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"Latin America and the Reconfiguration of the World Order"

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"Latin America and the Reconfiguration of the World Order"

Guest Editors:

Raúl Salgado Espinoza (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales [Flacso], Ecuador);
Amaya Querejazu Escobari (Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia);
Shauna N. Gillooly (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile)

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Introduction

Recognizing the importance of scholarly contributions from Latin America and the Caribbean to debates in international relations and contemporary international politics, this special issue moves beyond the question of the region's inclusion in the international system to engage with broader debates about the uncertainty surrounding that system. Tensions and polarization among hegemonic powers have undermined the institutions of the Western liberal international order, which are increasingly showing signs of having reached their limits and are no longer capable of sustaining their role as the framework governing interactions among political actors worldwide.

The current international context is clearly marked by fragmentation and the erosion of global governance. Unilateral actions by the United States, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Israel's invasion

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of the Gaza Strip, and the US war against Iran have deepened this crisis of international norms and disrupted the global economy. The unilateral imposition of tariffs, threats, the use of force, and recent events such as the US military intervention in Venezuela, which culminated in the capture of President Nicolás Maduro on Venezuelan territory, suggest that international politics is increasingly resembling the dynamics of the early twentieth century. Added to this is the United States' withdrawal from more than 60 international organizations within the multilateral system, a move that will have far-reaching implications for many of these organizations. The climate crisis further compounds these challenges amid escalating geopolitical conflicts and tensions with emerging powers. Meanwhile, emerging powers acting collectively, along with other non-Western centers of power, are calling for a reconfiguration of the international order toward a post-Western system (Acharya 2025), whose defining characteristics remain difficult to predict.

As the current Western liberal international order faces imminent collapse, some scholars from the Global North, including Graham Allison, Michael Beckley, and Jeffrey Sachs, have advanced the idea that a new multipolar international system is emerging, structured around what are known as spheres of influence or security zones. At the same time, other scholars, such as Philip Pilkington and Amitav Acharya, have predicted the imminent transformation of the liberal international order into a more chaotic and uncertain, yet also more pluralistic, system. Donald Trump's return to the US presidency for a second term has further exposed this crisis. Through the publication of the National Security Strategy and his own "Donroe Doctrine," or Trump Corollary, he has laid bare the realpolitik that US administrations have long pursued toward Latin America and the Caribbean, but have skillfully concealed behind a discourse of democracy, international free markets, and hemispheric security—a discourse that is no longer sustainable.

Latin American countries, for their part, have adopted various political, diplomatic, and international legal strategies to manage their relations with their northern neighbor. Some have also pursued individual courses of action that suggest a degree of unconditional alignment with the United States. These developments clearly call into question the institutional normative order founded on the values, rights, and principles of peaceful coexistence historically promoted by Latin American and Caribbean states. They also compel these actors to reconsider their positions in response to the ongoing reconfiguration of the international system. Understanding these dynamics is essential to the study of international relations both from the perspective of Latin America and the Caribbean and in relation to the region.

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Against this backdrop, this special issue will bring together scholarship offering new perspectives on how Latin America and the Caribbean contribute to international relations, drawing on local experiences that respond to emerging structures of the global order. It also offers an opportunity to examine the region through different, perhaps less conventional, perspectives, enriching the discipline with knowledge, case studies, and insights into contemporary developments drawn from the region itself.

Thematic areas

In this context, we see a need to engage the Latin American and Caribbean scholarly community working in international relations and international studies in debates and reflections on the current state of the international system. We welcome contributions that draw on Latin American and transdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches and address the following themes:

Uncertainty and the Future of the Western Liberal International Order: Challenges and Agendas

This theme invites reflections on the behavior and agency of various Latin American and Caribbean actors in international and regional politics amid uncertainty about the future of the Western international order. The following questions guide this discussion: How have Latin American and Caribbean actors contributed to the development of the current liberal international order and its agenda? How are they participating in its transformation? What role might states play in the face of potential shifts in power within global governance? How have colonial legacies and ideals of liberation influenced their participation?

Dimensions of Foreign Policy in the Current International Context

This theme addresses the following questions: What foreign policy approaches are Latin American and Caribbean countries proposing? What opportunities and risks does the current international landscape present for small states? What multilateral strategies will the region pursue? How are the United States, the European Union, and non-Western powers such as India, China, and Russia influencing the foreign policies of Latin American and Caribbean states today?

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Theorizing Contemporary International Politics and Latin American International Political Thought in the Twenty-First Century

This theme contributes to academic debates on the development of international relations theory by examining the following questions: How do Latin American and Caribbean scholars theorize contemporary international politics amid uncertainty about the current Western international order? What new categories, concepts, or theories might help explain the region's present circumstances? What new methodological, ontological, and epistemological approaches emerging from the region might help explain and understand the current state of the Western liberal international order? How can we understand the reconfiguration of the region's political identities through different manifestations, including ideological polarization, decolonial processes, and ethnonationalism, among others?

The selection process will also take into account representation from different countries, theoretical approaches, and perspectives; diversity in academic experience; and diversity in terms of sex and gender.

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