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Historical Antecedents and Post-WWII Regionalism in the Americas

By TOM LONG*

Introduction

After the Second World War disrupted global and regional security orders, new U.S.-led regional security arrangements emerged with varying institutional forms. The multilateral security institutions that took shape in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization contrasted with the bilateral pacts that connected the United States and its Asian allies.¹

Multilateral security and political institutions also emerged in the Western Hemisphere after the war—particularly the Rio Treaty and Organization of American States.

However, debates about the institutional forms of postwar regional security orders have overlooked this contemporaneous case. This is more than an empirical oversight.

Theoretical frameworks that emphasize external threat, burden-sharing, and shared identity as jointly necessary for the emergence of multilateral regional security institutions do not explain the inter-American case.

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¹ Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002.

The post-WWII inter-American system centered on a collective defense treaty after 1947 and a strengthened, multi-purpose multilateral organization after 1948. These regional institutions were shaped by power asymmetries, but they also ensconced norms of sovereign equality and nonintervention. At the time of their creation, most Latin American leaders saw them as way to gain greater voice through multilateral decision-making and to create institutional and legal constraints on U.S. unilateralism. Historical and IR scholarship largely treats postwar inter-American institutions as a continuation of hegemonic or imperial leadership. Our empirical examination contests that interpretation and uncovers two important aspects of the period. First, the continuation (indeed, expansion) of inter-American institutions was far from certain given disagreements among U.S. policymakers, who variously favored new global arrangements, a renewed inter-American system, or the preservation of unilateral prerogative. Secondly, the new inter-American system was not a U.S. imposition. Instead, crucial support and impetus for multilateral inter-American security institutions originated with Latin Americans who wanted to expand, build upon, and repurpose prewar regional institutions in the context of a nascent global order. Though U.S. power and interventionism figured among Latin American concerns, they also sought to institutionalize engagement, voice opportunities, restraint, and rules-based order with the United States and one another. The postwar multilateral security architecture emerged as a grand bargain that institutionalized and extended U.S. influence while recognizing Latin American demands.

This case does not conform to prominent explanations for the emergence of multilateral regional security institutions. Drawing on multinational archival evidence and an

historical institutionalist framework, we show how *shared historical antecedents of regionalism* shaped the emergence of multilateral security institutions. In the Americas, these included a legacy of Pan-American cooperation, designs, and practices, which were situated in juridical, normative, and diplomatic traditions partially shared among the United States and Latin American republics. In the North Atlantic, too, historical antecedents—wartime cooperation, inter-war negotiations, histories of arbitration, and earlier proposals for North Atlantic cooperation—prefigured NATO’s multilateral regional security institutions.² The paucity of such antecedents spanning the Pacific corresponds with the absence of security multilateralism, namely the failure of the Pacific Pact, and subsequent reliance on bilateralism.³ Our argument contributes to broader debates about international institutional creation and design by showing how, in critical junctures, antecedents shape actors’ choices and facilitate processes of layering and conversion. These conceptual tools, adapted from historical institutionalism, improve IR’s accounts of how history matters for the development of regional institutions by distinguishing antecedents from identity and illuminating processes of institutional creation and change. By employing underutilized Brazilian, Chilean, Colombian, and Mexican foreign ministry archives, alongside records from the Department of State and Truman Presidential Library, we make an empirical contribution on postwar inter-American relations, while extending emerging research on Latin American contributions to norms, practices, and institutions of global governance into the security realm.⁴

² Roberts 1997; Baylis 1993.

³ The Pacific Pact’s failure in 1949, as Press-Barnathan 2004 notes, offers a better synchronous comparison with NATO than SEATO.

⁴ For example, Helleiner 2014, discusses contributions to Bretton Woods; Finnemore and Jurkovich 2014 and Schulz 2017 discuss diplomatic contributions at The Hague; Sikkink 2014 and Long and Friedman

The article continues as follows. The next section outlines the debate over the emergence and divergent forms of postwar security orders. After showing that leading explanations provide little purchase on the inter-American case, we advance an alternative explanation based in historical institutionalism. Our case examines the formation of postwar inter-American security institutions in depth. We conclude with a brief comparison of the post-WWII cases to demonstrate how antecedents help explain institutional variation in U.S.-led security regionalism.

Orders and regions

Though the U.S.-led, post-World War II international order is often characterized as multilateral, substantial variation in regional security arrangements existed from the start. IR scholars offer numerous explanations for variations in institutional emergence and form. Supply-side explanations typically treat hegemons or “pivotal states” as security providers,⁵ which act for systemic reasons or due to the internationalist interests of governing coalitions.⁶ Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll point to the leading power’s capability, role, and orientation as determinants of regional order.⁷ Pedersen labels West German postwar strategies “cooperative hegemony,” emphasizing leading powers’ role in fostering regional orders.⁸ Conversely, explanations of the regional “demand side” focus on common external and domestic threats and negative security

2019 explore contributions to human rights and democracy protection regimes; Long 2018 discusses Latin America in debates on liberal international order.

⁵ For a recent overview, see Kacowicz and Press-Barnathan 2016, 300–306.

⁶ Solingen 1998.

⁷ Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll 2010.

⁸ Pedersen 2002 emphasizes a declining power’s incentives to build more cooperative rule. Ikenberry’s emphasis on attempts to create stable order at a moment of exceptional power is more fitting here. See also Hurrell 1995.

externalities.⁹ In comparative regionalism, Acharya and Johnston emphasize power distributions, cooperation problems, identity, and regime-type heterogeneity to explain distinctive regional institutional designs. Kahler and MacIntyre emphasize spillover and feedback effects in generating support from economic interests for regional integration.¹⁰

Within the literature on security regionalism, one prominent debate compares the emergence of multilateral security institutions in NATO with their absence in Asia.¹¹ However, the “Why is there no NATO in Asia?” debate has overlooked the inter-American experience during the same juncture.¹² From 1944-48, Western Hemisphere states conceived, negotiated, and implemented a collective security pact and multifaceted, multilateral organization. The contemporaneous inter-American case—slightly predating NATO—allows for a strong test of existing explanations for the emergence of multilateral security institutions.

Hemmer and Katzenstein effectively treat the emergence of multilateral security institutions as dichotomous: the North Atlantic developed multilateral security governance while Asia did not. Though North Atlantic and inter-American security arrangements differed in important respects, both regional systems fit prominent definitions of multilateralism, including the conceptualization employed by Hemmer and Katzenstein. For Keohane, multilateralism is essentially coordination among three or

⁹ Kacowicz and Press-Barnathan 2016, 300–306.

¹⁰ Acharya and Johnston 2007; Kahler and MacIntyre 2013.

¹¹ Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002; Press-Barnathan 2004; He and Feng 2011.

¹² Acharya 2005 notes that Latin America developed collective defense with the United States despite power disparities and legalistic norms of nonintervention, but does not explore the case.

more states.¹³ Ruggie invoked a “qualitative dimension” in which coordination occurs “on the basis of certain principles of ordering relations among those states.”¹⁴ For security multilateralism specifically, Ruggie emphasized “some expression or other of collective security or collective self-defense.”¹⁵ For both scholars, multilateral institutions can be global or regional in scope; Ruggie further stresses that principles of conduct apply generally among member-states. NATO and the inter-American system had important similarities, starting with their founding texts: the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance of 1947 (known as the Rio Treaty) and the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949. Both created regional collective security guarantees based on the principle that “an attack on one is an attack on all,” with mandatory mechanisms for multilateral consultation. Both drew juridical legitimacy from UN Charter Article 51 on regional collective defense, have mechanisms for referral to the UN Security Council, and specify the creation of an organization for executing these functions.¹⁶ These similarities contrast with the failed Pacific Pact and, later, SEATO, which lacked a collective defense clause and retained unilateral and bilateral decision-making.¹⁷ Though one might object that the United States was an extra-regional power in Asia and Europe while it was part of the Americas, Hemmer and Katzenstein (building on Ruggie) emphasize the mutability of regions and the construction of a “North Atlantic” region that included the United States and Canada. While the U.S. exercised longstanding predominance around the Caribbean, it is doubtful that its influence or interests were

¹³ Keohane 1990.

¹⁴ Ruggie 1992, 567.

¹⁵ Ruggie 1992, 566.

¹⁶ These are called “the Council” in the North Atlantic Treaty and the “Organ of Consultation” in the Rio Treaty, which preceded the creation of the OAS, and therefore refers provisionally to the Pan American Union’s Governing Board or meetings of Foreign Ministers.

¹⁷ Hemmer and Katzenstein, 578-79.

deeper in South America in the late 1940s than in Europe or Asia, where it had fought wars, held massive debts, and garrisoned hundreds of thousands of troops.

Still, the inter-American system and NATO emerged with important differences, which grew over time. In contrast to the North Atlantic Treaty, the Rio Treaty emphasizes peaceful resolution of disputes among signatories and explicitly considers the possibility of intraregional conflicts. It is more specific about decision-making procedures and juridical precedents, with implicit reference to nonintervention and sovereign equality.¹⁸ More important than initial textual differences was how the arrangements evolved in their first years. Following hemisphere-wide consultation in 1945, the American states approved a collective security compact in 1947, which was complemented the following year by a reinvigorated regional body, the Organization of American States (OAS). The OAS was created to oversee a range of functions beyond defense—quite different than the North Atlantic Council—and it functioned through contentious voting instead of consensus and unanimity.¹⁹ Inter-American military coordination—centered on the Inter-American Defense Board, a wartime holdover—was far less centralized than in Europe.²⁰ Proposals for an integrated command structure faltered. In contrast, NATO evolved greater military command integration and centralization than was first envisioned, spurred by the Soviet nuclear test, Berlin blockade, and the Korean War. Functioning on a permanent basis after mid-1950, the North Atlantic Council coordinated larger resource and troop commitments; postwar military aid in the

¹⁸ These terms do not appear in the treaty text, but are prominent in contemporaneous inter-American agreements.

¹⁹ The text of the Rio Treaty is available at <https://www.oas.org/juridico/english/treaties/b-29.html>; the North Atlantic Treaty is available at https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm.

²⁰ Rabe 1974, 133.

Americas was minimal and bilateral.²¹ NATO developed into an operationalized military alliance with a centralized headquarters; the Rio Treaty did not.

What explains the variation in institutional forms emerging from the postwar juncture?

In comparing NATO and Asia, Hemmer and Katzenstein discount several U.S.-centric “universal and indeterminate explanations.” Ruggie argued that multilateralism is how U.S. leaders enacted a particularly *American* hegemony,²² but this cannot account for multilateralism’s failure to emerge in Asia. Though congruent with multilateralism in the Americas, the explanation fails against the details of the case.²³ Explanations concerning U.S. beliefs, Eisenhower’s New Look strategy, and, alternatively, neighbors’ fears of resurgent enemies are all “underdetermined.” Nor do they explain the Americas. Instead, Hemmer and Katzenstein advance an “eclectic explanation” focused on “power, threats, and identity.” Their framework remains especially useful for examining the broader literature on the emergence of regional security orders,²⁴ because it captures liberal arguments about institutional efficiency, realist arguments about responses to threats, and constructivist arguments about identity.

Their first condition concerns the presence of cooperative great powers who help shoulder security burdens: the United States shares authority if it expects lower costs.

Similarly, Press-Barnathan hypothesizes that multilateralism is more likely if power disparities between the U.S. and regional partners are moderate and “power disparities

²¹ On NATO, see Krieger 1992, 121; Schwabe 1992; Cook 1989, 222-250. Cook emphasizes French and British pressures in May-July 1950 for spurring a permanent NATO council. On arms transfers in Latin America, see Rabe 1974.

²² Ruggie, 593.

²³ Tillapaugh 1978; Trask 1977; Garcia 2012.

²⁴ Krahnmann 2003 highlights “balance-of-power theory, security regimes and security communities” as the three leading schools of thought on regional security.

among the regional partners are low.”²⁵ Though neither Europe nor Asia could offset costs immediately after the war, U.S. policymakers viewed several European states as once-and-future great powers. In Asia, this applied only to Japan. As such, great-power status helps account for U.S. multilateralism in Europe versus bilateralism in Asia.²⁶ However, U.S. policymakers doubted any Latin American country would be a great power. U.S. pessimism about Latin America’s great-power potential and burden-sharing capacity contrasts with the creation of inter-American multilateral security institutions. Press-Barnathan’s emphasis on regional *commitment* to cooperation, as opposed to material capacity, fares better against the inter-American case—though it is ambiguous in Asia given divided preferences between Japan and its neighbors.²⁷

The second group of explanations focuses on external threats. Realist accounts often argue that “a regional power assumes the burden of defending the area from external security threats.”²⁸ According to Hemmer and Katzenstein, higher and qualitatively different threat perceptions in Europe help explain why multilateralism emerged there and not in Asia. (Counterintuitively, a war in Asia [Korea] spurred deeper multilateralism in NATO’s first years, while failing to do so in Asia itself.²⁹) Even in Europe, however, there is no “direct line from a certain type of threat (cross-border Soviet attack) to a particular institutional form (multilateralism).”³⁰ He and Feng add that U.S. policymakers respond to higher levels of threat—loss in prospect theory terms—by accepting greater

²⁵ Press-Barnathan 29-30.

²⁶ Hemmer and Katzenstein, 584

²⁷ Press-Barnathan, esp. 29-31.

²⁸ Frazier and Stewart-Ingersoll, 742.

²⁹ Hemmer and Katzenstein, 585-86; Cook 1989.

³⁰ Hemmer and Katzenstein, 585.

risk via multilateralism.³¹ Again, the inter-American case complicates these explanations. U.S. policymakers perceived little threat from, within, or to Latin America in the immediate postwar period. Though threats in the Americas in 1945-1948 rank as the lowest of the three cases, multilateral security institutions were constructed—defying He and Feng’s explanation. U.S. leaders desired Latin American cooperation—particularly access to raw materials and strategic territory—in any future conflict, but this goal responded to recent wartime experiences, not to perceptions of an imminent threat to the region.

The third group of explanations emphasizes “perceptions of collective identity,” in Hemmer and Katzenstein’s terms. U.S. and European policymakers understood themselves as comprising a common Western, Christian civilization, which meant “the Europeans could be trusted with the additional power a multilateral institution would give them.”³² U.S. prejudice against Asians sank attempts to replicate NATO there.³³ Southeast Asia was seen first through a colonial, and then, a Cold War lens. Strategic rationales were offered for the failed Pacific Pact and the 1954 creation of SEATO, but civilizational affinities were conspicuous by their absence.

However, identity offers little purchase for explaining postwar inter-American multilateral security institutions. Racial biases characterized U.S. views of Latin Americans, as they did for U.S. views of Asians. Although Latin American statesmen, often descendants of Europeans, used language of “Christian civilization,” many U.S. policymakers viewed Latin Americans as racially inferior and childlike, a view infamously encapsulated in

³¹ He and Feng 2011.

³² Hemmer and Katzenstein, 588.

³³ *Ibid.*, 575.

George Kennan's 1950 report on his Latin America tour.³⁴ These views were not universal in the State Department; Kennan was not a Latin Americanist and many in that division had greater appreciation of the countries to which they were assigned. Racial and cultural prejudice contrasted with a "Western Hemisphere idea" that identified the Americas as a "new world" of republics that interacted according to different principles.³⁵ However, condescending paternalism dominated U.S. policymaking from Theodore Roosevelt's corollary to the Monroe Doctrine through the Wilsonian emphasis on "teaching" Latin Americans proper political culture, justifying numerous U.S. interventions in the circum-Caribbean in the decades before Franklin Roosevelt's election.³⁶ Shedding light on the effects of this racial prejudice is a core facet of two decades of "revisionist synthesis" in historical scholarship on U.S.-Latin American relations.³⁷ It surfaces in archival records in the postwar period, too. Latin Americans were rarely treated as full members of the Western civilization that, for U.S. policymakers, united the North Atlantic.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

The causes highlighted in the "no NATO" debate were strikingly absent in the Americas (Table 1), making it puzzling that multilateral security institutions emerged there. Instead, we argue, *shared historical antecedents of regionalism* played a key role in the

³⁴ Kennan wrote: "It seems to me unlikely that there could be any other region of the earth in which nature and human behavior could have combined to produce a more unhappy and hopeless background for the conduct of human life than in Latin America." He added, "the extensive intermarriage of all these elements [Spaniards, indigenous, and African slaves], produced other unfortunate results which seemed to have weighed scarcely less heavily on the chances for human progress."

³⁵ Scarfi and Tillman 2016; Whitaker 1965.

³⁶ Schoultz 1998; McPherson 2014.

³⁷ Gilderhus 1992; Schoultz 1998, 2018.

creation of these new institutions. Alone, such antecedents are not a sufficient cause; instead, they are one productive cause in the context of a permissive critical juncture, as discussed below. Despite those antecedents, there was real uncertainty about institutional outcomes: U.S. commitment to inter-American institutions was in doubt from Dumbarton Oaks to the San Francisco conference and beyond. From this contingent critical juncture, a collective defense treaty and multilateral organization emerged. External threat, burden sharing, and collective identity were not clear drivers of U.S. policy, nor were they the crucial rationale offered by Latin Americans, illustrating how antecedents favor multilateral institutions even in the absence of other commonly emphasized conditions. Diplomats and policymakers returned to the importance of prewar antecedents to build multilateral institutions.

Historical trajectories and regional orders

One study of institutional gestation in the Americas concludes, “Legacies matter.”³⁸ Indeed, many accounts of regional institutional formation—beyond the Americas, the postwar juncture, and security—acknowledge the importance of history, but in idiosyncratic ways that sometimes overlap with identity. For example, comparative regionalists Acharya and Johnston mention two types of historical influence on institutional design: historical memory and path dependence.³⁹ Both are forces for continuity. Historical memory is closely related to identity, evinced in suggestions of an “ASEAN way,” that favors certain institutional forms.⁴⁰ To these, one could add

³⁸ Dominguez 2007, 127.

³⁹ Acharya and Johnston 2007, 21.

⁴⁰ Khong and Nesadurai 2007.

gradualism and accretion, in which institutional structures inexorably build over time.

Kahler and MacIntyre compare this to “crude diagrams of the ascent of man.”⁴¹

Building on recent developments in historical institutionalism (HI), our explanation advances existing treatments of history’s role in the formation of regional institutions by showing how certain antecedents gain causal weight in critical junctures. HI’s approach to explanation bridges IR’s salient rationalist-constructivist paradigmatic divide,⁴² which is also reflected in Hemmer and Katzenstein’s eclectic explanation. Our more precise treatment of history allows us to distinguish historical antecedents from regional identities, as emphasized by Hemmer and Katzenstein and IR constructivists generally. In the inter-American case, antecedents do not co-vary with identity and can be analyzed separately.

HI was long known for an analytical model in which relative stasis is punctuated by brief periods of rapid institutional change.⁴³ Scholarship initially emphasized mechanisms—especially path dependence⁴⁴—that favor institutional continuity after such critical junctures. In an HI account of European security institutions, Menon notes this division between exogenous shocks in creation moments followed by long periods of stability.⁴⁵ Though HI has developed explanations for gradual and incremental change,⁴⁶ its accounts of rapid change continue to emphasize exogenous shocks and critical junctures.⁴⁷ Critical junctures are defined by Capoccia and Kelemen as “relatively short

⁴¹ Kahler and MacIntyre 2013.

⁴² Rixen, Viola, and Zürn 2016, 199-200; Fioretos 2011.

⁴³ Fioretos 2017.

⁴⁴ Thelen 387-9; Fioretos, 373-83.

⁴⁵ Menon 2011, 87-88.

⁴⁶ Hacker, Pierson, and Thelen 2015; Rixen, Viola, and Zürn 2016; Moschella and Tsingou 2013.

⁴⁷ Pierson 2004; Thelen 1999; Pierson 2000, 476–477; Rixen, Viola, and Zürn 2016, 11.

periods of time during which there is a substantially heightened probability that agents' choices will affect the outcome of interest."⁴⁸ Though there is debate in HI about the nature of critical junctures and how to identify them, we adopt this contingency-focused approach because it allows scholars to examine "near misses," of institutional creation or reform, counterfactuals, and choices not taken.⁴⁹ Most famously, Ikenberry argued that following major wars, the combination of state capacities and interests shapes postwar orders.⁵⁰ The post-WWII period is such a critical juncture, allowing for the comparison of three divergent regional outcomes. Divergent institutional forms are possible because in such critical junctures, loosened structural constraints "increase the causal power of agency."⁵¹

Secondly, we integrate Slater and Simmons' concept of "critical antecedents" with HI mechanisms for incremental change that have largely been examined outside critical junctures.⁵² Critical antecedents are "factors or conditions preceding a critical juncture that combine with causal forces during a critical juncture to produce long-term divergence in outcomes."⁵³ While Slater and Simmons argue these antecedents may affect causal mechanisms, they do not specify the types of mechanisms one might expect. Elsewhere, however, HI describes several mechanisms for incremental change—drift, conversion, layering, and exhaustion.⁵⁴ We argue that similar

⁴⁸ Capoccia and Kelemen 2007, 348.

⁴⁹ Capoccia 2015.

⁵⁰ Especially Ikenberry 2001.

⁵¹ Soifer 2012, 1575.

⁵² Slater and Simmons 2010 emphasize divergence instead of contingency in identifying critical junctures. We bridge this disagreement by bringing in the (constrained) agency of actors in contingent critical junctures. Antecedents (*a la* Slater and Simmons) condition the range of choices, shape preferences, and work through causal mechanisms, but room for agency remains in how actors relate to antecedents.

⁵³ Slater and Simmons 2010, 889.

⁵⁴ Mahoney and Thelen 2010; Fioretos 2011 emphasizes, as do we, layering and conversion for international institutions.

mechanisms, especially layering and conversion, can function within critical junctures, causally connecting antecedents to later institutional development. Layering describes a process in which “new elements are attached to existing institutions and so gradually change their status and structure;” conversion refers to a transformation of existing institutions for new purposes.⁵⁵ Slater and Simmons suggest antecedents can shape actors’ range of choices during critical junctures;⁵⁶ we agree and add that antecedents shape *mechanisms* within critical junctures as well. The creation of regional security institutions during the postwar critical juncture illustrates this. Systemic wars produce rare opportunities for major changes in international order.⁵⁷ Even then, new orders are not created *ex nihilo*. Bits may be novel, but diplomats and policymakers construct, through layering and conversion, new institutional structures atop shared antecedents. That said, antecedents do not all matter equally or produce multilateral outcomes in every critical juncture. As with HI generally, “individual causal factors normally must be analyzed as part of larger combinations,” with attention to contextual conditions and interactions of causal factors.⁵⁸ One can consider these factors in terms of “permissive” and “productive causes.”⁵⁹ The presence of permissive causes produces the contingency of a critical juncture, while productive causes lead to changes within that juncture. The emergence of any given multilateral institution will have multiple and

⁵⁵ Van der Heijden 2011; see also, Thelen 2004. Drift is less applicable because it involves relative institutional stasis as external conditions gradually change, creating a mismatch between institution and environment. Displacement emphasizes the removal of rules and their substitution; this certainly may occur but is best suited to examining dense institutional environments. For a summary, see Fioretos, Falletti, and Sheingate, 2016, 11.

⁵⁶ Slater and Simmons, 887.

⁵⁷ Ikenberry 2001.

⁵⁸ Thelen and Mahoney 2015, 7.

⁵⁹ Soifer 2012.

complex causes. The postwar Asian, inter-American and North Atlantic cases shared permissive conditions, but productive causes varied. Threat, burden-sharing, and common identity shaped NATO's creation but were not necessary conditions for security multilateralism everywhere. Building on Ikenberry, we emphasize the interaction of antecedents with preference compatibility among secondary states and the leading state. Going beyond interest-based accounts that stress the importance of positive feedback for expanding institutions while treating their origins as exogenous,⁶⁰ we offer a stronger account of institutional emergence by specifying permissive conditions and highlighting the interaction of antecedents with other productive causes. Fioretos notes, "external developments, including major crises, may cause groups in some countries to experience preference transformations over national designs if they do not value historic institutions highly, while in other countries the same events may serve to strengthen preferences for extant designs if groups value historic institutions." When actors value "historic institutions" during critical junctures, antecedents of regionalism make multilateral outcomes more likely; "antecedent conditions define the range of institutional alternatives available to decision makers [in a critical juncture] but do not determine the alternative chosen."⁶¹ As Moschella and Tsingou illustrate regarding the 2008-09 financial crisis, antecedents may favor less radical change in moments of crisis.⁶² In other cases, the permissive conditions of the critical juncture facilitate the consolidation of inchoate antecedent practices and designs. For that to happen, antecedents must exist and be valued by agents. The nature of the

⁶⁰ Kahler and Macintyre 2013, 13-16.

⁶¹ Capoccia 2015, 151, 169.

⁶² Moschella and Tsingou 2013.

antecedents matters for institutional form. We refer to antecedents that are *shared* and *of regionalism*. Shared antecedents include prior events, designs, and practices that involved a critical mass of the actors relevant to the critical juncture. These include incipient cooperation among these actors, such as efforts to ameliorate regional conflicts through treaties or mediation, creation of mechanisms for peaceful resolution or arbitration of disputes, joint actions to address transnational problems, and the creation of venues, organizations, or networks between and beyond state actors.

Our explanation can be tested against outcomes and processes. Strong “diagnostic evidence”⁶³ would connect the presence antecedents throughout a causal chain, from actors’ preferences through mechanisms (layering and conversion), to the emergence of multilateral institutions. Evidence should show that actors base claims and expectations on antecedents, which may be valued because they represent previous investments that constrain actors’ choices and because they shape perceptions of future costs and benefits; layering and converting antecedents should be justified as a more efficient and secure solution than starting anew. As is often true in process-tracing, the role of antecedents must be untangled from competing explanations against the case narrative.⁶⁴ If actors respond to new threats and a new distribution of capabilities with new designs—unconstrained by antecedents—this would support rationalist explanations linked to threat and institutional efficiency. If designs are more shaped by shared identities and the trust these foster than by antecedents of

⁶³ Bennett and Checkel 2014, 7

⁶⁴ George and Bennett 2005; Bennett and Checkel 2014, 6–9.

regionalism, this would support constructivist explanations. We turn to the inter-American case to explore this further.

The reformation of the inter-American system

Though NATO is considered the multilateral security institution par excellence, the 1947 Rio Treaty preceded it; in fact, the State Department cited the Rio Treaty as a model during NATO's creation.⁶⁵ The initial agreements impressed similar obligations upon their signatories, though NATO became more prominent and centralized, and received greater resources. Comparatively, IR scholarship gives little attention to inter-American multilateral security institutions. The prevailing historical treatment—drawn on U.S. sources and focused on U.S. decisions—emphasizes the solidification of U.S. dominance instead of institutional emergence and development.⁶⁶ Regarding the 1947 Rio Conference and 1948 Bogota Conference, Langley writes, “the United States generally got what it wanted; Latin Americans did not.”⁶⁷ Brazilian historian Gerson Moura concluded that the new regional order “was no more than the juridical and political framework for irreversible United States hegemony over the continent.”⁶⁸ Drawing on research in Brazilian, Chilean, Colombian, Mexican, and U.S. archives, we argue that these interpretations overstate U.S. dominance and read later Cold War trends backwards into the system's creation. Despite clear U.S. material primacy and some Cold War concerns, the multilateral security arrangements of the late 1940s

⁶⁵ Press-Barnathan 2004, 84; Cook 1989, 112, 131-32.

⁶⁶ Two important Brazilian studies touch on the topic: Garcia 2012; Moura 2013. For Mexican sources, see Torres 1979; Loaeza 2010, though use of Mexican archives is limited.

⁶⁷ Langley 2010, 167.

⁶⁸ Moura 218.

reflected, imperfectly, the goals of Latin American leaders who sought to expand and convert pre-war antecedents into multilateral institutions for a postwar world.

Antecedents of inter-American multilateralism

Inter-American postwar collective security was ensconced in a multilateral system centered on the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance and the Organization of American States. This system converted and was layered over prewar institutions and practices including the Pan American Union (PAU) and Pan American conferences. It drew on earlier norms and practices of Latin American international jurisprudence, sovereign equality and nonintervention, and inter-American consultation, as well as the region's global engagement at the 1907 Hague conference and the League of Nations.⁶⁹ U.S. support for greater Latin American participation at The Hague emerged in part from connections between U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root and his Latin American counterparts, who emphasized affinities as fellow republics with a shared dedication to advancing international law.⁷⁰ These antecedents emerged in the context of U.S. expansionism and Latin American ambivalence about U.S. power. In 1889, the United States established a precedent of semi-regular meetings of American foreign ministers and a commercial office in Washington, but interest was muted. As U.S. power became clear following the Spanish-American war, inter-American relations gained salience. In the early twentieth century, U.S. occupations and intervention sparked local resistance that enjoyed regional sympathies.⁷¹ Latin American diplomats sought prohibitions on intervention, an end to gunboat diplomacy, and recognition of

⁶⁹ Friedman and Long 2015, 338–343; Schulz 2017; McPherson and Wehrli 2015.

⁷⁰ Finnemore and Jurkovich 2014. On cooperation regarding international law, see Scarfi 2017.

⁷¹ McPherson 2014.

sovereign equality.⁷² Intellectuals including Cuban José Martí and Nicaraguan Rubén Darío rejected U.S. pretensions to leadership.⁷³ However, opposition was far from uniform, and many Latin Americans envisaged benefits of cooperation with a more restrained northern colossus. This tension shaped early regional practices, including eight Pan American Conferences between 1889 and 1938; the PAU; joint mediation of conflicts, including the “ABC mediation” between the U.S. and Mexico in 1914; the 1933 Anti-War treaty in South America; and influential inter-American legal networks.

Through incremental layering and conversion, the commercial office of the 1890s became a multifaceted international organization, the PAU; in 1923 the American states agreed to appoint permanent representatives to its governing board.⁷⁴ Despite strong U.S. influence, the PAU and conferences created customs of regional consultation. Through early 20th century Pan Americanism, “Latin American states sought to bind the United States while maintaining their own freedom of action.”⁷⁵ While always somewhat lax, institutions became more formal and multilateral over time. A 1933 study concluded that the PAU acted as “an independent international administrative organ of a more or less permanent character based on the principle of equality of American states.”⁷⁶ At Pan American summits, Latin American diplomats stridently questioned U.S. unilateralism, without renouncing the benefits of engagement. The summits drew U.S. presidential visits in 1928 and 1933 and spurred “binding mechanisms”⁷⁷ in the form of a non-intervention declaration, the crown jewel of FDR’s Good Neighbor Policy. Though

⁷² Friedman and Long 2015; Scarfi and Tillman 2016; Morgenfeld 2010; Scarfi 2017.

⁷³ Sheinin 2000, chaps 6, 7.

⁷⁴ Casey 1933, 447–453.

⁷⁵ Petersen and Schulz 2018, 112.

⁷⁶ Casey 456

⁷⁷ Ikenberry 2001, 40-43.

disparate and fragmentary, the Pan American system allowed Latin America to consult, push, pressure, and sometimes oppose the United States during the 1920s and 1930s. Though U.S. influence grew during the first decades of the 20th century, pre-WWII U.S. predominance is often overstated, geographically and temporally. In South America, it was contested by European powers and often resisted by larger South American republics. Europe, including the Axis powers, provided markets and military partners during the inter-war period. World War II's geostrategic and economic realities—curtailed trans-Atlantic shipping; U.S. overseas basing, including major deployments to northeast Brazil; and U.S. wartime expansion—increased U.S. influence at the expense of Europeans far beyond what World War I had done. Inter-American diplomacy reflected this. In 1940, diplomats concurred that an attack by a “non-American state” against the Americas “shall be considered as an act of aggression.”⁷⁸ Six weeks after the Pearl Harbor attack, the American ministers declared, “solidarity must be translated into facts.”⁷⁹ The conference veered into internal security with restrictions on Axis nationals and firms.⁸⁰ Latin American states were valuable supporters of Allied efforts. By late January 1942, most had broken relations with the Axis powers—with the important exceptions of Argentina and Chile. The region's most important roles were economic and geostrategic. Latin America supplied critical wartime commodities at controlled prices: food, oil, copper, tin, bauxite, rubber. U.S. bases on Latin American territory were crucial for moving troops and materiel, patrolling sea lanes, and hunting

⁷⁸ Declaration of the Havana Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, July 21-30, 1940, Avalon Project, Yale Law School.

⁷⁹ Declaration of the Rio de Janeiro Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the American Republics, January 15-28, 1942, Avalon Project.

⁸⁰ Friedman 2003.

German U-boats. Inter-American coordination occurred through meetings of foreign ministers, regular diplomatic consultation, and via the PAU. This included postwar planning from mid-1943.⁸¹ After the war, these antecedents favored multilateral security institutions, though they did not guarantee them.

The war also shaped domestic politics in many Latin America countries.

Democratization flowered, or at least repression diminished, from roughly 1944-1947.

As Latin American leaders shaped inter-American arrangements, they also responded to these internal pressures, including through a regional debate over squaring support for democratization with principles of sovereignty and nonintervention.⁸² By late 1947, traditional conservative and military elites were ascendant, while the left faced renewed repression. Democracy receded in several countries.⁸³ However, the pre-1947 center-left and the ensuing conservative wave both favored cooperation with the United States. Roosevelt's New Deal and Good Neighbor policies, alongside proclaimed Allied goals, resounded with Latin American democrats during the war and immediately afterwards. Anti-communist conservatives—especially influential militaries—also favored the United States. Latin American militaries had grown more invested in security regionalism through training and Lend-Lease transfers, creating expectations of further benefits.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Mexican Embassy in Peru to SRE, Consulta propuesta por Colombia a las naciones sudamericanas neutrales que han roto relaciones con Alemania y sus aliados, August 31, 1943, Folder III-632-2(2a), Archivo Histórico Genaro Estrada, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, Mexico (henceforth SRE-MEX); Harold B. Rogers, Western Hemisphere offered as model for postwar organization, May 3, 1943, *The Evening Star*.

⁸² Long and Friedman 2019.

⁸³ Bethell and Roxborough 1997.

⁸⁴ Leonard and Bratzel 2007.

Governments of different domestic stripes held similar inter-American security preferences, especially while global Cold War tensions remained a secondary concern.

From war to postwar: A critical juncture

The war upended global order, creating a critical juncture in which new arrangements quickly took shape. Postwar planning in the United States began seriously in 1943. Some Latin American governments began to formulate plans for international order by the end of that year.⁸⁵ At Bretton Woods, Latin American states pushed for developmentalist content that drew on New Deal and inter-American antecedents. Helleiner stresses how U.S.-Latin American cooperation in response to the Great Depression informed U.S. policymakers' views and plans for global institutions; earlier cooperation, including a frustrated initiative for a regional development bank, created space for Latin Americans to pursue their economic priorities.⁸⁶ In security and diplomacy, Latin Americans almost universally favored a strong postwar regional system embedded in international law. The U.S. government was divided about how to balance regional and global levels in the postwar order. Under Secretary Sumner Welles and Assistant Secretary Nelson Rockefeller favored regional multilateralism, though their position was weakened when Welles resigned was pushed out in late 1943, wounded by administration infighting and the threat of personal scandal. Special Assistant Leo Pasvolsky and Secretary of State Edward Stettinius advocated predominant global security arrangements. The U.S. debate pitted advocates the

⁸⁵ The Chilean Foreign Ministry, for example, formed a high-level planning group in 1943. See Comisión Nacional de Post Guerra, 1943, Fondo Histórico, ref. 2190, Chilean Foreign Ministry Archives.

⁸⁶ The charter for the bank was negotiated but stymied in the U.S. Congress due to financial sector and bureaucratic opposition. Helleiner 2014, 74-78.

Monroe Doctrine, in traditional or multilateralized form, against fears that an autonomous inter-American system would legitimate European imperial preferences and Soviet claims in Eastern Europe.

Under Pasvolsky's guidance, the Dumbarton Oaks plan, drafted with minimal consultation beyond Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States, threatened to obviate the inter-American system in favor of a dominant global body. The lack of consultation, and the plan itself, frustrated Latin Americans while demonstrating the value of a privileged, regional forum with the United States. The Brazilian ambassador, supported by Latin American counterparts, protested the violation of inter-American norms of consultation. Their demands spurred a series of briefings between Latin American diplomats and U.S. officials at Blair House. Shortly after the Dumbarton Oaks plan was circulated, Mexican Foreign Minister Ezequiel Padilla called for an international summit to consider how the new world organization envisioned at Dumbarton Oaks would affect "the economic unity of the [American] Continent and its contributions for a permanent peace in the world."⁸⁷ Padilla's call resounded with established practices for hemispheric diplomatic conferences, converting that antecedent into a voice opportunity for Latin Americans. The U.S. agreed to the meeting, but sought to delay "actual changes in the structure of the inter-American system ... [until] after the world security organization is more fully developed."⁸⁸ Still,

⁸⁷ Qtd. in Cavalcanti to the Minister, Declarações do Ministro E. Padilla en Havana, October 16, 1944, 32/3/1 Mexico Ofícios 1944, Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, Rio de Janeiro (henceforth AHIR); Flora Lewis, Padilla insinúa que habrá junta de cancilleres, *Excelsior*, October 16, 1944, 32/3/1 Mexico Ofícios 1944, AHIR.

⁸⁸ US Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, No. 2354, December 23, 1944, L1706 M35449, AHIR.

Latin Americans succeeded in scheduling the inter-American meeting before San Francisco to avoid a *fait accompli*.

Though seen as a pro-U.S. figure, Padilla emerged as a leading regionalist in the Mexico City and San Francisco conclaves. The Mexican response to the Dumbarton Oaks draft, sent on October 31, 1944, highlighted declarations from the Seventh and Eighth Inter-American Conferences and inter-American jurisprudence as a foundation for any future world order. No antecedent was more important than inter-American non-intervention, in which Latin America had invested much and from which it expected continuing benefits: “This principle, the cornerstone of the Inter-American System, deserves to be in the foreground among those which the New World can offer as a contribution of its own to the formation of the International Organization that is created.” Mexico sought to convert nonintervention from a negative guarantee to a positive principle of international organization. Mexico embedded its claims in the “same ideas” Roosevelt had praised earlier that month, seeking to entrap the United States in the president’s pro-regionalist rhetoric.⁸⁹ Both strategies would eventually bear fruit.

Brazil’s aspirations to a central, global role afflicted its policy on the conjunction of regional and global orders with some ambivalence. In mid-1944, Roosevelt considered Brazil for a permanent Security Council seat, largely to bolster geographic representativeness—but without consulting Brazil. Brazil harbored doubts about the Dumbarton Oaks plans, especially the proposed permanent-member veto. When Brazilian President Getúlio Vargas decided to pursue a permanent UNSC seat, the idea

⁸⁹ Department of Foreign Relations of Mexico, Opinion concerning the Dumbarton Oaks proposals for the creation of a general international organization, October 31, 1944, Harry N. Howard Papers, Box 5, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (henceforth HSTPL).

divided the Brazilian foreign ministry. Many senior diplomats were chastened by Brazil's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1926, when Germany was given permanent seat and Brazil was shunned. This shaped Brazilian preferences for a multilateral regional system with precedence over global arrangements that privileged great powers. Brazil's wartime Foreign Minister Oswaldo Aranha emphasized Brazil's privileged role as Pan-American champion and interlocutor between the U.S. and Spanish America in an autonomous inter-American system.⁹⁰

The inter-American conference convened at Chapultepec Castle in Mexico City in early 1945, with the goal of shaping the blueprints for world and regional institutions. U.S. preparations were spearheaded by Nelson Rockefeller and Joseph Grew, whose roles in antecedent Pan-American cooperation laid the foundation for a cross-national, pro-regional coalition.⁹¹ Brazil, Mexico, and most Latin American states emphasized preferences for a strong and relatively independent regional security system, layered over Pan-American institutions. In preparation for Chapultepec, Brazil's position was that "the Security Council of the future world organization will never intervene, except in the rarest exceptions, in our hemisphere. ... The decisions of the Security Council would be executed in the American continent by its own states."⁹² The Brazilian proposal converted principles of non-intervention to preserve the autonomy of the inter-American system. Non-intervention was central to what Ruggie called "principles of ordering relations" among states. Small states were great advocates, too: Uruguay

⁹⁰ Weis 2000, 135–142; Garcia 2012.

⁹¹ See State's favorable comments on Mexico's proposed agenda. US Embassy in Rio de Janeiro, January 6, 1945, L1706 M35449, AHIR; Nelson Rockefeller to Carlos Martins, letter, January 30, 1945, L1706 M35449, AHIR.

⁹² Pedro Leão Velloso, instructions to Brazilian delegates, February 5, 1945, L1707 M35454, AHIR.

argued that the regional agenda should include “a pact for mutual guarantee of political independence and territorial integrity of the American nations, complemented by the elements that exist in that sense in American Law and their due coordination with the system of world security.”⁹³ Antecedents shaped the range of choices in the postwar juncture and molded actors’ preferences. The great power-centrism of Dumbarton Oaks and Latin Americans’ uneven experiences with the League suggested that Latin Americans would have less influence on global decisions than at the regional level. Latin American proposals framed prewar regional antecedents as successes to build upon, linking arguments for regional precedence, nonintervention, and greater multilateralism.

Chapultepec: An Inter-American Highpoint

The meeting at Chapultepec from February 21-March 8, 1945 grew from Latin Americans’ concerns that the inter-American system was losing precedence as the postwar order took shape, in contrast with its growth during previous decades.⁹⁴ Latin Americans argued for a rejuvenated inter-American system characterized by greater prominence and multilateralism. Brazil argued, perhaps wishfully, that the Dumbarton Oaks draft “foresees and therefore gives prestige to regional understandings, of which none has the prestige, constancy, organic nature, or permanent juridical content of the Inter-American system.” The Brazilian proposal noted the Treaty of Versailles’ reference to the Monroe Doctrine and “implicitly this system.” In a concrete proposal for layering, Brazil argued that American countries should create a Permanent Inter-American

⁹³ Government of Uruguay, Memorandum, November 23, 1944, L1706 M35449, AHIR.

⁹⁴ Garcia 2012, 133.

Commission of foreign ministers to “oversee the good execution of the conventions, agreements, or treaties elaborated by various Pan-American conferences.” The Brazilians suggested building on and combining two existing institutions: Pan-American diplomatic meetings and the consultative Governing Board of the Pan American Union. Brazil’s proposed commission would have prerogative over inter-American matters, reducing UN influence and enhancing Latin American voice.⁹⁵ Speaking to assembled delegates, Brazilian Foreign Minister Pedro Leão Velloso stressed evolutionary progression of the inter-American “machinery,” which stood ready to help “safeguard the peace and security of the world” in cooperation with the United Nations, converting regional agreements into a multilateral component of global order.⁹⁶ Brazilian preferences for autonomous and multilateral regional security institutions were shaped by investments in past institutions and expectations of continued returns. Others shared this assessment. Latin American diplomats noted that the global system was an uncertain experiment—an allusion to the failed League of Nations—while the inter-American system was a bona fide success. Paraguay argued “that the Pan American system is so real and concrete that no American State could renounce its benefits, which have been achieved in over fifty years of joint efforts.”⁹⁷ Antecedent institutions had emerged gradually; now, Latin Americans argued, they should be transformed and expanded—not discarded in favor of new, uncertain global institutions.

⁹⁵ Proposta apresentada pela delegação Brasileira a Conferência Interamericana sobre Problemas da Guerra e da Paz, February 22, 1945, L1920 M36439-41, AHIR.

⁹⁶ Leão Velloso, draft of speech for Chapultepec, c. February 24, 1945, L1921 M36449, AHIR.

⁹⁷ Delegation of Paraguay, Summary of remarks presented by the Government of Paraguay on the Dumbarton Oaks Proposal, translation, February 27, 1945, Harry N. Howard Papers, Box 5, HSTPL.

The Act of Chapultepec, adopted by all American nations except Argentina on March 6, 1945,⁹⁸ enshrined principles that favored multilateralism: equality, non-intervention, and collective security. It also called for building on prior arrangements with a “treaty establishing procedures whereby such threats or acts may be met” by measures ranging from breaking diplomatic relations to economic sanctions to the “use of armed force to prevent or repeal aggression.”⁹⁹ Decisions would be taken through the existing PAU governing board, converting it into a political body and raising its profile. As the meeting adjourned, several Latin American states “declared expressly that the Pan-American system is compatible with the aims, purposes, and objectives of the Organization of the United Nations, and that, in consequence, it shall continue functioning autonomously.”¹⁰⁰ The foundations of postwar multilateral security institutions emerged at Chapultepec as the Axis threat waned and before concerns about a Soviet threat in the Americas emerged. Multilateralism did not hinge on U.S. expectations of great power status or shared burdens; references to identity were situated in antecedents of Pan-Americanism.

San Francisco: Regional visions in doubt

If Chapultepec demonstrated inter-American agreement, San Francisco illustrated the postwar juncture’s contingency. Latin Americans left Chapultepec believing the United States would continue and expand its commitments to diplomatic consultation, non-intervention, regional defense, and peaceful dispute settlement.¹⁰¹ The United States

⁹⁸ With the intercession of several Latin American governments, notably Brazil, the agreements were left open for Argentina to sign, which it did after the conference’s conclusion.

⁹⁹ Act of Chapultepec, 1945

¹⁰⁰ Delegations of Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and Peru, Joint draft amendment to Chapter XIII, Section C of the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals, May 6, 1945, Harry N. Howard Papers, Box 5, HSTPL.

¹⁰¹ “Preview at Mexico,” *The Economist*, April 14, 1945; Tillapaugh 1773, 184-185; Garcia 2012, 146-148.

expected strong Latin American support in San Francisco. The comity was quickly disrupted, first over Latin American insistence on including Argentina in San Francisco. Despite domestic discontent, the United States relented. More serious was the renewed clash over regional versus global predominance in security governance. U.S. advocates of global institutional preeminence dominated the San Francisco preparations.

Pasvolsky's plan granted UN dominance over regional bodies, with "the nations in the inter-American system obligated to seek permission and risk a veto before they could take any defensive action."¹⁰² Roosevelt's death and Secretary of State Cordell Hull's illness and resignation exacerbated the uncertainty.

The U.S. administration was divided over global versus regional security arrangements and whether the U.S. should multilateralize its commitments in the Western Hemisphere. Many U.S. defense figures wanted to preserve unilateral freedom of action. Secretary of War Henry Stimson complained: "the Dumbarton proposals have practically wiped out the unilateral character of the Monroe Doctrine and places our use of the Monroe Doctrine, in case of enforcement by arms, at the mercy of getting the assent of the Security Council to be created at San Francisco." Stimson recognized the weight of Pan-American antecedents, noting that agreements from "various conferences with South American Republics during the past twelve years" under the Good Neighbor Policy "put serious obstacles in the path of the [unilateral] exercise of the Monroe Doctrine."¹⁰³ Gen. George Marshall and Navy Secretary James Forrestal also favored

¹⁰² Tillapaugh 1978, 33.

¹⁰³ Henry L. Stimson Diaries, May 2, 1945, microfilm, HSTPL.

reinforcing U.S. unilateral prerogatives in Latin America.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately, U.S. attachment to the Monroe Doctrine provided impetus for a grand bargain with Latin America.

Pasvolsky countered that the UNSC veto preserved the Monroe Doctrine and U.S. unilateral rights, making a regional clause unnecessary. He rejected Latin American pressures for regional security multilateralism as inimical to global order: “If we open up the Dumbarton Oaks Proposals to allow for regional enforcement action on a collective basis, the world organization is finished.” Pasvolsky sought to escape such antecedents. Despite Chapultepec, the U.S. was “not now obligated permanently” by its regional commitments to Latin America.¹⁰⁵ The U.S. delegation worried that other American states could take actions under Chapultepec without U.S. approval. Stettinius agreed, saying “while recognizing the strategic importance of inter-American solidarity, we should not allow ourselves to be compelled to adopt a position contrary to our own view of national interest.”¹⁰⁶ Despite defense concerns, the global institutional advocates initially dominated.

However, antecedents shaped the preferences of other actors, who emphasized the perceived benefits of layering and converting the existing institutional architecture to more multilateral forms. Countering Pasvolsky, Latin Americans threatened a walkout from San Francisco to preserve the regional system; then, Latin American diplomats

¹⁰⁴ Stimson Diaries, May 10, 1945, HSTPL. Stimson’s views were discussed by the U.S. delegation in San Francisco the next day: “Secretary Stimson had requested that we try to obtain the right to move in this hemisphere free of the veto of the Security Council.” In FRUS, 1945, vol. 1, doc. 216. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v01/d216>

¹⁰⁵ Minutes of the Thirty-Second Meeting of the United States Delegation, Held at San Francisco, Monday, May 7, 1945, 6:18 p.m., FRUS 1945, vol. 1, doc. 217. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v01/d214>

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of the Thirty-Sixth Meeting of the United States Delegation, Held at San Francisco, Friday, May 11, 1945, 2:30 p.m. FRUS 1945, vol. 1, doc. 217. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v01/d222>

exploited U.S. divisions by appealing to advocates of Pan-American institutions.¹⁰⁷ Latin American diplomats contacted a bedridden Hull and Rockefeller, then pressed Sen. Arthur Vandenburg, a delegation member, for a reference to the Chapultepec accords in the San Francisco treaty.¹⁰⁸ Colombian Alberto Lleras Camargo and Cuba's formidable Ambassador Guillermo Belt countered Pasvolsky, demanding a public presidential declaration of support for the inter-American system as embodied in Chapultepec and for conferences to formalize antecedents of inter-American cooperation.¹⁰⁹ To bridge the divide, U.S. delegate Harold Stassen proposed a "collective self-defense" approach to link the global organization and regional pacts, formulated as an "inherent right of self-defense, either individual or collective." The response to Latin American pressure led to UN Article 51.¹¹⁰

Latin Americans sought to preserve and formalize hemispheric diplomatic consultation in a context where U.S. interests were suddenly global. Pro-regional U.S. diplomats also expected continued returns from inter-American cooperation. Ambassador Adolph Berle noted—and opposed—in October 1945 "one current of opinion which by and large would like to end the regional agreement which has served us well."¹¹¹ Inter-American "solidarity" had extended U.S. influence and dampened opposition. A memorandum to President Truman in late 1945 noted Latin American concerns that the new

¹⁰⁷ Tillapaugh, 38.

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of the Thirty-Ninth Meeting of the United States Delegation, Held at San Francisco, Tuesday, May 15, 1945, 9 a.m., FRUS 1945, vol 1, doc. 228. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v01/d228>

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Tillapaugh, 38; Minutes of the Forty-Eighth Meeting (Executive Session) of the United States Delegation, May 20, 1945, 12 Noon, FRUS 1945, vol 1., doc. 243. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v01/d243>

¹¹¹ Berle to State, October 4, 1945, FRUS 1945, vol. 9, doc. 107. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v09/d107>

administration, “[did] not realize that continental solidarity is essential from the political, human, and economic point of every country in the western hemisphere, including the United States.” However, solidarity was distinct from collective identity, which few U.S. policymakers shared. The same memorandum evinced condescending essentialism that casts doubts on a collective identity explanation. The diplomat said public statements “would be very welcome by the Latins. They are a touchy and emotional people who like to be catered to and patted on the back.”¹¹² The language, common in the period, echoed longstanding tropes in U.S. foreign policymaking about Latin American distinctiveness and inferiority. Certain ties of history bound the United States and Latin America, but for most in the U.S. foreign policy elite, race, religion and social development created distinct identities.

Collective security and the road to Rio

When the United States waffled on its regional commitments at San Francisco, Latin Americans pressured Truman for a conference to convert antecedent defense agreements into formal, multilateral institutions. This led, eventually, to the 1947 Rio Conference and Treaty. Later seen as the encapsulation of U.S. dominance, the Rio Treaty emerged from a Latin American diplomatic victory.

The Rio Conference was to be held shortly after San Francisco, but worsening U.S. relations with Argentina’s Juan Domingo Perón, including State Department attempts to sway Argentine elections by tying Perón to fascists, postponed the conference. Brazil initially endorsed the delay, as did the PAU, agreeing that Argentina had not met inter-

¹¹² Confidential Memorandum on Latin America, n.d. (late 1945), PSF Box 160, HSTPL.

American commitments and therefore could not join a conference based on them.¹¹³ Soon, Latin American ambassadors noted “rumors” that the U.S. wanted to drop the regional defense pact.¹¹⁴ By April 1946, Brazilians began highlighting “the just aspirations of the American Republics to conclude the Interamerican Treaty of Mutual Assistance in the briefest possible period and without fracturing continental unity.”¹¹⁵ During the delay, the U.S. military advocated a continental plan for weapons standardization and “for granting of military rights, facilities, etc. whenever military enforcement action was necessary”¹¹⁶—limited defense burden-sharing, in the U.S. military’s view—but many in Latin America and the State Department rejected arms spending as needless and dangerous.¹¹⁷ This rejection highlights the secondary importance of burden-sharing and the common perception of low external threats.

Brazil’s first draft of the Rio Treaty in September 1945 advanced a strong version of inter-American security multilateralism, making responsive measures largely obligatory and requiring signatories to facilitate and aid the passage of collective military forces.¹¹⁸ Brazilians argued against replicating the top-heavy UNSC in the Americas, as it would

¹¹³ Kesler 1985, 208. L.S. Bandeira (second secretary, Political Division), A projectado Conferência de Rio de Janeiro, November 20, 1946, L1796 M35817, AHIR; Alarico Silveira Junior and Barboza Carneiro to Sr. Chefe da Comissão de Organismos Internacionais, Conferência Interamericana para a Manutenção da Paz e da Segurança no Continente, January 21, 1947, L1845 M36046, AHIR.

¹¹⁴ Spruille Braden, November 9, 1945, FRUS 1945, vol 9, doc. 109. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v09/d109>

¹¹⁵ Declaração, n.d., but archived on April 20, 1946, L1796 M35817, AHIR.

¹¹⁶ Braden to Acheson, May 29, 1947, FRUS vol. 9, doc. 1. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v08/d1>

¹¹⁷ Lanoue 1978, 68–76.

¹¹⁸ Brazilian Foreign Ministry, Circular to American Diplomatic Missions, no. 122: Ante-projeto do Pacto Interamericano para a Manutenção da Paz e Segurança no Continente, September 6, 1945, L1796 M35817, AHIR.

be “contrary to the traditional bases of the Interamerican System.”¹¹⁹ Instead, Brazil favored broad-based multilateral institutions patterned after inter-American antecedents. Conversely, U.S. planning for Rio, initially chaired by Pasvolsky, emphasized that inter-American responses would be “executed subject to” the UNSC.¹²⁰ Article 51 had not ensured an autonomous regional security system.

With the meeting finally in sight, Brazil pressed to limit the agenda to a security treaty—with economic and other proposals delayed until the planned Bogota conference.¹²¹ One such proposal was Mexican Foreign Minister Jaime Torres Bodet’s call for an inter-American “constitutive charter” in April 1947. Torres Bodet noted the history of “the oldest regional body” and the need to modernize “a series of conventions and resolutions [that] can be difficult to consult and are at times of uncertain contractual value.”¹²² By the end of June, eighteen American republics expressed agreement on the need for a clearer, multilateral structure building on previous institutions.¹²³ Dispute resolution was paramount for Mexico, which sought to layer over existing arbitration practices to create security institutions to curtail inter-American aggression.¹²⁴ Torres Bodet told a U.S. audience the Rio Treaty would carry out “a noble tradition of

¹¹⁹ Alarico Silveira Junior and Barboza Carneiro to Sr. Chefe da Comissão de Organismos Internacionais, Conferência Interamericana para a Manutenção da Paz e da Segurança no Continente, January 21, 1947, L1845 M36046, AHIR.

¹²⁰ FRUS 1945, vol. 9, doc. 100. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945v09/d100>

¹²¹ Brazilian Embassy in Mexico, Relatório do Mês Político de Abril de 1947, May 15, 1947, 32/3/9 Mexico Ofícios 1947, AHIR.

¹²² Torres Bodet, press statement, April 15, 1947, Folder, Boletines y declaraciones IX Conferencia Internacional Americana, III-1053-1(2), SRE-MEX.

¹²³ SRE, press release, June 28, 1947, Folder, Boletines y declaraciones IX Conferencia Internacional Americana, III-1053-1(2), SRE-MEX.

¹²⁴ Torres Bodet, speech on opening of Rio Conference, August 15, 1947, III-1053-1(2), SRE-MEX.

continental solidarity and common defense of the American peoples ... as old as the independence of our Republics.”¹²⁵

Ultimately, the negotiation of the collective security agreement was rather smooth—in part because U.S. preferences had grown more compatible with what Latin Americans had advocated since 1944—greater regional autonomy. U.S.-Soviet competition played a role in changing U.S. preferences, but antecedents structured the range of available, mutually acceptable choices. By 1947, the U.S. had reduced its attachment to UNSC centrality and sought explicit inter-American commitments to “assist” in response to an attack, as opposed to just consultations.¹²⁶ An attack “imposes common obligations immediately,” the U.S. opined—a more expansive interpretation of Article 51.¹²⁷ The U.S. left the definition of “aggression” open to include “subversion or political attack,” in a nod to regional concerns about communism and wartime fears of “fifth column” fascists.¹²⁸ The U.S. concern in Latin America remained neo-fascism in the form of Argentina’s Perón more than Soviet-backed revolution. During 1947, Latin Americans highlighted communist threats more often than their U.S. counterparts.¹²⁹

Despite pre-conference concerns that “the treaty will not bind the United States without its consent,”¹³⁰ the United States accepted a binding two-thirds vote in the event of

¹²⁵ Torres Bodet, radio interview with National Broadcasting Company, September 26, 1947, III-1053-1(2), SRE-MEX.

¹²⁶ Braden to Acheson, May 29, 1947, FRUS 1947, vol. 8, doc. 1. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v08/d1>

¹²⁷ Marshall, July 3, 1947, FRUS 1947, vol. 8, doc. 7. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v08/d7>

¹²⁸ Marshall, July 15, 1947, FRUS 1947, vol. 8, doc. 19. Online: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1947v08/d19>

¹²⁹ Marshall, August 20, 1947, FRUS, vol. 8, doc. 42, summarizes an illuminating conversation with Argentina’s foreign minister about communism.

¹³⁰ Braden to Acheson, May 29, 1947.

aggression. Secretary of State Marshall internally cited the U.S. “desire to make the treaty as effective as possible” as the reason for bowing to Latin American preferences,¹³¹ expressed in the Mexican plan presented to the PAU.¹³² The Latin American majority preference for a binding solution that obligated the U.S. without a veto converted antecedents of sovereign equality and nonintervention to a new postwar context. Nineteen American nations adopted the collective defense formula on August 30, 1947, a victory for regional arrangements under the UN framework and a precedent for NATO.¹³³

An inter-American constitution

The Ninth International Conference of American States, held in Bogota from March 30-May 20, 1948, was the culmination of efforts to formalize and multilateralize antecedents. From 1944 to 1948, several things had changed. The breakdown of U.S.-Soviet cooperation altered the global context. U.S. concerns about international communism were growing, though U.S. policymakers still considered Latin America a secure, and secondary, zone. Despite shifting domestic politics in many Latin American countries, the change in inter-American security preferences was minimal; surging anti-communism was a return to the historical norm. The Bogota conference suffered disruption when Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a populist Colombian presidential candidate, was murdered near the conference site. Riots erupted and some delegation members and families fled. Colombia veered into violence and turmoil, which would lead to a military takeover. Even so, CIA concerns about communist activities at the summit did not

¹³¹ Marshall to Forrestal, July 25, 1947, FRUS 1947, vol. 8, doc. 27

¹³² Trussell, “U.S. action cheers Americas’ leaders,” *The New York Times*, August 17, 1947, p. 33.

¹³³ Cook 1989, 112, 131-32.

include fears of a leftist uprising;¹³⁴ the disruption did not alter the outcome of the proceedings.

The Bogota conference focused on inter-American political and legal instruments that included and went beyond security governance. Plans for an inter-American constitutional order originated with Mexico's concerns about uncertain U.S. commitment. Torres Bodet remained its most forceful advocate, emphasizing the need to build "on all of the juridical elements of Pan-Americanism that have been defined and refined in the light of experience."¹³⁵ Without pressing external threats and despite a limited ability for burden-sharing,¹³⁶ U.S. and Latin American leaders sought to increase and institutionalize inter-American cooperation, ad hoc before the war. Mechanisms of layering and conversion produced rapid changes in this critical juncture.

Brazil and Mexico sought a stronger, more independent inter-American secretariat where Latin Americans would have a greater voice. When Chile proposed a rotating council, Brazil invoked regional antecedents to oppose it as inferior because "it would lack the tradition, unity, means of information, etc." Mexico concurred, saying, it "had not come to the conference with the motive of retreating from the conquests reached by Panamericanism."¹³⁷ Brazilian and Mexican preferences were shaped by the perceived

¹³⁴ Statement of Rear Admiral Hillenkoetter (Director, CIA) to the Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, House of Representatives, April 15, 1948, NSC File, Box 2, HSTPL.

¹³⁵ Respuestas al cuestionario presentado al señor Torres Bodet, por el señor Alfonso Tealdo S., Agregado Cultural de la Embajada del Perú, February 14, 1948, III-1053-1(2), SRE-MEX.

¹³⁶ As late as August 1949, the Defense Department emphasized raw materials, general support, protection of communication lines. A sixth point mentioned, "coordinated protection by member nations of their own national areas from invasion and from raids." Secretary of Defense, Report to NSC on U.S. Policy Concerning Military Collaboration under the Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, August 31, 1949, PSF Box 181, HSTPL.

¹³⁷ Comisión de Iniciativas, Acta de la sesión quinta, IX Conferencia Internacional Americana, Comisión II, April 15, 1948, Folder III-1053-2(1a), SRE-MEX.

advantages of layering on antecedents. At Latin America's urging, and particularly Mexico's, the conference drew on antecedents for a declaration of Rights and Duties of American States that averred "faith in the principal of continental solidarity and proclaim[ed] their unshakeable loyalty to the Interamerican system."¹³⁸ The conference recreated previous institutions under the OAS structure and passed a treaty on dispute settlement as the peaceful equivalent to Rio's security alliance.¹³⁹ The new institutions strengthened legal restraints on unilateral intervention, while keeping the United States engaged in the region.

Antecedents shaped the regional security arrangements that emerged from the postwar juncture, especially in the Americas where external threat and burden-sharing were notably absent. By shaping the range of choices and preferences, antecedents helped produce multilateral security institutions. Earlier experiences led Latin Americans to expect increasing returns from institutionalized consultation and decision-making—with policy feedback shaping layering.¹⁴⁰ For the United States, building on the antecedents that had ensured cooperation in World War II seemed a prudent course. Layering on and converting existing institutions were perceived as entailing lower set-up costs and offering greater certainty, while limiting the range of compatible choices. Actors who had been engaged in antecedent cooperation formed coalitions to defend and expand it; they presented regional multilateralism as less costly and uncertain than alternative arrangements such as U.S. unilateralism or solely global security institutions. The Pan

¹³⁸ Draft of the Declaration of the Rights and Duties of the American States, Acta de la sesión extraordinaria del consejo directivo de la Unión Panamericana, July 17, 1946, Folder III-2313-1(7a), SRE-MEX.

¹³⁹ Though an explanation is beyond the scope of this paper, economic arrangements in the Americas did not develop the same degree of multilateralism or regional autonomy.

¹⁴⁰ Newman 2017.

American Union, which was itself the site of conversion and layering in the new order, aided coordination and helped address contentious situations like Argentina's participation. While antecedents could be instrumentalized in a form of rhetorical entrapment, they also shaped preferences, choices, and outcomes in the permissive conditions of the critical juncture. The often-incremental processes of layering and conversion took on new importance in a rapid restructuring of the inter-American system during the critical juncture, as diplomats reshaped previous antecedents for new purposes and a new context.

Conclusions

This article examines the emergence of multilateral security institutions in the Americas after World War II, despite the absence of causes highlighted in the literature. We empirically expand the “no NATO in Asia” debate and challenge its most influential conclusions. Our explanation builds on and contributes to HI scholarship by examining how antecedents shape institutional outcomes during critical junctures. In doing so, we provide new tools for understanding the emergence of regional institutions, highlighting how processes associated with incremental change—conversion and layering—occur during critical junctures. These tools contribute to a growing dialogue between HI and IR. The value of HI for explaining key phenomena in International Relations goes beyond illustrating how path dependence shapes the continuity of international institutions; it can help explain processes of change as well. We particularly highlight how better understanding the dynamics of critical junctures and mechanisms of change

allows scholars to systematize the treatment of history in their explanations of the emergence and evolution of international institutions.

A full exploration of the creation of NATO and the failure of the proposed Pacific Pact and SEATO is beyond this article's scope, and well covered in the literature.¹⁴¹

However, it is worth mentioning the three regions' distinct antecedents as they relate to divergence in the form of regional security arrangements. There is broad agreement on the absence of multilateral security arrangements in Asia during the postwar period. If identity and history are seen as competing, the absence of U.S.-Asian security multilateralism is congruent with both factors (see Table 1). In the inter-American system, however, identity and history diverge. The U.S. policymaker biases toward Asians that Hemmer and Katzenstein emphasize find echoes in paternalistic, patronizing, and racist views of Latin Americans in the 1940s. However, historical antecedents were on Latin Americans' side. U.S. relations with Asia lacked the earlier structures and practices that gradually characterized U.S.-Latin American relations from at least the 1889 Pan-American Conference. Actors perceived the recreation of earlier Pan-American arrangements as beneficial, which shaped their preferences to maintain and expand them. U.S. historical ties with Asia were more limited and did not include substantial shared historical antecedents with a region heavily shaped by European colonialism. Asian diplomats could not appeal to antecedents, nor did they benefit from perceptions of shared identity. Bilateral and initially ad hoc models dominated.

¹⁴¹ Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002; Acharya 2005; Press-Barnathan 2004; Beeson 2005.

For NATO's emergence, both identity and antecedents support multilateralism; further study would be needed to untangle the two in causal processes. At a glance, antecedents appear important. According to one historian, NATO's "antecedents can be traced back to the Knox Resolution and the abortive French security treaty of 1919."¹⁴² Within living memory of many policymakers, the United States and Western European states had cooperated in the First World War, the Paris conference of 1919, the Dawes Plan of 1924, and through economic—and often nominally private—cooperation in European post-WWI reconstruction. These events had continued importance for influential Atlanticists in the U.S. foreign policy establishment; even many League of Nations opponents favored strong trans-Atlantic defense ties.¹⁴³ Despite U.S. rejection of the League, coordination continued in agreements such as the London Naval Conference. The most evident antecedents include cooperation during both world wars. While this may have been dominated, especially after mid-1940, by cooperation between Britain, the U.S., and Canada, broader antecedents exist, such as Norwegian Foreign Minister Trygve Lie's 1940 proposal for North Atlantic security. Like in the Americas, a host of activity followed WWII but preceded NATO's emergence.¹⁴⁴ Brinkley underlines Dean Acheson's involvement in trans-Atlantic antecedents as influential in shaping his approach in the North Atlantic.¹⁴⁵ Antecedents predisposed actors to multilateral agreements in the critical juncture of the late 1940s and conditioned how they responded to a new threat, providing material for rapid institutional construction.

¹⁴² Roberts 1997, 363.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, esp. 348, 362. Such backers included Theodore Roosevelt and Stimson. Several prominent League opponents favored Anglo-American security guarantees for France and small continental states.

¹⁴⁴ These are emphasized in Baylis 1993; Brinkley 1992.

¹⁴⁵ Brinkley 1992, 131-139.

External threat is considered the key explanation for NATO, but it is ambiguous in explaining weaker U.S.-Asian multilateralism. In the Americas, collective security commitments emerged despite low perceptions of external threat. A 1947 CIA report dedicated one page to Latin America: “In Latin America Soviet objectives are limited and negative. ...With the conclusion of the Treaty of Rio de Janeiro, however, United States interests in Latin America appear to be reasonably secure.”¹⁴⁶ Latin Americans were more concerned about internal communist threats than was the Truman administration. In Brazil, home of the largest communist party in the region, government repression went against the U.S. ambassador’s advice.¹⁴⁷ Regionally, the U.S. opposed formal anti-communist agreements, despite some calls from Latin America.

While the presence of great powers to share security burdens does not explain the *emergence* of security cooperation in the Americas, it may be quite important to understanding subsequent institutional evolution. NATO evolved toward more multilateralism, though one could read too much egalitarianism backwards into its founding moment, when even the British depended on U.S. economic and military assistance.¹⁴⁸ Baylis writes that NATO “signalled the end of British ambitions for a more independent world role.”¹⁴⁹ Only later, with recovery, could the European powers provide some balance within multilateral NATO. U.S. commitments grew more expansive—an illustration of historical institutionalists’ point that institutional paths often

¹⁴⁶ CIA, Review of the world situation as it relates to the security of the United States, September 12, 1947, SMOF: National Security Council File, Box 4, HSTPL.

¹⁴⁷ Schwartzberg 2003.

¹⁴⁸ Jackson 2003, 223, argues that threat-based accounts “tend to read the stable bipolar situation of later years backwards into the incredibly ambiguous period of the period immediately following the Second World War.”

¹⁴⁹ Baylis 1993, 120.

diverge from founders' intentions. On the other hand, the inter-American system drifted away from multilateralism in practice, though not in form, as asymmetries were worsened by the intensification of the Cold War.

Our findings challenge students of regionalism to more clearly distinguish between broad treatments of identity and the more specific implications of historical antecedents of regionalism. Hemmer and Katzenstein's explanation highlights collective identity, and it is reasonable to ask whether historical antecedents are just a component of identity. Certainly, collective identity relates to history. However, our explanation emphasizes something more specific. The United States had history with China and Japan, for example, but none of it constituted a shared historical antecedent of regionalism. Possibilities for rapid layering or conversion were minimal. When questions of global and regional order were thrown open for renegotiation after WWII, the presence of historical antecedents shaped the range of feasible choices and favored divergent outcomes in different regions. Pan-American institutions, summits, and practices served as important models. The PAU offered a focal point, a physical site, and established procedures for discussions between Latin American and U.S. diplomats. Many Latin Americans perceived benefits from deepening and expanding regional cooperation in a new global context. At the 1947 Rio conference, Colombian Lleras Camargo "made an extensive comparison between the inter-American system and UN pointing out that UN is only experiment and weak, experiencing 'continuous friction with reality, very similar in appearance to failure.'"¹⁵⁰ Antecedents had provided important benefits to the United

¹⁵⁰ Marshall to State, telegram, August 19, 1947, George M. Elsey Papers, Box 18, HSTPL.

States, too, giving the country legitimacy, a geostrategic reserve, and close commercial ties. Many U.S. and Latin American actors alike expected continued benefits.

The case, crucial to inter-American institutional creation, should invite greater reflection on the nature of early Cold War U.S. hegemony in the Americas, which is often treated as monolithic, “crudely imperial,” and therefore of secondary importance to understanding the emergence of U.S.-led international orders.¹⁵¹ Though the possibility of coercion cast a shadow, inter-American order was also characterized by negotiated bargains that incorporated Latin American leaders’ interests, even at the height of U.S. power. In the postwar critical juncture, Latin American diplomats, and some supportive U.S. policymakers, drew on antecedents to shape and advance plans for multilateral security institutions. These included mechanisms of restraint. Despite many Latin Americans’ concerns about its ultimately interventionist nature, Latin American diplomats cited the Monroe Doctrine and U.S.-led Pan Americanism in support of a grand bargain that would extend and institutionalize U.S. engagement while restricting unilateralism.¹⁵² In earlier summits, the American states had committed themselves to juridical equality, non-intervention, peaceful settlement of disputes, and diplomatic consultation. Now, they refashioned earlier institutions and formalized those commitments. U.S. adherence to these principles would remain incomplete in the new inter-American system, as it always had been. Latin Americans realized that. However, in a variation of Lord Ismay’s quip about NATO, the inter-American system remained

¹⁵¹ Ikenberry 2012, 27.

¹⁵² Though the Monroe Doctrine was later viewed almost universally in Latin America as interventionist, historically several prominent Latin American jurists supported the doctrine’s claim of a separate American sphere. Even in the early 20th century, some recognized a special role for the United States – though in conjunction with the larger South American republics. See Scarfi 2017.

Latin America's best bet to keep the United States in (regional politics), out (of internal affairs), and down (proscribed from intervening), all at once.

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