

**“Moscow, Beijing and Latin America:
Testing smart power diplomacy”**

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ABSTRACT

Moscow and Beijing's policies and its various diplomatic activities in Latin America generated a substantial political concern, however, there is not enough research in the region on this subject. After the Bush era, the emergency of smart power diplomacy under Putin and Hu Jing Tao leaderships has meant a highly strategic participation.

The Obama's strategy toward the region will refuse hard power diplomacy and it will try to improve hemispheric solidarity on democratic principles. The paper will examine the flirtation¹ policies among these key non-regional great powers as a possible counterweight to its long term adversary, the United States. The emergency of "smart power diplomacy" must adjust to these new tripolar scenarios that have transformed inter-American issues and intra regional balance of power relations.

To propose a different perspective in the study of international politics among great powers and to choose an topic of study so complex, a level of theoretical and methodological sophistication it is needed that the present essay does not presume to satisfy. This paper introduces an original view to answer a few questions that should be researched in depth by internationalist scholars. We hope to improve our understanding of what and how these great powers come to be constructed through a combination of "hard, soft and smart power diplomacy". In Latin America the discipline is segmented and contributions like this one open ways for the innovation in the analysis of world politics as a socially constructed phenomenon².

Washington, Moscow, and Beijing after the Cold War

Relations between Washington, Moscow and Beijing are perceived differently during the Bush era than those during the Cold War period. The Australian academic Bobo Lo who is an expert on Sino-Russian relations refers to this marked difference:

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¹ "Flirtation policies" a set of convincing signals of mutual admiration to deter the options of an eventual rival or competitor.

² See: SANCHEZ, Walter. "Relaciones Internacionales: de la clonación a la creación. La mirada desde el Instituto de Estudios Internacionales de la Universidad de Chile, 1966-2006", *Estudios Internacionales*, Año 39, N° 155 (octubre-diciembre), 2006. pp. 117-136.

In the 1997 'Joint declaration on a multipolar world and the formation of a new international order', then Russian president Boris Yeltsin and his Chinese counterpart Jiang Zemin announced their commitment to develop a 'partnership... for the purpose of strategic interaction in the twenty-first century'. The statement was widely seen not only as a challenge to American 'hegemonism', but also as confirmation of the qualitatively new relationship that had emerged between Moscow and Beijing after the end of the Cold War³.

Furthermore, the levels of trade and cooperation have also taken a major quantitative turn as far as the economic ties between Beijing and Moscow (an area still lacking in current Latin America scholar research) which have strengthened within the past few years and have ultimately risen commercial exchange from US\$ 5.7 billion in 1999 to US\$ 15.7 billion in 2003 during the first period of Putin Administration alone⁴. A few years later, in October 2008, Wen Jiabao, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China, stated the following during the inauguration of the Third High-Level China Russia Economic Forum:

Trade volume has increased and quality improved. The trade volume between China and Russia grew by nearly ten times in the decade from 1998 to 2007, and will top \$50 billion this year, making attainable the trade target of \$60 billion-80 billion the two sides set for 2010. While the trade volume grows, the trade structure has also improved. The export of electro-mechanical products from Russia to China has been on the rise for two consecutive years, and the two sides will launch a number of new demonstration projects in helicopter, metallurgy, machinery and other areas. With synchronized growth in both quality and quantity, China-Russia economic cooperation and trade has entered a new phase of development⁵.

In critical moments such as we are experiencing now, for a country hungry for energy such as the People's Republic of China, and with an economy in need of permanent financial flows such as the case of Russia, this new wave of exchanges appears to be a "win-win" situation; an ideal opportunity for the creation of a new deal. However, from a long term perspective, this "ideal" situation carries with it its own internal weaknesses for the reason that although the People's Republic of China is to Russian Federation the entrance to the Asian Pacific region, Beijing still remains the main strategic competitor and the principal threat to Moscow, which essentially raises a few contradictions and paradoxes in the study of Russia's foreign policy.

³ LO, Bobo. "The long sunset of strategic partnership: Russia's evolving China policy", *International Affairs*, 2 (2004). pp. 295-309.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Wen Jiabao [on line]. "Work Together for Fresh Progress in China-Russia Economic Cooperation and Trade", Address by Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China at the Opening Ceremony of the Third High-Level China-Russia Economic Forum. Moscow, October 28, 2008. URL: <<http://www.bjreview.com.cn>>

After 9/11, there is a growing consensus among scholars about the definition of power correlations at the world level. We have written in a recent paper⁶ that since 1991 an international system⁷ was shaped where the United States maintains its hegemonic power, the axis of a unipolar system through strategic and military means and finally the dominant force in the global political economy. From an economic point of view, the asymmetry continues, where since the fall of the Twin Towers power has been distributed in at least three poles: The European Union, Japan and the People's Republic of China. Through this balance, the only actor who has experienced a decrease in their objective attributes as well as their hard power (territory, GDP, and military) is the Russian Federation, descending from a semi-parity with Washington during the Cold War to sub-parity status. Moscow's position in the international system regarding the People's Republic of China is characterized by an open practice of mutual benefits and agreements⁸.

This hypothesis can be clarified in that from the subjective point of view—"soft power"—the Russian Federation removed its negative totalitarian stance and improved their country's image in the international arena with the new democratic appearance, worthy of being emulated. Furthermore, taking another perspective of how observers construe this reality, Bobo Lo concludes that Moscow has had the most diplomatic success while laying out a red carpet before relations with Beijing and by this obtaining their consent on behalf of the leaders of the new generation post Jiang Zemin. Nonetheless, Lo advises the following:

At a time when Russian–Chinese relations are at their zenith, the ultimate paradox is that we may be witnessing the beginnings of a transformation from strategic partnership into strategic divergence⁹.

Essentially, the sum of these phenomenons allows us to understand why the People's Republic of China possesses a greater relative weight within this singular context. China's struggle now is how to maintain and go above their achievements, taking the right path and utilizing "Sino smart power"¹⁰ or "smart power diplomacy made in China".

⁶ See: SÁNCHEZ, Walter y CARREÑO, Eduardo. "La Era Post Bush: Una Mirada Política a la Crisis de Wall Street", *Escenarios Actuales*, N° 3, Noviembre, CESIM, 2008. pp. 5-18

⁷ According to constructivists, the international system "is a set of ideas, a body of thought, a system of norms, which has been arranged by certain people at a particular time and place". (KARACASULU, Nilüfer and UZGÖREN, Elif. "Explaining social constructivist contributions to security studies", *Perceptions*, Summer-Autumn, 2007. p. 32). See also DHAMMOON, Rita and ABU-LABAN, Yasmeen. "Dangerous (internal) Foreigners and Nation Building: the case of Canada", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 30, N° 2, 2009. pp. 163-183. This article "develop a theoretical framework which could inform our understanding of how, when and why a nation and a certain groups come to be constructed through a combination of discourses". We try to utilize a similar outlook and perspective through different sources and data.

⁸ For a more specific analysis on this issue, see: CARREÑO, Eduardo. *Proceso de Modernización de las Fuerzas Armadas de la República Popular China (2000-2006)*, Thesis (MA in International Studies), Institute of International Studies, University of Chile, 2009. (Chapter II). www.cybertesis.cl

⁹ LO, Bobo. "The long sunset of strategic partnership: Russia's evolving China policy". Op. cit.

¹⁰ See: Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye Jr.: "Smart power is neither hard nor soft—it is the skillful combination of both. Smart power means developing an integrated strategy, resource base, and tool kit to

It's possible the awesome inauguration of the Olympic Games in Beijing which was held the August 8, 2008 was the first signal of what is to come, and ultimately improved the country's international perception.

The qualitative change of China's presence in the post Cold War era has also been manifested by the new relations with its Asian neighbors, but particularly with Latin America. The facts confirm that Beijing has taken the steps in order to realize this qualitative turning point turn. Javier Santiso¹¹ claims that this rapprochement between the People's Republic of China and Latin America is historic, in that from this relation the region obtains a third mainstay or, support: first from Europe, then the United States, and now the People's Republic of China. Their ties with the region have grown exponentially, as is shown empirically in the article, which is reflected in the new trading and investments flows. Beyond the China dollar diplomacy, Chinese soft power is being utilized as they demonstrate the viability of the other cognitive paradigm for the region, a model of pragmatic, successful and atypical development with a strong State and market solutions.

The new progressive generations that have access to power in Latin American countries watch this alternative model with interest and endorse Chinese pragmatism along with the modernizations of the Russian Federation. Touching on this topic, Bobo Lo states the following:

Retirement of the old Soviet-educated cohort of Chinese leaders and their succession by a more business-oriented, western-influenced generation may encourage the development of relations on a more practical basis. A leader like current Chinese President Hu Jintao is, in many respects, a better fit for Vladimir Putin than Hu's predecessor, Jiang Zemin. More generally, there may be scope for a measure of normative convergence between two statist, yet market-oriented models of government¹².

For Latin America the attraction of soft power diplomacy which Beijing and Moscow assume in the region is made more visible after observing since the years of the Clinton Administration up until the Bush era there was little priority for Latin America throughout the international agenda of the United States. During the Clinton presidency (1993-2001), the United States redefined itself at the same time as an indispensable nation, a provider of universal public and collective goods to which all aspire to possess. Consequently, it is necessary to re-conceptualize Washington's role from a traditional

achieve (...) objectives, drawing on both hard and soft power. It is an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels to expand (...) influence and establish the legitimacy of (...) action". (ARMITAGE, Richard L. and NYE, Joseph S. *CSIS Commission on smart power. A smarter, more secure America*, Washington DC: CSIS, 2007. p. 7.)

¹¹ SANTISO, Javier. "La emergencia de China y su impacto en América Latina", *Política Exterior*, N° 107 (Septiembre / Octubre) 2005. pp. 97-110.

¹² LO, Bobo. "The long sunset of strategic partnership: Russia's evolving China policy". Op. cit.

nation state to an “imperial power”¹³, that is to say, a foreign policy that organizes the world around certain fundamental principals that affect relations between States and condition them and their domestic affairs. In this global agenda, the main interest has been the Middle East, relations with Eastern European countries, the war on terror, the challenge of Islam as well as local issues, with little room left to worry about relations with Latin America.

The geopolitical vision of the United States established their hegemonic positioning in the international system by the means of the Bush Doctrine, which assumed an excessive use of hard power against terrorists who threatens the national security and also permeates our borders and the region’s security. Certainly, the use of soft and smart power was forgotten. It is recognized that everyone depends on one another, but in particular countries highly depend on their commercial, financial and technological ties with Washington¹⁴.

The process of the redistribution of power to scale when comparing Washington, Moscow and Beijing clearly forced an epistemological reformation due to two significant heuristic weaknesses of the traditional approaches of the discipline. It was challenging to find the answer in other recent common trends of the discipline. The first predominant approach is the focus of interdependence which assumed that countries behave rationally and coexist thanks to the recognition of mutual vulnerabilities and where the tendency is to maintain certain reciprocal balances where a sole hegemon does not exist. Second, the political realism approach with its Hobbesian vision of international relations does not help us to explain the option for a political pragmatism under the years of Deng Xiaoping, and the low profile policies of Boris Yelstin until the beginning of the Putin era. As professor Lo observed:

Compared to the Yeltsin years, Moscow today has functional relations with Washington and the major west European capitals; it has built on its strategic partnerships with Beijing and New Delhi; it is much more effective in projecting Russian influence (...)¹⁵

The end of the Cold War and the push from the centrifugal forces of globalization “suggests a significant intensification of global connedctedness and consciousness of that intnesification, with a corresponding diminution in the significance of territorial boundaries and state structures”¹⁶. Global forces ultimately shortened the distances between peoples and nations, weak borders, and more importantly, beliefs and collective images were changed when it was ascertained in the perceptions of the majority that of

¹³ CORNETTA, Carl. *Cul de Sac. 9/11 and the Paradox of American Power*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Project on Defense Alternatives, Research Monograph N° 13, 2008. p. 9.

¹⁴ FRIEDMAN, George [on line]. “State, Economies and Markets: Redefining the Rules”, Stratfor’s free intelligence reports, October 13, 2008. URL: <www.stratfor.com>. October 15, 2008.

¹⁵ LO, Bobo. “The long sunset of strategic partnership: Russia’s evolving China policy”. Op. cit.

¹⁶ BRETHERTON, Charlotte. “Introduction: Global Politics in 1990s”. In: BRETHERTON, Charlotte and PONTON, Geoffrey (editors). *Global Politics: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. p. 3.

the three great powers in the international arena, that which appeared most damaged after 9/11 period was the United States.

The current Wall Street crisis has raised perceptions and beliefs about the vulnerability of the U.S. model of development. As was acknowledged at the beginning of this paper, the relation is qualitatively “different” than the Cold War years since the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China appear in the long-term horizon as barriers of contention to U.S. hegemony in the region. Power grows and expands in other places beyond the Asian Pacific regions that before were concentrated on the single hegemon.

One of the consequences of globalization is the deterritorialization of the creation of wealth, status and power. Often the wealth of a nation is generated in other nations, which presents a paradox that redefines the status of borders and their guardians¹⁷. For Beijing and Moscow the mutual necessities and eventual tensions with the United States could unite the two in a kind of “marriage out of convenience,” a society of mutual aid, that could last as long as none of the two take advantage of the good faith of the other.

This new reality also offers a different rationality by the international actions of Latin America, which appear to be very different from the Cold War. Today, the country’s dilemma isn’t how to walk out a political bloc at the lowest possible price or be anti or pro globalization, but rather how to become globalized more efficiently and faster. In this arena, the new pattern of ties and interactions with Moscow and Beijing appear as a concrete manifestation of “Latin America smart power diplomacy.”

An alternative approach: “what and how”

This paper develop a theoretical framework which could improve our understanding of how, when and why a group of nations from different regions come to be constructed trough changing global and local beliefs and mutual perceptions.

An alternative approach is presented as a challenge more than a response. As this has been pointed out, is an exploratory quest and intends to refresh our vision of the global reality as a socially constructed phenomenon.

Beyond realism and interdependence, the test of various concepts of constructivism and postmodernism is used. These analytical tools help to explain the significant transformations in the perceptions and collective images of international politics; theories that are associated currently with a change in epoch and historical projection. The great historic theories are rejected, as well as the omnipotent paradigms; re-assessing the postmodern epistemology of “practice” over the “idea” and a critical review of concepts about the great diversification of interests and pluralizations of actors in world politics and its regional implications ¹⁸.

¹⁷ CASTELLS, Manuel. *The Rise of Network Society*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000.

¹⁸ TOMASSINI, Luciano. *La política internacional en un mundo postmoderno*, Buenos Aires: GEL, 1991.

The appearances of non-state actors, like the media which shape public and global opinion, shape the agenda and propagate beliefs about what occurs around the world. We are witnessing the emergence of a global civil society with an increasingly empowered individual. We are onlookers of the complex interactions between domestic and international politics, thus we must focus our analysis on this trilateral relation as determined by subjective elements and the perceptions of the subjects that shape these realities.

As a result of our analysis, the situation from the threshold of Latin America, the belief and perception was established that a greater presence of the People's Republic of China exists, seen as a counterweight to the U.S. presence with the apparent decrease of their hegemony in the region. Thus, individuals and decision makers construct a social reality and reproduce it in their daily practices¹⁹. Therefore, the purpose of this paper has been to determine up until what point these realities—the “what”—has been modified and “how” the implications of these changes have also been accommodate due to these new perceptiosn and beliefs.

Paradoxically for the United States, the perception of the current issue at hand is the opposite, since the perception comes from a traditional point of view, the conventional Occidental logic, by traditional we refer to their axiom that democracies are more efficient and tend to confront one another less and as a result authoritarian regimens are potential adversaries. To invest too much energy in order to achieve a better relation with the People's Republic of China, a totalitarian regimen, and the Russian Federation, an old rival with authoritarian aspects, means giving too many advantages and concessions in their “back garden” to two historic adversaries.

As a result, the influence that the People's Republic of China has had on the region is worrisome for Washington. This unease could be explained by the “window of opportunity” provided by these extra-regional powers, and by the weakening of the political Latin American systems, State powers constantly questioned by public opinion about their corruption and accountability, and political and social mobilization which lead to the appearance of populist and nationalist leaders. These bring together social movements based on a rebellious perception; they undertake on a “revolutionary fight” against the international capitalist system, dominated by the U.S. hegemon and the cause of a major problems in the region. Therefore, in 2005 the Indiana Congressman and Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere, Dan Burton, declared:

There is no doubt that several of our neighbors in this hemisphere face considerable challenges to their maturing democracies. Persistent poverty, violent guerrilla conflicts, non-democratic leaders, drug trafficking, corruption, terrorist infiltration and increasing crime are making it difficult for many in the region to see the value of democracy.

¹⁹ KARACASULU, Nilüfer and UZGÖREN, Elif. “Explaining social constructivist contributions to security studies”. Op. cit.

Weak legal systems, lax enforcement of labor standards, and an immature institutionalization of the respect for human rights are fertile ground for Beijing's agenda and China is definitely exploiting this opening²⁰.

After the post-Bush era, the question is how States will resolve these new exogenous and endogenous threats that affect internal stability. Everything points to the goals that President Barack Obama promise during the electoral campaign. However, this option has proved impossible due to the Wall Street crisis which once again distanced the region as a priority on the United States' diplomatic agenda. What we have seen after the first hundred days is that there is no doubt that he plans to overcome the Bush doctrine and the "blind unilateralism"²¹.

The main mechanism used in order to analyze the presence of these three international actors in the region is to find out if a display of hard power (economic-military) and soft power, that power which is generated by cooperation with others, creating common agendas and strengthening the confidence between States by the means of establishing solid channels of communication, exist.

The fall of the Soviet bloc transformed the United States into the winner of the East-West conflict where they ultimately became the single international power during the post Cold War period. However, others perceive a different reality. Europe, and to some extent Latin America currently do not see Washington as it once was. On the contrary, for many populist leaders, the capital gain that is ensured by depending and subordinating oneself to the hegemony of the United States now is not as evident as before.

The United States has lost its influence in European affairs continent while the continent has become all the more autonomous. Consequently, all signs point to fact that the United States, the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China need to learn how to live with one another throughout this period of transition where the power correlations have yet to be decided, also learn to cooperate with Europe and the rest of the world that is rapidly expanding and growing strong²².

With the disappearance of the pro-Soviet state of mind, the strong inclination that Europe once possessed to be deferent and align themselves to the power and leadership of the United States is plummeting²³. They fortify themselves simultaneously and gradually through integration techniques such as the European Union and the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), a superb opportunity in order to transform this strategic zone into the center of European policy, and through this they began assuming the role of a

²⁰ "China's influence in the Western Hemisphere". Hearing before the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, One Hundred Ninth Congress. First session, April 6, 2005

²¹ NYE, Joseph S. *La paradoja del poder norteamericano*, Santiago: Taurus, 2003.

²² See: ZAKARIA, Fareed. *The Post-American World*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2008.

²³ CORNETTA, Carl. *Cul de Sac. 9/11 and the Paradox of American Power*. Op.cit.

peaceful and prosperous region able to challenge the relative environmental crisis, overcome inequalities, and handle the great influxes of migrants²⁴.

In Latin America, to a lesser extent, a similar situation has occurred. The end of the Communist threat opened the gates to more autonomy and more opportunities to utilize a “Latin American Smart Power Diplomacy”.

On the other hand, the re-entrance of the Russian Federation took much longer to be noticed by Latin America and for most of the world. Moscow had no interest in the region, except for Cuba and Chile in the 1970’s. Afterwards, it was essentially discredited in Latin American and there were no more official visits to the region²⁵.

Establishing a new era of relations for Russia was not easy, and it was only the fall of Communism that facilitated the appearance of positive beliefs about the country and the possibility of developing a new deal. With Boris Yelstin and afterwards with Vladimir Putin, it was understood the new powers existed that opposed a unipolar world and that desired to create a multipolar political system. A byproduct of this new perception of the geopolitical platform is the content contained in the “Medvedev doctrine” which praised the Putin Administration. The logic behind this doctrine is to recuperate its special relations with the ex-soviet republics as part of Russia’s influence and ultimately drive out any intruder in the region²⁶.

As has been mentioned before, the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China need the United States, just as the United States needs them, due to their strong economic exchanges, energetic necessities and certainly in order to confront Islamic terrorism and other asymmetrical threats together. Put bluntly, there is simply no bank account that can reject the strategy of the Bush Doctrine after the Wall Street crisis²⁷.

Latin America and the new dynamic between Washington, Moscow and Beijing

The presence of the People’s Republic of China in Latin America is sustained by the policy of mutual respect and the pragmatism of trade exchanges, technical cooperation

²⁴ “Zapatero, Prodi y Sarkozy lanzan en Roma la ‘Unión por el Mediterráneo’”. URL: <<http://www.psoe.es>>. October 14, 2008.

²⁵ SIZONENKO, Alexander. “Latin America, a fixture in Russian Diplomacy”, *International Affairs* (Moscow), 53, no. 1, 2007. pp. 117-131.

²⁶ The Russian President Dmitri Medvedev stated Russian foreign policy in five succinct points, which we can think of as the “Medvedev Doctrine”: first, Russia recognizes the primacy of the fundamental principles of international law, which define the relations between civilized peoples; second, the world should be multipolar, because a single-pole world is unstable and threatened by conflict; third, Russia does not want confrontation with any other country; fourth, protecting the lives and dignity of its citizens, wherever they may be, is an unquestionable priority for Russia; and fifth, as is the case of other countries, there are regions in which Russia has privileged interests. These regions are home to countries with which the Russian Federation share special historical relations and are bound together as friends and good neighbors. (FRIEDMAN, George [on line]. “The Medvedev Doctrine and American Strategy”, Stratfor’s free intelligence reports, September 2, 2008. URL: <www.stratfor.com>)

²⁷ FRIEDMAN, George [on line]. “The Russo-Georgian War and the Balance of Power”, Stratfor’s free intelligence reports, August 12, 2008. URL: <www.stratfor.com>. October 15, 2008.

and economic assistance. This presents us with a strategic relation which for Beijing implies fixing a policy of cooperation and international aid by virtue of the principals of equality and mutual benefit²⁸.

Therefore, the rapprochement between the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, plus the growing relation between these two countries and Latin America, has been a socially constructed reality by the leaders of the region. The interpretation of this phenomenon by the Department of State and the White House divided the North American strategies between those who ensured and those who rejected this rapprochement.

The changes in these socially constructed international realities are perceived as dangerous by American radar. For Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the growing presence of the People's Republic of China in Latin America is worrisome and ultimately presents us with a vision that is significantly different from the relation between the neighboring countries four years ago. As a result, in 2005 Roger Noriega, former Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, noted that China's influence in Latin America could be qualified as only minimum, and did not affect in any way the principal partnership Latin America shared with the United States²⁹. This change of perspective exhibits the United States' recognition of the PRC as a strategic competitor.

Within the Latin American region, the PRC is welcome on the one hand because they stopped perceiving the advantages of being dependent on the United States; and on the other hand by the damage that, according to many, the Bush Doctrine has provoked. The United States' dominant position in Latin America has forced the region to search for alternative strategic partners in states which have for many years also been subjected to the United States, as has already happened in military, commercial and political material.

Beijing takes advantage of an undesirable situation and uses it in the region as a "larder" in order to ensure, through acquisitions and investments, a complete supply chain for its critical industries, in a vertical integration with several Latin American countries³⁰.

The People's Republic of China's relations with Latin America during the first years of the Cold War, although Latin America never interested China strategically, the relation did lead to the creation of significant diplomatic ties of which in the region, on the one side, there were numerous countries which did not recognize the People's Republic; on the other side, after the Conference of Bandung in 1955, Beijing's foreign policy sought alliances between countries with common interests and the construction of political blocs with Asia, Africa and Latin America. From this, one can understand the trade, mineral

²⁸ ESQUEDA, Alberto; BARROSO, Fernan and MELLET, Luis. "Las Relaciones Internacionales de América Latina con los principales centros de poder mundial", *Revista del Colegio Interamericano de Defensa*, Volumen XV, 1987-1988. pp. 80-178.

²⁹ DUMBAUGH, Ferry and SULLIVAN, Mark P. [on line]. *CRS Report for Congress, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division*, April 20, 2005. URL: <<http://www.usembassy.it/pdf/other/RS22119.pdf>>

³⁰ ELLIS, R. Evan, *US National Security Implications of Chinese Involvement in Latin America*, Strategic Studies Institute, June 2005.

and grains supply interests of China and the search for small groups of countries with similar ideological interests that would eventually be able to assume power in a state throughout the region by means of informal contacts or cultural diplomacy, which translated to invitations from China to relevant actors in Latin American culture and policy³¹.

The Socialist Revolutionary character which Fidel Castro introduced in 1961 through his movement generated skepticism in both Moscow and Beijing as the Cuban Revolution distanced itself from the Marxist-Leninist rule. This situation would later take a turn in the case of the People's Republic at their recognition of the President Lui Shaoqi the same year that in Cuba the "revolutionary armed forces were strengthened, the revolutionary regimen was consolidated and the agrarian reform initiated, eradicating domination of the principal monopolist, the United States, while developing a national independent economy and elevating the level of material and cultural life of the people"³².

In the case of the remaining countries throughout the region, relations with the People's Republic of China have been established since 70's through diplomatic contacts. Yet in the passed few years the commercial representatives, with sectorial contacts of a technical, scientific, technological, and military nature, have become more powerful. This enables the governments to develop strategies that permit positive relations with Beijing and at the same time maintain non-political relations with Taiwan as relations remain purely commercial³³.

This socially construed reality between Latin American countries and Beijing during this decade have been sustained by an active bilateral and multilateral diplomacy while touching upon many important topics in a regional context which, in agreement with Sergio Cesarin³⁴, are presented as more prone to the interests of Beijing because of the existence of five strategic variables: First, the creation of hegemony on behalf of Washington in the global arena made it difficult for the US to consolidate a *pax americana* throughout strategic zones for its own security. Second, China's penetration in Latin America is considered to be part of the process of construction and accumulation

³¹ CONNELLY, Marisela and CORNEJO, Romer. *China-América Latina. Génesis y desarrollo de sus relaciones*, México DF: Colegio de México, 1992. Por ejemplo, en tres oportunidades hice uso de esa diplomacia cultural y fui invitado como académico por el gobierno y universidades.

³² Ibid. p. 67. (The translation to English of this text has been made for the authors.)

³³ The People's Republic of China have diplomatic relations with the majority of Latin American countries: with Argentina since 1972; with Bolivia since 1985; with Brazil since 1974; with Chile since 1970; with Colombia since 1980; with Ecuador since 1980; with Cuba since 1960; with Mexico since 1972; with Peru since 1971; with Uruguay since 1988; y with Venezuela since 1974. Paraguay have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, but the President Fernando Lugo has say that it's not possible "underestimated" a market so important for the international trade like the People's Republic of China. (WILHELMY, Manfred. "China y América Latina", *Estudios Internacionales*, Año XXXIV, N° 133 (enero-marzo), 2001. pp. 3-11).

³⁴ CESARIN, Sergio. "Ejes y estrategias de desarrollo económico chino: enfoques para América Latina y el Caribe". In: CESARIN, Sergio and MONETA, Carlos (compiladores). *China y América Latina. Nuevos enfoques sobre cooperación y desarrollo. ¿Una segunda ruta de la seda?*, Buenos Aires: BID-INTAL, 2005. pp. 3-48.

of global power on behalf of Beijing. Furthermore, an active, formal diplomacy and the use of institutional and non-institutional channels on the part of Beijing has been vital in generating decisions and political support that favors Chinese interests on a long term basis in the region. Also, Latin America is a source of raw materials, favoring Beijing in providing investments in exploitation of natural resources in the mining environment and food production. Finally, the spread of business networks through the active participation of Chinese communities in Latin American countries has generated networks of political, cultural and economic influence.

For Washington, the Chinese presence in Latin America has been worrisome. The beginning of the twenty-first century marked the retirement of US troops from the Panama Canal, as members from both the Democratic and Republican parties watched as a new threat to their national security arose which could lead to Beijing's interfering position in a strategic zone for the commercial interests of Washington as well as potentially limiting US access to maritime routes. Thus, during a session of the Armed Forces of the United States Senate Commission in 1999, Robert Barr, former Georgia Congressman and member of the Republican Party, planted the following in reference to withdrawing the US Armed Forces from the Panama Canal:

I am deeply disappointed to see the Clinton Administration has made absolutely no effort to maintain a United States military presence in Panama [...] The most worrisome element of this trend is Panama's decision to convey to Hutchinson-Whampoa port facilities at both the Atlantic and Pacific ends of the Canal. Hutchinson-Whampoa is a Chinese corporation run by individuals with clear and extensive ties to the Chinese military [...]

Disturbingly, Chinese influence in Panama is not limited to simply obtaining control over shipping facilities [...] There are also allegations that the Chinese government is aggressively settling Chinese immigrants in Panama. All these facts point to one inescapable conclusion: Communist China has decided to extend and solidify its influence in the western hemisphere, using Panama – the "Crossroads of the Americas" - as a base of operations³⁵.

Currently the People's Republic of China's position on the Panama Canal is interpreted by many to be an instrument used to put pressure on the Central American countries and the Caribbean to impede the independence of Taiwan, as many of these countries (Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, the Dominican Republic, San Cristobal and Nieves, San Vicente and the Grenadines, and Santa Lucia) still maintain diplomatic relations with Taipei.

The links between Taiwan and the Central American countries along with the Caribbean find difficulties in the area of internal policy due to a lack of consensus between elites and public opinion over an ideological-economic debate where it appears as if the "dollar

³⁵ "The Future of the Panama Canal". Senate Armed Services Committee, October 22, 1999.

diplomacy” of the People’s Republic of China and Venezuela (strong alliance with Beijing) is consolidated and ultimately generates more supporters³⁶.

The Russian Federation: an emerging actor in Latin American

In the 70’s, the relation between the Soviet Union with the region was put on hold due to the pressures of the Cold War, and in particular during the military regimes: an international reality that was formed based on one another’s propaganda, but that essentially affected relations between both regions.

The years of the fall of communism were without a doubt difficult for the Russian Federation and the normalization and re-emergence of Moscow occurred in the 90’s. Currently, the Russian Federation has diplomatic relations with thirty-three States in the Latin American region where through 1996-1997 two visits by Russian representatives of high status were realized. Within 2000 and 2004, Vladimir Putin visited four Latin American countries, which included Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Mexico.

The raised the amount of bilateral treaties and commercial exchanges, investment and the sale of arms, military and civil consultancy, aid and agreements on cooperation on the handling of energy, including nuclear, which demonstrates a qualitative advance in the relation between the Russian Federation and Latin America. Therefore, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov declared in December, 2003, the following:

The time has come for conscious and coordinated actions in the global community in order to establish an international order that is safer, more just and democratic (...)

Russian and Latin American diplomacy actively collaborate within the framework of the United Nations and other global forums. In particular, we highly evaluate the support from Latin American countries and the Caribbean in the Russian initiative to establish a global system under the aegis of the United Nations in order to counter new challenges and threat³⁷.

On November 26, 2008, President Dimitriv Medvedev visited Hugo Chavez, accompanied by a Russian fleet that resided in the Venezuelan port. His visit signaled a strategic alliance between Caracas and Moscow, being this a strong emitted sign to the continent of the content of his doctrine, showing furthermore a qualitative advance in the presence of Moscow in the region.

³⁶ CARDOZO, Gustavo A. [on line]. “La disputa China-Taiwán en América Central y el Caribe”, Observatorio de la Política China/Instituto Gallego de Análisis y Documentación Internacional, 27 de febrero de 2008. URL:<<http://www.igadi.org>>. April 27, 2009.

³⁷ IVANOV, Igor. “Las relaciones de la Federación Rusa con Chile y la región de América Latina”, *Diplomacia*, N° 97 (enero-marzo), 2004. pp. 41-46. (The translation to English of this text has been made for the authors.)

Million dollar contracts of military cooperation, the sale of arms and aid in the case of a possible nuclear industry were signed. In Cuba, the Castro brothers took advantage of this event to emit the importance of these visits and reproach the United States for their imperial decadence. Daniel Ortega and Evo Morales also appeared on the list of strong beneficiaries of the lavish donations and aid to their people.

On the other hand, the Russian Federation's foreign policy towards the global powers has been defined by Vladimir Putin who, according to Bobo Lo, considers that in an eventual scenario of political rapprochement between Washington and Moscow, and a rise in tension in the Sino-American relation. The Russian Federation would count on maintaining the extensive ties with Beijing. Regarding this issue, the author states:

In this context, his stubborn resistance to American pressure over nuclear energy cooperation with Iran offers an instructive precedent, demonstrating that Moscow will not give ground easily, even when a western 'rational actor' perspective might suggest otherwise³⁸.

Concluding Remarks

Why the presence of Moscow and Beijing in the region has this qualitative change occurred? To what extent have they transformed our beliefs about inter-American and inter-regional relations?

We utilize this framework which could improve our understanding of how, when and why a nation and a certain groups nations come to be constructed through a combination of new perceptions and beliefs.

After ending our analysis of the sources and data that were collected in the current paper, leads to conclude the following:

First, the initial hypothesis it was positively proved. Beijing-Latin American relations, together with the regional impact of the Medvedev doctrine, have as a testing case of this qualitative turning point. In the system of Latin American alliances, a new perception of reality, originating in the construction of a positive and legitimate image of the current situation of world power. That is, a collective belief has been established in the public opinions makers, that it is possible to build a more multipolar world. As a consequence, the smartest diplomatic thing to do is to act as if this state already existed. Finally, the test of smart power diplomacy it is a positive one.

Second, as a consequence of the previous conclusion, Latin America has opted to apply this learned strategy, or rather utilize Latin America Smart Power Diplomacy, considering how Beijing and Moscow have presented themselves as two pivotal strategic partners as new historical means of support.

³⁸ LO, Bobo. "The long sunset of strategic partnership: Russia's evolving China policy". Op. cit. p. 304

These new reinforcements are more than welcome and at the same time reflect the achievements of soft power diplomacy that Beijing and Moscow have utilized in building a set of interests agreements with a common agenda between the region and these extra-regional powers.

Third, these new emerging partners in the Pacific do not replace, but rather complement the traditional axis of friendship and cooperation with the North Atlantic lead by the United States. Now, the new strategic extra-regional partners are an extension of the systems of alliance more than an offensive arc pointing against the United States and third powers.

Finally, this paper has its own limits in theory and practice. The provocative questions about the “why” and “how” the inter-American relations have been changed as well as the relative weight of the region in the international system. We have argued that the answer is yes.

These are preliminary results and with exploratory character. From now on, the first steps have been taken on this long path of understanding world politics from a Latin American view.

Santiago of Chile May 31, 2009