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Republican internationalism: the nineteenth-century roots of Latin American contributions to international order

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Abstract *Although Latin America plays a minimal role in debates on the ‘liberal international order’, scholars recognize the region’s influence on international law, norms, and institutions. We contend that these Latin American contributions to international order spring from a tradition of ‘republican internationalism’, rooted in the region’s domestic political traditions and practices. Republican principles such as the separation of power, association, and the rule of law had important corollaries in Latin American international relations, including sovereign equality, confederation and regional cooperation, and international law and arbitration. These republican internationalist ideas shaped Latin America’s diplomatic traditions and its contributions to international order in the nineteenth century and beyond. Attention to republican internationalism and Latin American contributions demonstrates how actors beyond the North Atlantic shaped the origins of international order. This study also advances debates on the sources of the liberal international order by demonstrating the distinctive influence of republican ideas and practices.*

Introduction

Debates on the origins and nature of international order have dedicated little attention to Latin America. This is not for a lack of long-term interaction: the region’s states gained independence and were consolidated alongside the initial British-led commercial order of the nineteenth century. Latin America

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contributed to, and was shaped by, each new iteration of the 'liberal international order' (LIO). However, Latin America occupied a peripheral role in international society; more to the point, the region was often marginalized by North Atlantic powers (Schulz 2014). Both supportive and critical accounts of the LIO's historical emergence have struggled to incorporate Latin America's place as a region of formally sovereign but often unequal states. Yet despite – and in some ways because of – that position, Latin America developed a rich diplomatic tradition and made important contributions to international order.

We argue that Latin American contributions to international order emerged from a tradition of 'republican internationalism' through which Latin American elites responded to their liminality in the hierarchies and civilizational discourses of Eurocentric international society. However, the effects of this peripheral position – and with it, republican internationalism – are not so straightforward as a simple development of weapons of the weak. Republican internationalism embodies an inherent contradiction. In the newly independent Spanish American states, many creole elites deployed republicanism to contest the inequalities of dynastic and colonial rule, on the one hand, while buttressing their position within domestic social hierarchies, on the other. Abroad, Latin America's privileged creole interlocutors invoked republican ideals in the name of a more inclusive, formally equal, and rules-based international society. In doing so, they replicated more radical, domestic discourses that saw republican ideas – of the common good, citizenship, and the rule of law – as a powerful tool to challenge domination.

Though Latin America is rarely central to debates about the LIO, IR scholars have underscored Latin American contributions to elements of global governance and international order: international law, multilateralism, international organizations, and liberal norms regarding human rights and democracy (Long 2018). But what informed these contributions and shaped Latin American diplomatic traditions? To the extent that this question is considered, most scholars emphasize two factors: the need to protect weak, post-independence states against imperialism (de la Reza 2000, 112) and a tradition of legal formalism inherited from Iberian colonial rule (Kacowicz 2005, 46–47). However, the emphasis on these two factors overlooks recent historiographical developments regarding the emergence and consolidation of republican, sometimes liberal, states during Latin America's nineteenth century. In international affairs and particularly international political economy, more attention has been directed to the influence of liberalism in this period. Nonetheless, Latin American diplomatic traditions were not uniquely attributable to liberal governments. We instead emphasize republicanism as their source, which helps explain continuities in diplomatic behaviour exhibited by conservative and illiberal Latin American governments.

Republicanism is a tradition of political thought and associated form of government that proposes a 'government of laws, not of men' in the service of the common good. This is most often accomplished through a mixed constitution and representative government (Dagger 2011). As an intellectual tradition, republicanism is sometimes conflated with liberalism. However, even though they share similarities, liberalism focuses on the individual and

individual rights, while republicanism places greater emphasis on civic virtue and citizens' duty towards the political community.

Republicanism was an important ideological influence on the 'Atlantic revolutions' of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century, including an exuberant outburst of republican thought in Latin America (Dagger 2011; Sanders 2014). In Haiti, throughout Spanish America, and later in Brazil, republican ideas informed state formation and consolidation. However, Latin American republicanism was denigrated by US and European contemporaries and downplayed in the later historiography. Recently, attention to domestic debates and practices of republicanism in Latin America has boomed (Aguilar and Rojas 2002; Pani 2009; Rojas 2009; Sabato 2018; Sanders 2014; Simon 2017). The same cannot be said regarding the study of republicanism's implications for Latin American diplomacy and foreign policy during the nineteenth century.

We argue that these implications were profound. Latin America's engagement with and contributions to the institutions, norms, and practices of liberal international order spring from a lost lineage of republican internationalism that took shape during the nineteenth century. We define republican internationalism as an approach to international affairs inspired in the domestic attributes of republican governance. Republican thinkers have long held that the political constitution of a society shapes (and should shape) its international politics, including through an emphasis on diplomacy and international law (Onuf 1998; Deudney 2007). If at the domestic level, republicans prioritize their notion of the common good, abroad, republican internationalists pursue an inclusive international society suspicious of unchecked concentrations of power. Republican principles of separation of powers, association, and the rule of law had important corollaries in Latin American diplomacy: namely, sovereign equality, regional confederation, and international law and arbitration.

Republican internationalism also responded to the international dimension of the 'creole dilemma' (Simon 2017), most famously enunciated in Simón Bolívar's 1815 *Letter from Jamaica*. In the letter, the Liberator sought to animate the independence struggle and called for American republicanism as an antidote to European monarchism. Bolívar described the creole position as 'a most extraordinary and complicated conjuncture' consisting of opposition to one's European forebears while continuing the 'conquest' of the Americas. To contest their subordination in Eurocentric international society and civilization hierarchies, Latin America's republican elites – the 'creole literati' (Rojas 2002, 50) – turned to the same ideational justifications that legitimated their dominance at home. By showing the coherent republican roots of Latin American diplomatic traditions, we illustrate how both peripheral and republican – not just liberal – ideas shaped the early formation of the LIO. In so doing, we contribute to historical IR's discussions on the nineteenth-century origins of today's international society (Buzan and Lawson 2015) by decentring accounts of international order-building and giving non-US, non-European actors agency in these developments (Acharya and Buzan 2019; Long 2018). In addition, this article builds a bridge to the historiography on Latin America's nineteenth-century republicanism, suggesting further empirical exploration of the international dimensions of republican ideas and practices.

In the next section, we review the existing literature on Latin America's contribution to the LIO. We proceed to outline the central argument tying Latin America's engagement with the LIO to republican internationalism. We then discuss each element of republican internationalism in turn. Finally, in the conclusion we consider the wider implications of the argument and point to future directions for research.

Latin America and the liberal international order

Scholarship in both global history and international relations increasingly understands the nineteenth century as a pivotal moment in the development of international order. Rapid technological change – railroads, steamships, and telegraphs – led to increasing 'interaction capacity' that drew the world together. Imperial expansion accompanied the 'global transformation' as did the development of European-centric international institutions and diplomatic practices (Buzan and Lawson 2015). In supportive accounts of the LIO, the great-power compacts of Vienna 1815 and Paris 1919 underpinned new international orders. The 'constitutional' nature of these arrangements predisposed them to take on liberal features (Ikenberry 1998, 2001). For critics, the 'liberal' international order emerged from – and remains deeply imbued with – colonial legacies (Bell 2016). These were particularly evident in the late nineteenth century, when great power bargains were intertwined with the expansion of empires and imposition of racial hierarchies (Parmar 2018). Those hierarchies carried over into early twentieth century institutions, most evidently the League of Nations mandate system and in narratives of civilizational difference that pit an ostensibly modern 'West' against the premodern and racialized 'rest' (Pedersen 2015; Mazower 2009; Thakur et al 2017).

Latin America is largely absent from these historical narratives and debates (Long 2018). The absence of Latin American great powers meant its states played no role in formative compacts; conversely, Latin America's independence predates the 'new imperialism' of the late nineteenth century and decolonization in the twentieth century. As a result, the region largely falls out of both supportive and critical accounts of the LIO. However, there are reasons to believe that Latin America deserves greater attention. Understanding the 'liberal' internationalist project and its crises demands better comprehension of peripheral engagements with the LIO's foundational projects, as well as how these engagements were shaped by traditions of thought that do not fit neatly into (il)liberal, (non)Western dichotomies (Grandin 2012; Fawcett 2012). As Fawcett (2012, 679) argues, 'there is still a large gap in our understanding and knowledge of how these outsiders, new or emerging states, and the individuals representing them have contributed to shaping debates about international relations'.

Given the region's unique positionality during formative moments, Latin America is a crucial site for studying the LIO's unequal interactions with the Global South (Taylor 2012; Tickner 2011). While major powers recognized the independence of Latin American states in the nineteenth century, European and US foreign policy makers often regarded Latin Americans as unfit to meet the expectations of 'civilized' international society (Schulz 2014). The region

became part of the economic 'periphery' during the period, too, as dependency on Britain and, later, the United States replaced Iberian colonial structures. Leaving Latin America out of debates on the LIO's nineteenth-century origins overlooks a crucial vantage point on the development of international orders.

Latin American experiences also point to ways in which international order-making was intertwined with domestic projects of rule in the periphery. The period was central to state consolidation, emergence of export industries, and contestations over the constitution and delimitation of new Latin American republics (Sabato 2018; Rubilar Luengo and Sánchez Andrés 2019). Representations of 'civilization', debates over Latin America's place in civilizational hierarchies, and the often-violent enforcement of these hierarchies were crucial features of the region's state consolidation (Rojas 2002). Republicanism provided an important framework for almost all such political and social debates. For the most part, these debates were limited to a small elite; most (though not all) of those who could participate were creoles – American-born of European descent – and men of privilege. Some, like Andrés Bello and Lucas Alamán, had a conservative bent. Others, like Francisco Bilbao, struck a more radical tone. However, republicanism largely bridged the Liberal and Conservative divide, as well as related divisions over federalism. With a few exceptions, republicanism served as the underlying unifier against foreign dynasticism and for creole privilege.

While republican patricians, such as Simón Bolívar, Andrés Bello, or José María Samper, held positions of privilege domestically, they confronted marginalization in international society. This experience shaped Latin Americans' views on and reactions to international order. In part as a response to that duality, the Western Hemisphere became an important site of diplomatic innovation by the mid-nineteenth century.

Though these Latin American diplomatic innovations are rarely linked with debates over the LIO, scholars in IR and International Law have explored Latin America's role in changing prevailing norms of sovereignty (Sikkink 1996); doctrines of non-intervention (Obregón 2006; Lorca 2014; Scarfi 2016); human rights law and transnational advocacy (Sikkink 2019; Kelly 2018); institutions of international economic development (Helleiner 2014; Thornton 2021); the regional protection of democracy (Heine and Weiffen 2015; Feldmann et al 2019); and inclusive multilateralism (Finnemore and Jurkovich 2014; González et al 2015). Except for legal histories, most accounts that uncover Latin America's role in shaping international norms and institutions focus on the interwar and immediate post-war period (McPherson and Wehrli 2015; Long and Friedman 2020). Studies that venture beyond the post-WWII juncture tend to do so through the lens of US-Latin America relations, for example, as a site where Woodrow Wilson hashed out his internationalist views. We briefly review accounts of the Latin America contributions most relevant to LIO.

International law

International law comprises a system of rules and principles that guide the relations among states. Though international law predates the formation of the LIO and only acquired many of its more liberal elements during the last century (Koskenniemi 2001), law plays a crucial role in the operation of the

LIO. Ikenberry (1998, 2001) notes the importance of international law in the 'constitutional' moments that create international order, while critics have illustrated how international law reflects and reinforces global inequalities (Anghie 2007; Benton and Ford 2016; Keene 2002). Yet, international law is the area of international order where Latin American contributions are best recognized.

In response to their liminal position in nineteenth-century international society, Latin Americans used international law in defence of their hard-won sovereignty and as a shield against intervention (Lorca 2014; Obregón 2006; Scarfi 2017). Latin American lawyers and diplomats spearheaded the codification of public and private international law. They also made signal contributions concerning the international recognition of belligerents; the role of *uti possidetis* in the emergence of new states; the right of diplomatic asylum; non-intervention, especially regarding collection of debts; the law of the sea; and arbitral and judicial settlement of disputes (Delić 2016; Esquirol 2012, 55; Garay Vera 2019, 160). This is no coincidence. As we discuss below, law is deeply embedded in republican thought. International legal contributions alone suggest that Latin Americans were far from mere 'policy takers' in their interactions with early British and US efforts to craft practices of international order (Acharya 2018, 90–94).

Multilateralism and (regional) international organizations

Although multilateralism did not originate with the contemporary LIO, it is strongly associated with the order's operation, the modalities of US leadership (Ruggie 1992), and the post-WWII expansion of international trade and finance (Deudney and Ikenberry 1999, 195). IR's historical narratives regarding the development of multilateralism trace its roots to the 1815 Congress of Vienna and grant minimal consideration to the contributions of the Global South (Acharya and Buzan 2019, 159). Latin America's *regional* multilateralism is sometimes mentioned in passing (see Ravndal 2020; Reinalda 2009), but it is only in relation to the League of Nations that a cohesive body of scholarship on Latin America's multilateral involvement exists (Herrera León 2016; McPherson and Wehrli 2015).

Latin Americans made signal contributions to contemporary multilateral practices, dating to the mid- and late nineteenth century. Early American organizations were regional, as were those of Europe. The world's first multilateral, multipurpose international organization – a crucial element of the LIO's institutional architecture – originated in the Americas. While that organization, the Pan-American Union, included the United States, during the PAU's formative years, it incorporated many traits of earlier Latin American regionalism (Petersen forthcoming). Latin America's regional practices travelled to the global level. Finnemore and Jurkovich (2014) illustrate how inter-American practices and Latin American participation in the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conferences established roots for norms of universal international participation – a bridge from the great powers-only Concert to the near-universal League of Nations (Schulz 2017).

Latin American states were strong advocates for global and regional multilateralism, buttressing the foundations of the LIO and extending its reach beyond the North Atlantic, though this too is better recognized for the inter-war and immediate post-WWII periods (van Klaveren 2020; Long 2020).

Latin America's importance to multilateral organizations emerged both from numerical weight and active participation starting in the League of Nations (McPherson and Wehrli 2015; Ojeda Revah 2014), and then in the United Nations (Tillapaugh 1978; Garcia 2012) and the Bretton Woods organizations (Helleiner 2014; Urquidi 1994; Thornton 2021). These accounts of Latin America's contribution to multilateralism primarily emphasize the region's responses to specific challenges in the twentieth century, without uncovering their nineteenth-century republican roots.

Liberal norms

The modern international order, built around the territorial sovereign state, only became 'liberal' through the growing assertion of norms and practices based on individual rights, including through Spanish American independence (Reus-Smit 2013, chapter 4). Multilateralism and the relatively rules-based nature of international decision-making are two such shifts. Other changes are more explicitly liberal, such as the promotion of relatively open trade and the prioritization of democratic governance and human rights – albeit unevenly and perhaps with a dose of hypocrisy.

In the economic realm, Latin American elites in the late nineteenth century are often characterized as uncritical adopters of foreign *laissez faire* doctrines. However, as Helleiner and Rosales (2017) show, the region saw robust debate over liberal and other economic models, and Latin American thinkers selected and adapted these according to their interests. Although trade was more explicitly discussed in terms of liberalism, economic debates at times intersected with republicanism, such as in Bolívar's rejection of colonial trading restrictions (Helleiner and Rosales 2017, 925). At other moments, republican and liberal ideals clashed; the social implications of *laissez faire* were perceived as a threat to the republican common good by more conservative elites (Rojas 2002, chapter 5).

The expansion of international human rights is closely linked to Latin America, though not always in the way that governments intended. Perhaps more than any other IR scholar, Kathryn Sikkink (2019, 74–79) has highlighted Latin American contributions to the international human rights regime. This includes the influence of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man on the subsequent Universal Declaration of Human Rights – itself shaped by direct Latin American involvement. Latin American international legal contributions are often distinguished by a dual emphasis on rights and duties (Berdion Del Valle and Sikkink 2017). Even earlier, feminist advocates from Latin America played an important role in instituting social and women's rights at the international level (Marino 2020). During the Cold War, human rights advocacy networks emerged from South America in the wake of the 1964 coup in Brazil, before expanding dramatically after the 1973 coup in Chile (Kelly 2018). Eventually these networks reinvigorated inter-American and UN human rights institutions and extended Latin American contributions to the LIO beyond those of state actors (Saltalamacchia and Urzúa 2016, 19–64; Fuentes-Julio 2020; Sikkink 2019, 114–122).

A similar pattern holds regarding international democracy norms in Latin America. When much of Latin America transitioned to democracy in the

1980s and 1990s, democracy norms became a more explicit element of the region's foreign policy (Feldmann et al 2019; Palestini 2020; Heine and Weiffen 2015). Precedents are often mentioned, such as the 1945 Larreta Doctrine and the Cold War-era Betancourt Doctrine, as well as the earlier 1907 Tobar Doctrine, which called for coordinated regional non-recognition of coup governments (Long and Friedman 2020). Though these concerns about both rights and democracy were evident at the turn of the twentieth century, these diplomatic doctrines are rarely connected to their nineteenth-century origins.

Republican internationalism: roots and practices

The aforementioned contributions emerged from a tradition of 'republican internationalism', which has roots in the independence struggles of Spanish America and coalesced during the second half of the nineteenth century. In this section, we draw on debates on republicanism in political theory and the history of ideas to highlight several core republican principles. We build and advance on these debates by demonstrating how these republican ideas have diplomatic corollaries, which connect domestic political constitution to international politics. We illustrate these connections with diplomatic developments and political thought from Latin America's nineteenth century.

Republicanism has drawn little attention in IR theory, and it has been neglected in discussions of the LIO. In 1998, Onuf noted the absence of republicanism in IR theory; despite his landmark contribution and important works by Deudney (1995, 2007), this largely remains the case. Republicanism's absence from IR theory differs markedly from the centrality of liberalism, into which republicanism is sometimes subsumed. And yet, features of Latin America's republican tradition – not uniformly liberal or democratic – played the leading role in inspiring regional approaches and contributions to international order.

Like other major traditions of political thought, the meaning of republicanism is contested. Most scholars, however, agree that republicanism foregrounds the promotion of the 'common good' in society. As Dagger (2011, 701) points out, 'republicanism rests on the conviction that government is not the domain of some ruler or small set of rulers, but instead a public matter – the *res publica* – to be directed by self-governing citizens'. The emphasis on shared interests and responsibilities distinguishes republics from those polities intended to represent private or dynastic interests, as well as from those intended purely to ensure individual rights. In the contemporary understanding, republicanism tends to be defined as the opposite of monarchism. However, classical and early republican thinkers often defended mixed government that combined aspects of different constitutional forms to check arbitrary power. Modern political theorists discuss republicanism as an alternative to liberalism due to the latter's stark distinction between public and private affairs. Skinner (2008), for example, distinguishes 'republican liberty', which emphasizes non-domination (see Pettit 1997), from liberal conceptions of liberty that focus on non-interference.

Historians debate the relative importance of republicanism and liberalism in the emergence of independent states in the Americas. Although liberalism

Table 1. Republican principles & diplomatic corollaries

Republican principle	Diplomatic corollary
Common good (<i>first-order principle</i>)	Inclusive international society
Separation of powers	Sovereign equality
Association and virtue	Confederation and regional solidarity
Rule of law	International law and arbitration

eventually emerged as the dominant political philosophy of the wider Atlantic world in the nineteenth century, Pocock (2016 [1975]) challenged the traditional view that liberalism provided the intellectual underpinnings of the American revolution. In the author’s view, classic republican ideas such as ‘civic virtue’ and ‘commonwealth’ informed early constitutional debates in the United States. The idea of an ‘Atlantic republican’ tradition sparked renewed scholarly interest in republicanism in the English-speaking academy. It also led to a reassessment of the political ideas that informed the Haitian and Spanish American revolutions (e.g. Aguilar and Rojas 2002), and to comparisons between US and Latin American liberal and republican traditions.

Until recently, accounts of nineteenth-century political ideas in Latin America long emphasized elites’ adoption of liberal philosophies that were ill-suited for the political and social conditions in the region (Hale 1985). By contrast, more recent historiography rejects the longstanding picture of nineteenth-century Latin America as a post-colonial backwater marked by the alternation of caudillismo and anarchy. This scholarship shows that liberal and republican ideas formed an integral part of nineteenth-century state-building projects (Aguilar and Rojas 2002, 5–6; Posada-Carbó and Jaksic 2013). There was also substantial popular engagement with these developments (Sanders 2014; Sabato 2018). In this context, republicanism provided elites with the political language to denounce European despotism and imperialism while simultaneously justifying the non-egalitarian character of the new regime and preserving their positions of privilege in racial and class hierarchies (Simon 2017; Rojas 2002).

Contrary to the debate on US independence, histories of political ideas in Latin America largely eschewed sharp lines between liberalism and republicanism. Grandin (2012, 71) explicitly combines republicanism and liberalism, en route to arguing that differences in racial and colonial circumstances produced a Spanish American ‘republicanism that was more inclusive than its counterpart in the United States’. Likewise, Palti (2002, 91–92) contrasts Argentine republican traditions of ‘civic humanism’, associated with Sarmiento and Alberdi, with more individualistic traditions in the United States (also Negretto 2002, 121–127). Conversely, Simon (2017) stresses republican commonalities based in the similar social positions of American-born elites in the US and Spanish American republics. Building on these debates, we argue that greater attention to the differences between liberalism and republicanism offers a more consistent explanation of Latin American elites’ relationships with and contributions to international order.

Latin America’s republican internationalism and the ‘common good’

To understand the importance of republican internationalism in Latin America, we first propose a distinction between the first-order principle of the common

or public good, and three second-order principles – separation of power, rule of law, and association – that contribute to the realization of this aim (Table 1). Each of these republican ideals has an international corollary that shaped Latin America’s diplomatic traditions and engagement with and contributions to international order.

Republicanism emphasizes the advancement of the common good and civic duties to that good. This overarching republican value translates to a vision of the ‘national interest’ that goes beyond the monarch’s power and prestige. As Deudney (2004, 316–317) suggests, this understanding has been central to arguments about the domestic sources of the democratic peace, usually invoking Kant (e.g. Doyle 1983). However, the idea of the common good has implications for international society beyond each republic’s national interest – a notion that diverges from the individualistic focus common to rationalist IR theories and resonant with liberalism. Onuf (1998, 84) argues that the idea of a great republic, existing beyond the bounds of separate nations, shaped the arguments of thinkers like Vattel. In a region of republics, the corollary of common good, or commonwealth, encompasses the creation of an inclusive international society with intentional ‘political structures’ that create checks on arbitrary power (Deudney 2004, 322).

Commonwealth notions of regional, republican international society were prominent in nineteenth-century Latin America (though they did not always prevent war). For the influential nineteenth-century Latin American thinker Andrés Bello, ‘international society – a repository and factory of values – was a good in itself, providing the conditions under which states could coexist and prosper’ (Fawcett 2012, 691). Indeed, Bello’s famous legal treatise, the 1832 *Principios de derecho de jentes*, departs from the proposition that the purpose of international law is ‘to guarantee security and the common good’, and repeatedly invokes the concept. These ideals are reflected in a regional self-consciousness of shared security and mutual benefit – factors that shaped emerging Latin American identities (Gobat 2013).

The vision of the common good at home and abroad largely reflected the positions of the creole elites. Like in the United States, republican ideas in Latin America served to assert and protect the privileges of their advocates, namely their positions atop hierarchies of race, class, and gender. Republicanism was a rejoinder to foreign, dynastic opponents while serving also as a rationale to justify oppression and tutelage of indigenous and black populations – who often had participated in wars of independence (Echeverri 2011; Schulz 2019, 883; Simon 2017). Republican ideas helped construct adequate central authority to settle political disputes (Negretto 2002, 112–114), including over how to define and pursue the ‘common good’. Republicanism allowed literate ‘Creole men [to grant] themselves a privileged place in the building of the emergent nation’ (Rojas 2002, 18).

The shared republicanism of the creole elites fed into a sense of continental community, forcefully rejecting the dynastic origins of European ‘concert’ diplomacy (although not necessarily European balance-of-power politics). Merke (2015) refers to these practices as a form of ‘concertation’ that connects South American traditions of international law and arbitration. These values and practices were weak immediately after independence (Gobat 2013), but gained potency through greater state consolidation, increasing interactions,

and a growing sense of republican self-confidence (Sanders 2014). Such views were clear in rejections of dynastic alliances and the perception of the threat these posed to independent republics. Responding to a Franco-Austrian invasion of Mexico, which made the Habsburg scion Maximilian emperor of Mexico, the republican firebrand Francisco Bilbao penned his famous 1862 *La América en Peligro* [*America in Danger*]. Denouncing dynastic, Napoleonic, and theocratic alliances, Bilbao (1862, 7, 14) wrote: 'The strength of America is its republicanism' and only unity, he contended, could halt the attempted 'extermination of the Republic in the world'.

In South America, repudiation of the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–1870), in which Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay teamed up to decimate Paraguay, encouraged a turn to more republican security institutions, including frequent regional attempts to ameliorate Chile's conflicts with its neighbours. Elites often invoked confederations as a mechanism to address external threats, but also to overcome internal tensions and build solidarity (de la Reza 2019). This vision of Latin America's duty to the republican common good extended beyond the Americas. José María Samper, a leading figure in Colombia's post-independence intellectual elite, forcefully advocated for republicanism abroad. At a congress of the League of Peace and Freedom held in Lausanne, Samper denounced the private interests of monarchies as a threat to peace. As a member of the 'republican race formed in Spanish America', Samper (1869, 123–124) argued 'that humanity is solidary in duty and rights, and therefore as a son of the New World, I have tremendous interest in seeing peace and liberty triumph in Europe'. We now discuss, in turn, the second-order components of republican internationalism, seen as devices to promote the common good.

Separation of powers/sovereign equality

Republicanism considers the separation of powers a safeguard against domination. Montesquieu's *Spirit of Law* devised a tripartite division of the branches of government into the executive, legislative, and judiciary to check and balance power in society. Other republican mechanisms to diffuse power territorially and functionally include federalism and the creation of an armed citizenry. The influence of these ideas is evident in the US constitution. Starting at independence, Spanish American constitutionalism drew on US, British, and French republican traditions, as well as on classical thought and local experience. Latin American states experimented with more than a hundred constitutional designs during the nineteenth century, with recurring disputes about the organization of power between branches of government and between centralism and federalism. Concerned about social fragmentation, creole elites turned to 'practices of republican homogenization' while leaving the door open to a confederation of newly independent states (Rojas 2009, 11–13). During ensuing decades, 'several republics redefined their institutional organization following the tenets of constitutional liberalism and set up new rules, which confirmed the original republican values and practices, and at the same time sought to establish limitations to the exercise of government power' (Sabato 2018, 192).

In the international sphere, republican thinkers hold that concentration of power can easily lapse into despotism abroad as well. As Deudney (2007, 8) elaborates, although contemporary IR theory associates the balance of power with realism, its conceptual origins lie with republican ideas about 'mutual restraint'. Levy (2004, 32) summarizes 'the single most important theme' of balance of power theory – 'the avoidance of hegemony' – by reference to the Greek historian Polybius and eighteenth-century jurist and diplomat Emer de Vattel, both towering figures in the history of republican thought. Born in Switzerland as a Prussian subject in 1714, Vattel was attentive to the interests of small states – and republics in particular – as the balance of power provided them with little protection against dynastic politics and great power domination. Making a strong case for (formal) sovereign equality, Vattel famously wrote: 'A dwarf is as much a man as a giant; a small republic is no less a sovereign state than the most powerful kingdom' (2008 [1758], 75).

Vattel's importance for republican internationalism in the Americas cannot be overstated. His *The Law of Nations* was invoked during Spanish American wars of independence and thereafter. Bello's own influential, 1832 defence of sovereign equality closely followed Vattel's aforementioned formulation: 'Since people are naturally equal, so are groups of people who form a universal society. Even the weakest Republic enjoys the same rights and is subject to the same obligations as the most powerful empire'. Vattel's work was similarly cited by Argentinian jurist Carlos Calvo during the 1860s, in favour of egalitarian interstate relations and in opposition to armed intervention. Sovereign equality also occupied a central place in Latin American diplomatic practice from the very beginning, including at the landmark 1826 Congress of Panama. There, delegates rejected the European precedent of having the conference presided over by the convening great power as incongruent with the principle of sovereign equality. Instead, the conference implemented an innovative rotating presidency that would acknowledge the equality of all parties in attendance. The same congress emphasized republican values and sovereign equality through stipulations on government type in the defence treaty (Scott 1926). Finnemore and Jurkovich (2014) note that Latin American 'efforts at multilateral coordination' were 'revived' at the 1888–1889 International Conference of American States in Washington. In fact, the tradition never disappeared, and this emphasis on sovereign equality shaped conferences during the intervening decades. At the 1847 Lima conference, called in response to Spanish naval incursions, the presidency was determined according to lot to avoid undermining sovereign equality (Inman 1965, 23).

This background of recurring Latin American diplomatic interactions and robust republican internationalist thought provided the region with relatively coherent international preferences and practices – especially around sovereign equality – in later confrontations with Washington. These preferences resonated with the republican emphasis on the separation of powers as a mechanism to ensure non-domination – in this case by the expanding United States – and in the Latin America quest for equal status at The Hague in 1907 (Schulz 2017).

Association/confederation. In liberal political philosophy, rights are first and foremost accorded to individuals. In republican thought, social *association* is

stressed over pure individualism, with duties acting as the constant counterpart to rights (Onuf 1998, 49–54). At the international level, Vattel (2008, 71, 73) considered international society the necessary consequence of the ‘natural sociability’ of humankind, which created a responsibility for ‘mutual assistance’ through communication and trade. The value of association led classic and early modern republicans to stress the active development of *virtue*, with precedents often traced to Rome through Machiavelli (Onuf 1998). Montesquieu connected ideas of virtue and social obligations to republican citizenship. Spanish American republicans emphasized similar notions of virtuous association, mostly notably with Bolívar’s plans for a *poder moral* as a branch of government (Simon 2017, 102–104), and later in Bello’s emphasis on education for the continuation of good government (Fawcett 2012). More darkly, these values justified paternalistic civilizing missions or limitations on citizenship, aimed at those seen as unvirtuous others (Rojas 2002). Leading exponents of Argentina’s Generation of 1837, often regarded as textbook liberals, considered the creation of a virtuous citizenry (either through immigration or education) a precondition for the country’s viability (Botana 1984). Traditions of association and virtue appear frequently in Latin American diplomatic declarations stressing the ‘rights and duties’ of states, the value of solidarity with other republics of the New World, and in contributions to international law and human rights.

Association is also evident in the longstanding efforts to foster regional cooperation (Petersen and Schulz 2018; González and Sánchez 2020). Bolívar’s *Letter to Jamaica* already articulated the idea that unity among Spanish American republics should eventually materialize, while a deeper confederation was desirable though infeasible. In the 1826 Panama Congress, he sought ‘treaties of friendship, navigation, and commerce’ with American states. The urge for regional unity – very often without the United States – and the frustrated ambitions of 1826 remained features of Western Hemisphere relations during the next six decades (Scott 1931; de la Reza 2000). Mexican conservative Lucas Alamán proposed an exclusively Spanish American *pacto de familia* [family pact] in the 1830s, gaining support from top Mexican diplomats, although the conference never convened (Olivera and Hernández 2013, 189). In 1847, Spanish aggressions provoked a meeting of five South American states to coordinate mutual defence, which led to four treaties, including a Treaty of Confederation and Commerce that was left open to adherence by all American states, and an effective nonaggression pact that also ‘established the rule of absolute non-intervention among the states’ (Whitaker 1965, 54). This congress echoed calls from well-known republicans, including Alberdi (1843), who, invoking the example of the 1826 Panama Congress, sought a conference that would address Latin America’s internal disputes, including uncertain borders and the potential domination of its weaker states. As Bilbao (1866 [1857], 288, 289, 303) penned in expressly republican terms:

Liberty and peace are inextricably united ... The union we seek is founded in equality before the law [*identidad del derecho*] and unity under the law [*asociación del derecho*]. We do not want monarchical rule, nor centralized despotism, nor conquest, nor theocratic pacification. Rather the union we seek is an association of free persons, men [sic], and peoples, to achieve universal fraternity ... Liberty without union is anarchy.

Union without liberty is despotism. Liberty and union will be the Confederation of Republics.

Republican tenets of association inspired sympathies with the United States as a 'sister republic' and early constitutional model, though this principle of association was challenged by US military interventions and evident racial antipathies (Sanders 2014, 73–80). Several US founders voiced disdain for the inhabitants of emerging Spanish American republics. Such negative views hardened and spread, starting with the secession of Texas from Mexico; prejudices against Mexicans took more racialized forms, growing in tandem with the anti-Catholic views of the US populace. Such prejudices contributed to the US decision to annex Mexican territory. Slaveholding US President James Polk 'viewed Mexicans as racial inferiors' and believed the country 'would not or could not rally its population to a major war to defend remote territories where few Mexicans live' (Guardino 2017, 35). Latin American elites were well aware of such views. Writing about a US-Paraguayan diplomatic dispute in 1852, Calvo (1864, 16) wrote: 'Everyone knows of the great contempt with which those great republicans of the North treat all who do not belong to their race'.

As the region's republics consolidated at mid-century, and the juxtaposition with an expansionist United States grew sharper, republican solidarity became Latin American solidarity: "'Latin America" also stood for a form of democratic republicanism perceived to be threatened by European imperialism' (Gobat 2013, 1367). Spurred by the filibustering expedition of William Walker in Nicaragua – and by US recognition of the filibuster state – Spanish American states gathered in 1856 in Santiago, Chile to create a 'permanent council for mutual defense' (Scarfi 2017, 6). Though again not ratified, the 'Continental Treaty' suggested Latin American solidarity and confederation as a response to US aggression against Mexico and in Central America. A final mid-century conference in Lima in 1864–1865 was held in response to European incursions into the Americas under the banner of Spanish American unity.

As noted above, Bilbao invoked the need for a confederation based on republican association as a response to European dynastic incursions. But perhaps the period's most complete consideration of republican confederation is José María Torres Caicedo's *Unión Latino-Americana* (1865). There, Torres Caicedo depicts republican instincts for peace as natural elements of progress, while 'absolutism' and slavery are historical aberrations responsible for war. While Torres Caicedo's plan for peace posits the inevitable victory of 'the constitutional regime', he proposes 'confederation, union, leagues' as an historical step toward peace in opposition to monarchy and empire. Torres Caicedo (1865, 15–18) contrasted dynastic and divisive wars in Europe with Latin American fraternal association, rooted in republican values.

The end of slavery in the United States and the increase of commercial ties restored some shine to ideals of hemispheric association. Regional cooperation grew more institutionalized under the aegis of the United States in the late nineteenth century. According to Whitaker (1965), shared republicanism contributed to the 'Western Hemisphere ideal' that the states of the New World stand in a special relationship to one another, despite interstate rivalries

and long-standing apprehension that US hegemony threatened sovereign equality. The first International Conference of American States, held in Washington, coincided with the proclamation of the Brazilian Republic in November 1889. The end of the Brazilian Empire, and related end of slavery, removed another constant irritant from the region. Many Spanish American republicans had considered the continuation of slavery and monarchical rule in South America an affront to American values; meanwhile, the Brazilian aristocracy prided itself on the country's stability in comparison to its quarrelsome republican neighbours (Spektor 2019; Gobat 2013, 1349). Diplomatic relations had continued, and Brazil played a role in South American diplomats' balance-of-power calculations, but the country's monarchism had enfeebled norms of association with the Brazilian Empire. The Bolivian Benedito Medinaceli rejected Brazilian participation in a proposed confederation (de la Reza 2020, 7). Likewise, Bilbao (1862, 14) excluded 'the Brazilian empire with its slaves and Paraguay, dictatorship with its serfs' from American international society. Torres Caicedo (1865, 50) shared similar concerns about the form of government but underscored the need for pragmatic engagement with Brazil, including through the 1856 Treaty of Santiago. The emergence of republicanism in Brazil also permitted the extension of republican association in South American international society.

IR scholars frequently point towards the meagre results of Latin American regionalism as a contrast with the rhetoric of solidarity. These accounts usually attribute this failure to the political legacy of colonialism, as an international reflection of the colonial refrain, *Obedezco pero no cumpro* [I obey but do not comply], which was invoked to preserve local autonomy without challenging the authority of the Spanish crown. According to this view, Latin America's tradition of legal formalism explains the perseverance of nonbinding regionalism and incomplete implementation. We suggest that the apparent contradiction is better understood in light of republican internationalism's twin concerns: separation of powers and association.

Law/international arbitration. Law is deeply embedded in republican thought as a tool to further the common good; indeed, the purpose of law is to provide a structure that prevents the exercise of arbitrary authority and therefore limits domination while controlling anarchy. 'Political freedom, in other words, is constituted by rightly-ordered laws, institutions, and norms', notes Lovett (2018, section 1.3; Pettit 1997, 107). For that reason, whether for Vattel, Bello, or Calvo, republican internationalism is deeply linked to the development of international law. The *republican* contribution to international law manifests in legal limitations on conquest, intervention, and the demand for arbitration.¹

Though rule of law remained inconsistent at the domestic level, Schaefer (2017, 15) argues that Spanish American independence wars 'were first of all legal revolutions'. The Chilean Juan Egaña proposed national constitutional designs and plans for regional confederation; in 1817, he called for 'indissoluble ties... to

¹ Latin American states typically favored compulsory arbitration, though Chile long resisted stronger arbitration because it feared the potential reversal of its conquests in the War of the Pacific.

establish an American public law, or a national or confederated sovereignty' to win and ensure independence from Spain (qtd. in de la Reza 2017, 463). The republican quest for law took on a new life in the second half of the nineteenth century in many Latin American states. Mid-century liberal republicans in Mexico sought 'The realization of legal equality...that could tie republican institutions to the ethical imperatives of concrete life practices' (Schaefer 2017, 211). In South America, Bilbao (1862) argued that Latin America's 'destiny is to realize the Religion of Law in the New World of Columbus'. Torres Caicedo's (1865) aforementioned call for confederation emphasized 'public law, both internal and external', connecting domestic republican organization and values with the pursuit of an international common good.

By the late nineteenth century, the receding European threat and a spate of intra-Latin American conflicts reopened the question of arbitration, specifically, and the consolidation of Latin American traditions of international law generally. Concerns with settling disputes, especially over borders, were prominent since the independence period, but later conferences proposed increasingly detailed systems of arbitration. Alberdi (1843, 300) was one early voice for these concerns: rivalries in South America, he held, emerged from 'a preoccupation with territorial interests, which we uncritically received from the example of European politics'. He instead called for the establishment of 'a type of juridical and arbitral court' because the 'general interest of America' would be better served by peaceful arbitration and the removal of militarized boundaries (ibid.). Continued disputes motivated a Colombian call for an arbitration treaty in 1880 and led US Secretary of State James Blaine to connect US policies with the emerging focus on arbitration, which Blaine intended to be the primary topic of a conference planned for 1881 (Bastert 1959).

Obregón (2006) argues that colonial legacies and the social position of creole elites, commonly trained in law, led to a distinct Latin American approach to international law. Reflecting this 'creole consciousness', Álvarez (1909), a distinguished Chilean jurist, noted that even though Latin America was of European extraction, the nature of its politics, and the particular problems that arose from the region's experience with sovereign but unequal statehood, shaped a uniquely *Latin American* international legal order. Latin American engagements, he insisted, radically transformed international law (Scarfi 2016).

Latin America's best-known international legal contributions emphasize sovereign equality, non-intervention, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. These juridical emphases are linked with the republican internationalist focus on non-domination, but they also emerged in the historical context of growing integration with the British-led international economic order. This integration expanded Latin America's exports, but also generated conflicts with foreign creditors and investors that augmented threats of intervention (Helleiner and Rosales 2017). The most famous legal response was the Calvo Doctrine, first enunciated in 1868, which bound foreigners to domestic legal remedies, replacing diplomatic and gunboat interventions (Scarfi 2016, 11–12). Responses to such interventions were later an important topic of dispute at the inter-American level and during the Second Hague Conference, which marked

the first time that Latin American states directly engaged with European congress diplomacy (Carrillo Reveles 2018, 46–49; Schulz 2017).

The Latin American push for legalization and codification – an international echo of changes to domestic republican forms – powerfully affected regional cooperation, too. This included an influential series of conferences on private international law in the Americas from 1877–1880 in Lima, then in 1888–1889 in Montevideo; the latter produced treaties that ‘covered rules on conflicts in the areas of civil, commercial, criminal, procedural, and intellectual property law’ (Esquirol 2012, 13). A series of sanitary conferences was also held in South America in 1887–1888. As Petersen (forthcoming) argues, these conferences went beyond the merely technical and were situated in ideals of regional solidarity, claims to leadership, and a new Latin American internationalism at the dawn of the twentieth century.

Conclusions

Latin America’s post-WWII international contributions have gained increasing recognition in the areas of international law, multilateral organizations, and norms of human rights and democracy. However, the region has received scant attention in historical accounts of the nineteenth-century development of international order. Critics rightly point to the lasting international inequalities that emerged during this period, particularly the expansion of imperialism. Latin America occupied a different place – independent, but still often peripheral. This international position shaped Latin America’s historical contributions.

However, international position was not the only thing that mattered. This article sheds light on the republican roots of Latin America’s diplomatic traditions. In doing so, we propose an agenda for better understanding the international ramifications of Latin America’s nineteenth-century republicanism. Latin America’s approach to questions of international order was shaped by a tradition of republican internationalism that began at independence and was consolidated in the middle and late nineteenth century. Republican ideas, values, and practices at home shaped the region’s international conduct around an ideal of the ‘common good’, represented by an inclusive international society premised on non-domination. The diplomatic components of republican internationalism – sovereign equality, confederation, and international law and arbitration – emerged from domestic principles central to republican thought, namely the separation of powers, association, and law. Exploring republican internationalism adds a missing international dimension to the growing historical literature that takes Latin America’s nineteenth-century liberal and republican politics seriously. The idea adds to our understanding of the emergence of Latin American diplomatic traditions, helping explain lasting tensions between multilateralism and sovereignty (Sikkink 1996); the recurrence of ‘declaratory regionalism’ (Jenne et al 2017); and the persistence of supposedly liberal practices from frequently illiberal states (Merke 2015; Kacowicz 2005).

Moving beyond Latin America, republican internationalism suggests a framework for thinking about the implications of republican traditions for international order. By pointing out the conflation of republicanism with

liberalism, our argument suggests reasons for the continuity of certain diplomatic traditions associated with liberal international order even from illiberal governments. The importance of republican internationalism during the period can help IR scholars better understand peripheral engagement with today's rapidly evolving international order, including the relationships between the hierarchies of international order and those of domestic rule.

The domestic politics of Latin America's nineteenth century have been the focus of growing historical attention; the same cannot be said of the region's international engagement during the same period. Greater empirical research is needed, especially moving beyond regional diplomatic conferences to national practices of diplomacy and their connections to (republican) domestic politics. In the late nineteenth century, many Latin American countries possessed growing confidence in their republican institutions. That was reflected in increasingly self-confident interactions with international society. Though that attention – and the insistence on equality – was not always reciprocated, Latin America's republican underpinnings exercised lasting effects on the region's diplomatic legacies and contributions to international order.

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