

# POLICY BRIEF

## REGIONAL SECURITY DETERMINANTS: LATAM and CHINA

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### POLICY STATEMENT

Regional security frameworks have been present in the last decades in both Asia-Pacific and Latin America (LATAM) regions, but it seems that their motivators are pretty different - and we can think on some of those essential conjecture determinants. In this regard, current security threats in the Asia Pacific are more geopolitically associated than the Latin American challenges, which are governed by domestic instabilities, border security, and transnational crime issues.

Although an expressive part of the challenges lies in problems such as illegal flows of drugs and arms, people trafficking, or institutional degradation, the absence of particular interest in the LATAM region from the regional powers opened space for other interests, concurrence, and access to other funding mechanisms that can indirectly affect the current demands for the regional security.

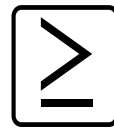
### BACKGROUND

Regional security was built in the Hemisphere with the Americas as part of the Inter-American Defense Board foundational decisions, one of them which divided the Americas Maritime Areas into 4: Pacific North and South, Atlantic North and South. Even though the framework was built to address regional security as part of the collective security framework based on The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance (1947), also called the Rio Treaty, the current challenges associated with the maintenance of the security of the region states are more connected to transnational and hybrid threats.

Major power competition within the LATAM region is about the most efficient mechanisms of interdependence that allow states to enhance their global power due to commerce strength and political influence. After years of North-South aid programs and funding, Latin American countries faced a broader ischeme, guided by South-South cooperation. Conversely, due to new ways to engaging, regional integration dispersed into bilateral, small multilateral agreements, overlapping or non-territorial regimes of cooperation.

On the other side, US regional programs had been someway unsuccessful regarding the Hemispheric project. Distanced from the original veils of the OAS Inter-American System, the United States had to deal with the failure of the commercial integration process and the subsequential political crisis in many of the Latin American democracies, from corruption to institutional and electoral fragilities.

Bilateral agreements such as the simplification of commercial flows are too young and diminished, compared to the various disagreements around the Central America migrants' flows, Venezuela government, or the Nicaragua channel.



Food security is under the priorities of China, and Latin American countries had been progressively contributing to this demand. After the COVID-19 pandemic, China is a diligent partner, from which the vaccines, health protection and care goods came before to many of the LATAM countries. Towards the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), 19 LATAM countries are already part of an intensive program to reach various sectors. The BRI, also called OBOR, drove through territorial boundaries and maritime routes via economic opportunities. Within the BRI maritime engagement platform, LATAM countries were part of an integration program in which benefits could overcome barriers present at the multilateral level, with lower chances do thrive. Funding and infrastructure were the leading offers that turned China into the most important commercial partner in Latin America in recent years.

## FINDINGS

Those pieces of evidence can show the regional security picture in Latin America:

- (1) Non-traditional security issues are composed of various types of crime, progressively inter-related, as the distance between security and defense becomes shorter. This typology includes the characteristics of crime and their relations to power structures that combine money and embedment within state institutional frameworks.
- (2) Domains of insecurity are related to territorial and maritime areas, which certain groups occupy. The virtual domain activities interfere both outside of the general routes of information exchange and within them.
- (3) Insecurities derived from crime-related networks within the LATAM countries are marked by an expressive arm trafficking, which is central to regional security and stability. Alternative power manifestations in the region are guaranteed by possessing "small arms," armed hierarchical processes, and power legacies. Without addressing these as social and economic-related problems, there will not be an efficient security regime for the region.

## CONCLUSIONS

To deal with those challenges, triangulation may be a way to enhance interdependency, with different scopes of proximity, from traditional territorial to artificially created identities. The BRICS regime, the CPLP (Portuguese Language Countries), ZOPACS South Atlantic Regime, Mercosur, or the Pacific Alliance were also ways to triangulate states' possibilities of cooperation, which lead to prominent ties. Indeed, investments may overcome original political barriers, traditional regimes, or security frameworks, where triangulation may not be a dispute; instead, it may be a way to escape from the disputes. Still, regarding the LATAM region, it is more suitable to consider the silk curtain as not a regime building but a way to triangulate economic influence, finally making the routes for other collaborative platforms. As it occurs in the Asia Pacific schemes, LATAM countries may be better prepared for their security and regional challenges if infrastructure and economic funding are guaranteed.

## SUGGESTIONS

- US President Joe Biden duty first 100 days indicates what he, as the Vice-President of Obama had stated: the Latin American region matters, especially drug traffic and corruption combatting. However, at the same time, formal security ties must be accompanied by a multistakeholder approach and a complex net of engagements, including financial and social ones.
- Contributions from this type of directive may offer more integrated vigilance systems, including trying to overcome 5G infrastructure developments in the region by the Chinese, which can leverage competition for the influence in the region.
- Alternatively, the list of opportunities that the Chinese offer to the LATAM region includes recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. Furthermore, that is one of the reasons why security regimes will less likely go deeper without the economic and social variables consideration.
- Security is progressively interlaced with opportunities and investments, such as ports or roads infrastructure and tech transfer. It is, though, more probable that old regimes will not cover demands for security throughout the LATAM region borders without taking into account the availability of resources to enhance and promote prosperity.

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