

## BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

# There Is No Map: International Relations in the Americas

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Reconceptualizing Security in the Americas in the Twenty-First Century.** Edited by Bruce M. Bagley, Jonathan D. Rosen, and Hanna S. Kassab. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015. Pp. xix + 368. \$49.99 paperback. ISBN: 9780739194874.

**Brazil in the World: The International Relations of a South American Giant.** By Sean W. Burges. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017. Pp. xi + 280. £30.00 paperback. ISBN: 9781526107404.

**U.S.-Venezuela Relations since the 1990s: Coping with Midlevel Security Threats.** By Javier Corrales and Carlos A. Romero. New York: Routledge, 2012. Pp. xii + 228. \$47.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780415895255.

**21st Century Democracy Promotion in the Americas: Standing Up for the Polity.** By Jorge Heine and Brigitte Weiffen. New York: Routledge, 2015. Pp. xii + 208. \$47.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780415626378.

**Aspirational Power: Brazil on the Long Road to Global Influence.** By David R. Mares and Harold A. Trinkunas. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016. Pp. x + 224. \$32.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780815727958.

**Precarious Paths to Freedom: The United States, Venezuela, and the Latin American Cold War.** By Aragorn Storm Miller. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016. Pp. xxi + 278. \$65.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780826356871.

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Over the last fifteen years, both the practice and study of International Relations (IR) in the Americas have seemingly been transformed. The United States, many have argued, no longer plays the hegemonic role of yesteryear, perhaps because its power has been hollowed, its attention pulled away, or its role challenged by rising Latin American and extra-hemispheric powers.<sup>1</sup> This was a dramatic change from the Cold War, where the possibility of US intervention was never far offstage and the United States amassed allies and isolated foes. It was an even more surprising turnaround from the immediate post-Cold War period, where US influence seemed uncontested, even as coercion (usually) faded into the background. The transformation started on September 11, 2001, when the US Secretary of State Colin Powell left Lima, where the American states had just signed the Inter-American Democratic Charter, to turn US diplomatic attention decisively away from Latin America and toward the Middle East. Within a few years, the bloody aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq demonstrated the limits of US military might while the 2008–2009 financial crisis exposed the vulnerabilities of US economic power. However, the US leadership role in the

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<sup>1</sup> Pía Riggirozzi and Diana Tussie, eds., *The Rise of Post-Hegemonic Regionalism: The Case of Latin America* (New York: Springer, 2012); Francisco de Santibañes, "An End to U.S. Hegemony? The Strategic Implications of China's Growing Presence in Latin America," *Comparative Strategy* 28, no. 1 (2009): 17–36.

Western Hemisphere was already shrinking. Brazil and Venezuela surged during the first decade of the twenty-first century, giving substance to old dreams of autonomy. To grasp these changes, old paradigms and concepts were deconstructed. Above all, the centrality and omnipotence of the United States, once a common feature of both establishment and revisionist accounts of IR in the Americas, was questioned.<sup>2</sup> Instead of a contest between well-defined, but opposed, powers or positions, as one might imagine the Cold War in the Americas to have been, the theme today seems to be uncertainty—or better put, complexity—without a unifying theory to give it order. The Americas are hegemonic no longer, but multipolar not yet.

A “post-hegemonic” current of IR scholarship on the Americas emerged in a buoyant period for Latin America, as did historical and IR reinterpretations that emphasized the agency of Latin American actions. Aided by a boom in commodities prices, governments across the region cared less about US resources, policy models, and admonitions. Today, however, US material capabilities have largely recovered from the 2008–2009 recession, and Latin America’s once-rising powers are struggling. Mired in crisis, Brazil’s effect on the region today is less about UNASUR, the now-moribund regional body it founded, than about Odebrecht and the transnational corruption it spawned. Venezuela-led regionalism is defunct. China provides an alternative option for trade and loans, but the economic and political effects of China’s clout are also seen with mounting scepticism. At the moment, there are no real contenders for regional leadership; despite that, the United States does not seem to be reclaiming its centrality. How, then, are we to understand this transformation?

The erosion of US centrality has not been primarily a question of substantial changes in relative material capabilities within the hemisphere. However, that decline was never just about macro-indicators of structural power or even particular cases where Latin American leaders bucked US preferences. Hegemony, more nuanced IR theorists note, is more than material primacy. It is “socially bestowed, not unilaterally possessed.”<sup>3</sup> Regional acceptance of US leadership was seriously, though unevenly, degraded during the George W. Bush presidency; Latin Americanists began discussing post-hegemonic regionalism even as many IR scholars were focused on a new wave of US empire. Even the popular Barack Obama and his tremendously well-regarded opening to Cuba made limited inroads. After Obama, of course, *le déluge*. US military and market might cannot offset what still seems like a fundamental shift.

These six books offer an excellent opportunity to reflect on how US power (and more importantly, leadership), long oriented the practice and understanding of international politics in the Americas during the Cold War and its aftermath across issues of security, democracy, and diplomacy. Before assessing these books and their place in the field, I want to suggest a metaphor. Even before the Second World War, the United States acted as the principal cartographer for the Western Hemisphere. It drew the most frequently referenced (though not only) maps that depicted the inter-American landscape: these were the desirable destinations; those were the areas to avoid (*cave! hic communistas!*). Its maps were drawn in broad strokes, and its representations of particular localities often lacked nuance, inspiring more than a few wrong turns. However, even those who disagreed with the depiction of the topography or chafed at their place in the US-drawn atlas found themselves arguing with reference to it. Though mapmaking requires power and technological clout, the United States was never able to convince, cajole, or coerce everyone. Latin American leaders sometimes denounced the map, other times they whispered in the cartographer’s ear to guide the pen toward an illustration more favorable to their interests.

Aragorn Storm Miller’s study of Cold War inter-American relations reflects a high point for the centrality of the US-led map.<sup>4</sup> Venezuela’s leaders, especially Rómulo Betancourt, agreed with the basic outlines, while Venezuelan and Cuban leftists sought to change them. In the five books with a contemporary focus, including two on Brazil and one on recent US-Venezuelan relations, the perception differs. In today’s hemispheric relations, there is no map that holds the authoritative place once claimed by US power and “socially bestowed” by many Latin American leaders. The United States’ cartography now draws a thick line on its southern border and imagines dangers beyond. Nor have others in the hemisphere convincingly taken up the pen. From the late 1990s, US and Venezuelan disputes undermined the US and Latin American elite

<sup>2</sup> For previous *LARR* reviews, see Christopher Darnton, “After Decentering: The Politics of Agency and Hegemony in Hemispheric Relations,” *Latin American Research Review* 48, no. 3 (2013): 231–239; Robert A. Pastor and Tom Long, “The Cold War and Its Aftermath in the Americas: The Search for a Synthetic Interpretation of U.S. Policy,” *Latin American Research Review* 45, no. 3 (2010): 261–273.

<sup>3</sup> Ian Clark, “How Hierarchical Can International Society Be?,” *International Relations* 23, no. 3 (2009): 464–480.

<sup>4</sup> Laurence Whitehead suggested “metanarratives” and cognitive maps as devices that structure understandings of regional IR. Laurence Whitehead, “Navigating in a Fog: Metanarrative in the Americas Today,” in *Which Way Latin America? Hemispheric Politics Meets Globalization*, edited by Andrew F. Cooper and Jorge Heine (New York: United Nations University Press, 2009), 27–49.

consensus of the early 1990s, as Javier Corrales and Carlos A. Romero show. For a decade, Venezuela drew a route in bright red, but the path attracted few countries and seems to have led nowhere. As explored in the books by Sean Burges and by David Mares and Harold Trinkunas, Brazilian leaders sought subtler, but perhaps more consequential, changes to the hemispheric map. President Lula pointed out the map's distortions: like the Mercator projection, the old US map exaggerated the North and shrank and marginalized the South—including Brazil itself—to an unjust degree. Brazil promised to reshape the map in part by zooming in on South America, but it was ambivalent about choosing destinations. All of this had momentous consequences for regional regimes on democracy, addressed by Jorge Heine and Brigitte Weiffen, and the paradigm for security conflict and cooperation, addressed in the volume edited by Bruce Bagley, Jonathan Rosen, and Hanna Kassab. This essay will first address the two books on Venezuela, then the two on Brazil, and finally the books on democracy and security, which provide an overarching view of the Americas.

## Venezuela

Miller's *Precarious Paths to Freedom* retells the history of US-Venezuelan relations during the country's restoration and consolidation of pacted democracy in the long 1960s. Venezuela emerged from dictatorship in a context where the United States increasingly feared that repressive, though friendly, regimes on the right would provoke the rise of unfriendly revolutions from the left. Given its oil wealth, size, and strategic location, Venezuela was an important locus of this struggle. The transformative President Betancourt developed a certain cachet as a democratic, center-left modernizer who opposed regional extremes while cultivating close US ties. For the United States, Miller argues, Venezuela represented a relative success, given the continuation of a moderate, stable, and democratic polity. This was not for want of challenges—from the reactionary, authoritarian right early on and from domestic leftists with Cuban support thereafter. Together, the United States and Venezuela steered a course between despotism and revolution.

Miller highlights continuities in Venezuelan and US policy from the late 1950s through the mid-1970s. President Dwight Eisenhower's late-term change of heart regarding democracy and dictatorship, in Miller's view, coincided with Betancourt's rise as "the leading visionary of Latin American societal reform and democratization" (14). The most genial pairing existed between Betancourt and President John F. Kennedy, and by mid-1961, the "Caracas-Washington axis would be the key force for moderate democratic capitalism" (34). This axis turned first against the right in the person of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo. By 1962, it turned against the leftist regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba and his guerrilla acolytes across the region (94). Both left and right took aim at Betancourt. Trujillo nearly succeeded in his 1960 attempt to assassinate the Venezuelan leader with a car bomb, while Castro provided material and moral support to Venezuelan guerilla movements throughout the 1960s. Despite Miller's argument that the countries steered a course between the extremes, there seems little doubt that both (and especially Washington) were more willing to sit alongside rightist authoritarians than leftist revolutionaries as the decade went on. This involved a great deal of military force and repression—though less in Venezuela than in Bolivia during the same years.<sup>5</sup> Miller argues that the "forces of political moderation" stopped the rise of extremist interventionism in Venezuela, though this was, in practice, as dependent on military aid as on economic modernization. Though this was even clearer under Betancourt's and Kennedy's successors, the trend was set by 1962.

Like much recent historical work on US-Latin American relations during the Cold War,<sup>6</sup> the book highlights Latin American agency. Miller gives a clear and cogent account of the development of the bilateral relationship; later chapters focus on a blow-by-blow account of Venezuelan battles with armed leftists. Miller's claim that the bilateral relationship held unique significance (xv, 34, 209) and that Venezuela was a "hinge" (xx) of greater importance than its neighbors in the region's Cold War is ultimately difficult to assess given the book's lack of comparison and limited regional scope. One could make a case that Bolivia, as a top aid recipient, played that role, that many aspects of Venezuela's importance and indeed of the bilateral relationship were similar to those of Colombia, or that all were dwarfed by Brazil. Ultimately, the matter of "Venezuelan exceptionalism" (218) is less important than what Miller's contribution indicates about how the United States deployed its power to set parameters on the inter-American Cold War's map, even as Venezuelan leaders—often more concerned with local obstacles—played a central role drawing their own path. Miller's book provides insightful background on the foreign relations of the Punto Fijo regime, which

<sup>5</sup> Thomas C. Field Jr., *From Development to Dictatorship: Bolivia and the Alliance for Progress in the Kennedy Era* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Tanya Harmer, *Allende's Chile and the Inter-American Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014); Hal Brands, *Latin America's Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

set the limits for Venezuela's democratic transition. It is a reminder of the historically friendly relations the country's leaders long favored with the United States. As such, it makes for an intriguing pairing with scholarship on the post-1998 turn in US-Venezuelan relations.

Any recent book on contemporary Brazil or Venezuela faces a difficult challenge in maintaining relevance as events outpace the publishing process. Despite having been written before the current conjuncture, these three books on Venezuela and Brazil provide fascinating insights into the current crises and the prospects for rejuvenation. Corrales and Romero's *U.S.-Venezuela Relations since the 1990s* was published years before the economic and political situation degraded so seriously; indeed, it was written while President Hugo Chávez was ill but still alive. Even so, this work of qualitative political science holds numerous insights into the Venezuelan situation and the country's foreign relations.

The authors link their bilateral case with a broader body of IR theory and concepts, labelling US-Venezuelan relations a "midlevel security threat," a category that receives little attention from IR theory. While *chavista* foreign policy had certain continuities with its predecessors, the relationship with the United States represented substantial change. During the Chávez era, the United States and Venezuela were each a frequent irritant to the other, but not one large enough to merit a complete rupture of relations—particularly one that would disrupt mutually advantageous oil flows. Oil played a "double role" in facilitating Venezuela's challenge to the United States while also curtailing both sides' hostility. The authors clearly saw the oil sector's rotting roots that led to today's fiscal crisis. They also pointed out that while "oil thus allow[ed] Chávez to operate in a sort of middle zone" (65) with the United States, the Bolivarian government had grown more asymmetrically dependent given the failure to substantially diversify Venezuela's markets or enhance the autonomous technological capabilities of the state oil company, *Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A.*, better known as PDVSA. Meanwhile shifts in US production and importation patterns made Venezuelan oil less important.

The authors ascribe the causes of Venezuelan foreign policy less to structural factors than to ideological dynamics. Yes, Venezuela's oil wealth and size has encouraged an activist foreign policy in the past. However, in 1998, there was little that determined change of direction. The collapse of the country's traditional political parties facilitated Chávez's rise but did not necessarily augur a shift in foreign relations. Venezuelan public opinion and historical trends favored moderate, pragmatic cooperation with the United States. The shift away from cooperation predated the 2002 coup against Chávez, making clear that while Washington's welcome of the coup exacerbated tensions, tensions were already growing on both sides. *Chavista* foreign policy is sustained not by mass support but because it animates a strident sector of the base. Bilateral acrimony is increased by Venezuelan attempts to win allies elsewhere: promoting the rise of the left in Latin America and making common cause with other "outcast regimes," thus growing the "in group" (167–172).

US policy was also driven by domestic politics, as well as what might be optimistically called foreign-policy learning. As the authors document, US policy and levels of attention varied over time, though not necessarily in correlation to any material threat posed by greater arms purchases or by the tenor of Venezuelan rhetoric. Initially, the US response to Chávez's emergence in 1998 was "less alarmist" (43); between 2001 and 2003, there was an escalating pattern of recriminations. The authors describe U.S. policy from 2003 to 2007 as "imitative soft balancing" (though balancing seems a poor conceptual fit for the actions of the larger power). Tit-for-tat responses by US officials like Roger Noriega increased Chávez's prestige. In late 2007, the United States shifted to "speak softly, sanction softly" and adopted more restrained policies (56–58), even as Venezuela's rhetorical broadsides continued and arms spending increased. Despite that, the countries did not settle into a relationship of substantive accommodation or cooperation (as Venezuela and Colombia briefly managed under President Juan Manuel Santos). As Corrales and Romero note, even speaking and sanctioning softly implied monitoring (of drug-trafficking and of governance) that Venezuela rejected as paternalistic. The United States garnered limited regional support in its opposition to Chávez. In short, Venezuela and its regional allies rejected the outlines of the deteriorating US map.

As an account of the United States and Venezuela's sometimes pathological bilateral relationship and the domestic bases of Venezuelan foreign policy, the book provides an exceptional analysis. In its development of IR theory, the text is less agile. The chapters tend to combine well-known IR concepts with labels of the authors' invention. In chapter 2, for example, they describe Chávez's foreign policy as "soft balancing" plus their own concept of "social power diplomacy." While the use of "eclectic explanations" has some pedigree in IR, it is not always clear how the authors' concepts are combined and weighted, or what aspects of the diverse theories are supported or contradicted. For the most part, though, this does not take away from the incisive empirical analysis.



## Brazil

Brazil's long run of stability and economic growth generated great enthusiasm as the South American giant seemed to carve out greater international autonomy for itself and its South American neighbors. Today the gap between those aspirations and the capabilities underlying them is all too clear. Understanding how that gap developed requires attention to two factors. First, what drove the sky-high ambitions of Brazilian strategy? Second, just how close were those capabilities to being able to deliver on Brazilian goals? The books join a wave of IR scholarship on emerging powers and fit neatly with a growing focus on Latin American goals and agency in international policies where the United States is secondary to domestic, regional, and global influences.

*Aspirational Power*, by Mares and Trinkunas, and *Brazil in the World*, by Burges, might be seen as competing for the same readership; however, the two make an effective pair. Mares and Trinkunas offer a sweeping account of recent Brazilian aspirations, assessed through an "emerging power" framework. They ask whether a country far from centers of geopolitical competition can rise with a primarily "soft power" strategy. Burges, on the other hand, delves into Brazilian policymaking in a richly detailed account of the country's recent approach to the world. Burges's narrative explores the goals and processes of Brazilian foreign policy from a domestic political base, and he gives great attention to informal norms and practices, which he terms *o jeito brasileiro*, or the Brazilian way of getting things done. Mares and Trinkunas offer case studies of Brazilian successes and failures in particular thematic domains (international security, economy, and global commons); Burges examines how Brazil has developed its international relationships with regard to different regions of the world. Burges also looks at trade, the promotion of national enterprises, and security, with an emphasis on the domestic and bureaucratic determinants of foreign policy. The two excellent books add up to a thorough picture of Brazilian foreign policy.

Mares and Trinkunas's *Aspirational Power* puts Brazil's recent—and now apparently frustrated—emergence in the context of its previous attempts to claim the mantle of great-power status. These occurred in the aftermath of the two world wars and during the 1970s. Status, as recent IR work on the topic has pointed out, is not just a question of amassing material power.<sup>7</sup> It is a social indicator of group membership and relative position within groups, and as such is conferred by peers. However, material resources—and expectations about future resources—make status claims credible. Military power allows even a declining economy like Russia to retain influence. Lacking hard power, or reasons to develop it, Brazil has seen its global status dissipate when its domestic model stumbles. Brazil's pretensions were frustrated by incumbent great powers' rejection of its bids for permanent seats at the League of Nations and the United Nations Security Council. In the 1970s, when its military governments were rebuffed despite the economic growth of the "Brazilian miracle," they shifted strategies to address a new peer group in the global South. But Brazil's model had limited appeal, especially after the 1980s debt crisis shattered its foundations.

Compared to the previous three attempts, Brazil's most recent rise was a sustained one, lasting from the late 1990s through 2012. It was premised foremost on domestic political and economic stability, and secondly on leadership that projected the image of Brazilian success as larger than life. During its first two attempts to rise during the twentieth century, Brazil struggled for membership and ranking in existing international groups. Recently, Brazil became critical of aspects of the current international order but showed few signs of wanting to overthrow it.

Both books underscore the similarities between the foreign policies of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002) and Workers Party (PT) successors President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2011) and President Dilma Rousseff (2011–2016). The books agree that Lula had the "most ambitious" global agenda (Mares and Trinkunas, 67), which benefited from greater capabilities and the emergence of other powers with some overlapping interests, in addition to Lula's inimitable charisma. Burges notes that Rousseff's curtailed policies resulted from both shrinking resources and her more restrained global ambitions. Mares and Trinkunas argue that Brazil failed to develop the "right combination of capabilities" to sustain its influence across the board. It has been more influential in issues concerning global commons, and especially in models of poverty reduction and public health, but it has been ineffectual in advancing security cooperation. They view Brazil's erstwhile promotion of "responsibility while protecting" especially sceptically (105). Brazil's once-trumpeted national champion companies were never unproblematic as mechanisms for extending

<sup>7</sup> T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Brazilian power, the books concur, even if one could not foresee just how far the tentacles of Brazilian official and private-sector corruption would reach.

The two books adopt somewhat different perspectives on Brazilian goals. Burges argues that Brazilian leaders did not seek power over other states but were focused on “influencing a deeper and more profound type of power, an effort which seeks to embed Brazilian interests in the very fabric of the regional and international system” (241). Foreign policies to advance these goals often emerged from domestic politics. Because the voting public pays scant attention to foreign policy, domestic factors are often overlooked. However, underneath the surface, foreign policy has been converted from the province of somewhat insulated experts in the Foreign Ministry to a contest involving several national agencies, assertive presidents, and economic heavyweights. For Burges, domestic economic development remained at the heart of Brazilian foreign policymaking through the country’s rise. *Aspirational Powers’s* focus on “emergence” is more status-based. Brazil achieved objectives in some policy areas, but its global strategy ultimately failed. Domestic and regional constraints make a hard-power rise unsustainable, but Brazil’s soft-power strategy relied on the international appeal of domestic success. Mares and Trinkunas argue that Brazil would prefer greater autonomy and “thin institutions” of global governance, even if these produce fewer global public goods (168). In contrast, Burges sees global multilateral structures that are more biased against Brazil. The two accounts are not miles apart, however, with Mares and Trinkunas referring to “soft revisionism” and Burges to Brazil’s “revisionist structural game.” As Burges says, the goal has often been “to shift some of the frames of reference” of the international system, “albeit with a Southern orientation that preferably puts Brazil near the centre of attention” (3). The “Southern orientation” of Brazilian cartography has, without a doubt, receded with the end of PT governance and the all-consuming crisis of corruption, public distrust, and painful recession.

## Democracy and Security

Perhaps nowhere is the absence of a shared map more noticeable than in the terrains of security and democracy. While never uncontested, the very meaning of the two concepts in the Americas has been thrown wide open in both politics and scholarship. Fragmentation of leadership has led to a fragmented agenda. These books seek to make sense of these contested fields. In a slim but insightful book, Heine and Weiffen illustrate the rise and partial decline of consensus on defining, promoting, and—especially—protecting democracy in the Americas. They briefly but systematically examine inter-American responses to threats to democracy since the 2001 Inter-American Democratic Charter took effect. While there has been progress since the Cold War—where a with-us-or-against-us ethos sometimes defined the map more than democratic practice—it is hard to feel optimism at the course of the last decade and a half. They conclude that “the defense of democracy regime, if not in tatters, has been seriously weakened by the broader tearing of the fabric of the pan-American idea” since 2000 (165), with blame falling both on inconsistent US support of democracy and the emergence of regional organizations more dedicated to preserving ideologically aligned incumbents than strengthening institutions of national and international accountability. The authors helpfully draw on IR and political science literatures on fragile democracies.

The authors separate democracy promotion from its cousin, democracy preservation. For them, democracy *promotion* involves tamer measures of institutional support with the acquiescence of the host state as opposed to the virulent, regime-change variety often associated with the term. They therefore can conclude that “the defense of democracy is costlier and more difficult to achieve because it requires high levels of coordination among an organization’s member states” on affairs typically considered internal affairs (19). Certainly they are right to point out the concrete difficulties of regional democracy protection regimes—deciding what constitutes a violation, what defects are most serious, and what measures should be taken in response, let alone the political problems of getting a majority of incumbents to act against another still powerful homologue. As they note, the “original rationale” for the Inter-American Democratic Charter (IADC) was the “protection of sitting executives to ensure their political survival” (63), making the instrument less useful when executives run roughshod over domestic institutions.

Chapter 4 creates a typology of acute threats to democracy, employing a two-by-two matrix of ambiguous/unambiguous and endogenous/exogenous threats. While this is helpful for distinguishing the 2009 Honduras coup from the rapid impeachment of Paraguayan president Fernando Lugo, the authors acknowledge that it misses gradual democratic decline. This mismatch is unfortunate, as those are precisely the cases where the democracy protection regime has struggled most. Regional responses to acute crises have usually lasted only until the next election, even when they are followed by long and disastrous descents (97). The book’s conclusion about the state of democracy protection in the Americas is not optimistic. Though the authors recommend some sensible revisions to the IADC, they pragmatically note that, in the current climate,

reforms of the IADC are unlikely to produce a stronger text. What matters most is political will (150–151), and given the responses to corruption scandals of incumbents from Mexico to Guatemala to Brazil, the appetite for international accountability seems limited. This is not helped by the Trump administration's proclaimed indifference to democracy and hostility to multilateral diplomatic solutions.

*Reconceptualizing Security*, a project with University of Miami roots, brings together seventeen chapters on organized crime, drug trafficking, environmental challenges, and shared health issues, as well as several country case studies. The volume contains several excellent chapters, notably a synthesis of the Colombian conflict by Adam Isacson, an analysis of organized crime by Juan Carlos Garzón Vergara, and a discussion of public health by Sherri Porcelain. Isacson's chapter would be useful reading in a survey Latin American politics course. Barnett Koven and Cynthia McClintock provide a similarly useful and tightly written overview of the evolution of Peru's Shining Path from ideological insurgency to regional drug player. Garzón Vergara illustrates how the transformed criminal landscape, in which mega-cartels have been partially replaced by small, local networks, may not pose the obvious threat to central states that past cartels did but may be just as pernicious for citizen security. Small groups have expanded from trafficking to local, predatory crimes like extortion and kidnapping. Along these lines, Sebastián Cutrona examines the drug business in Argentina, detailing the factors driving high homicide rates in the city of Rosario.

However, the empirical chapters at the book's core are not well matched with the framing chapters. The introduction and conclusion seem to propose the book rather than synthesizing the promised reconceptualization of security. An historical overview of US-Latin American relations confuses instead of clarifies the terms and context of the debate, while making no reference to either new historical scholarship of the type described above or to classic texts on inter-American relations. Broader engagement with that scholarship would have cast doubt on vast overgeneralizations such as that "truly, the states of Latin America, as documented, have been dominated by their northern neighbor" (13) and that "the power wielded by the United States was unequivocal; the idea of the Monroe Doctrine dictated policy" (19). The proposed theoretical framework, drawing on IR's Copenhagen School theory of securitization, is disconnected from later chapters. Where the introductory chapters promise a normative effort of "desecuritizing," the framing employed reinforces the securitization of health, environment, drug trafficking, crime, and energy. These framing chapters claim that the books makes "one cogent point: that security is no longer limited to realism; it transcends the state focus" (325). However, in criticizing the literature for ignoring nonstate actors, the book cites studies from 1983 and 1991; security studies has evolved in the last quarter century and now gives great attention to the very actors and issues the editors claim are ignored.

## Conclusion

Taken together, these books illustrate an international environment where cooperation is becoming more important, not less. At the same time, the minimal consensus needed to facilitate that cooperation seems to have vanished. This is not just a matter of declining US power and leadership. Brazil's economic and political crises underscore that while it remains a central actor, it also struggles to spur regional responses. This includes pressing issues on its very borders—namely the breakdown of order in Venezuela and its myriad consequences. In an outmoded conception of the Americas as the sphere of influence of a hegemonic and almost omnipotent United States, these problems would fall on the northern power to solve. However, Miller's book, along with work by a generation of new scholars on US-Latin America relations, emphasizes that US power was never ubiquitous, geographically even, nor "unequivocal." The books on contemporary IR in the Americas underscores the point that while the United States retains material preponderance, its hemispheric leadership is diminished and contested.

In the immediate post-Cold War period, the salience of US coercion was reduced, but US power was present in its ability to structure hemispheric institutions and shape the terms of debate. Latin America had wiggle room, agency, and even autonomy, but for decades, inter-American debates were framed with reference (supportive or not) to the US map. Does the Western Hemisphere need a map, or what Laurence Whitehead called a "metanarrative"? Old US maps often proved deleterious, while Latin American pressure and even opposition sometimes pushed the United States toward better framings, as Miller might note. Given those injustices, it is tempting to cast the atlas aside, celebrate its demise, and oppose future mapmaking. The United States retains primacy in the Americas; it can bring direct pressure to bear and maintains substantial structural power.<sup>8</sup> However, during the last fifteen years, this incumbent power has not produced a convincing map. That the United States still looms large gives many a reason to oppose

<sup>8</sup> Tom Long, "The United States and Latin America: The Overstated Decline of a Superpower," *The Latin Americanist* 60, no. 4 (2016): 497–524.

any joint hemispheric maps. But could a new map be more pluralistic in its conception? The emergence of cogent, decentered debates about IR in the Americas suggests the possibility. A more cooperative process of cartography would facilitate joint responses across different domains, but at the moment, there is little effort to establish agreed parameters of hemispheric politics. Ambitious Brazilian and Venezuelan efforts failed to launch; regional organizations are unable to foster mapmaking efforts, with or without the United States. Today's inter-American landscape is instead marked by myriad obstacles to security and governance, not wholly new but more prominent and interwoven, and a plethora of serpentine paths that promise to overcome the region's shared challenges.

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