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Edited by David R. Mares and Arie M. Kacowicz

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GEOPOLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA, OLD AND NEW

Detlef Nolte and Leslie E. Wehner

Introduction

Geography can certainly influence politics, as the complicated topography of South America with its inaccessible rainforests, deserts, and high mountains illustrates. This topography has historically made the establishment of communication channels and contacts (including warfare) difficult, not only between neighboring countries but also between the center and the periphery within many countries. However, geographic obstacles are not as insurmountable as recent transcontinental infrastructure projects have demonstrated. Being endowed with natural resources creates opportunities for action to be taken in terms of exploitation, development of infrastructure, and securitization. However, political decisions must be made in order for changes related to geographic spaces and endowments to occur. Geopolitical thinking constructs narratives at the interplay of territory, geography, and politics, and with regards to how these elements should shape the interactions of states within a region (Cohen 2009; Kacowicz 2000; Kelly 1997).

Geopolitical thinking and policy-making may have waned in other regions of the world, but Latin America is still a fertile ground for the development of geopolitical ideas and doctrines. If we look at the maps included in the different defense White Books (*Libros Blancos*) of South American governments, they show the enduring importance of geopolitical markers – maps of the maritime boundaries, lost and/or reclaimed territories, and territorial projections into the Antarctic. In fact, the attempts of Latin American governments to construct identities based on territorial and maritime spaces are deeply rooted in geopolitical thinking (Dodds 1993), as demonstrated by the 'Blue Amazon' narrative promoted by the Brazilian navy since the first decade of the 2000s. The enduring importance of geopolitics in Latin America is also reflected in the high number of books, journals, and articles in print with the word 'geopolitics' in their title (whether in Spanish, Portuguese, or English), and in its being a salient component of the curricula of military academies in this region.

While geopolitics is still important in political discourses and foreign policy in Latin America, there are only few analyses of current geopolitical thinking. Moreover, most of these works are rather descriptive or adopt a historical perspective on the development of geopolitical ideas. While Latin America is a region in which geopolitical thinking is influential and pervasive, the avenue of 'critical geopolitics' – which seeks to unpack the different rationales

and meanings of geopolitical discourses – is, paradoxically, rather underdeveloped (exceptions are Cairo et al. 2007; Preciado and Uc 2010; Cabrera 2011) when compared to mainstream geopolitics approaches focusing on cases outside of Latin America (Dodds et al. 2013). Critical geopolitics refers to the analysis of the spatializing of boundaries and dangers (the geopolitical map of the world), and of the geopolitical representations of self and other (the geopolitical imagination) (Mamadouh 1998: 244).

'Neoclassical geopolitics' (Guzzini 2014), however, is the dominant perspective in Latin America. It is a policy-oriented approach, which conceptualizes foreign policy challenges and the international politics of a state in light of its geographical features, or its position on the map. It formulates guidelines for conducting statecraft based on this analysis (van der Wusten and Dijkink 2002: 20). Therefore, neoclassical geopolitics gives explanatory primacy to physical and human geographical factors – for example, whether a country is landlocked or has a large coastline, or whether it is rich or poor with regard to raw materials – which tend to lead to environmental and structural determinism. This chapter focuses on both major political and economic developments that have influenced geopolitical thinking in South America. It also seeks to elucidate the constitutive and basic elements of existing geopolitical narratives.

Classical geopolitics in Latin America

The reference to geopolitical codes and maps (i.e., on postage stamps; Child 2008) is a pervasive element of political thinking in Latin America. Thus, the past still has a significant psychological impact on the current international relations of the region and present-day boundary disputes (Kacowicz 2000: 84–85).

Latin American geopolitics until the end of the Cold War era was characterized by a focus on the state – sometimes perceived as an organic entity – as the provider of territorial security in both its domestic and external dimensions. The state prioritized the need to exert control over its own territory by trying to provide space for population growth and economic expansion. However, few connections were made between the internal territorial geographies and topographies in the field of geopolitics in its old variant – that is, the study of sparsely populated areas as places from which nonconformist sectors of society (including criminal networks) can subvert and control the state (Cohen 2009: 36).

The centrality of the state in geopolitical thinking was related to the need to determine and defend its territorial boundaries. Border disputes are related to the very origins of the nation-state in Latin America (Parodi 2002). This explains why "territorial disputes embody the essence of South American geopolitics" (Kelly 1997: 135). South America has been referred to as a 'zone of negative peace' or a 'zone of violent peace;' both phrases reflect the reality of rivalry of South American states vis-à-vis territory and border disputes. However, these terms simultaneously attest to the lack of large-scale armed conflicts in the region, despite the existing rivalries (Kacowicz 1998; Mares 2001).

The authoritarian regimes of the 1960s and 1970s tended to emphasize nationalistic narratives in the face of territorial issues. The geopolitical thinking of the military governments was closely linked to national security doctrines (Kacowicz 2000). Moreover, geopolitical thinkers from the military became political protagonists who were able to shape relationships with other states in the region. A good example is General Augusto Pinochet, who was a professor of geopolitics but not an important geopolitical author. In contrast, General Golbery do Couto e Silva, another geopolitical thinker, was able to influence Brazil's foreign policy as advisor to

different authoritarian presidents after 1964 (Child 1979; Kacowicz 2000). The predominance of the military sector in the field of geopolitics is related to the role played by the military geographical institutes that exist in most Latin American countries. These institutes' main duties were to control and elaborate the cartography of the state. However, the same institutes also played the role of academic centers for geopolitical and military training (Barton 1997: 63). They were closely linked to the respective national military academies.

While traditional geopolitics perceived the state as a unitary actor, geopolitical narratives and policies have always been contested. Geopolitics at the domestic level has remained underresearched in terms of actors, competing policies and narratives, and internal dilemmas regarding the implementation of one policy over another. The subfield of foreign policy analysis can illuminate this facet of geopolitics, as it has shown that even in authoritarian contexts policies can be contested domestically.

Traditional geopolitics in the 1960s and 1970s was influenced by the structural frame set by the systemic variable of bipolarity during the Cold War. The key point is that ideological and power structures had the upper hand in geopolitics in South America. Geopolitics in Latin America was thus reduced to Great Power politics management by the United States and the Soviet Union in developing regions. For instance, the dissemination of anticommunism of the United States was key for the development of the national security doctrines in Latin America (Cohen 2009; Child 1979; Kelly 1997).

Further, an overemphasis on border delimitations in the analysis of old geopolitics research may have influenced the lack of interest in geo-economic issues. While economic issues were present in existing studies of old geopolitics, they were nested in studies of disputes over territorial and maritime boundaries without being distinguished from the study of sovereignty issues. For instance, the maritime treaties signed by Chile, Ecuador, and Peru in 1952 and 1954 were not exclusively driven by the need to delimit sea borders. Rather, economic strategic reasons were fundamental for the signing of these accords, to exert economic control over those 200 miles, to protect national fishing industries, and to allow for national economic development as a whole and in specific geographical zones that could serve as economic poles. A reexamination of old geopolitics topics in Latin America could lead to new understandings of concepts and to new perspectives of research, such as the observed but neglected intrinsic relationship between security and development in this period.

New geopolitics in Latin America

The main factors influencing geopolitical thinking in Latin America since the 1990s can be summarized as follows: (1) Latin America has become geopolitically less marginalized in international politics, and as a side effect the geopolitical perspective and room to maneuver have become broader; (2) geopolitical thinking has moved from the national to the regional or continental level, giving room to geopolitics of integration; (3) as part of this development South America has been constructed as a new geopolitical region, with Brazil as its major regional power; (4) the United States has lost centrality in South America, and extra-hemispheric actors such as China have become major players in Latin America; (5) as a result of global power shifts and the new international positioning of Latin America both the Pacific Basin and the South Atlantic (including the Antarctic) have become more important in Latin American geopolitical narratives; and (6) natural resources have again turned out to be a central issue in Latin American geopolitical thinking, leading to their increasing securitization and to new territorial disputes, especially related to maritime borders.

Latin America as a geopolitical region

In the 1980s Latin America was a "zone of marginality within the world power structure," (Cohen 2009) and at the end of the 1990s geopolitical analysis still emphasized the peripheral role of South America in international politics (Kelly 1997: 183). A decade later, however, South America had become an independent geopolitical region with balanced ties to the United States, Europe, and Asia (Cohen 2009). There are now new interregional dialogue forums with Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Arab countries. As a result of this, Latin American countries have been able to take more independent positions – for example, as temporary members of the UN Security Council (as during the Iraq crisis of 2003 or with regard to Iran's nuclear program). Brazil is a constitutive part of the networks of rising powers like IBSA and BRICS. Mexico (1994) and Chile (2000) entered into the OECD, and Colombia is currently in the accession process. Moreover, Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina are part of the G-20 of leading economies. States from this region are also important partners in global governance forums such as climate summits; in this way, Latin American countries are increasingly shaping the global architecture.

Geopolitics of integration

The early 1990s represented a period of change characterized by a sequence of different regional cooperation projects. These projects were manifestations of divergent geo-economic and geopolitical interests. Historically there has been always an overlap of intraregional cooperation (Latin America) and inter-American or hemispheric cooperation (Hurrell 1992). In the 1990s the idea of the Americas as a political and economic geographical space was in vogue. The Americas project was a reaction to contemporary major global geopolitical and geo-economic trends, such as the fear of an exclusive regionalism in other parts of the world. Mexico, the United States, and Canada consolidated a common geo-economic space with the creation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994. At the same time, the U.S. government promoted the idea of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) stretching from Alaska to Tierra del Fuego; the preparatory process started with the first Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994, although it never materialized. For a short time, the so-called Washington Consensus unified the region behind the same economic model. Moreover, Canada joined the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1990 to convert it into a genuinely all-encompassing continental organization of the Americas.

Liberalization within the framework of the Washington Consensus facilitated economic cooperation projects in Latin America under the premise of open regionalism. Observers identified a positive transformation from geopolitics to geo-economics (Kacowicz 2000). However, the dream of creating the (neo)liberal Americas under benign U.S. leadership lasted only a decade; it crumbled in the face of other harsh geopolitical and geo-economic realities. The EU started to court Latin America, organizing regular European–Latin American and Caribbean summits (since 1998) – giving way to a competitive summitry (Legler 2013) – and offering free trade agreements to the Latin American countries. While extra-hemispheric actors have won influence, the United States has lost economic and political leverage in Latin America. Russia is displaying a renewed geostrategic interest in Latin America (Blank 2009). Other important newcomers in the region are China and, on a minor scale, India (Malamud and García 2014). From the U.S. perspective, the 'dragon in the backyard' is perceived as a threat to the geopolitical position of the United States in the Western Hemisphere. In fact, in some South American countries China has already displaced the United States as their most important trading partner.

In the shadow of declining U.S. influence and perceiving the FTAA as a threat to its own geostrategic interests, Brazil has been developing its own geopolitical project in South America. At the same time, in Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez (in office 1999–2013) used oil revenues to create his own Latin American networks from which to project power such as ALBA, Petrocaribe, and Petroamerica. The idea of trade in the Americas via the FTAA lost its appeal for a number of South American countries, illustrated by the fate of the Summit of the Americas (Legler 2013). The 2005 Mar del Plata summit completely buried the hemispheric project of the FTAA. In contrast to the previous three summits, there was no reference made to hemispheric integration in the summit declaration. Moreover, the next two summits in Port of Spain (2009) and Cartagena (2012) ended without the approval of a common declaration, revealing a rift between the United States and many Latin American governments.

The end of the 'Americas project' illustrates that Latin America has become more independent and self-confident. Yet, it has also become more heterogeneous and segmented, both economically and politically. In fact, in Latin America there is a proliferation of regional and subregional organizations that serve to delineate and consolidate geographic (sub)regions. While these organizations give the geographic regions an identity (or 'actorness'), as a social construct they can also lead to a drifting apart of countries belonging to different regional organizations. Thus, when Mexico, the United States, and Canada signed NAFTA, Mexico became more dependent on the United States and more separated from the rest of Latin America, especially South America.

Unlike Latin America, South America is a relatively new social construct – its creation was strongly influenced by Brazilian foreign policy strategies designed to demarcate that country's sphere of influence (Spektor 2010; Malamud 2012). Regional cooperation and integration was made possible by Argentine-Brazilian rapprochement, seen as a geopolitical turning point (Kelly 1997). The move from geopolitical rivalry to cooperation was fundamental for the creation of MERCOSUR in 1991 and the emergence of a security community in the Southern Cone (including Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay) (Hurrell 1998).

From a geopolitical perspective, Brazil can be seen as a 'core state' that facilitates the deepening of integration (Rivarola 2011). As early as the 1990s, Brazil envisioned a free trade area focusing exclusively on South America (SAFTA), but it was not until 2000 that a first summit of South American presidents took place in Brasilia. Brazil also led the push to establish the South American Community of Nations (later renamed the Union of South American Nations, UNASUR) during the third presidential summit in Cuzco (Peru) in 2004, whose constitutive treaty was signed in 2008. UNASUR has since facilitated South America's becoming a political and economic entity with increasing international actorhood (Rivarola 2011). The creation of UNASUR is both a part of Brazil's strategy to consolidate a South American autonomy vis-à-vis the United States (Brands 2010) and an instrument for the integration – both physically and in terms of energy resources – of South America. Thus, the emergence of Brazil as a regional power with a global projection capacity has strengthened South America's role as an independent geopolitical region (Cohen 2009: 147).

The process of South American integration has been underpinned by a current of strategic thinking branded the 'geopolitics of integration,' which links geography, integration, and development thinking with the objective of creating and consolidating South America as a new continental geographic unit (Rivarola 2011). Moreover, the (re)construction of regions is also a topic of critical geopolitics (Preciado and Uc 2010), and it is linked to the idea of more 'geopolitical autonomy.'

From the beginning, the idea of expanding South America's physical and energy infrastructure was a central element of 'positive integration' in the region, as it encouraged political

consensus-building, promoted regional interdependencies, and increased cooperation in non-trade issues (Sanahuja 2012). Consequently, one of the first concrete results of the 2000 South American presidential summit was the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional South American Infrastructure (IIRSA), which was later integrated into the UNASUR structure. IIRSA is a geopolitical project constructing a new regional territorial space in order to strengthen the interdependence of the South American countries (Perrier Bruslé 2013).

The Pacific and South Atlantic as geopolitical markers

The economic promise and market projection into the Pacific Basin was already present in the traditional geopolitical thinking with regards to the Pacific Ocean. In these narratives the South American countries, which have a coastline on the Pacific, constituted a separate regional subsystem (Kelly 1997: 7–10, 30–31). However, for most of the 20th century Latin America's most important trading partner was the United States; second most important was Europe. So the 'Atlantic Triangle' was more important than the Pacific Basin. With the rise of Asian economies and especially China's upsurge in the 21st century the geo-economic parameters have changed, and the Pacific Rim (including the Western parts of the United States) have become more important.

As a manifestation of the emerging 'Pacific Consensus' – the movement in terms of trade and investment toward the Pacific geo-economic region (Vadell 2013) – three Latin American countries (Chile, Mexico, and Peru) became members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in the 1990s. Other countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Panama are also interested in joining the organization. Moreover, Chile and Mexico – as APEC members and having multiple FTAs with Asian states – have cast narratives of being gateways for trade between both regions (Wehner and Thies 2014).

In 2012, Chile, Colombia, Peru, and Mexico created the Pacific Alliance, a regional project that seeks to create a free trade zone between its members and make connections to Asian economies. Later, Panama and Costa Rica also applied for membership. However, this economic project had additional, significant political consequences, furthering the fragmentation of Latin American economic integration, as the Pacific Alliance became a counterweight to a more statist MERCOSUR and the anti-neoliberal ALBA project (Briceño-Ruiz 2014).

The idea to link the Atlantic and Pacific through bi-oceanic corridors – as part of the IIRSA project – is both a recognition of the growing importance of the Pacific Basin and a reaction of Brazil to this development. IIRSA is thus an instrument to counter the centrifugal forces of a Pacific and an Atlantic South America by strengthening the South American core.

Moreover, from a Brazilian viewpoint, the 'wider Atlantic' is of strategic importance (Alcaro and Alessandri 2013), wherein the South Atlantic has become an area of strong geopolitical and strategic competition (Lesser 2010). Brazil, which has by far the longest South Atlantic coastline (4,350 miles), believes this border is vulnerable – especially following the discoveries of large oil and gas deposits within the pre-salt layers of Brazil's continental shelf. Moreover, the Brazilian government is promoting a redefinition and extension of its continental shelf by way of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), which would expand Brazil's maritime space and exclusive economic zone.

More than 90 per cent of Brazilian trade is shipped via Atlantic sea routes, and the country has a major strategic interest related to the security of the main sea lines of communication (SLOCS) crossing the South Atlantic (Reis 2012) and any possible choke points therein. Of importance for sea transport (as mentioned in the 2012 *National Defense White Book*) are the 'Atlantic Gorge' between northeastern Brazilian and West Africa, the Strait of Magellan (as an

alternative to the Panama Canal, especially for large ships), and the Cape of Good Hope, which links the Southern Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, as an alternative to the Suez Canal. There is also growing attention being given to new, nontraditional security threats related to the South Atlantic, such as smuggling, the transatlantic drug trade (especially with West African countries), illegal immigration, environmental crimes, terrorism, and piracy.

In this context the Brazilian government has securitized the South Atlantic and clearly defined its position both in the 2008 *National Strategy of Defense* and in the 2012 *National Defense White Book*. In the middle of the first decade of the 2000s the Brazilian navy launched the 'Blue Amazon' campaign – a new geopolitical concept whose objective is to foster the idea that South Atlantic resources within Brazil's exclusive economic zone (an area equal to 52 per cent of the country's continental land mass) are of vital interest to all Brazilians. The securitization of the South Atlantic is in line with the strategy taken up by other regional powers in the world to give 'their' region a maritime perimeter (Abdenur and Marcondes 2014a). As a consequence, Brazil started a naval modernization program that included the construction of nuclear-powered submarines (in cooperation with France), vessels that are particularly suited to long-distance patrols in the South Atlantic.

For the Brazilian military, the South Atlantic is an area of power projection (Reis 2012), whereas the African coast is perceived as part of the Brazilian defensive perimeter. Since 2007, Brazil has revitalized the 'zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic' (ZOPACAS, following the Portuguese acronym) created by the UN General Assembly in 1986 as a multilateral negotiation mechanism between West African and South American countries. ZOPACAS (specially mentioned in the 2012 *National Defense White Book*) is comprised of three South American countries (Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay) and 21 African countries. ZOPACAS seeks to address regional issues without outside interference and to keep the South Atlantic out of geostrategic Great Power games (Kornegay 2013). The main concern is that NATO will expand its influence to the South Atlantic and establish new partnerships beyond the North Atlantic. From the Brazilian perspective there is also a critical appraisal of British postcolonial possessions – a string of islands stretching from Ascension Island to Saint Helena and Tristan da Cunha, ending in the Falkland/Malvinas Islands – and military bases in the South Atlantic (Costa 2012). From these islands positioned between Brazil and Africa it might be possible to control maritime transport and sea-lanes in the South Atlantic. Moreover, there is the challenge of territorial claims and power projection by the United Kingdom into the Antarctic (Reis 2012), where Brazil and especially Argentina and Chile have their own geopolitical interests and cooperation mechanisms (Gómez 2005). Since 1982 Brazil has run an Antarctic program with a research station and sees its Antarctic policy as a way to legitimize its status as a major international player (Abdenur and Neto 2014b).

Thus, the geopolitics of the South Atlantic is closely linked to the geopolitics of the Antarctic, which will continue to be a contested area. There is no prospect in the foreseeable future that Argentina will renounce its claim to sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands (the Falklands), especially if substantial oil and gas resources are found in the surrounding waters. The Malvinas issue has also been framed as a struggle against European colonial practices (Benwell and Dodds 2011) and has been raised in regional forums like UNASUR or the newly created Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

From the British perspective, the Falkland Islands are considered a 'strategic gateway' to both the Antarctic (the British Antarctic Territory) and the South Atlantic (Dodds 2012). The Falkland Islands, as well as the South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, are along with the British Antarctic Territory (the southern part of which was named Queen Elizabeth Land in 2012) all part of the British Overseas Territories. After the Falklands War (1982), the United

Kingdom increased its economic stakes and its military presence on the islands. In this context, the Mount Pleasant Airbase in East Falkland is of geostrategic importance, where around 1,300 members of personnel are stationed and which is linked by an air bridge to the U.S.-British airbase (Wideawake Airfield) on Ascension Island. The British government created an exclusive fishery zone and a fishing-licensing regime in the late 1980s, which altered the economic livelihood of the islanders. Moreover, it is expected that gas and oil resources will be found in the seabed around the islands, which increases the importance of these territorial possessions for the British government.

Natural resources: protection and power projection

The abundance of natural resources has always been an important element in Latin American development and underdevelopment, continually attracting the interest of foreign companies and countries. The region is a major participant in the global production and reserves of copper, silver, selenium, gold, zinc, manganese, tin, boron, antimony, nickel, molybdenum, bauxite, lead, iron ore, niobium, and lithium (CEPAL and UNASUR 2013). Further, Latin America also boasts a rich biodiversity, as well as important freshwater reserves.

Since the turn of the century, natural resources have again become an important geopolitical and geo-economic factor. Both Latin American politicians and scientists use the concept of geopolitics in relation to natural resources. The rising demand for minerals – especially from Asia – along with increasing prices has recently made Latin America wealthier and more independent, and it gives the region strategic leverage (Bruckmann 2011). Some governments claim the right to exploit natural resources for national development (critics speak of neo-extractivism) and take a negative view of international NGOs, which are perceived as instruments of foreign interests that seek to undermine national sovereignty (García 2012). Other governments use the earnings from natural resources for regional power projection (as in the case of Venezuelan oil) or as a foreign policy instrument (as in the case of the Bolivian refusal to sell natural gas to Chile). Natural resources may change the economic and political weight of a country, as in the case of Bolivia (which is rich in gas and lithium), or of Brazil (which is becoming a net exporter of oil).

In Latin America, natural resources are both an aspect of integration (including infrastructure projects) and of conflict over territories where resources were expected to exist. Already in the 1990s, maritime geopolitics changed, turning away from sea-lanes and choke points to fishing resources and exploitation – which made the maritime frontiers a major concern of South American geopolitics (Kelly 1997: 45). Moreover, the change in international maritime law (the aforementioned UNCLOS of 1982), the extension of maritime economic and environmental jurisdiction out to 200 miles, and the discovery and development of new technologies to exploit marine and seabed resources raised the salience of many territorial disputes (Domínguez et al. 2003) – which, in contrast to other ongoing border disputes, are not a legacy from colonial times but rather linked to the more recent interest in drawing or redrawing maritime borders.

As a consequence of their importance to national development, most Latin American countries have securitized their natural resources – such as energy, water, the Amazon rainforest (as in the Brazilian *National Strategy of Defense*), and agricultural land (to prevent 'land-grabbing'). Natural resources were, from the beginning, part of the agenda of UNASUR. It is significant that the creation of UNASUR was announced during the first South American energy summit, held in Isla Margarita (Venezuela) in 2007. There is a growing consensus within UNASUR that regional cooperation is also a means of protecting natural resources from

exploitation by external forces. Thus, the South American Defense Council assigns high priority to the safeguarding of biodiversity and strategic natural resources.

Conclusions

Latin America in general and South America in particular are fertile areas for neoclassical geopolitics. While geopolitical thinking no longer has the same prominence that it did during the era of military regimes in Latin America, it is still influential in the foreign and security policies of states in this region. While traditional geopolitics in the 1960s and 1970s was influenced by the structural frame set by the Cold War, new geopolitical thinking at first responded to the 'unipolar moment' and to the U.S. dominance regarding the Americas and the FTAA project in the 1990s, and later came to reflect the growing multipolarity and the waning of U.S. influence in the first decade of the 21st century. Territorial boundaries are still important in the relationships between Latin American states. However, new geopolitical narratives deal with border issues in a more nuanced way, as they are not an issue exclusive to security politics but are also of importance for geo-economic interests. In fact, maritime border conflicts have become more prominent in new geopolitics, because they are linked to economic interests such as the exploitation of natural resources. Geopolitical narratives have also become less nationalistic. For instance, Latin American and especially South American integration is now an integral part of geopolitical thinking. Traditional geopolitics was mainly limited to the continental space and its coastlines, whereas the horizon of geopolitical projections has become wider and even transregional in its new variant, as the inclusion of the South Atlantic and the Pacific Rim in geopolitical narratives demonstrates.

Geopolitical narratives construct links between geography and politics. Geopolitical analysis should unpack these narratives. In Latin America there is lack of critical geopolitical analysis. One may speculate that the lack of critical analysis of geopolitical discourses is related to their association with military thinking and a burdened past. However, geopolitical terms and narratives are also part of the vocabulary of analysts located on the left of the political spectrum in this region.

Most of the geopolitical writing is affirmative and follows a geographic determinism. However, certain geographical factors, such as whether a nation is landlocked or has a long coastline or a particular geographical endowment (such as prized resources), do not necessarily determine a specific foreign policy, as political actors still enjoy a high degree of latitude in making and advancing decisions and adopting geopolitical narratives to justify their policies.

This chapter's purpose was to present an overview of geopolitical thinking in Latin America that will hopefully inspire further research on geopolitical topics and narratives along the subsequently sketched-out thematic corridors. First, each country's geopolitical reality and narratives should be analyzed in order to compare their different historical trajectories. Second, a new geopolitical research agenda should also focus on the reasons why and when actors resort to geopolitical narratives and should study whether these are reactions to political crisis or whether they reflect an identity crisis over the foreign policy roles of a state. Third, further systematic research on geopolitics in Latin America should also consider the role of new geopolitical narratives as the result (or not) of a changing international status of states, as the case of Brazil indicates.

A future research agenda on geopolitics might also explore the reasons why geopolitical narratives are still so popular in Latin America. One aspect that should be dissected and analyzed surrounds the producers, propagators, and drivers of these narratives, as well as the existing types of audiences involved. Another course of investigation may focus on the mechanisms

of dissemination of geopolitical narratives. Further, there is an academic void with regard to the study of the consequences and outcomes of existing geopolitical discourses on the foreign policy and behavior of different states. While geopolitical narratives may instigate interstate conflicts in Latin America, they may also function as a way to promote regional cooperation and integration.

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