup>29</sup> For many people in Europe and Latin America, the invasion of Iraq had nothing to do with the war on terrorism and has a big dose of old-fashioned imperialism. Additionally, as I have mentioned above, the human rights abuses performed by the U.S. occupation forces in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the illegal treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo, combined with the efforts of the U.S. government to legalize some torture practices,<sup>30</sup> have affected in a very negative way the only source of legitimacy of Bush’s foreign policy: the democratization of the world. However, the main cost for American hegemony did not come from the lack of legitimacy of the war on terror: it came from the lack of results. After three years of occupation, the situation in Iraq is quite unstable, and the number of American deaths increases every week. In economic terms it has

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<sup>26</sup> Ivo H. Daalder and James H. Lindsay, *Ibid.*, p. 87.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Jervis, *Op. Cit.*, p. 99. See also Harry Kreisler, “Theory and International Institutions. Conversation with Robert O. Keohane”. March 9, 2004 (mimeo).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the *Washington Post* Editorial column “Vice President for Torture”, October 26, 2005, p. A18.

also been a disaster that has cost American taxpayers more than 200 billion dollars. Also, the political energy that the war in Iraq requires has weakened in an important way the rest of the Bush's foreign policy. It is quite evident that it is difficult to expect another preemptive strike, given the domestic climate in the U.S. At the same time, it is hard to imagine the American Army intervening in Iran, Libya or Cuba to depose the "rogue" governments that rule there. Finally, the Bush invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq has not prevented the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London in 2005. In other words, the final balance of the war in Iraq is that it has undermined in a substantial way the Bush revolution in foreign policy. As Jervis has pointed it out: "Machiavelli famously asked whether it is better to be feared or to be loved. The problem for the United States is that it is likely to be neither (...) Bush's policy has left the United States looking neither strong nor benign, and we may find that the only thing worse than a successful hegemon is a failed one"<sup>31</sup>

### *The cost of the war: a softer approach*

After two years of turbulent occupation of Iraq, Bush decided to make some adjustments in his foreign policy. He replaced the liberal Colin Powell as secretary of State and appointed Condoleezza Rice, a member of the neoconservative team that has surrounded Bush since his First Administration. At first sight, the arrival of Rice would have meant a victory of the hard liners and unilateralists over the soft multilateralists. However, there are signs that this is not totally true. Rice is a pragmatic politician and despite her background, the changes she has implemented in American foreign policy suggests a move in the direction of diplomacy and multilateralism, more than a strengthening of the military tendencies.<sup>32</sup> There are some signs of this tendency. During 2005 the peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has made significant progress, due in part to the role played by the U.S. Also, there has been a growing interest of the Bush Administration in using diplomatic tools. The U.S. asked the United Nations to participate in the elections in Iraq, what shows recognition of the importance of international organizations. As Robert Keohane pointed it out: "once they attacked Iraq they discovered that they needed international institutions, because you can't mobilize a longstanding coalition which is legitimate, of democratic countries whose publics care about legitimacy, unless you are aligned in some way with an international institution—the UN or something else—which is seen as representing the views of not just ourselves".<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>32</sup> "Condi's challenge", *The Economist*, January 12th, 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Harry Kreisler, *Op. Cit.*

There have been also changes in the discourse. In her statement before the Senate, when she was confirmed as Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice talked about freedom and democracy and redefined U.S. foreign policy goals: a) unite the community of democracies “in building an international system that is based in our shared values and the rule of law”, b) strengthen “the community of democracies to fight the threats to our freedom and democracy throughout the globe”, and c) “spread freedom and democracy throughout the globe”.<sup>34</sup> Rice also announced more emphasis on the promotion of trade as a way to create jobs and made a surprising call for alliances and collaboration with “multilateral institutions” as a way to “multiply the strength of freedom-loving nations”.<sup>35</sup> The emphasis in creating jobs through commerce and economic reforms was also present in the relations with Latin America. In the U.S. goals for the Fourth Summit of the Americas that took place in Mar del Plata, Argentina in November 4-5, 2005, job creation was the most urgent task that has to be done in the region. Also, the U.S. perceives that improving competitiveness in the Latin American countries is a priority.<sup>36</sup> Finally, another sign of the change in U.S. foreign policy is the appointment of Tom Shannon as Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere. Shannon is a professional diplomat with a deep knowledge of Venezuela. It allows us to expect a softer approach to the region as well as an emphasis in negotiation more than in military confrontation, even when rhetorical confrontation with some governments, like those of Cuba and Venezuela, will prevail.<sup>37</sup>

As it is easy to see, there is a clear emphasis in non military instruments to address the challenges that the U.S. is facing now. And this change of tone is clearly a consequence of the complications of the adventure in Iraq and the need for international legitimacy. Certainly, the domestic political problems that George Bush has been facing during 2005 have contributed to this change. The outrageous performance of the Bush Administration after Hurricane Katrina, combined with the scandal of the revelation of the identity of a CIA agent, supposedly made by people belonging to the Bush’s inner circle, and the withdrawal in October 2005 of the Bush’s nominee to Supreme Court, Harriet Miers, suggest that the Bush Presidency is considerably weakened. Additionally, in the public mind, some of these problems are in some way related to the mistakes in foreign policy, particularly the invasion of Iraq. When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in September 2005, there were many voices that remembered that half of the Louisiana Guard was serving in Iraq.

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<sup>34</sup> “Opening Statement by Dr. Condoleezza Rice. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, January 18, 2005” <http://foreign.senate.gov/testimony/2005/Ricetestimony050118.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> U.S. State Department, “U.S. Official Outlines Goals for Fourth Summit of the Americas”, September 29, 2005 (mimeo).

<sup>37</sup> Howard LaFranchi, “A gentler touch with Latin America”, *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 6, 2005.

## ***What role for Latin America?***

What was the impact of the Bush's foreign policy in Latin America? One first answer would be that it was not a big one, since the region is neither a terrorist threat in itself nor a haven for terrorists. Actually, that is probably the reason why the U.S. has not paid too much attention to Latin America after September 11.<sup>38</sup> As Peter Hakim pointed it out: "the region will remain peripheral to the central concerns of U.S. foreign policy, which are the war against terrorism, securing and rebuilding Iraq, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and nuclear proliferation"<sup>39</sup> However, it does not mean that the U.S. foreign policy has not provoked any reaction in the area. Moreover, the Bush strategy against terrorism, especially the invasion of Iraq, generated a strong negative reaction. Even when most of the Latin American countries condemned the September 11 attacks, the war against Iraq was also rejected by a majority of them: "of the 34 Latin American and Caribbean countries, only seven supported the war."<sup>40</sup> It is worth mentioning, that these countries had a particular interest in supporting the U.S.: "six of them (Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama) were engaged in trade negotiations with the United States at the time. And the seventh, Colombia, receives more than \$600 million a year in U.S. military aid."<sup>41</sup> Notwithstanding, contrary to what used to happen in the past, the rejection of the war in Iraq was not only a rhetorical one. At the time of the war two Latin American countries were non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council: Mexico and Chile. Both countries refused to support the U.S. attempt to get the Security Council approval for the invasion of Iraq. Even when this refusal provoked a strong reaction from the Bush Administration, in the end there was no retaliation. Moreover, the two countries that opposed the invasion were the only ones that had a free trade agreement with the United States. Certainly, the opposition to the war cannot be seen as an act of hard balancing against the United States. That would be something unthinkable coming from a Third World country. However, the opposition at the United Nations tells us what could be the future role of Latin America: a policy of broad agreement in the goal of fighting terrorism but disagreements in the means to do that.<sup>42</sup> That can be defined as a "soft balancing" strategy against the United States, that has been followed by other States in the war in Iraq, like France, Germany or even Turkey, which denied

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<sup>38</sup> See for example Arturo Valenzuela, "Beyond Benign Neglect: Washington and Latin America", *Current History*, February, 2005, pp. 58-63 and Peter Hakim, "Is Washington Losing Latin America?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 85, Number 1, January/February, 2006, pp. 39-53.

<sup>39</sup> Peter Hakim, *Op. Cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>42</sup> The opposition of some states to the U.S. means and the agreement on goals has been suggested by Robert A. Pape: "Soft Balancing against the United States", *International Security*, vol. 30, No. 1, Summer 2005.

the U.S. access to its territory for invading Iraq.<sup>43</sup> This strategy does not contemplate a military confrontation but the use of soft instruments, like diplomacy or procrastination that could increase the costs for the hegemon in carrying out some policy. This also can be described as the “tying the giant” strategy.<sup>44</sup>

The “soft balancing” strategy does not mean that Latin American countries are unwilling to cooperate with the U.S. in some aspects of the war on terrorism. It only presupposes that this support has a clear limit: the domestic legitimacy of the governments in the area. Actually, the cooperation between the United States and Latin America has increased after the terrorist attacks, and with the exception of Cuba and Venezuela, the countries of the region are reported by the State Department as reliable partners.<sup>45</sup> It is worth mentioning that the terrorist threats perceived by the U.S. in the region are basically domestic, with the exception of the activity of Hizballah and HAMAS among the Muslim communities in the Triborder area of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. That is why the U.S. has no big interest in the region: it is not perceived in general terms, as a source of terrorism that can endanger American security in a direct way. Notwithstanding, there is a clear concern for the U.S. territorial border with Mexico, which can be a point of entry for terrorists and organized criminals.<sup>46</sup>

It is highly probable that most of the Latin American countries do not think that the possibilities of a terrorist attack in their territory are very high. However, they don't want to put at risk the relationship with the United States. Actually, “only Cuba and Venezuela are openly hostile toward the United States. And most Latin American governments continue to seek close ties with the United States, including free-trade agreements, immigration accords, and security assistance”.<sup>47</sup> This is so despite the opposition to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) shown by some governments during the Fourth Summit of the Americas that took place on November 2005 in Argentina. Even when the opposition to this project was led by Venezuela, and endorsed by some other South American countries, like Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay, the truth is that most of these governments are disposed to negotiate with the U.S. That was quite evident during the visit of President Bush to Brazil after the Summit of the Americas in 2005. Other countries like Mexico and Chile have been supporting the FTAA in an open way.

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> The image of a giant (the U.S.) tied by many Liliputians (the countries opposed to the war in Iraq) was used by the former Mexican Ministry of foreign Affairs, Jorge Castañeda in 2002. See Dante Palma, “Busca México ‘atar al gigante’”, *El Universal* (Mexico), November 6, 2002, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> United States Department of State, Office of the Coordination for Counterterrorism, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004*, April 2005, pp. 76-87. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/c14813.htm>

<sup>46</sup> About this possibility, see Bill Gertz, “Terrorists said to seek entry to U.S. via Mexico”, *The Washington Times*, April 7, 2003; Jerry Seper, “Al Qaeda seeks tie to local gangs”, *The Washington Times*, September 28, 2004.

<sup>47</sup> Peter Hakim, *Op. Cit.*, p. 47.



Notwithstanding, it is impossible not to see the political changes in the region during the recent years. Nowadays, there are seven governments in the area that can be defined as leftist in some degree: Cuba, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile and Bolivia. Also, it is probable that three other countries have governments from the left in 2006: Mexico, Peru and Nicaragua. However, it would be a mistake to think that all these regimes are the same.<sup>48</sup> There are big differences between Venezuela and Cuba, on the one hand and Chile, Brazil and Uruguay, on the other hand. Castro and Chavez have openly supported socialism, while Lagos (and Michelle Bachelet), Lula and Vazquez are in favor of the free market. One of them, Chile, has a free trade agreement with the United States and Brazil would be very happy with that possibility. In other words, even when there has been a turn to the left in the region, it does not mean that all governments maintain radical anti-US policies. Even in the case of the U.S.-Venezuelan relations, where there is a very noisy rhetoric, the perspectives for an open conflict between both countries are low. However, some minor friction is not discarded between the region and the United States, but this will take the form of "soft balancing", that is diplomatic disagreements and delays in supporting U.S. positions. At the same time, it is highly feasible that differences between moderate and radical leftist regimes increase, what complicates the coordination of policies among the different countries. If Chavez continue radicalizing himself, confrontation with moderate governments of the region, like Chile, is very possible. That scenario appeared during the Sixth World Social Forum (the anti-globalization meeting that pretend to be an alternative to the Davos' World Economic Forum) that took place in Venezuela in January 2006. In that meeting some radicals from the left accused the Presidents of Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay of being "coward reformists".<sup>49</sup>

Notwithstanding, it would be a mistake to think that all the countries in the region have the same leverage in the international system. There are clearly two major powers in Latin America: Brazil and Mexico. The former has a hegemonic project that contemplates a permanent seat at the Security Council while the latter is the major Latin American trade partner of the United States and possesses a big bargaining power with Washington. Chile is a wealthy country with a consolidated democracy that also has a free trade agreement with the U.S. and consequently has some margin for maneuver. Colombia is the major producer of cocaine in the world and has in its territory three groups that the U.S. has defined as terrorist. That attracts the interest of Washington, but given the high volume of aid given by the U.S. it is difficult to expect a disagreement with the American policy. Colombia is also negotiating a free trade agreement with the U.S., like Central America.

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<sup>48</sup> Jorge Castañeda, "Latin America's Two Left Wings", *Newsweek International*, January 9, 2006.

<sup>49</sup> Eduardo Davis, "Foro Social critica a Lula, Kirchner y Vázquez y ensalza a Chávez", *Terra News*, January 28, 2006. <http://www.terra.com/noticias/articulo/html/act328533.htm>

Consequently, it seems that the biggest opposition to the United States will come from Venezuela and Cuba, but if those countries are not able to obtain the support of some of the major countries of the region, their ability to restrain the giant is limited.

There are also economic limits to the power of Latin America. Mercosur, the most ambitious South American commercial pact, represents 23.49% of the total trade of the region, while Mexico itself represents 46.52% and the Andean Pact only 17.28%.<sup>50</sup> In terms of the world trade, Latin America (excluding Mexico) represents 4.95% while the North American Free Trade Agreement (Canada, Mexico and the United States) represents 22.09% and the European Union 37.41%. Even when this percentage of the global trade is not totally irrelevant, it is not sufficient to have some impact in the international system.

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<sup>50</sup> International Monetary Fund, *Direction of Trade Statistics*, 2005.

## *Conclusions*

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The end of the cold war had an important impact in the priority given by the U.S. to Latin America. Since the "communist" threat disappeared, the region became secondary. However, during the 1990s some countries were able to attract the attention of Washington: Mexico signed a free trade agreement with the U.S. and Chile initiated negotiations for a similar accord. The reasons that explain why some countries could attract the U.S. attention were related to geographical factors and the ability to provoke some instability in the hegemon. However, things changed with the arrival of the new century and the terrorist attacks of September 11. Because of that event, the U.S. priorities were modified and Latin America was important only as a piece in the counter terrorist strategy. In this perspective, only some countries were relevant: Mexico and Central America and the Caribbean as well as possible sources of instability like Colombia, Venezuela and Cuba. However, the war in Iraq showed that the region could also use a "soft balancing" strategy affecting the legitimacy of the U.S. policies. Mexico and Chile developed this strategy in an open way because they were part of the UN Security Council. Notwithstanding, it is quite evident, that most of the countries of the region did not want a confrontation with the United States even when the Bush revolution in foreign policy has been weakened in a substantial way.

The future of the region is not clear. Even when some countries are disposed to tie the giant through diplomacy at the international organizations, they cannot do more than that unless some major changes take place in the area. Even when regional organizations like Mercosur have evolved in a satisfactory way, the economic performance of the Latin American countries is far from being satisfactory. Actually, behind the aggressive rhetoric that some of the governments use, there is a big interest in improving the terms of exchange with the industrialized countries, especially for agricultural products. If that does not happen, the role of the region in world affairs would be secondary in the future. Certainly, in political terms there are two countries with a hegemonic project: Brazil and Venezuela. These countries can have a limited influence in part of the region. However, they cannot go too far, especially if they want to confront the United States. Certainly, they can bother the giant and in some cases, tie him.



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